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San Diego County is home to scores of periodicals serving a wide variety of niche markets. While these local magazines offer an extensive range of interests, none serves the community with an editorial philosophy that embraces a contemporary lifestyle within a framework of faith.

We've decided to change that by taking our 25 years experience in publishing the *Christian Examiner* newspaper and making a rather radical change in order to produce a full color magazine that focuses on bringing our readers hope, encouragement, inspiration, and practical solutions to the complexities of life.

To that end, we aim to offer informative and thought-provoking columns, inspirational articles, human interest stories, and intriguing accounts about life in the local community, as well as occasional features on nationally-known personalities.

If you have been a reader of the *Christian Examiner* newspaper, we invite you to become a regular reader of this new publication and to share copies with your friends and neighbors.

**Your feedback desired**

Tell us what you think. Visit [www.refreshedmag.com/survey.html](http://www.refreshedmag.com/survey.html) and complete the reader survey. Your feedback on this first 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](mailto:info@refreshedmag.com).

Thank you for embarking on this new journey with us.

Lamar & Theresa Keener  
Publishers

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# Waiting for Maggie



## Couple overcomes infertility through adoption

by LORI ARNOLD

The phone rang and Rebekah Kennedy braced herself for the message on the other end. Three years of near-monthly turbulence, ongoing processing sessions with a therapist, and spiritual wrangling with her Creator led her to this moment.

With the receiver expectantly to her ear, Rebekah heard the all-too-familiar refrain: Motherhood eluded—again.

“I felt that hope had died,” Rebekah said of their failed in vitro fertilization treatment.

Her next comment, though, prompted an audio double-take.

“That was a good thing!” she said. “I felt crushed and defeated. I just wanted to give up. The good thing was, though, that I was able to express my feelings and pour them out to God. I didn’t feel like I had to hide them. I truly believe that God met me then; when I was brutally honest and held up my hands in surrender.”

For Rebekah and her husband, Shawn, the three-year journey through infertility stretched them as never before.

“For a while I lost sight of God’s goodness and I felt utterly defeated,” she said.

As the couple tried desperately to make sense of their inability to conceive, they spent time with a Christian therapist, read books—and the Bible—together, and prayed.

“It took me a little while, but I regained sight of God’s goodness and held tight to that,” she said. “My hope is in Christ’s ultimate goodness and plan. It is my hope to bring Him glory in all circumstances.”

One of the things Rebekah learned to do was approach God openly about her pain.

“I felt very little emotion or anger towards God, but was simply overcome



with sadness,” she said, adding that their counselor helped them to understand that their God was big enough to handle anger.

“I decided that that summer I would focus on feeling and expressing my emotions toward God and the whole situation,” Rebekah said, adding that the Psalms became a constant companion. “It was hard, because my tendency is to push those feelings down until they blow up in my face. It was very helpful to explore them.”

Shawn, community pastor at Existence Church, was sorting out his own emotions, learning how to balance the very public profile of being a pastor with the intensely personal need for self-protection.

“It certainly is a challenge discerning when to share and when to hold back,” he said. “Overall, I think we did pretty good. As for coping with personal pain, I have a series of very close friends inside and outside the church who I go to for support.”

During the process, Shawn said he clung to Romans 8:28, even as he used his own pain to minister to others.

“Mind ninjas work their magic when you least expect it,” he said, adding, “Without my faith it would have been hard to see the good that God was working in my disappointment.”

His wife agreed.

“We really feel that God is in the business of redemption and that our story would turn out better than we could have expected, even if it wasn’t how we pictured it,” Rebekah said. “We just had to trust him to write our story.”

### Looking to adoption

That openness to God led the Kennedys to open adoption, a process in which the birth mom remains a part of the baby’s new family long after legal proceedings are finalized.



“I don’t think we would have come to adoption with an open heart if not for going through the grieving process well,” Rebekah said. “Of course, grieving isn’t a one-time event. We will grieve in different ways for the rest of our life; but the majority of the sadness has passed.”

Having worked through much of the grief, the Kennedys eagerly pursued the future.

“A few months before we put in our application, both Shawn and I felt that the Lord had guided us to open adoption and would use it to bring redemption in our lives, our child’s life, and her birth mom’s life,” Rebekah said. “We were nervous but excited by the opportunity.”

Nearly a year ago, the Kennedys filed an application with the Adoption Center of San Diego. Together they prepared,

physically and emotionally, to bring home their first child.

“Some people aren’t comfortable preparing or celebrating before an adopted child arrives because of the fear of a failed adoption,” she said. “Shawn and I talked about that. It is a real possibility. In fact, we know several families that experienced that heartache. We decided, though, that infertility had already robbed us of so much joy we were going to march forward and embrace the excitement.”

In April, just weeks after filing their application, they were matched with a birth mother and attended an ultrasound appointment. Their daughter Maggie was born in July.

“We are so grateful to have been there when she was born,” her adoptive mother said. “We took her home two days later.”

# Open adoption seeks to honor birth mom, adoptive families

Sarah Jensen has never forgotten her young classmate, who was adopted at 9 months.

“She didn’t know where she was before that age,” Jensen said. “She had a small scar on her leg and she didn’t know how she got it. I dunno ... even when I was young, it just didn’t seem right to me.”

Years later, she still doesn’t know the source of her fascination.

“It’s funny. I had no connection to adoption but I recall every adopted kid I ever knew,” she said.

It’s not surprising then that Jensen has been involved in adoption work for more than 20 years, most of that time as director of the Adoption Center of San Diego, a secular nonprofit that provides counseling, education and open adoption facilitation.

“We do adoptions differently at the Adoption Center,” the director said. “Adoption is an internet business these days. But for me, adoption is intimate. So I work with prospective couples and birth parents that are in our community.”

Much of Jensen’s work involves helping women in crisis pregnancies.

“They’re afraid and confused,” she said. “We are able to answer their questions, meet with them personally and help them by offering resources in

the community.”

Practically, that can include connecting them with a crisis pregnancy center, referring them to doctors or safe housing, and providing one-on-one clinical counseling to birth parents and their families.

The center also provides resources to parents seeking to adopt.

“Most of our families have experienced years of pain and loss in trying to become parents,” she said. “We also have support groups for waiting families. I’m accountable to them, plus, they meet the other couples and share their fears and joy of adoption. Many couples are discouraged and worry that it could take years to adopt.”

Jensen said she is a fan of open adoption because it eliminates much of the stigma and pain for birth parents and their children.

“Open adoption is a loving choice,” she said. “These brave young women love their babies. They choose life and then they choose the kind of life they want for their precious baby. Our families embrace the idea of developing ongoing, lifelong relationships with the birth family. These babies always know the truth. They were loved by their birth family, and the adopting family.

“No secrets, no shame,” she said. “These children know they are loved by their birth parents.”

*For more information, visit [www.sdadopt.org](http://www.sdadopt.org).*



Sarah Jensen

## From crisis to joy

Sarah Jensen, who has served as director of the Adoption Center of San Diego since 1993, sees similar redemptive stories unfold every year.

“There is joy in adoption,” said Jensen. “Everyone that we work with is in crisis, adopting parents and birth parents. Yet through faith, courage and love they walk an unknown path called open adoption and everyone is blessed—especially the child.”

Even after 20-plus years in the field, Jensen said she is still amazed at the resilience of birth mothers.

“These women make the most loving sacrifice I can imagine and they should be honored,” she said. “Yet most birth mothers I know are met with scorn. How could she ‘give up’ her baby?”

The sacrifice is not lost on the Kennedys, who just spent their first Christmas as parents and remain in contact with Maggie’s birth mom.

“I don’t think I, or we, would have had such a successful adoption experience if I hadn’t been able to surrender my feelings and experience to the Lord,” Rebekah said.

## Paying it forward

With their grief and uncertainty now tempered by giggles and coos, the Kennedys are finally in a place where their redemption story offers tangible truth to others.

“It was my hope that in sharing our joy the congregation could see how God was taking the broken pieces of our life and making a beautiful picture,” Shawn said. “He could do it for them, too!”

“Adoption has definitely made me more sensitive to people who are experiencing grief in various ways. I can enter into their experience and provide real encouragement, now that I have tasted it myself.” ■

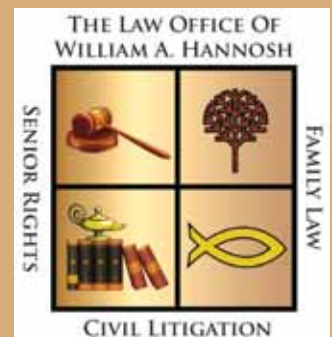
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# Serving with simple tools

There is never a convenient time for a washing machine to stop working, but this time was particularly inconvenient. I needed some particular clothes for the next day, so my wife and I did what we used to do when we were in college or were newly married: We went to the local Laundromat.

The closest one to our house is in a neighborhood shopping area. We went there on a Saturday night, and by the time we were pulling the last loads out of the dryers, we were the only people in the entire place. About 15 minutes before closing time we saw what I presumed to be a homeless man walk in.

He and I nodded to each other as he walked past, and then he disappeared on the other side of the vending machine. Several minutes went by, and he didn't come back out.

"Go see what he's doing," my wife suggested.

"You go see what he's doing," I said. I didn't really want to know.

After a couple of moments of stand-off, I went to see what he was doing.

On the other side of the vending machine was a lost and found table piled

with clothing people had left in the dryers. The man was trying on jackets.

We nodded at each other again, and I went back to folding my stuff.

"He's fine," I said to my wife.

A few minutes later the man walked out, wearing a jacket that was clearly too small for him.

As we loaded stuff into our car, I noticed how cold it was. Yes, weather in San Diego is largely perfect, but that night, about this time of year, it was around 40 degrees. That's really cold if you're sleeping outside.

"We should find that guy and see if he has warm enough clothes," my wife said. This time I didn't hesitate. I found him leaning against the back of the adjacent grocery store, overlooking a canyon.

"I saw you in the laundry place, and I'm wondering if you'd like warmer clothes," I said.

"I'm fine," he said.

"Seriously—I have a sweatshirt that I just washed that would be warmer than that jacket. And since we're right here at a grocery store, could I get you something to eat?"

Eventually he came into the store with us. I told him to get whatever he wanted. He settled on a large container

of Red Bull, the energy drink.

"You won't sleep for a week if you drink that without any food," I said.

He went back through the store and came out with a can of soup.

As we headed to my car to get a sweatshirt for him, I asked if he needed anything else.

"What I could use are some socks," he said. I had just washed about 10 pair.

So I gave him a sweatshirt and a

**I just gave him what I had at the time.**

pair of socks. I didn't go all Blind Side on him and bring him into my home and have him sleep on my couch and teach him how to play football and have a movie made about our relationship. I just gave him what I had at the time.

When Moses told God that there was no way he could be God's messenger to the Pharaoh, God asked Moses, "What do you have in your hand?" Moses had a shepherd's staff. That was all God needed. That, and a willing servant.

When Jesus told the disciples to feed the 5,000, they said there wasn't enough to go around. Jesus asked the disciples essentially the same thing that God asked Moses: What *do* you have? It turned out to be more than enough.

That night at the Laundromat I had a sweatshirt, some socks and a Vons card.

What do you have in *your* hand?



Dean Nelson is the founder and director of the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University. His most recent book is "God Hides in Plain Sight: How to

See the Sacred in a Chaotic World."

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# Women, childbirth and what it means to be fully human again

My wife, Jan, was eight days past her due date when the first signs of labor finally kicked in about 5 a.m. Being past your due date is no fun (keep in mind, I'm a dude talking here, so I really have no idea how hard it really is) as you start to wonder, one, if this little creature will actually EVER arrive and, two, if your labor will have to be initiated by powers outside of your control, namely lots of drugs and stuff. After our first baby, Ruby, decided to make her triumphal entry on the very LAST day before we would had to make some hard choices about the road forward, we were praying baby No. 2 would come along a bit sooner.

As the contractions strengthened, we celebrated that this was the real deal and Janny locked into this sacred, super-human state of focus and determination like I've never encountered.

Strong.

Steady.

Quiet.

At peace.

It was surreal. Of course, I was a ball of anxiety, fear and anticipation wrapped in the cloak of a "secure support partner." About 80 percent of her laboring happened at home when we finally got in the car to head to the birthing center. Trying not to hit the breaks, speed without getting a ticket and keep my mouth shut, we pulled in and got all settled in for the grand arrival.

Again, surreal.

Confidently instructing a handful of us on how to support her, Janny was stoic. Not long after we got to the birthing center, our little Rosie arrived in my arms—quite literally!—and we snuggled as a family of four for the first time.

As I began to process what had just unfolded in front of my eyes, I was struck by the sacredness of the whole

birthing event. A woman is able to grow a baby inside of her body—with a TINY bit of help from a man—have a full grown baby come out of her body and then offer it all the resources it needs... with her body.

There is something sacred to this and I don't think it gets celebrated or near the attention it should.

When God created humanity, we were made in God's image. The very nature of God was inscribed on us as God had serious plans for the role humans would play in the Creation Story. There was no sin. No fallenness. No vision for us to become subservient to the constructs that would be assembled around us. In fact, to be fully human was to be quite divine.

Of course, we know there was a break in the Story. Selfishness, infidelity and violence started to corrupt what was originally created to be in perfect union with God.

While our faith tradition affirms the reality of sin, it also affirms the reality of God's image and design being central to who we are as humans. After the Reformation (think John Calvin, Martin Luther and a lot of angry church folk), this portion of our tradition didn't get as much press, but it is just as true as ever.

## A sacred space

That brings me back to what I saw and experienced in that birthing center. I got a glimpse into a rightly ordered creation. I saw—quite tangibly—the way God created us to function ... and it was remarkable. It was worship. It was a reminder that the God who created us hasn't given up on us. No, in fact, he is

still very much with us. We just need to have the eyes to see it.

One of our dear friends and neighbors is a couple weeks out from her due date. After losing her first baby a few months into her pregnancy, these moments leading up to arrival seem a little extra sacred. Having lost our

**I got a glimpse into a rightly ordered creation. I saw—quite tangibly—the way God created us to function...**

first baby at five months along, Janny understands the mental, emotional and spiritual weight of carrying a baby to term after such a tragedy.

As such, Janny transformed our upstairs bedroom into a little haven of blessing, encouragement and renewal. With candles lit and soft music streaming quietly through the space, she invited this woman over for a facial. Having gotten her friend settled into this space, Janny started to reveal a series of surprises that turned an ordinary facial into an experience with the divine.

One of our other friends came in the room with her harp and began to play next to the bed. Then, one-by-one, women from our faith community came into the room and offered blessings over mom and baby. Instead of leaving after their blessing, most stayed and began massaging her feet and arms and belly.

Tears were shed, burdens were carried together and the hope of new life became palpable.

## Sacrificial love

I often talk about the idea of a thin place; a physical space where heaven

...rightly ordered humanity isn't about who holds the most power, but who is most willing to give it away for the sake of another.

and earth seem to collide, a place where God's kingdom is made real.

In this instance, it was a place where we got a glimpse into what it means to be fully human again. A place where God's intended design actually came about.

In a world where heroism, success and order are most often defined by men projecting their insecurities on society, I thank God for women. And for far more than childbirth (that just happens to be what deeply moved me recently).

For their leadership.

For their compassion.

For the way they show us what sacrificial love actually looks like.

For the way they guide us to the stuff that actually matters most.

For the way they remind us that rightly ordered humanity isn't about who holds the most power, but who is most willing to give it away for the sake of another.

Because, for me, women show us how to be fully human again.



Jon Huckins is on staff with NieuCommunités in Golden Hill, co-founder of The Global Immersion Project, speaker and author of "Thin Places" and "Teaching Through

the Art of Storytelling." Follow his blog at [www.jonhuckins.net](http://www.jonhuckins.net).



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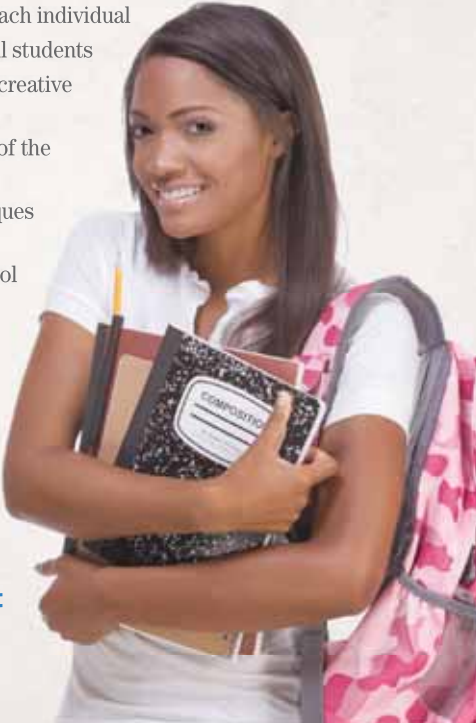
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PHIL COOKE

# 'Revolutions,' not 'resolutions'

The statistics are in on how well we keep New Year's Resolutions, and it doesn't look good. Forbes Magazine reports that while 40 percent of us make New Year's resolutions, just 8 percent actually follow through on those goals. We rarely get to the end of January before we're reminded that every year we make New Year's resolutions, and every year we fail. We just can't seem to stay committed, enthusiastic or determined

## Revolutionary changes signal to your family and friends that this year, your life is going in a new direction.

enough to keep our good intentions. But the word "resolution" is simply another way to express the desire for change. And when you discover the secrets to real change, your resolutions will start to stick.

One of those secrets is *size*. In my book "Jolt: Get the Jump on a World That's Constantly Changing," I reveal that resolutions need to be big enough to matter. Most people don't change little things, so start with the biggest areas of your life that need to change and need to change *now*. I call these changes

"revolutionary" because they are serious, critical and there's no turning back.

Revolutionary changes signal to your family and friends that this year, your life is going in a new direction. Whatever those changes may be for you, make them big and make them loud. Once you've figured out the list of those revolutionary changes, here are some tips for making those resolutions stick:

1. There Can Be No Other Choice. We

usually think hitting bottom is the end, but the truth is, it can be a new beginning. I've discovered that if there's any other option, most

people will take it. The vast majority of New Year's resolutions fail because the stakes simply aren't high enough. When it's not important, we don't take our resolutions seriously. What do you need to change that's really "life or death" for you? An extra 10 pounds might not be much to most people, but for a model, actress or athlete, it could kill a career. Don't make a resolution unless it's really critical.

2. Change What Matters. Take control of your priorities, and you'll take

control of your life. We often fail because we don't take the time to decide what's really important. A promotion has little value if it comes at the expense of your family. Most of us float through life never giving a thought to what we want to be remembered for accomplishing. My advice? Stop spending so much time on what other people think is urgent, and spend more time on what really matters to *you*.

3. Eliminate Destructive Distractions. Release the negative baggage from your life. Stop re-living your last failure and start focusing on the future. The divorce, firing, bankruptcy, or other disaster in your past does not determine your future. I was fired from my job at 36 and now, two decades later I realize it was the best thing that could have happened. You can't see what's coming if you're looking in the rearview mirror. As long as you dwell in the past, you'll never discover your destiny.

4. Finally, Build a Motivation Machine. Discover the difference cheerleaders can make. Long ago, athletes discovered the power of a cheering section. As you work through the most challenging aspects of personal change, you need people who believe and will encourage you, so go public with your new dreams. Get rid of the negative people in your life, and surround yourself with people who are convinced of your possibilities!

Start thinking now about how you'd like your life to change in 2014. It's never too early, or late, to start the journey...



Phil Cooke is a filmmaker, media consultant and author of "One Big Thing: Discovering What You Were Born to Do." Learn more at [www.philcooke.com](http://www.philcooke.com).

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# Saying 'hello' has become a lost art

I am being haunted by the ghost of Christmas past. Now before you say, “Mark, the holiday season was so over weeks ago,” work with me here.

Instead of the usual seasonal leftovers (like bills), one thing sticks in my mind. It’s a lyric from Burl Ives’ classic hit, “Have a Holly Jolly Christmas.” And now that I brought it up, you can’t get it out of your head either.

Here’s the convicting line from ol’ Burl: “Say hello to friends you know, and everyone you meet,” EVERYONE? That’s a tall order, isn’t it?

Greeting others is difficult. For example, when’s the last time you even said “hello” to a stranger on the street... or anywhere else?

How about when you’re in an elevator with others? My friend

Dennis Prager told me long ago how he goes out of his way to say something funny to others in such situations, especially if he is there with only one other person. It sends a message that sets the other individual at ease. Humor and a good-natured personality make a difference, especially when people don’t expect it.

Too many of us say little or nothing to our fellow Americans each day. Simple greetings have become a lost art.

Maybe we’re too caught up in high tech communication, engaged in social media greetings and posts, tweets and updates. It *feels* like we say hello all the time. Just not in a more personal way.

Saying hello to friends you know is a wonderful place to begin the process. Maybe you sent out Christmas cards (though that’s also a lost art, as the U.S. Postal Service notes), believing the

gesture covers connecting with friends and family. Nice gesture, but what about the rest of the year? Friendship takes some work, ongoing cultivation and frequency.

One way to say hi to more friends is to think of it when traveling.

When arriving in another city I ask myself, “Who do I know here?” I check my iPhone contacts, then call or text a quick “Hey, I’m town, just saying hello.” I’ll also ask about family or job... any-

thing to show I gave the message a little thought.

After that kind of contact, good things can happen. There are opportunities for a quick meeting over

coffee or dinner. Friendships are refreshed, prayer requests are exchanged and, sometimes, new business comes from the connections. At the very least, friends are reminded that they are remembered.

Saying hello to *everyone you meet*, though, is more complicated. And it can be scary. There are plenty of places where a friendly howdy may send a message of “Hey, I’m ready to be mugged.” So it’s important to pick opportunities carefully.

As you see someone (even if they’re looking grumpy) passing on the street, a simple smile can make a big difference. You never know how you have a chance to brighten someone’s day.

Most people seem to be so absorbed in cell phones and other technology that they rarely look up to see others. Sometimes that leads to bad news, like

a recent story of a woman who walked off the end of a pier while updating her Facebook status.

(She survived, and so did her phone.)

Another way to make a difference, and get more out of each day, is to engage in conversation with people who work in service jobs.

People who clear tables, park cars, or handle marketplace checkouts rarely have much meaningful interaction with customers. It’s usually just a parade of people in a hurry.

On a recent East Coast trip, while buying newspapers and a bottle of water at the Philadelphia airport, I struck up a chat with the man who was ringing up my purchase, “How’s your day going so far?” He said, “Great, so far! I’m blessed by God!” I didn’t see that one coming. I said, “So am I... and what’s the best part of your work day?”

He explained how much he loved *having* a job, period. His attitude became more evident because a customer asked him about how HE was doing. I then noticed the next customers were much more personable, seeming to realize that there was a real person behind the counter, not someone to be ignored or taken for granted.

Burl Ives was right. Finding ways to “say hello to friends you know, and everyone you meet” is very worthwhile. And it makes life much more interesting, throughout the year.







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](http://www.marklarson.com).

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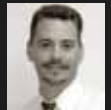
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# Just for Kicks

PB church uses soccer, fitness to reach, shape its community

by LORI ARNOLD

When Christians get into the sometimes-precarious effort of outreach to the community, they often find themselves straddling murky questions of faith, evil and God's design for humanity. For members of Barabbas Road Church the gateway to ministry is black and white.

Located in Pacific Beach, one of the county's youngest and most active communities, Barabbas was looking for an outreach tool that fit the community. With a staff and membership who view fitness as a lifestyle not a four-letter word, soccer became the outlet.

"There are a ton of fun and free things to do in San Diego and we knew we could not compete with those," said Matt Smith, the founder and pastor of Barabbas Road Church. "Instead, we wanted to simply provide an environment where new people in the church could easily connect with each other and the community in a fun way."

A former Olympic hopeful in rowing who walked away from formal competition after discovering Jesus and committing to full-time ministry, Smith said the church originally began offering personal training, but over time shifted focus to pick-up soccer games.

"To this day soccer after church remains one of the best ways we have seen for new people get to know others in the church and community," Smith, a former personal trainer said. "It is much easier to get to know someone when you both are exercising. In my opinion lunches and more formal get-togethers can be difficult for folks to engage someone, but after soccer it comes naturally."

Nick Duellman, who became a Christian through the ministry of Barabbas Road, said the neutrality of soccer benefits everyone involved.

"For in-reach it makes a great environment to get to know people in the church if you are new and like sports and fitness," he



Personal trainer Nick Duellman, tries to secure control of the ball during a pick-up soccer game hosted by Barabbas Road Church in Pacific Beach. The congregation uses post-worship service soccer matches as a community outreach.

said. "For an outreach it is a less frightening approach for people to get to know and learn about the church while having fun with a bunch of cool people.

The flexibility of the sport has helped the congregation as it has grown and moved around various locations, including its current home at Pacific Beach Middle School. Earlier in the church's history they used the expansive Kate Sessions Park on the east end of town.

"Any open field or lot can be used for soccer," Duellman, who is also a fitness trainer, said. "All you really need is some goals and cones. We even had games where we used shoes as the goals and played barefoot!"

"It can be played by people of all fitness levels with minimal equipment. We have experimented with other sports but have always come back to soccer. Everyone gets a chance to play!"

## Field of prayers

Duellman said the informal games allow members of the church to model their faith in practical ways. Prayers are freely offered before each game.

"It helps keep people safe," he said. "Also, I think it shows newer Christians and non-Christians the living out of the faith. Through a competitive sport, selflessness, inclusion, grace and love for one of another can really be seen."



His pastor agreed, saying the discipline required to maintain a fit lifestyle mirrors that of a faithful believer.

“The discipline I was using to train to be the best in the world at rowing I was able to use to serve God,” he said referencing 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

### Disciplined Christianity

That commitment to discipline is what Smith said he seeks from his own flock.

“To me this is the call for a disciplined Christianity that is to be normative for the church,” he said. “This has caused me to be expect more from those who claim to be believers in Christ. We all should want to glorify God as much as I was willing to work to glorify myself before being saved.”

At the same time, Smith said he is cognizant that if people are not careful, the commitment to fitness can easily become a distracting idol that focuses on the created, not the Creator.

“Before I was saved, I wanted to be the best in the world at something, anything really, and athletics was my path to being a somebody,” he said. “When I became a Christian I realized my worth was related to Christ and it was about His glory not mine, anyways. It took a bit but I understand that we are happier as people when we are giving God His glory rather than trying to steal it for ourselves.” ■

Learn more at [www.barabbasroadchurch.com](http://www.barabbasroadchurch.com).

## Tourney to benefit foster kids

DEL MAR — The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Voices for Children Golf Tournament will be held beginning at 11 a.m. Feb. 24 at the Del Mar Country Club: The shotgun start is set for noon with the dinner and awards program at 5 p.m.

Proceeds for the event will be used to expand the agency’s mission to transform the lives of foster children in San Diego County by providing them with the caring advocacy of a Court Appointed Special Advocate or CASA volunteer. The specially trained CASA volunteers lend support to the children, research a case, interview parties involved, and make recommendations to the court.

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## Play tribute to MLK

SAN DIEGO — “A Night with the King,” stage play will be presented at 6 p.m. Jan. 18 at the Educational Cultural Complex.

The play examines the civil rights movement and the role of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“The era of the ’60s is revisited through five of his most recognized and moving speeches,” organizers said. “Walk back in time through the hope, tragedy and triumphs of this period in American history.”

Play writer and coordinator, Maxine Clark created the tribute as part of “Our Living Heritage”, an annual production effort she spearheaded to acknowledge Black heroes and heroines.

Proceeds from the play will benefit the St. Stephens Cathedral Church of God in Christ Sunshine Band.

Tickets are \$15 and available at [ssb-nightwiththeking.eventbrite.com](http://ssb-nightwiththeking.eventbrite.com).

The cultural complex is located at 4343 Oceanview Blvd.

For more information, call (619) 277-6228.

## ‘Out with the Old’ luncheon

SAN MARCOS — The San Marcos-Vista Christian Women’s Club luncheon “Out with the Old, In with the New” will be held at 11:30 a.m. Jan. 20 at the St. Mark Golf Club, formerly called The Lake San Marcos Country Club.

Sharon Simonian, a Laguna Niguel poet, actor, former teacher and motivational speaker. A presentation of Scentry

fragrances will also be provided. “Sweet Melodies” will present the music.

Stoncroft Ministries/Christian Women’s club is sponsoring the luncheon.

Tickets are \$18. The reservation deadline is Jan. 16.

The club is located at 1750 San Pablo Drive.

For more information, go to [www.stoncroft.org](http://www.stoncroft.org) or call (760) 432-0772.



## Agajanian at concert series

LAKESIDE — Lakeside Presbyterian Church will launch its 2014 concert series with local son, Dennis Agajanian, at 4 p.m. Jan. 12.

Agajanian, a resident of East County, is known for exceptional guitar work and rebel-style vocals.

Over the years he’s won numerous awards, including Musician of the Year Awards, ICM Entertainer of the Year awards and the 2008 Living Legend Award.

Agajanian, who has toured across the globe and has worked with Samaritan’s Purse crusades, began playing the guitar at the age of 15.

In March, the church will host the Ugandan Children’s choir on the 9<sup>th</sup> and “Mainly Mozart,” a production of the San Diego School of Performing Arts on March 28.

The church is located at 9908 Channel Road.

For information, call (619) 443-1021.

## Intro to Prophecy class

ENCINITAS — Encinitas Beach Chapel will hold a 10-week class “Introduction to the Prophetic” beginning at 7 p.m. Jan. 17. Sessions are two hours every Friday.

The cost for the series is \$65, which includes a book.

The chapel is located at 510 S. El Camino Real.

For more information, visit [www.beachchapel.org](http://www.beachchapel.org) or call (760) 942-4900.

# Disney's animator of heroines



IMAGE COURTESY OF WALT DISNEY PICTURES



Mark Henn talks about creating Disney's leading ladies, his Christian faith, and his work on 'Frozen'

by EMILY BELZ

**M**ark Henn has been an animator at Disney for 33 years. While he has animated many of Disney's best-known characters (from Goofy to Winnie the Pooh to the mice in "The Rescuers"), he has the reputation as the animator of heroines. He animated Belle from "Beauty and the Beast," Ariel from "Little Mermaid," Jasmine from "Aladdin," Mulan from "Mulan" and Tiana from "Princess and the Frog." Now for Disney's new animated film "Frozen," Henn served as one of the lead animators, overseeing the development of all of the characters.

**Can you talk in more detail about the kind of work you did in "Frozen," and whether there was a particular character you were drawn to?**

I worked with the animators as a con-

sultant, mentor, cheerleader. I touched all of the characters at different times. I helped them make scenes stronger, make the expressions stronger. Marshmallow, Olaf, Ana, Elsa, Kristoph, Sven ... I'm kind of partial to the leading ladies in our films. That's been a big part of my résumé. This film presented a unique challenge—not one (leading lady), but two. They're sisters, but they're very different.

**You've worked in two-dimensional animation and now three-dimensional. As technology has changed, has the artistic process changed for you?**

If you think of the difference between hand-drawn animation and computer-generated animation—you have two completely different tools but the same end result: to make a character come to life. I did some computer animation—"Meet the Robinsons" was my first com-

puter-animated film. The only thing that changed for me was the tool, getting proficient enough to use the tool.

I've been here 33 years now. I bring that skill set to help the younger animators think like a Disney animator. I don't see a difference between hand-drawn animation and computer-generated animation from that point of view. The heart and mind of the animator is the same. And that's what I'm trying to pass on to the new group of artists.

**I've heard animators describe their job as acting.**

Think of us like a theater troupe—that's very much like an animated film. Over time as you get to know one another you learn each other's strengths. Some people are great at comedy. You have other people who are more into the dramatic, more emotional acting. You have some typecasting among animators.

Being an animator is the best of both worlds. I love drawing. I love performing and acting, but I don't have to be on the screen myself.

**Speaking of typecasting among animators, how did you end up animating all the leading ladies?**

I don't know other than I grew up the oldest of three kids—my other two siblings are sisters. I grew up with girls and I'm probably more comfortable walking into a room with a bunch of girls than a bunch of guys. I fell in love with Snow White and Cinderella. But I've also done mice and dogs and Winnie the Pooh and

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Henn served as one of the lead animators in Frozen, overseeing the development of all of the characters.



IMAGE COURTESY OF WALT DISNEY PICTURES

Pete (in the Mickey Mouse short “Get a Horse!” that will be shown before “Frozen”).

**How does your faith play into your work, into character development and storytelling?**

It’s a global impact as well as day-to-day and scene-to-scene. I’m very blessed. ... This has been my boyhood dream to be a Disney animator. I’ve seen a lot of change and a lot of ups and downs. I was almost fired at one point. God has been incredibly gracious to allow me to be here, and I feel like this is where I’m supposed to be.

In the minutiae—it’s those daily struggles—you’re fighting a scene, the same things everyone deals with. He’s gotten me through

many a tough day and tough scene and tough production schedule.

It’s nice to work for a company—we’re not a church organization or a faith-based organization—but the basic values we want to put across in our films are right in line with my faith.

**I noticed “Frozen” had themes about self-sacrifice and the importance of family.**

Parents need to do a little work and glean out those things and talk about them with their kids. (The themes) are there. The parents have the responsibility to look for them. ■

*Emily Belz writes for World News Service.*

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switchfoot  
Fading West

Balancing faith, families,  
music and a love of surfing

by LORI ARNOLD



Jon Foreman took his usual place on stage, in front of his Switchfoot bandmates as they launched out on yet another tour, this one designed to rediscover their passion in the midst of growing demands at home. This time, traveling to some of the world's best surfing spots, they decided to chronicle their adventure in a documentary as they searched for inspiration for their ninth album, "Fading West."

After rocking their Australian audience, Jon left the stage, read an urgent text from home and found himself rocked—and the cameras were rolling.

His infant daughter Daisy needed emergency surgery and he was 30 hours away.





"Fading West" was shot along legendary surf breaks in Australia, New Zealand, Africa and Bali.

The rock cacophony that propelled the band to sales of more than 5.5 million records over their 17 years together abruptly gave way to ear-numbing silence as Jon's bandmates, including brother Tim, solidified their relationship without words.

The intimacy of the moment is captured in "Fading West," the band's first foray into film and a complement piece to the namesake album. Directed by Matt Katsolis and filmed during Switchfoot's 2012 World Tour, "Fading West" released Dec. 10 on a variety of digital platforms. The band celebrated with a performance on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

At its core, the film captures the emotional intersection of balancing their first loves: faith, families, music and their love of surfing, a bond that has kept them connected as they've grown from young adults to family men.

The film shows their humanity, sometimes lost in the whirl of rock star success. In that agonizing space between reading the text and catching a flight back home, for instance, the camera catches Jon sketching his daughter's

face.

"When things go wrong you ask yourself, 'How can there be a good God?' Jon ponders aloud. "I think the conclusion that I come to is that both faith and doubt are equally logical choices in the face of tragedy."

As Jon looks toward home, the band cancels several shows and regroup by calling in a friend to fill in for Jon while he is state-side.

"Faith is to say, 'Yes, a future will have pain' but there's a meaning and a purpose deeper than that pain," Jon adds. "For me, that is my choice, to *believe* rather than doubt."

#### Regrouping overseas

Following Daisy's successful surgery and her parents' prayers for discernment, Jon rejoins Switchfoot in South Africa. As he returns to the tour, home remains sharply in focus as the group gets to work on writing songs for the album, which releases Jan. 14 through At-

lantic Records/Word.

"The point became, 'What are we going to do to push ourselves?'" Jon said of the earliest stages of the album's creation. "Could we take ourselves somewhere we'd never been before, yet achieve a feeling of comfort at the same time? How do we go to a new place that

**"Faith is to say, 'Yes, a future will have pain' but there's a meaning and a purpose deeper than that pain."**

feels like home?

"For a long time, home was a place of failure because it meant that we didn't have any shows. When you drop out of college in your early '20s and all your friends are getting jobs and you're the guy who lives with his parents, it's way better to be on the road. Only recently did I feel like home was a place where I could feel comfortable and content."

In creating the film, Switchfoot and its director Katsolis took inspiration from Irish rockers U2 and their 1988

documentary “Rattle and Hum,” which also follows the exploits of the band, and from the 1966 film “The Endless Summer,” which follows the global search of two surfers. “Fading West” was shot along legendary surf breaks in Australia, New Zealand, Africa and Bali, where the Foreman brothers “breathe fresh life into their songwriting and sound by harnessing the spirit of their stunning surroundings and mining new emotional depths.”

“The idea was to surf, write songs, play music, and see what ideas came,” Tim said.

### From kids to gigs

The result is part rock documentary, part surf film and part travelogue as the camera captures the incredible movements of the ocean, the frenetic energy of the band’s live shows, giddy rehearsals with their children, and quiet moments of reflection.

“We set out knowing that we were going to document whatever happened,” said drummer Chad Butler. “Whether that ended up being the demise of Switchfoot or the rebirth of something new, we were going to document it, one way or the other. We had two themes: surfing, music and how they intersect. And looking for inspiration for a new record was the motivation to chase those themes. I feel like we succeeded in finding the means to make a record based on and inspired by the ocean.”

As part of its 52-date fall tour, Switchfoot opened its act with the film, followed by a stripped-down but still rocking live performance by the band. Besides its San Diego show, the band sold out venues in Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, Portland, Phoenix, St. Louis, Atlanta and two dates in New York.

The film is available on iTunes, Amazon, Instant Video, Cable Movies on Demand, Google Play, Xbox Video, Sony PlayStation, CinemaNow and Vudu.

### Serving others

In addition to their commercial success, Switchfoot has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to aid homeless in San Diego through the Switchfoot Bro-Am Foundation, which hosts an annual surf competition and concert.

Switchfoot will hit the road again soon with dates to be announced. ■

*For more information, including a “Fading West” trailer, visit [www.switchfoot.com](http://www.switchfoot.com).*

## Downey-Burnett duo expand faith-based stories on TV, film

Executive producers Roma Downey and Mark Burnett, the team behind the History Channel’s megahit miniseries “The Bible,” will produce “The Dovekeepers,” for CBS.

The four-hour miniseries, which is expected to air in 2015, is based on Alice Hoffman’s acclaimed historical novel about four extraordinary women whose lives intersect in a fight for survival at the siege of Masada.

“We are excited to get to turn this bestselling novel by Alice Hoffman into an epic miniseries that will be a major television event on CBS,” said Roma Downey. “This novel is a testament to the human spirit and how love can rise from the ashes of war. It is, quite simply, an amazing story of heroism and hope, and a story that must be seen not just with the eyes but felt with the heart.”

Set in ancient Israel, “The Dovekeepers” is based on the true events at Masada in 70 A.D. After being forced out of their home in Jerusalem by the Romans,

900 Jews were ensconced in a fortress at Masada, a mountain in the Judean desert. Besieged at Masada, the Jews held out for months against the vast Roman armies.

The miniseries will recount the unfolding events from the perspective of four extraordinary women who arrive at Masada independently and with unique backstories, but who share a common drive for survival.

“The Dovekeepers is a compelling, beautifully written novel that combines history and fiction into a timeless story of survival and heroism,” said Nina Tassler, president of CBS Entertainment, adding that the Romney Burnett team possesses an “amazing passion for telling biblical stories and for producing entertaining television on an event scale.”

In addition to their television work, the husband-and-wife team have been working in film, with their latest project, “Son of God,” scheduled for release by 20th Century Fox on Feb. 28.

## Eareckson Tada sings movie score

Noted author and speaker Joni Eareckson Tada, whose Joni & Friends ministry has reached millions, finds herself on a different stage these days after recording “Alone Yet Not Alone,” the main score for a Christian-themed movie by the same name. “Alone Yet Not Alone,” which follows the struggle of two sisters captured by a Delaware tribe and taken to Ohio, will release nationwide on March 14. More than 12,000 advance tickets for the movie have already been purchased.

The film is based on the true story of Barbara and Regina Leininger in 1755, during the French and Indian War.

Eareckson Tada recorded the song after being moved by its lyrics and score. The song was composed by Bruce



Lydia (Jenn Gotzon) hides the children after their village was attacked by Native Americans in a scene from “Alone Yet Not Alone,” a movie that features the voice of Joni Eareckson Tada in the title song.

Broughton and Emmy-winning lyricist Dennis Spiegel. Broughton’s movie credits include “Silverado,” “Young Sherlock Holmes,” “Lost in Space,” “Tombstone,” “Miracle on 34th Street,” “The Presidio” “The Boy Who Could Fly,” “The Rescuers Down Under and Bambi II.”

His TV tunes include “JAG,” “Quincy” and “How the West Was Won.”

Noel and Melissa Musicha used their honeymoon cash to invest in a village center in the southeast African nation of Malawi and launched The Chisomo Idea, a multifaceted ministry that uses soccer, youth development seminars, tutoring, mentoring, after-school learning centers, scholar-athlete initiatives, micro loans and other outreaches to build communities. Chisomo translates as grace.





# The Chisomo Idea

San Diegans take Jesus to Malawi's poor, find He's already there

by LORI ARNOLD

Noel Musicha stood along the tiny wall inside Humphrey Mvula's bedroom in a poverty-rich village in Malawi. With sleeping quarters no bigger than an average American walk-in closet, Musicha tried not to encroach upon three mats, one for each of the Mvula brothers.

As Musicha's eyes adjusted to the darkness, they fell upon a wall covered with glossy-magazine articles that Mvula had clipped of his favorite soccer players. The pages—boasting headlines such as “Big Expectations,” “Seek and Destroy,” “Thinking Big” and “Lost?”—did more than hide the imperfections of the hand-crafted clay bricks and mortar that occasionally cast sunlight into the cave-like, but quite clean home.

They were a testimony to Mvula's dreams.

“Yeah, to me, they have special meaning—these posters. ... They encourage me to continue with my career of soccer,” Mvula told his guest, adding that he hoped to go to college, play soccer professionally and one day have his own story featured on crisp, bright pages.

The spiritual connotations of the magazine headlines were not lost on Musicha, whose eyes came to rest on a story about former South African player Arthur Zwane. Above the text, bold-faced words screamed “Don't Write Me Off.”

“That was moving, because that's what we do as people,” said Musicha, a Malawi native who now lives in San Di-



A girl's soccer team kicks off in Chinsapo, Malawi. The team is one of six academy teams fielded by The Chisomo Idea, a San Diego-based international organization with a mission to make a sustainable difference in impoverished African communities.

ego. “We have this tendency to look at people and when, in our own eyes, they look hopeless, we say, ‘Ahh, what can the person become?’”

“I was moved by the imagery of that (poster). I think it was a reminder from God to me on how I view people, what I view as an image of God in people and what it looks like to be able to stand with people and say, ‘The things that you are dreaming about are real. Let's pursue those.’”

Moments before visiting the home, as the pair walked the dusty red clay dirt to get to Mvula's house, the young man told Musicha he loved his home village of Chinsapo, outside of Malawi's capitol city of Lilongwe.

“I like everything from here because I don't even mind how poor I am, how poor are my friends or how rich (they are),” Mvula said. “I just care about my future.”

His comments reflect a way of life in Malawi, a concept known as *umuthu*,

which translates “No one does life alone.”

“You not only see community, you feel community.”

Awakened to the young man's reality—birthed in the heart, but suspended by his life's station—Musicha became determined to set Mvula on a path to capture his dreams by capitalizing on community.

“His hopes and his dreams didn't seem very consistent with the place where he was coming from. I was given a much different platform than Mvula was,” said Musicha, who grew up in a privileged Malawi neighborhood. “And for a moment I started thinking, ‘Man, he has all these incredible dreams. He has gifts to be able to pursue those dreams, but he wouldn't be able to just because the platform is not there for him. Thinking about him and thinking about all the other kids who are kind of in the same scenario, who are just stuck in this grip of poverty, that really shook me up.’”



Noel Musicha has some fun with young children from Kudoku Children's Center, The Chisomo Idea's learning community for kids. The community turns into a feeding center in times of hunger.

## The projects of The Chisomo Idea

### Theater of Dreams Sports Academy

Uses grassroots soccer development as a way of highlighting and unleashing the potential that exists in Chinsapo and inspires the community in the fight against poverty. The boys' program operates four age-related teams, with one age group already winning two championships. Five players from the Chisomo program have advanced to Malawi's top division league. The girls' program has brought numerous victories and one championship, prompting news coverage in Malawi's leading newspapers.

### Netball Program

Netball is one of the most important female sports in Malawi, with its national team ranked fifth in the world. The Chisomo program is still in its infancy, but organizers say it shows promise.

### Scholar Athlete Program

Designed to create a platform that encourages academic achievement while youth pursue their dreams of a career in sports. The program helps to assuage parental concerns that children may be wasting their time on an unobtainable sports career.

### Mentoring Program

Matches older, experienced, and committed athletes in the same setting with younger, aspiring, and com-

mitted athletes. The program is masterminded by students from The African Bible College who go to the town of Chinsapo every week to promote the welfare of the local children.

### Leadership Development Program

Trains and empowers local leaders who will be motivated to bring change to their community.

### Business Program

Some of the mothers whose children are a part of the Chisomo soccer program are eligible for small loans from the ministry. Seven women have participated in the program and are already in the process of repaying their loans.

### Children's Centers Program

Provides opportunities for urban youth to invest in the lives of village children by providing them with training and resources that they would otherwise not have. Many of the rural villagers, who make up as much as 85 percent of the nation's population, lack access to quality education, jobs, electricity, telephones, food and transportation. The centers strive to offset this lack of resources by providing academic development, health and hygiene, sports and recreation, and spiritual development.

*Learn more at [www.chisomoidea.com](http://www.chisomoidea.com).*

The chance encounter—orchestrated in a way only God can do—set in motion a pledge by Musicha that he would never take for granted another person's story.

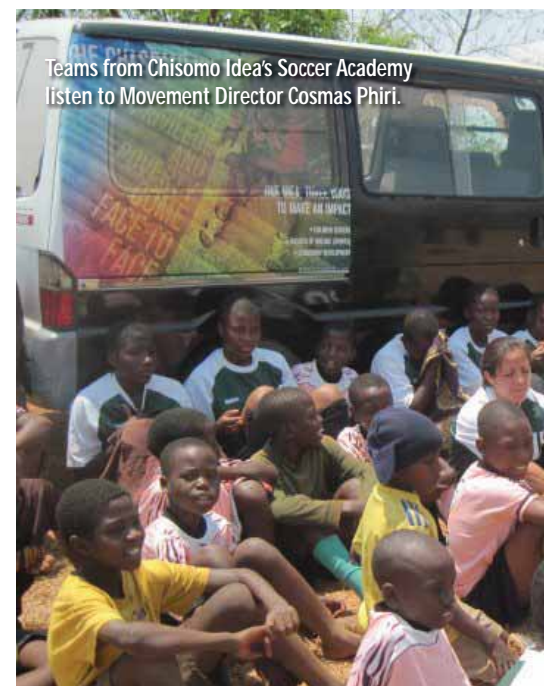
"I promised him, personally, that I was going to make sure that at least the dream he had of going to college was going to be a reality, at least as much that was dependent on me," Musicha said.

"I didn't even know how it was possible for us to be able to make that happen financially, but I just knew that it was not going to be possible anymore for me to worry about my monthly bread when Mvula was worrying about his daily bread. I thought there was something broken there. Something was wrong."

• • •

Musicha, though raised in a better neighborhood than Mvula, shared many of the same dreams. Their most common interest was soccer. In order to pursue his dream of playing professionally, though, Musicha's parents insisted he earn a college degree, so Musicha enrolled at San Diego Christian College, which recruited him because of his soccer skills.

While at the college, Musicha earned a bachelor's degree in communications and biblical studies. Later he earned a master's degree in public administration and organizational leadership. It was at San Diego Christian College where Musicha met his wife, Melissa. After marrying in the States, the couple traveled to Malawi in 2007 where his family hosted



a second marriage ceremony for the couple.

While there, the couple met two dozen or so children who were playing soccer. Both were touched by the needs they saw.

“Something just grabbed us,” he said.

Responding to God’s leading, the couple used the honeymoon cash they received from his relatives to invest in a village center and made arrangements to host eight soccer clinics and a tournament the following year. They returned to San Diego, but left part of their hearts in the southeast African nation.

The following year they returned to his homeland, this time with a small team from Flood Church. When they arrived, they discovered the community had mobilized around the center project and was thriving. Five women and two men had jumped into the effort despite their lack of formal training. Someone else had donated land to be used for a community farm.

The Musichas and their team expanded the effort by offering eight soccer clinics and tournaments in various villages near Musicha’s childhood home. In each neighborhood they were swarmed by hundreds of children young and old.

In one community the American visitors were greeted with a spontaneous concert featuring a child fingering pretend keys on an abandoned tire, while his peers provided their own syncopated sound with a stick violin and drumsticks from the stalks of dried weeds. Their



## Transformed by his own mission

Noel and Melissa Musicha knew God had a plan. They just weren’t privy to what it was, exactly. They knew that God was working in Malawi, He had called them to be part of it, and they had just committed to paying for a young man’s college education.

“We trust that He will show up,” Noel said at the time. “But, if this is You showing up by asking us to empty up our banking accounts, then so be it.”

Grace can sometimes be just a pretty little word but, if not used in the right context, it can also elevate the grantor over the grantee. The Musichas, however, were focused on the messy kind of grace, the type that can overrun calendars and result in deep sacrifices of talents and money.

That’s the type of grace behind The Chisomo Idea, a ministry the couple founded in Noel Musicha’s native Malawi. *Chisomo* translates into the word grace.

“In a world where people are enticed by the idea of upward mobility, we make a case for downward mobility,” said Musicha, who lives in San Diego and attends Flood Church. “We think that Jesus’ message of radical love only works when we truly learn to consider others better than ourselves.”

Musicha admits he was on the precipice and about to fall into the same “grace” trap when he, his wife Melissa and a team from San Diego headed to Malawi to provide soccer clinics to poor neighborhoods. Their design was to “bring Jesus to the community.” Then he met Humphrey Mvula, a Malawian teen who loved soccer and exuded a joy that seemed absurd in the light of his impoverished lifestyle.

“Jesus is not only in charge of things that are visible, but He is also in charge of things that are invisible,” Musicha said, referring to Colossians 1:16. “So in that moment of saying what is it here that Humphrey sees that I don’t see? Why is he so resilient? Why is he so hopeful? Why is he able to mix his tears with laughter and joy so quickly? Why is that able to happen?”

It was a transformational moment in which Musicha realized that the transformation business belonged to God, not to him.



“Once the conversation started it became so true that God was already there,” he said. “I wasn’t ‘bringing Jesus there.’ Jesus was already there. It was just opening up my eyes to the reality of what He had already been wading through. This is why the margins have been so important to me. For my

wife and I, honestly, we refuse to dream dreams that don’t involve the poor.

“We want to unapologetically stand with the materially poor but not in the traditional provider/receiver sense. We want it to be about kinship, which is to say making sense of the fact that we all need each other and belong to each other.”

### A benefit to San Diego

Although The Chisomo Idea is focused on Malawi, Musicha said he believes San Diego, where the ministry is headquartered, and other western cities also benefit when those who participate in short-term trips return to their local neighborhoods.

“One of the challenges we give to our western partners is that if they can trust the poor in our country, they can learn to trust the poor in their own country,” he said. “Our desire is that their time with us is a catalyst of what they can do in their own neighborhoods and communities here in the U.S. In other words, a tourist that comes to visit our work in Malawi is no different from a ‘missionary.’ The only difference is in what they do when they return.”

The mission field, Musicha said, is vast.

“We live in a broken world. A world dominated by poverty, disease, wars and issues of social injustice,” he said. “However, with those problems also comes an opportunity. A chance to stand against the wind of apathy and to live out the belief that all people are created equal.”

song was accented by the muted rhythm of field soccer.

Each child had big potential, even bigger dreams, but few resources.

“Despite their circumstances they live life so incredible, with unparalleled joy,” Musicha said.

Because they planned to minister in one community and then move on to the next Musicha said he believed their ability to truly touch the people would be limited.

“It doesn’t quite work that way because when you’ve seen people, especially young people who do have dreams but the dreams are about to be robbed out of them because of poverty, you look at those people in the eyes, sincerely, your life doesn’t just move on. You don’t ‘just do another clinic tomorrow,’ because a story has broken your heart, you know?”

• • •

It was on a vacant lot that they discovered Mvula, who drenched the dusty playing field with his passion for soccer.

“It wasn’t just about the way he played the game,” Musicha said. “He was exceptional in the way that he played the game. There was something about the grace in which he carried himself.”

Mvula’s field antics landed him the tournament MVP trophy and inspired the Musichas to launch the Chisomo Idea, a multifaceted ministry that uses soccer, youth development seminars, tutoring, mentoring, after-school learning centers, scholar-athlete initiatives, micro loans and other outreaches to



Chisomo Idea leaders get involved in exuberant singing and dancing at Chisomo’s annual leadership UnConference. The UnConferences make leadership more accessible to everyday folks.

build communities. *Chisomo* translates as grace.

Scrapping together funds from family and friends, Musicha was able to keep his word to Mvula who is now in his second year in college. Two to three times a week he returns to his village where he serves the community by coaching, mentoring and tutoring.

“It is really amazing to see,” Musicha said.

The giving spirit has far exceeded Mvula’s own sphere of influence as Chisomo Idea has worked to draw young Malawian adults of privilege into servanthood in their country.

“We have tons of college mentors flocking to us to work for free because they want to make a difference in their own country,” Musicha said. “We have created a culture where giving back

without expecting anything in return is the norm.

“As volunteers we are driven by the radical love and grace of Jesus Christ, who continues to transform our hearts to understand His passion for people and see His beauty in culture,” Musicha said. “His love compels us to care and serve the people He has created regardless of their race, gender, or religion”

It requires, he said, a commitment to intentional living that is centered on helping others to understand the magnitude of God’s love.

“It is our desire that those who encounter The Chisomo Idea may experience the freedom of truly knowing their creator as He pulls them into the turbulence of His story,” he said. “Living lives of impact to know Him and make Him known is the primal essence of our movement.” ■

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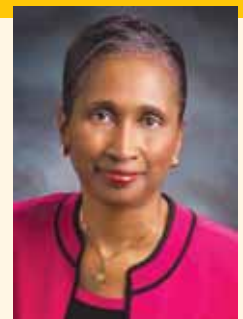
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# A hill worth dying on

The longer you're a parent, the more you realize there are fewer and fewer hills on which to die.

When I was in college, parents fought with their kids over hair length; now they fight with them over saggy pants and other issues that aren't eternal. Why?

Now that I'm a parent, I realize parents simply want what they believe is best for their children, and they are willing to fight to make their children "do the right thing." Not all of the hillside skirmishes will have a dramatic plotline, but they are still important and we need to be armed with the correct response.

## By discussing their opinions, you are helping them to learn how to think for themselves when you are not around.

One parent contacted me about an issue she was having with her 16-year-old daughter over her choice of a book. It serves as a good starting point for all parents who are dealing with issues as their children begin to exert some independence.

The mother, who said they instilled biblical values and limited her access to secular entertainment, praised her model teenager for never giving them any trouble. But the girl was clearly upset when her mom refused to let her read a vampire book, saying they were demonic in nature and not appropriate for Christians.

In my response to the woman, I suggested that she may have missed a wonderful teaching opportunity during the encounter, but there was still time to recover. First, it's important to evaluate the situation. So in this case, it is appropriate to ask if the daughter knows the hills on which her parents are willing to die.

What are the moral issues of life you are not willing to compromise? Children will push parents right to that limit, so they need to know their limits beforehand. When you find the hills on which you are willing to die, that means you are willing to negotiate on *every other* decision.

Let's evaluate the specific circumstances in this case:

The mom has a wonderful 16-year-old daughter.

The teen never gives her parents any trouble.

The parents allow a limited variety of entertainment choices.

The teen is upset with her mom because she won't let her read novels involving vampires.

Without knowing the woman, her daughter or the daughter's side of the story, I offered some questions to help her process her own response. These can be modified for any family situation.

1. Parents don't know if their child is obedient when they are placed on such a short entertainment leash. Nor do you know if they really want to be obedient. A hostile response such as this could be a minor eruption of a volcano of emotions that have been brewing under the surface for a while. It's definitely a sign of a deeper need.

2. Do you know how your children actually feel about most spiritual issues? Is their Christianity based on their faith or your faith?

3. It is true that books involving vampires may be inappropriate for a teenager but getting upset when they simply try to express their opinion is wrong.

4. If parents get upset when children express their opinion, the young people are likely to keep their opinions to themselves and count the days when they are

able to get out from under the parental thumb.

5. Discuss reasonable guidelines with your children. By discussing their opinions, you are helping them to learn how to think for themselves when you are not around.

6. Decide which hills are worth dying on and allow the others to be open for discussion. A discussion doesn't involve criticism or a lecture from the parent.

7. Discuss your concerns clearly with children. If they are still intent on reading the books, for instance, consider reading them first. That way you can discuss actual concerns and insights instead of making broad general criticisms. This can be a wonderful teaching opportunity.

8. Ask questions to discover how they develop their opinions. For example, you can ask why a vampire story is appealing.

9. In this case, learn more about the author of the books they wish to read. Use the Internet to help you research. The author may be sound in his or her worldview. For example, Frank Peretti, C. S. Lewis, and J. R. R. Tolkien all wrote books that included demons yet we can trust their strong biblical worldview.

10. Use your research as a springboard to compare the philosophies of books using vampires with the truth of Scripture.

It is important to remember we are not raising our children to simply be obedient. We are raising them to develop character that will last through tough times.



Al Menconi, is a counselor, author, speaker, husband and father. More parenting tips are available in his book, "RECONNECT: When your kids are connected

to everything but you." Learn more at [www.thechristianmusicchallenge.com](http://www.thechristianmusicchallenge.com).

# Go play outside: 7 keys to raising nature-loving kids



My parents likely didn't set out to raise a kid who wanted to be outdoors—it just came natural for them. My dad had a garden, and my mom “put up” everything that was harvested. I, of course, was expected to help, not only with the garden, but also with the beehives that my father placed on our property near the adjacent fields. We were outside a lot.

I'm now a father, and I'm trying to instill into my three children an even greater love for nature than I had at their age.

But these are challenging times. A British survey showed that children today spend 10 times more hours watching TV than they do playing outdoors. Another poll showed that only 40 percent of children would rather play outside than inside.

Video games and electronics are a big culprit. Another is decreased open space in urban areas. I've begun reading Richard Louv's 2005 book, “Last Child In The Woods,” which examines how we can save our children from what he calls “Nature Deficit Disorder.” His book has me wondering: What can we as parents do to keep our children from becoming indoor hermits?

Our oldest child loves being outdoors, and we think his two younger siblings will, too.

Here are seven ideas that worked for us, and just might work for you:

1. Understand that you don't have to go to Yosemite or Yellowstone—and you don't need a big yard. That small yard will work just fine. And if you don't have that, visit that city or state park down the road. Through the eyes of a child, that small yard and that tiny park are probably huge. Children don't need a lot of room. (OhRanger.

com is a good guide for state and federal parks. NatureRocks.org has great ideas on what families can do in their backyard.)

2. Be enthusiastic. If we are excited about the outdoors, our kids will follow our lead. It's really not that hard. That high school science teacher who was excited about astronomy or trees or clouds was right: Nature *is* cool, and the science behind everything *is* fascinating.

3. Turn off the television. Studies show that children who watch too much TV are more likely to be lazy, obese and have trouble focusing—and less likely to make good grades. Louv was right when he wrote: TV steals time, while nature “amplifies it.”

4. Don't buy a video game system. My son is only 5, and I'm holding out as long as possible before I even consider getting him one. Besides, he can get his own game system when he goes to college.

5. When indoors, focus on the outdoors. If your children watch TV, guide them toward programs about nature and animals. Our 5-year-old has learned to love animals by watching PBS' *Wild Kratts*. The BBC's nature

documentaries (such as *Planet Earth*) are spectacular. Also, buy books and games that have nature themes. When he's indoors, often he's thinking about what's outdoors.

6. Make it a habit to go outdoors each day with your kids. Even if it's only 5 to 10 minutes, it's a good practice. Play ball or tag. Ride bikes. Explore the yard. If your child has been more of an indoor kid, this ritual eventually might change their outlook.

7. Realize that there is a spiritual component involved. God created that majestic mountain, that beautiful lake, and that wonderful tree (right outside your door) for a reason. They are all to remind us that there is a Creator—a Creator who loves us. This idea alone has driven me. I like what Sally Lloyd Jones wrote in The

Jesus Storybook Bible: “God created everything in his world to reflect him like a mirror—to show us what he is like, to help us know him, to make our hearts sing.”



Michael Foust is the father of three small children, a writer and editor, and blogs about parenting at [www.michaelfoust.com](http://www.michaelfoust.com).

# Power up principle: The power of planning

The first thing I do at my office each morning is “power up” my computer. This tool has enormous capabilities that add instant benefits and make my life more productive. Unless I use it, however, it’s just a dormant piece of equipment taking up space in my life. As a financial planner, I can’t help but think of all the significant ways we can Power Up our financial lives! I look forward to sharing this series of Power Up financial principles that will do just that: add instant benefits and extra capabilities to things that would otherwise lie dormant in our lives.

The beginning of a new year is the

perfect time to focus on our foundation: planning and goal-setting. My husband and I spend time toward the end of each year reviewing the past year and evaluating areas that need our intentional focus in the year ahead. We want to ensure we are working together instead of just hoping things will work out. The added bonus of this time together is a healthier

## Life has a way of presenting interesting twists and turns.

marriage. We explore our perspectives, work through differences, evaluate the attainment of our goals, and make adjustments as needed for the year ahead. If you are single, this process is equally essential for you as you prepare for your long-term future as well.

Life has a way of presenting interesting twists and turns. So for the inevitable curve balls that come your way, try this exercise. Draw two circles and label one Control and one Concern. There are many things over which you have some control and plenty over which you have none! What you cannot control, place in the concern circle, do your best to address the issue, and then trust God for the outcome. What is within your control—therein lies the power of planning! Here are some considerations to get you started on making purpose-filled decisions that significantly impact your future.

**Debt:** How much is OK? How can we strategically reduce our debt?

**Savings:** What should we be saving for? How much, how often, and how strategically should we be saving?

**Family:** What areas should we better prepare for our family’s needs (education, medical, clothing, insurance coverage, etc.)? Do we need to physically or financially prepare for aging parents or

other dependent family members? What can we do now to minimize the impact this might have on our family later?

**Household:** What kind of home should we rent or buy? What’s the best mortgage for our needs? What additional short- and long-term maintenance and improvement needs should we consider?

**Retirement:** When do we plan to retire? What do we plan to retire to? How should we save and invest? Are we maximizing all the tools available to us?

**Lifestyle:** How much should we allocate for discretionary expenses like entertainment, vacation, special events, etc.?

**Giving:** How much would we like to give? To whom do we want to give? How can we maximize our giving?

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but is a great starting point to begin your goal setting. Draw your two circles, address each category, and formulate a plan for what is within your control. Focusing on a handful of well-thought-out strategic goals provides four key benefits: clarity to your thinking, meaningful direction for decisions, motivation to stick with the plan and the personal satisfaction of seeing your dreams become reality. Meaningful life planning is a Power Up tool that can get your new year off to the right start.



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](http://www.sfsinonline.com).

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## Date night: Think outside the price

Go to that high-priced marriage event this weekend—please do—and you’ll likely hear that you should “Go on a date night!” and that you should “Do it regularly!” You may also be told that if you don’t have a date night—your relationship is doomed.

As busy family counselors who work with marriages daily: We disagree.

You don’t have to go on a date.

It doesn’t have to be at night.

Got it? Did we keep it simple enough?

Here’s what really matters: Find a way to connect, just the two of you, and do it often enough to grow closer in your relationship.

If you’d like to do that, but you can’t afford dinner and a movie, here is a low-cost option that couples are using across North America and around the world. We call it the “\$4 Brunch” and we use it ourselves. So it’s counselor tested—and counselor approved.

Here’s how it works:

As often as possible we sneak away to Starbucks or Panera or Caribou—or that great little local place nearby—just for coffee and conversation (coffee optional). We purchase two cookies or two sliced-off muffin tops, then pay for one cup of regular coffee. We also ask for one cup of water: Not fizzy, not bottled, not French.

Our total outlay for two cookies, one coffee, and one water? About four bucks.

For those of you who like to live large, go ahead and order that specialty coffee with the foam and the froth and the flavors. But if you do—you’ve already spent your four bucks, and you don’t have any cookies yet. You do understand that, right?

We opt for plain coffee, plain water, two snacks, and one quiet table.

We sit in the corner and talk. We’re often amazed that everyone around us is busy updating their Facebook page, or



checking their e-mail, or arguing with a friend. Here’s a surprising truth: You can have an intimate conversation in a coffee shop, mostly because nobody else is paying attention!

One of our favorite getaway locations is a nearby Barnes & Noble bookstore. They set out pitchers of ice water, usually with fresh lemons, and plenty of plastic cups. We can have a really great \$4 Brunch at B&N and never actually spend the \$4.

Call us practical or thrifty if you’d like: We’re just cheap.

We sit there and chat, sometimes holding hands, just getting caught up with each other and how we’re feeling. This isn’t the time to solve all the world’s problems, or fix what’s wrong with the kids, or work on those hurt feelings from last weekend. This is just pure and simple couple connection time—slow down, sit back, sip a brew, and relax.

Wow, it’s good for us when we do this.

We find ourselves looking forward to it, thinking about it, dreaming of those little sliced-off muffin tops and that charming coffee shop around the corner. Before

you know it we’ve slipped away for our next \$4 Brunch—we’re lost in another world.

Come and find us there if you want, but we may not notice you.

We’re lost in just us. Sometimes, throwing caution to the wind, we even leave our phones in the car—on purpose. Wow, is that irresponsible. What if the world ends? What if lightning strikes the dog?

Some days we just don’t care: We crave each other.

We sit there and talk, and there aren’t any battery-operated interruptions. None.

Try this yourself, and feel free to improve on our basic concept. Drop us a note and tell us what’s working for you. Meanwhile never—not ever—let someone make you feel guilty because you’re not rich enough to go on a date night. Shake off that guilt and wake up to a much cheaper reality.

You don’t need \$40. Or \$20. Or even \$10.

You just need two people with one plan. Add in a small booth by the window and some lemony water—and you’re there. Talk and chat and dream and catch up.

Let the world go by, and just don’t notice it.

Be one as two.



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).

# Your journey to vibrant health

A wise and highly respected dean at my college also happened to be my student government adviser. We worked side-by-side with the other elected college students, ensuring that year would be the best year they would experience.

Many of us had financial hardships, others health issues, and some academic challenges. The dean, however, motivated every one of us to excel far beyond what we thought possible. His famous saying when we became discouraged was “have an attitude of gratitude.” He would teach us to look up, taking the focus off ourselves.

What a perfect way to begin a new year, by choosing your changes with a grateful heart. As a certified nutritionist

## Determination and motivation fuel sustainable change.

with a compounding pharmacy—which prepares prescriptions based on a patient's individualized needs—I've met with thousands of patients faced with every health opportunity imaginable. I've observed how attitudes, family support and the ability to be flexible have affected outcomes.

Specializing in weight management with my patients, January is my favorite time of year. People are eager to change and seek professional accountability and expertise. I thrive in guiding my patients in a more vibrant, joyful way of living life. Using visual props, illustrations and acronyms has always been popular with patients, allowing them to grasp the concept that they can recreate their own health!

Lasting change begins with REST. Shandel Slaten, a successful executive coach who is retained by top business owners to conduct “corporate interven-

tions,” created the R.E.S.T. process to support long-term, sustainable change.

Shandel has permitted me to adapt her corporate application of R.E.S.T. to a personal wellness and healthy habit model, which has the ability to yield lasting wellness results. Before we start, though, unplug, turn-off, and move away from all screens and focus. This is your time to take a media fast! If it's clarity you desire, you'll need to quiet your soul to optimize the benefits of this process.

**Reflect:** Right now, as you're reading this column, how do you feel physically? Do you remember a time when you had more energy, your joints weren't bothering you, and you had more flexibility and balance? Are you experiencing frustration because of your changing health? All of these “truths” are called your factual reality.

**Evaluate:** Pen in hand, now begin to write three to five core values that are non-negotiable, priorities in your life. Examples: being present for your family, spending quantity and quality time with your spouse or loved-ones, staying out of debt, work satisfaction, transitioning into new life opportunities. Then ask yourself, based on where your health situation is, “Am I able to honor my core values?” Do your daily health habits create conflict or support wellness? You cannot honor your core values if you are not living in optimal health.

**Strategize the future:** Here's the great news. In taking the first step to honestly evaluate your goals for 2014 you will be able to determine a strategy for change, either in slow incremental steps or in leaps. Naturally, your personal family physician knows you best, so in

making any dietary or exercise adjustments, seek their guidance first. Enlist an accountability partner, a counselor, a nutritionist or a support group. If you really want something, you will find a way; if you don't you will surely find an excuse.

**Think long term:** Ask yourself, “What do I really want for long-term outcomes in my personal health journey?” “What must I do on a daily, weekly, monthly basis to achieve and support my core values?” Determination and motivation fuel sustainable change. It's also important to remember that most people fail in permanent behavior changes when they act as Lone Rangers.

There you have it, REST but never retreat!

Finally, be focused yet be flexible. Change rarely happens without a few setbacks. When my patients confess their unhealthy behaviors, I remind them we always have another opportunity to return to what we really want for the long term. It starts today, one thought, one behavior, one victory at a time.

Over the coming months, I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experience with you and if there's a topic you are interested in, please email me at [kim@ucprx.com](mailto:kim@ucprx.com) and I may address it in a future column.



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 several local news channels.

# San Diego Christian College moves to new Santee campus

San Diego Christian College, which has been renovating five buildings it purchased in Santee's Town Center, will hold its Open House Celebration on Jan. 20.

The event will include viewings of the campus buildings, live entertainment by its students, food and games.

"SDC is excited about the opportunities that are available for us to connect to and serve our community by utilizing the passions and expertise of our staff, faculty, and students," said Dr. Paul Ague, president of the college, which was launched and housed by Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon since 1970.

When the campus opens it will do so with classrooms, offices, a chapel, dining hall and a library, as well as its Heritage Hall to honor alumni and donors. Future plans include the completion of residential apartments and athletic facilities to house soccer, baseball, and softball fields.

College officials announced in late 2011 their plans to purchase five of the six buildings in Santee's RiverView development, immediately north of the Santee Trolley Square Town Center. RiverView is a master-planned, mixed-use development designed to accommodate technology, research and development, along with professional offices housing and recreational facilities, though most of the development remained vacant after construction.

At that time, college officials estimated that the total cost for the 55,000 square feet of space, including furnishings, fixtures, technology infrastructure and transition expenses to be between \$10 million and \$12 million. Updated figures were not provided.

A cornerstone of the project is creating space that can be used for community partnerships.

"Once our athletic facilities are built, we plan to partner with the community to maximize the impact our athletic facilities can have to athletes of all ages," said Robert Jensen, vice president for advancement and administration.

Students and faculty did not wait until the move to become involved with their new hometown. During the school's annual new student orientation last fall, students partnered with Pathways Community Church to work on three beautification projects at three elementary campuses in the Santee School District.

Work has also begun in developing relationships with local businesses.

"This move means that the mission of our college is still going and we are seeking to expand our ability to impact the world for Christ for a long time to come," said alum Dan Lamm.

Faculty and staff said they welcomed the move as a way to expand the college's

vision.

"For the first time, we get to really grow in so many ways," said Robyann Oakes, the student life office manager. "It's very exciting. It's an opportunity to establish our identity."

The college's exodus from Shadow Mountain will allow the demolition of several old structures used by the college. In their place will be a 112,000-square-foot Generations building, which will be used as a combined space for worship, classrooms and nursery.





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# Security system: A hope that endures

Suppose you made a million dollars per year. Would that set you up for life? Would it give you financial security for the future? Well, apparently not if you're a professional athlete. According to a report in *Investment News*, 78 percent of NFL players are bankrupt or under financial stress within two years of retirement. Sports Illustrated similarly reports that 60 percent of NBA players are in serious financial trouble within five years of retirement.

Knowing what some professional athletes make, we're astounded to learn that many of them will end up strug-

gling to pay their bills within a few years of their last game. How can that be?

The two biggest culprits, according to the reports, are divorces and joblessness. Many former athletes also cite the social pressures of trying to sustain a luxurious lifestyle. Others fall prey to friends and family members wanting them to invest in unwise ventures.

It's not enough to have a job that simply takes care of today's needs. Somehow we need to manage wisely for the future.

Many of today's companies offer retirement, investment and insurance benefits that help ease our minds regarding the future. One insurance company even uses two upturned palms to assure us that we're in good hands when we're in their care. Yet we know by hard reality there's not much security in our world or its economy. We don't know what a day will bring forth. Riches can disappear in a moment. Jobs vanish. Savings and investments can turn sour. Stocks decline. Economies crash. As Proverbs 27:24 says, "Riches *are* not forever, nor does a crown *endure* to all generations."

As Christians, we don't depend on the world for ultimate security. For us, the eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. We have a hope that endures; for when Jesus comes into our lives, He comes with abiding security. He not only died to forgive our sins; He rose from the dead to give us eternal life. His resurrection supplies the power, provision and pat-

tern for our own resurrections. Because He lives, we will live also.

John's Gospel drives this home. At the end of his Gospel, John stated his purpose in writing it—that we might believe in Christ and have eternal life (John 20:31). He similarly ended his little letter of 1 John by telling us he had written it that we might *know* we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Through-

**...we know by hard reality there's not much security in our world or its economy. We don't know what a day will bring forth.**

out his writing, John used the phrases "eternal life" and "everlasting life" 23 times. For example, Jesus told us in John 10:26-29: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand."

The future just doesn't get any more secure than that!



Dr. David Jeremiah, senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, is the founder of Turning Point, a ministry committed to providing Christians with

sound Bible teaching relevant to today's changing times through radio and television, the Internet, live events, and resource materials and books. Learn more at [www.davidjeremiah.org](http://www.davidjeremiah.org).



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JOANNE BROKAW

## The trouble with technology

I recently got a glimpse of the “House of Tomorrow” on a TV show about home design and technology. While Judy Jetson’s kitchen may seem like the stuff of science fiction, according to people who know about these things, it’ll be here before you know it. Introducing the home that virtually runs itself.

Walk in the front door, and the house greets you by name and initiates a welcome program, complete with preset lighting and temperature controls. In the kitchen, built-in computer technology allows you to input a list of ingredients; the kitchen will supply a recipe, displayed right on your kitchen counter. Forget those sticky recipe cards. When you’re done, just turn the counter off.

The microwave comes with a barcode reader; scan the popcorn bag and your kernels are popped per Orville’s instructions. Everything operates either automatically or on voice command, and it’s all designed to make your life easier.

There’s even a refrigerator that will call you when someone has left the fridge door open.

If the fridge is so high tech, why doesn’t it just close the door itself?

It’s bad enough that parents can’t get a night out without the kids calling a hundred times to complain that someone is watching MTV without permission, or that someone is breathing someone else’s air and had better stop before someone gets it. Now the refrigerator calls with problems, too?

Let’s say I’m out to dinner. I’m relaxing, enjoying time with my husband and friends, when all of the sudden my cell phone rings.

“Good evening, this is your refrigerator. I’m calling to inform you that my

door is open.”

I’m not sure that’s very convenient. At the risk of stating the obvious, I can’t close the door until I get home. Now, I’m going to be worrying throughout dinner if my overpriced half-gallon of all natural, organic ice cream is melting into a pool on the kitchen floor or if the cat has crawled into the fridge for a feline buffet of leftover chicken.

I’d rather be ignorant and deal with the problem when I get home. By then, if I’m lucky, the dog will have licked up the ice cream and it won’t

**“Good evening, this is your refrigerator. I’m calling to inform you that my door is open.”**

matter that the cat ate the leftovers. Dinner will already be thawed for tomorrow.

I’m not sure how to define this new personal relationship with my machines. Apparently my car can now send me an email when its oil is low or the battery is about to die. If we’re going to be so chummy, why only email me when there’s a problem? Why not drop me a line now and then, just to say hello?

Technology is supposed to make our lives easier, but there are times when it’s faster to do things the old-fashioned way. Anyone who has used an automatic paper towel dispenser in a public restroom knows what I’m talking about. You can wave your wet hands repeatedly in front of the little red light until it spits out a piece of towel too small to dry a gerbil, but by the time you’ve accumulated enough toweling, your hands are already dry from all of the waving—although your sleeves are soaked from the dripping water.



Remember the good old days, when it took less time to crank out paper towels than it takes to jump around in front of the automatic sink trying to get the water to turn on? Don’t get me wrong. I’m especially grateful for technology like email, text messaging and cell phones that enable me to keep in touch with friends and family around the globe. But if I have to chat up my machines as well, maybe someone could program my refrigerator to call my car when we’re out of milk so the car can print out a shopping list when I get to the grocery store. That way, I won’t have to stand in the produce aisle trying to remember why I’m there.

That, my friend, would be technology designed to make my life easier.



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](http://www.joannebrokaw.com).

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