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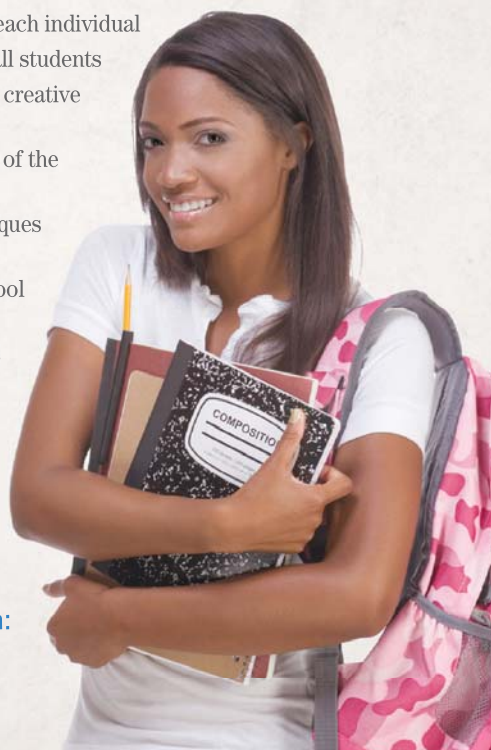
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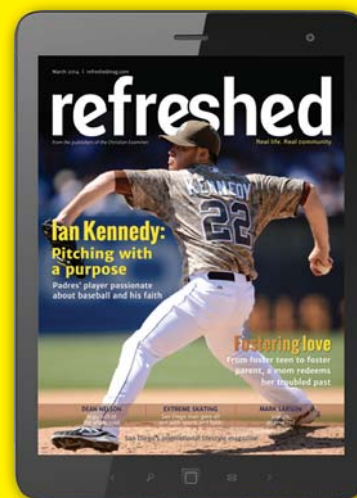
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Publishers' note

We didn't intend this to turn out to be a sports issue. It just happened that way. With spring training underway, our minds turn to baseball with high hopes for a better season. Pitcher Ian Kennedy joined the Padres mid-season last year, and it's always great getting to know our local players whose faith is as important to them as their play on the field.

Then we learned about El Cajon resident Josh Gabardi heading to the Red Bull Ice Cross Downhill World Championship in St. Paul, Minn. He, too, uses a sport as a platform to share his faith.

For a truly inspiring story, read about Angela Posten in "Fostering Love." Taken away from her abusive father as a young girl and placed in foster care, she found herself in Juvenile Hall by the age of 14. But Angela would not let her circumstances dictate her life and, now, years later she... well, you'll just have to read the story to learn how things turned out.

Your stories wanted

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

Lamar & Theresa Keener
Publishers

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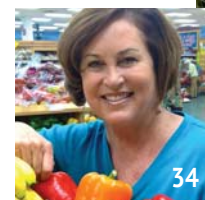
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DEAN NELSON

In pursuit of the whole road

There is a village in the Ivory Coast of Africa that has a custom I'd never heard of until we were walking toward it. I was there with a group of students from Point Loma Nazarene University, where I teach, and we wanted to get from one side of an island to another. But to get to that other side, we needed permission, according to our guide.

The custom works like this: If you pass through one village on the way to another, which is what we needed to do, we had to ask the leaders of the first village for their approval. That would be like, if I wanted to go from my home

That would be like Oceanside telling me that yes, I can pass through once, but Interstate 5 was closed for the return trip. Maybe take Interstate 15 instead, which would be a real hassle. Very time consuming and inconvenient.

"Is there another way back?" I asked.

"We'd have to go through the forest in the dark," the guide said. "That's not the option we want."

No kidding. Flashlights vs. forest. I think the forest wins.

So when we got to the first village, everyone was on their best behavior. We met with the village leaders, told them

God the way our group approached the first village. Be on your best behavior, don't say anything silly, act like you really care, make your request in just the right way with proper respect and humility, then, MAYBE we'll get what we want, whether it's forgiveness, healing or a new pony. Remember, you have to impress God if you want him to do anything for you.

The story of the Prodigal explodes that idea.

Henri Nouwen says that the parable we call The Prodigal Son could just as easily be called the parable of the Forgiving Father. In the story, the son disrespects and insults the father, and leaves on his own road. His ego has convinced him that he has a better idea for how he could be living.

When he comes to his senses he has to think, "Do I have half the road or the whole road?" Is the way *away* from the father a one-way street? Something in the son made him think that maybe, just maybe, his father had granted him the whole road. Either way, he felt like he needed to find out.

And while the son was still a long ways off, Scripture says, the father saw him and ran to him. The father met the son while the son was still on the road.

There is always a way back. That whole road is there.

Guess who built that road in the first place?



would need to get permission from the leaders of Oceanside to do it. It's a bit of a formality, our guide told us, but one we should not ignore.

"What if they say no?" I asked.

"The village leaders will say one of two things," the guide told us. "They will grant you either the whole road or just half the road."

That means they will let us pass through their village, he said. If they think we are honorable and safe, they will grant us "the whole road," which means they give us permission to return through that same village. If they don't trust us, don't like us, or for some reason they just don't want to see us again, they will grant us "half the road." That means we can pass through their village, but we must find a different way back.

were—we were going to participate in a worship service on the other side of the island. They brought out chairs, built a bench so we could all fit, set us in a circle with them, sent one of the kids for bottles of soda for everyone, asked where we were from, how many brothers and sisters we had. We didn't speak each others' languages, so all of this needed translation.

This custom is called asking for "the news." Then we asked the same about them. It was formal, but friendly, punctuated with lots of laughter. Then we shook hands and continued on our journey.

They gave us the whole road. Whew. The idea of this "whole road/half the road" concept has stayed with me.

Because of course we often approach



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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JON HUCKINS

St. Patrick: More than green beer and four-leaf clovers

There have been few historical Christian communities that have had a more significant role in shaping the postures of life and mission of NieuCommunities, an alternative Golden Hill church, than that of St. Patrick and the Celtic Christians. Living as a “sent” people who were committed to rhythms of common life, this band of early Christians embodied missional-monastic community in a context that was anything but conventional.

While Saint Patrick of Ireland is one of the most commonly known spiritual fathers of the past 2,000 years, he is also one of the most misunderstood. Often associated with green beer, shamrocks and the driving out of snakes, St. Patrick’s life and legacy have been greatly diminished by folklore. Because his legend is so widely spread, there is rich potential for the values of the historical St. Patrick to reach the masses if his story is retold well.

Having been raised in Roman nobility and enslaved by Irish barbarians, his role as spiritual father of a hostile population was uniquely shaped by earlier parts of his life. Further, St. Patrick’s ability to create a Christian movement of engagement within a pagan Celtic spirituality offers a rich tradition that, if emulated, has the potential to ignite the hearts and imaginations of Christians around the globe.

After being kidnapped from his home in Briton (Northern England) as a child, Patrick spent six years in slavery tending livestock on the hills of Ireland. During that time he had an encounter with God that would forever change the trajectory of his life and mission.

While in the fields, he had a vision of his escape back to Britain. After walking 200 miles through the wilderness, he boarded a ship for Britain. Because Roman roads often didn’t extend to some of the coastal towns in Britain, he and his fellow crewmates wandered the large

island for 28 days.

In Philip Freeman’s biography, “St. Patrick of Ireland,” he writes that Patrick, nearly starving to death, prayed for God’s provision and told his captain, “Today he’s going to send food right into your path—plenty to fill your bellies—because his abundance is everywhere.”

God did provide and Patrick made it home.

Living relationship

The man that returned to his boyhood home was no longer the boy that had been kidnapped six years earlier. Patrick now had a living relationship with the God who wanted not only the hearts of the Romans, but also of the Irish barbarians by whom Patrick had been enslaved. Despite being a town hero and with his parents begging him never to leave again, Patrick had another vision where, according to



Saint Patrick stained glass window from Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, Calif.

Freeman’s biography, he heard a chorus of voices saying, “Come here and walk among us.” Although in much different circumstances than the first, Patrick decided to go back to Ireland.

Despite being a town hero and his parents begging him never to leave again, Patrick had another vision where, according to Freeman’s biography, he heard a chorus of voices saying, “Come here and walk among us.” Although in much different circumstances than the first, Patrick decided to go back to Ireland.

It was upon St. Patrick’s arrival that the viral movement of Celtic Christian communities took shape and extended throughout the “barbarian” lands. History tells us that Patrick engaged and traveled “to the most remote parts of the island—places at the very edge of the world, places no one had ever been before,” Freeman writes.

St. Patrick didn’t go to Ireland to minister by himself, as the saint knew that the spiritual life and missionary call was not to be lived alone. In fact, the message he was working to share wouldn’t have made practical sense outside of a life lived in community. The Celtic Christianity that was birthed out of Patrick didn’t simply seek the transactional, individual conversion, but it invited others into a life of discipleship and practice. Monastic life, set in the context of vocational mission, offered a fertile foundation for a movement that was symbolized by journey rather than a static arrival of faith.

Living in community

Because the spiritual journey is not to be trod alone, communal monasticism grew out of the tradition of Patrick. In a society that was spread thin across the island, monasticism created the first population hubs in Ireland, author

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS BY SIMON CARRASCO CARRASCO

Thomas Cahill, writes in “How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland’s Heroic Role From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe.” The monastic life in Ireland wasn’t as strict as many other orders in Europe as it promoted movement towards engaging the Celtic culture and the reading of all literature; whether Christian or pagan, Cahill wrote.

It was in these population hubs that the Celtic Christians offer us a brilliant model of invitation. Unlike Roman monasteries that were typically built in quiet, remote locations, the Celtic communities were planted right alongside the tribal settlements where the Irish pagans lived and worked. The prevailing opinion in the Roman church was that barbarians were not even capable of becoming Christians.

Why?

They were considered illiterate, emo-

tional, out of control. But Patrick invited these Irish barbarians into the community to taste and participate in a different way of doing life. He knew that most people need to belong before they believe. They need to be listened to and understood, because when people sense that someone really understands them, they begin to believe that maybe God can understand them, too.

Living faith

These “barbarians” found a home through the invitation of Patrick and this new movement of Jesus followers. And it was only in the context of this invitation that they were able to step toward the invitation of God into a

As a child, Patrick had an encounter with God that would forever change the trajectory of his life and mission.

Story that continues to be told through his Community today.

As missional-monastic pioneers we would do well to reflect on the life and mission of St. Patrick and consider integrating that into our unique contexts.



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

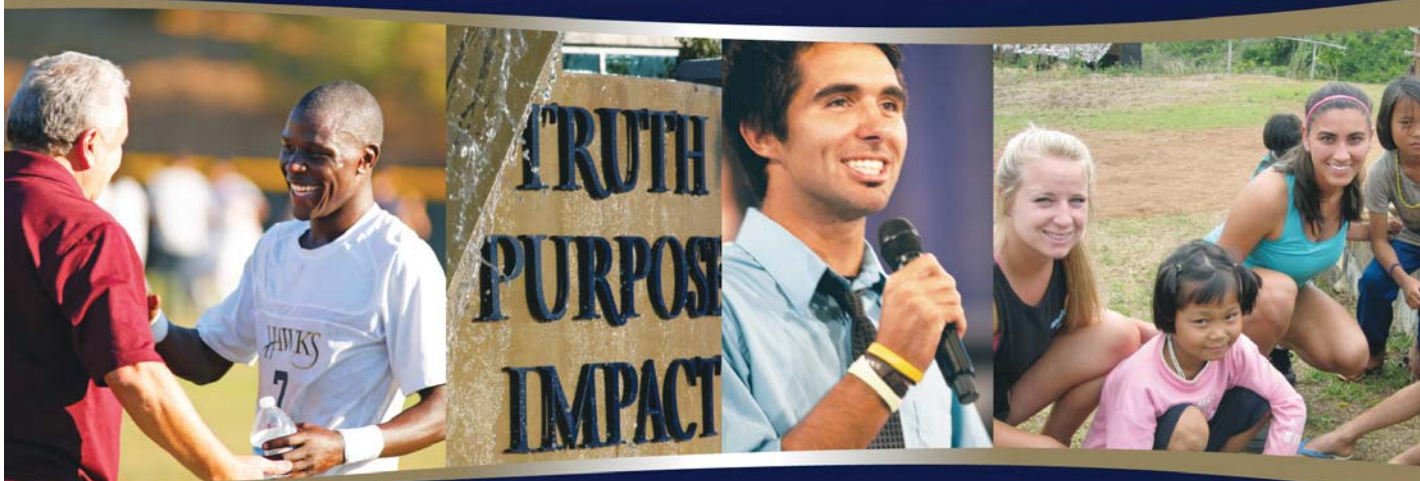
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Ian Kennedy: Pitching with a Purpose

Padres' player
passionate
about baseball
and his faith

by LORI ARNOLD

It wasn't quite the bottom of the ninth with bases loaded, but for Ian Kennedy, it was close. The 22-year-old Southern California native stood on the mound at Yankee Stadium in September 2007 in the midst of yet another pennant race. It was the right-hander's major league debut and his new teammates, Yankee superstars Robinson Cano, Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez, had his back in the infield.

Between each warm-up pitch catcher Jose Molina tossed the ball to first base where Cano followed the customary "around-the-horn" tradition until third baseman Rodriguez tossed it back to the

rookie starter.

"I was watching that happen," Kennedy said. "I was like, 'I just got the ball from A-Rod, who got the ball from Jeter, who got the ball from Cano. I'm (deep breath) 'OK.' There were little moments like that. The first inning I didn't feel my body. You don't feel your arm. You don't feel your leg."

It was there—in the house that Ruth built, the home field of the most storied franchise in Major League Baseball, the park that hosted the most playoff games in history, where fans and the media will claim you as king one day and relegate you to rat status the next—that Kennedy



BASEBALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SAN DIEGO PADRES

San Diego Padres right-hander Ian Kennedy relies on much more than athletic prowess on the field and off. Faith has played an integral role in his life since he committed his life to Jesus Christ while in the minor leagues.

But baseball, like the April weather ushering in each season, is fickle and though the following season found Kennedy on the Opening Day roster, he was soon back in the minors after several bad starts.

It is enough to crush any spirit.

"This is why I love baseball, because I feel if I had a normal desk job or a normal job I wouldn't have these constant tests of my faith, the constant tests of my flesh," said Kennedy, who is now in the starting rotation for the San Diego Padres. "I just feel like God is trying to chisel some of the things the world brings upon us. Baseball has a lot of it, a lot of ups and downs."

...

Growing up in Garden Grove, Kennedy said he was always drawn to baseball. Though he enjoyed other sports and tried them at different seasons, he always returned to the stick and the sphere.

"It was something that was a part of me, just like any other kids who wanted to play baseball," he said.

Sports took priority over church, even though Kennedy's mother was raised Catholic. But in high school, after the family moved to Huntington Beach, Kennedy took an interest in reading the Bible.

"I didn't know what I was praying, who I was praying to or what I was praying about," the athlete said.

Kennedy sought out his mother for guidance. Petrified that she had fallen short on her responsibility for his spiritual heritage, she immediately sought out a church and they began attending together.

"She'll describe it as she failed as a mom not to raise her kids to know about Jesus," Kennedy said.

Throughout high school Kennedy attended Bible studies and other spiritual

endeavors as the calendar allowed. Increasingly, he was fielding queries from colleges and major league scouts.

"All I paid attention to was trying to go to college, trying to go to college, and then you find out from professional teams that you could be a major league pitcher one day," he said. "It was like, 'Really? You think that? I just wanted to go to college.'"

He got his wish, enrolling at the University of Southern California where Kennedy's cache strengthened as he garnered impressive strikeout stats and was twice named to the U.S. National Team. He was also named Pitcher of the Year for what was then the Pac-10 conference before being drafted by the Yankees in 2006 and heading to the minors.

His prospects were not just improving on the field, either. Just weeks before the start of spring training in 2007, Kennedy became engaged to Allison Jaskowiak, a basketball player for USC. The couple wed later that fall.

"For me, getting engaged, that's really when I wanted to follow Jesus and put Him in my heart," Kennedy said. "It became my life and lifestyle. I didn't really change much of my lifestyle in high school."

...

While his lifestyle didn't change much in high school, it certainly did in the Bigs. Newly married and fired up with this faith, leading Bible studies and going on off-season mission trips, Kennedy was surprised to find himself struggling in 2008. Until that season, his baseball success had come with minimal effort.

"There were times when I was thinking, 'God, why are you doing this to me? I felt like I should be closer to you now than ever and why are you doing this, testing His plan for us?'"

relished the childhood dream of millions of young boys.

"I think it would have been different if it wasn't at Yankee Stadium," he said.

Kennedy, just 15 months after being drafted to wear the legendary pinstripes, responded by throwing just six pitches to end the first inning. By the third inning, the hurler said, it was just another game. Kennedy went on to win the game, pitching seven innings and allowing just one earned run.

"It's everything you think as a kid you feel it should be in the major leagues," Kennedy said. "It's a pretty amazing feeling. It's indescribable."

He called home, where Allison helped him to process.

"I actually cried," he said. "We prayed and I asked for release. 'God, I don't want baseball to be everything in my life. I want you take this from me.'"

It was a transformational moment that helped Kennedy the following year when faced with yet another professional disappointment: an aneurysm in his pitching arm.

"That year, now looking back on it, I was holding baseball so tight that I didn't want to let it go," Kennedy said. "I made it to the big leagues. This is what I wanted as a kid. This is what I had a passion for. This is what I felt like: God, he made me to play baseball."

After that night, his outlook on baseball was never the same.

"From then on I viewed it as a tool to share my faith," he said. "In 2008 I was

in the minor leagues but I was still having fun."

So when he was diagnosed with the aneurysm, Kennedy approached it as a blip even though it resulted in surgery and several months of recovery.

"There are so many things we can't explain in our life," he said, adding that Allison was instrumental in helping him with the physical and emotional recovery.

"People who don't love Jesus and who don't understand God, they don't understand the feeling that when you do pray and it's an intense prayer or something like that, you just feel as though this giant weight has been lifted off of your shoulders."

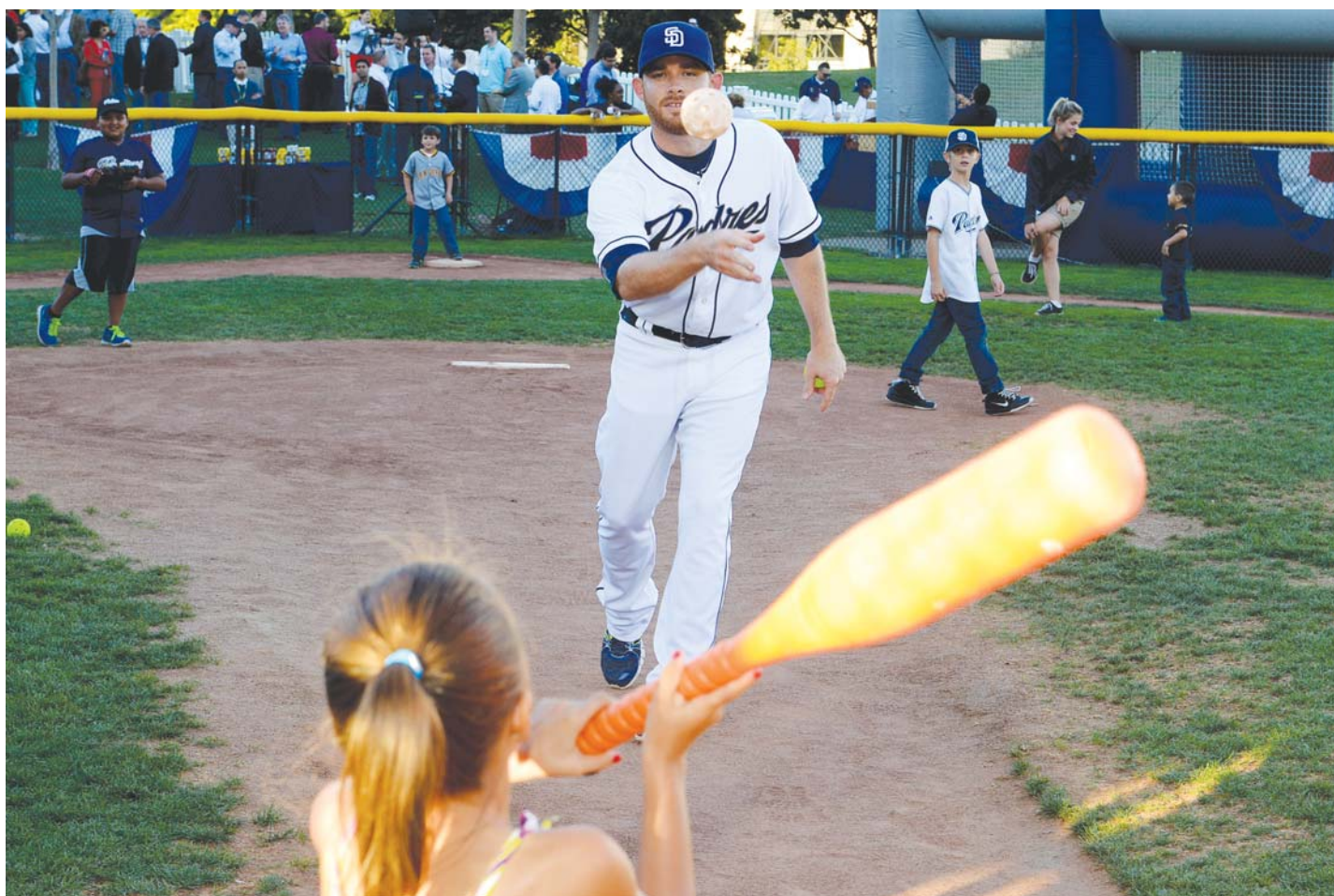
After an off-season trade to the Arizona Diamondbacks in late 2009, and bolstered by his realigned priorities, Kennedy was able to establish himself

as a major league pitcher and in 2011 regained the form that made his Yankee debut so memorable.

Named as Opening Day pitcher that year, Kennedy and his teammates lifted the team from its last-place finish the previous year into the playoffs. Though the team lost the divisional series, Kennedy, the Game One starter, placed fourth in the coveted Cy Young Award balloting as a result of winning 21 games during the season.

"It's incredible the people we get to meet, the platform that we have. I don't know how guys do it that don't love Jesus," said Kennedy, who lives in Scottsdale where Allison cares for their three daughters, Nora, 2, Renee, 1, and newborn, Lydia. "If I didn't have God to have that interaction with or God to lay a lot of my problems on Him ..."

Last July he was traded to the Padres



Padres pitcher Ian Kennedy dishes up a Wiffle ball to a young fan during last year's Fan Appreciation festivities.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KACI LUVI MAKEUP AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Ian and Allison Kennedy and big sisters Nora and Renee celebrate the arrival of baby Lydia.

where he started 10 games and logged a 4-2 record. Now, on the eve of spring training in Peoria, just miles from his desert home, Kennedy is eager to start his first full season with the Friars.

"I'm really excited," he said. "It's nice to get a couple of months with a team before you start for a season. At least I know people before spring training starts. I feel like we've got a good team if everybody can stay healthy. That's the main thing. I've always felt the Padres have a good team, but guys get hurt all the time."

...

The move to San Diego also helps to put some distance between him and a throwing incident last June that landed Kennedy a 10-game suspension after hitting Dodgers Pitcher Zack Greinke in the shoulder with a retaliatory pitch. The move prompted a bench-clearing brawl. Kennedy said the pitch—part of the traditional gamemanship players use to pay back opponents for actions against a teammate—was not aimed at his head, a major taboo.

"I would never do that," Kennedy said. The incident drew deep criticism from Dodgers players who said the punishment was not enough. After seeking advice from his mentor, Diamondback Chaplain Brian Hommel, Kennedy took to heart his close friend's words.

"He said, 'You need to understand

who you are playing for,'" said Kennedy, who offered up an apology to in an ef-

fort "to clear the air for me and my testimony."

The entire episode drove home to Kennedy, though, the importance of how you carry yourself.

"We play a sport and people are watching us," he said. "People are looking at us and examining what we do as people. The same thing happens as a Christians. People do the same thing when they know you are a Christian. They want to watch us more and pick us apart. The same thing with athletes—especially if you are a Christian athlete.

"You constantly have got to show and represent God and how he has worked in your life. There has to be some proof. It can't just be talk." ■

Ian Kennedy's MLB career timeline

- Jun 2003:** Drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals in the 14th round, 425th overall, but didn't sign.
- Jun 2006:** Drafted by the New York Yankees in the first round, 21st overall.
- Sep 2007:** Pitched first major league game starting in a match-up with the Tampa Bay Rays. Pitches seven innings, only allowing one earned run.
- Apr 2008:** Named to the opening roster
- May 2008:** Demoted to minor league team and bounced up and down for most of the season.
- May 2009:** Underwent surgery for arm aneurysm.
- Sep 2009:** Called back up to the Yankees, but is not included on the post-season roster.
- Oct 2009:** Marries Allison Jaskowiak, a USC women's basketball player.
- Dec 2009:** Traded to the Arizona Diamondbacks.
- Apr 2011:** Named Opening Day starter for Arizona Diamondbacks. He went on to win 21 games that season and came in fourth in Cy Young Award voting.
- May 2011:** Daughter Nora born.
- Oct 2011:** Starts Game One of the National League Divisional Series for the Arizona Diamondbacks. The Milwaukee Brewers win the game 4-1 and go on to win the series in five straight.
- Jun 2012:** Daughter Renee born.
- Jul 2013:** Traded to San Diego Padres.
- Jan 2014:** Signs a one-year \$6.1 million contract with the Padres for 2014 season.
- Feb 2014:** Daughter Lydia born.
- Feb 2014:** Reports for his first spring training as a San Diego Padre.



Ian Kennedy's 2008 Upper Deck rookie card

Elevated Outlook

Hiker puts failed climb behind him to tackle Mount Kilimanjaro for charity

by LORI ARNOLD

Ryan Shankles and his American hiking partner Jarrot Stanford stood at 18,000 feet. They had already made tremendous progress but were still 1,300 feet shy of the pinnacle of Mount Kilimanjaro, the world's tallest free-standing mountain.

"We were coming to a mental wall," Shankles said.

One of three San Diego hikers who got lost last May during a training hike to San Bernardino's Mount San Gorgonio, Shankles was no stranger to trail-



Mount Kilimanjaro towers 19,341 feet over the country of Tanzania in east Africa. Here a hiker celebrates reaching a pinnacle of the mountain, a favorite for hikers.

side drama.

At 11,503 feet, San Gorgonio—the highest peak in Southern California—is much less treacherous than Africa's Kilimanjaro.

But when a snowed-over path blocked their ascent on San Gorgonio, Shankles and friends, David Yoder and Miguel de la Torre, left the trail, only to lose their way and become stranded for four days. While huddled together inside a makeshift cave they created from tree branches, members of their Grace Chapel of the Coast in Oceanside huddled together in prayer at the church, while rescue teams huddled over maps in an effort to track the missing hikers, underdressed in shorts and T-shirts.

The prayers—coupled with the ingenuity of using a small scrap of a red mylar balloon to spark a fire from a fleeting sun—resulted in their high-profile rescue that made national news. The ordeal served to strengthen their friendship, their faith and provide valuable publicity for Shankles' ministry, Aiding Children's Villages, the beneficiary of their fund-raising climbs.

The May 2013 expedition underscored the ministry's mission statement: "Conquering the physical and spiritual mountains for those without fathers and mothers."

"When you go through a life-and-death ordeal, nothing can break that bond," Shankles said. "We experienced true miracles and, if it means to some that I am in the wrong place, then please, let me be in the wrong place some more."

The incident on Mount San Gorgonio failed to sway Shankles from his plan to take on Kilimanjaro, though logistical challenges prevented Yoder and de la



Ryan Shankles shows Antonio how to start a fire using the hand and bow methods at the Treasures of Africa orphanage. Shankles' ministry, Aiding Children's Villages, supports African work through various hiking expeditions.



Hikers Ryan Shankles, left, and Jarrot Stanford put up their ministry banner with the help of their young friend Samuel. Shankles and Stanford hiked Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for an orphanage operated by Treasures of Africa.

Torre from doing the same.

"They continue to be a part of what the heart of the organization is striving for," he said of his buddies.

Swahili song

For the January Kilimanjaro climb, Shankles' ministry partnered with Treasures of Africa, which is building an orphanage for 120 children, many of them with AIDS, in Moshi, Tanzania.

Helping Shankles and Stanford on the ambitious climb were three Tanzanians, including their guide, Edward "Teacher" Lazaro, who Shankles said inspired them to push through their mental struggles at 18,000 feet. Lazaro, a believer, was making his 602nd climb on Kilimanjaro.

"Teacher started to worship God in Swahili," Shankles said. "The song seemed familiar, but we could not make out all the words. All I remember is it was 4 a.m., it was dark, and I was tired."

As Teacher—defying the breath-taking and breath-stealing altitude—got to the chorus of "My God Jehovah," he asked God to bless each of the climbers.

"He started to name all kinds of people and I heard a group leader below start singing as well and it got louder and my spirit just inflated well beyond the starting point," the Oceanside resident said. "Both Jarrot and I were in tears of the beauty from God's servants."

Shankles said the impromptu worship session motivated them on to Stella Point, about an hour from the summit.

"From that time on, I was walking on clouds," he said. "We made it to the top."

Having about 45 minutes on the peak

to themselves, Shankles and Stanford took communion at 19,341 feet and then left their calling card, a three-foot metal stake with the inscription "Jesus is Lord."

"We prayed over the land and asked God for revival for Moshi and for the Treasures of Africa orphanage to be blessed," Shankles said.

Return trip

Although Shankles conquered the climb, his date with the mountain is not over as he plans to host subsequent climbs to Mount Kilimanjaro every December for the next seven years. Through a sponsorship arrangement with Zara Tours, four teenage orphans from Kilimanjaro Orphanage Centre will also do the climb each year. To help train, he will be joining a group in Israel that plans to hike from Mount Hebron to Jerusalem in September.

"Walking the same steps as Jesus is all of our dreams and we will actually get to do it," he said.

After the climb, Shankles and Stanford spent four days at the orphanage handing out donated backpacks, soccer balls, nets and other sporting equipment. They attended a ceremonial picnic celebration that drew 100 adults and kids, and later participated in an evangelism conference.

"The common thread through all of this was we know we are being directed by God," he said. "When God directs your path, you are in His favor and this is a great place to be." ■

Learn more at www.aidingcv.org.

Skating it to the Extreme



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RED BULL CRASHED ICE

San Diego man goes all out with sports and faith

by LORI ARNOLD

Josh Gabardi digs life on the edge and has a few notched bones—broken wrist, repeated breaks to his collarbone and shoulder blades, separations to both shoulders and a to-the-bone gash of his leg—as his testimony.

In late February he took his passion for extreme sports to a new extreme with an insane new sport called ice cross downhill.

Think of it as a widened Olympic-style luge track with a stunning downward slope. Add a few jumps, steps and mind-bending hairpin turns. Oh, and instead of using the protective cover of a bobsled or the stability of skis for the gravity-defying stunt, athletes simply put on ice skates and race, four at a time, to the bottom with speeds exceeding 40 mph.

“I’ve always been crazy,” said Gabardi, a 24-year-old El Cajon resident. “It’s always been in my heart and that’s a part of God, too, you know, because God puts it in your heart. I’ve just have always had it in my heart to do something in my life with extreme sports.”

After qualifying, Gabardi joined 99



120,000 fans, braving snow and frigid temperatures, lined the 430-meter Crashed Ice course in St. Paul, Minn., on Feb. 20 to 22 to witness the second leg of the four-city 2014 Ice Cross Downhill World Championship. The track included a 40-meter drop right out of the starting gate.

other downhill dynamos to compete in the Feb. 20-22 Ice Cross Downhill World Championship 2014 in St. Paul, Minn., one of a series of four races under the banner of Red Bull Crashed Iced. Much like NASCAR's Sprint Cup, the winners are determined through a point system compiled from each of the races. Gabardi finished tied for 34th, two spots and four-tenths of a second shy of qualifying for the finals.

Austrian Marco Dallago, who entered the St. Paul race as the favorite came through to win in the finals with Canadian Scott Croxall second and local favorite Cameron Naasz third for the U.S. Andrew Bergeson, also from the U.S., took fourth in the four-man final.

Although the sport emerged in Sweden in 2001, the official competition did not take shape until 2010. It is still in its infancy, though this year's competition in Minnesota drew 120,000 fans to watch in the dead of winter. The only permanent track for the sport is in Finland.

Because the tracks must be constructed for each competition, the regional qualifiers were conducted on a flat surface competitors who clocked the fastest times advanced to St. Paul.

As a result, many of those competing, including Gabardi, had never actually experienced the dangers of the downhill course. Gabardi, who decided to broaden his extreme repertoire after watching a race on TV, was not concerned.

To train, the adventure seeker played hockey four times a week, worked out daily at the gym, routinely rode a bike, and rollerbladed at skate parks, while occasionally putting his inline skates to the test on local hills.

"I can skate as good as I can walk," Gabardi said. "When you are a really good skater you have a decent amount of

control. It's the same thing with snowboarders like (Olympian) Shaun White who does all the crazy stuff on the half pipe and all that. It looks crazy but is pretty in control."

Gabardi gained his confidence while taking to hockey as a child living in Colorado Springs. He played throughout school, rising to AA and AAA levels, as well as the World Juniors in Idaho.

snowboarding, wakeboarding, surfing and skateboarding.

Inside track

Perhaps the biggest boost to his con-

El Cajon resident Josh Gabardi, a life-long hockey player, takes it to another extreme by competing in downhill skating. Gabardi poses with a banner he received after qualifying for the Ice Cross Downhill World Championship 2014 in St. Paul, Minn.



He also enjoys motorcycles, motocross,

fidence, though, has come through his personal relationship with Jesus, something instilled in him by his Christian mom, but which he made his own after graduating from Granite Hills High School.

After meeting an atheist and having a deep conversation about the existence of a higher power, Gabardi went after his spiritual pursuits with the same intensity he approached sports.

"I went home and started researching and researching and researching about God," he said. "Watching all kinds of sermons and doing all kinds of stuff. Then I knew—100 percent—that there is a God. I just know for a fact.

"I live my life every day trying to be the very best that I can be and just do the right thing and try to do God's will."

It has been under that divine covering, the extreme athlete said, that he's been most successful in channeling his fears.

"It's really hard to set aside your feelings—fear being the biggest one—because most people are scared to do a lot of these things and when you get scared

that's normally when you get hurt," Gabardi said. "When you are doing any kind of extreme sport, it's about keeping your body calm and just knowing that you can do it. I found out that trusting God has helped me with that."

Living it large

While Gabardi said that he openly shares his faith within the extreme world—which by its nature is self-wardly focused as athletes feast on pushing personal limits and individual improvement—he prefers to let his actions do most of the communicating.

"For me I've given my life to God and I let God guide my life and I trust God to not let me get extremely hurt," said Gabardi, who owns Perfect Image, a small mobile detailing business. "I also trust him to give me the skills and the talent and everything to get me on the course and do the best that I can do. Just having that faith makes it a lot easier, for me, to do extreme sports and know that God is watching over me."

That trust proved critical when he helped his mother through a series of

significant trials including his parents' divorce, her unexpected unemployment and loss of the family home.

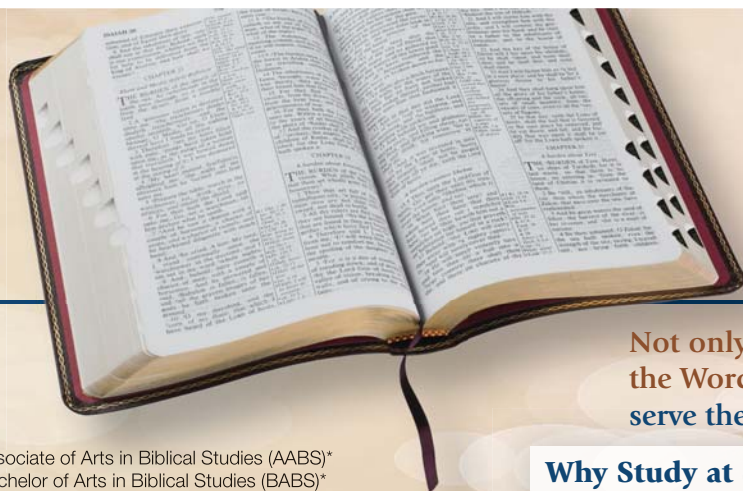
"We went through a rough time," he said. "Now that I'm a born-again Christian I don't ever question my faith. I always know that even if it's not what I want done and or what I want in my life, I know that God is doing it for a reason, though you may not know it at the time."

When Gabardi finds himself in those seasons he marvels in the symbiotic blessing of testing self in the midst of creation, whether it's glistening mountain slopes, the massive kettle called an ocean, wide open roads or frozen canals: The created one tackling the handiwork of the Creator.

"The way that everything works is so beautiful and amazing," he said. "When you look at all of this there has to be a Creator. It's like a phone or TV or ... you look at anything like that, there is a creator behind that; and the same thing with the earth. You look at the earth and you just know that there is a Creator behind all of this and it's just incredible." ■



The Cathedral of Saint Paul was the backdrop to a weekend of high-speed racing during the Red Bull Crashed Ice in Saint Paul, Minn., the second stop of the Ice Cross Downhill World Championship.



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Fostering LOVE

From foster teen to foster parent, a mom redeems her troubled past

by LORI ARNOLD

Angela Posten was a minor behind bars, a foster teen who found herself in Juvenile Hall after beating up a classmate in retaliation for an earlier confrontation. While Posten admitted to authorities that she injured the girl with her fists, her victim did a little retaliation of her own, falsely accusing Posten of using a gun during the attack.

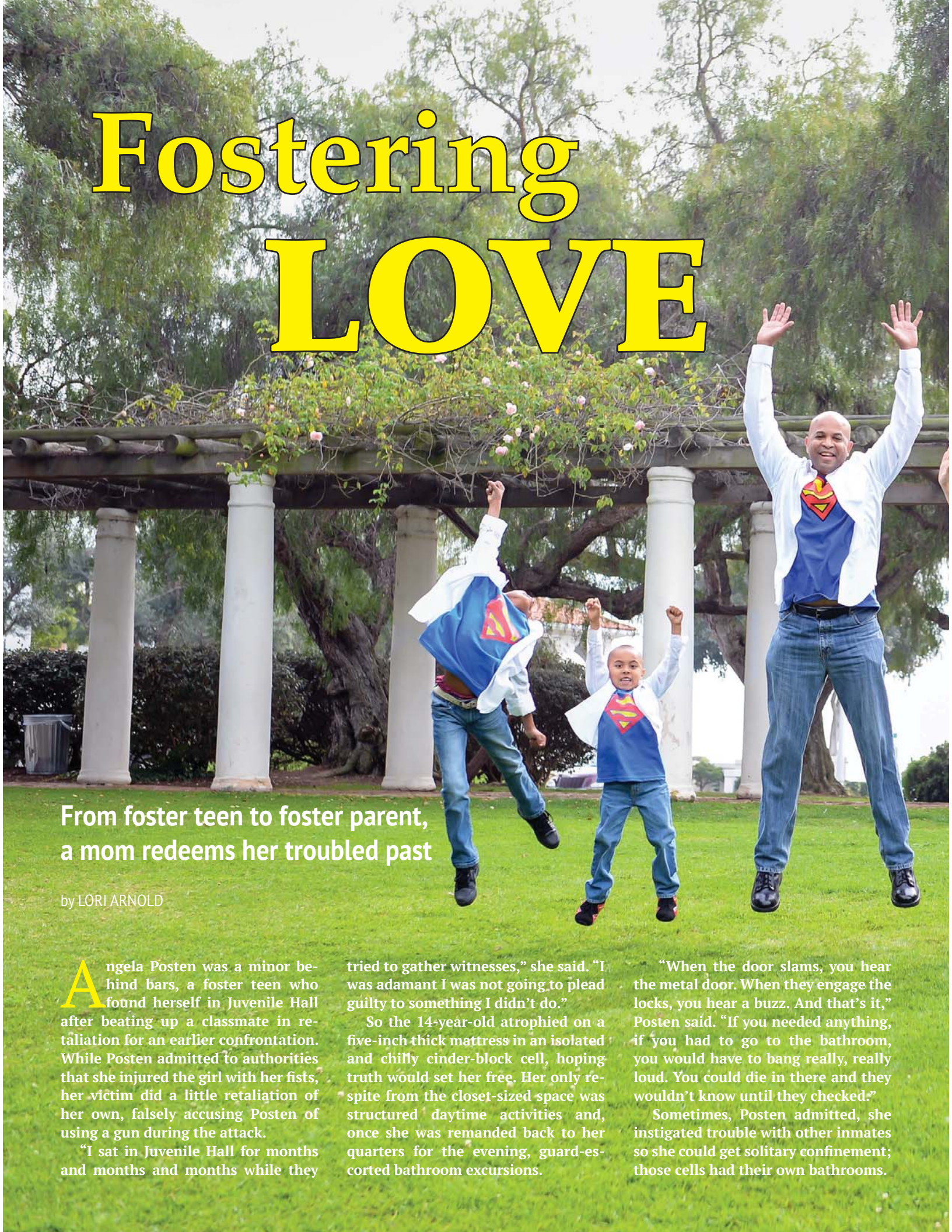
"I sat in Juvenile Hall for months and months and months while they

tried to gather witnesses," she said. "I was adamant I was not going to plead guilty to something I didn't do."

So the 14-year-old atrophied on a five-inch thick mattress in an isolated and chilly cinder-block cell, hoping truth would set her free. Her only respite from the closet-sized space was structured daytime activities and, once she was remanded back to her quarters for the evening, guard-escorted bathroom excursions.

"When the door slams, you hear the metal door. When they engage the locks, you hear a buzz. And that's it," Posten said. "If you needed anything, if you had to go to the bathroom, you would have to bang really, really loud. You could die in there and they wouldn't know until they checked."

Sometimes, Posten admitted, she instigated trouble with other inmates so she could get solitary confinement; those cells had their own bathrooms.





"Being locked up didn't really bother me because I knew I was safe in there," she said. "I didn't have to worry about where I was going to eat, I didn't have to worry about where I was going to sleep, I didn't worry about someone coming in to molest me. I didn't have to worry about someone abusing me."

"It's sad, but other kids were praying to go home and I was praying to stay—because it was the safest place

I knew."

That's because staying at her Dayton, Ohio home was no longer an option.

For years, Posten's father verbally and physically abused her Vietnamese mother. Hampered by her limited English skills and with no viable resources to fight her domineering ex-husband, her mother was unable to gain custody of their only child.

Divorce failed to stop his abuse of

the woman he had married.

"He continued to stalk, verbally and physically abused her, so eventually she fled town," Posten said of her mother. "At that time there weren't any laws to protect victims of domestic violence."

"Then his anger turned towards me. When I was in the sixth grade I confided in a teacher and, because they weren't able to locate my mother, I was placed in foster care."

Angela and Clark Posten enjoy their children during a visit to Presidio Park. The couple has a biological daughter, two adopted siblings and a foster son.

While entering the juvenile justice system removed Posten from one threatening environment, it did little to protect her as she was trundled from one family to the next. Each time, her few belongings scooped into plastic garbage bags for the transition.

Other times she didn't wait for her caseworkers to act, including the night she fled one foster home after the dad attempted to rape her.

"It was snowing and I was so cold that I broke into an empty house to warm up," she said. "I remember laying there, crying and asking God what I did to deserve the life I had. Part of me wanted to die so the misery would end. The other part was begging God to protect me as I slept."

Even as she instinctually fought for survival, Posten admits fear was her scruffy cloak.

"Being a female in foster care or homeless is really dangerous," she said. "I was always worried about dying. But my biggest fear was that no one would even care or miss me. I think I still have the fear of dying without making a difference in someone's life."

Eventually, it was the very confines of Juvenile Hall where Posten first felt release from bondage.

"There were many times in my life that I questioned God for my suffering," she said, adding that during her extended stay in Juvenile Hall she was given the option of staying in her cell or attending Sunday worship services.

"I chose the latter and that is when I was introduced to the Bible," she said. "Psalms 25 was my go-to whenever I had problems."

Turning it around

Nearly a year after she was incarcerated, a witness finally came forward to exonerate Posten. She was placed in a group home and got a job as a lifeguard at a local recreation center.

"No matter what I went through the night before, I looked forward to going to work and teaching kids how to swim," she said. "The kids really looked up to me and it was the first time in my life I felt



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALON

like I mattered to someone."

The teen worked hard, stayed clean and was able to get her own apartment several months after aging out of the system—but not before living on the streets yet again when she found herself sandwiched between losing her government-funded place in the group home on her 18th birthday and her leased apartment what wasn't ready for two more months.

"I had no furniture, other than an air mattress and milk crate that doubled as a chair and a table with a slab of wood on top," Posten said.

It was a permanent shelter, but still wasn't home.

"I still couldn't help but to sleep lightly, fearful that someone would come in to get me," she said. "It took a long time for the feelings of anxiety to go away—thinking that a social worker would come in anytime with garbage bags to move me to another home."

Finding Mom

At 19 she managed to track down her mother and came to San Diego to be near her. As Posten worked on that relationship, she married and had a daughter of her own. As her daughter neared the teen years, Posten had an opportunity to redeem her childhood at the urging of her husband, Clark, who was moved by a TV program about a couple who adopted special needs children.

"It's so sad there are kids out there that will feel like you did growing up," he told his wife. "We should open our home

to them."

Fueled by the insecurity of her past, Posten said she began to seeking excuses to avoid the issue.

"I always knew I wanted to be a foster parent and give a child the home I never had, but I had doubts about what kind of parent I would be," said Posten, who serves as a full-time case manager and client advocate at a residential housing program for senior and disabled adults.

All she knew about parenting, Posten told her husband, was what she learned from a book.

"You know what a bad parent looks like. So just do the opposite," he said.

The Paradise Hills family decided to expand their family through Koinonia Family Services, a ministry that matches foster children with families in hopes of getting them adopted.

"Angela is amazing," said Amy Sarmiento, a district administrator serving the region for Koinonia. "Her own journey gives her the insight and the heart to provide what these kids really need; unconditional acceptance."

In addition to their biological daughter, the couple now has two adopted foster children and a foster son.

Clark, she said, has proved to be an integral partner in forming their new family unit.

"Together, we are a complete picture because we have been on both sides, so to speak," she said. "He comes from a very traditional, loving, Christian family and his parents have been instrumental in all our lives."

"Some days are warm and fuzzy, like

reading a bedtime story to a child for their very first time. That's a great feeling. But, I'm also more sensitive to things that wouldn't bother other people."

Not a bag lady

That includes the seemingly innocuous use of plastic bags.

"Putting clothes into plastic bags—even if it's just for wet clothes at the pool—it brings up feelings for me, so the kids' things are always put neatly in backpacks," the mother of five said.

Tapping into the promises of Hebrews 11:1, which offers that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Posten said she has finally seen her journey go full circle.

"As a kid I couldn't understand why I went through everything I did," she said. "Now I realize those struggles made me a better parent and a better person. In the midst of a storm I can put on my lipstick, smile and say 'OK God, let's do it!'"

God's vision for family

By relying on God, Posten said, she's discovered she doesn't have to have the perfect house or perfect life to be a good mom with an open heart.

"The devil will tell you a hundred reasons why you aren't good enough," she said. "But there are a million ways to be a great foster parent. People are always telling us how wonderful we are for what we do. But the truth is, the kids are the true blessing. Every day they teach us about love, acceptance, forgiveness and resiliency. It breaks my heart every time we have to turn down a placement because we simply don't have the room. Imagine the impact we could have in God's plan if every Christian home took in one child."

For teens still seeking a place to call home, Posten said there is hope that circumstances don't have to define a person's identity.

"A piece of carbon has to go through a lot of heat and pressure in order to become a diamond," she said. "The difficult times will help you be stronger and more brilliant. The foster child label may be a legal status, but it is not who you are." ■

At a glance...

Koinonia Family Services

Koinonia San Diego re-opened its San Diego office in October after having relocated to Temecula in 2008.

"There were so many families coming forward from the San Diego area and we felt we could better serve those families if we were local," said Amy Sarmiento, the district administrator serving the region.

Founded:

In 1982 in Sacramento as Koinonia Foster Homes. The name was changed to Koinonia Family Services in 2006 to better represent the agency's diverse programs.

The name:

"Koinonia" (Koy-no-nee'-ah) is a Greek word that means to communicate, to have relationship, to fellowship.

Locations:

District offices are found in Anaheim, Bakersfield, Carson, Fresno, Loomis, Modesto, Oxnard, Palmdale, San Bernardino, Tehachapi, Temecula and Visalia.

Services:

Adoption, foster care, group homes, crisis resolution, drug abuse treatment, child advocacy and Love & Logic Parenting. (services vary by location)

The need:

There are about 3,500 foster children in San Diego County, with 50,000 in California, the majority in Southern California. Koinonia has placed about 700 children throughout the state.

The goal:

"Our goal is to find safe, stable, nurturing homes for children in our community in need," Sarmiento said. "Koinonia's goal is to make sure that all children have a family of their own. We first and foremost support reunification with a child's birth family when at all possible, but if children are unable to return home our goal is that they have a forever family who can provide permanency."

The approach:

"We are a non-profit public-service agency. However, we take a faith-based approach in working with our children and families. We acknowledge and support the role that faith can have in a child's healing, and utilize it as a primary resource in working with our families. We see a lot of our work as a ministry to serve and help others in our community."

Information:

Learn more at www.kfh.org.





Billy Graham listens to his friend and pastor Don Wilton during taping of the "My Hope America" campaign featuring the short program "The Cross."

'My Hope' success reignites campaign

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — "My Hope America," an evangelistic campaign launched in November, has resulted in more than 110,000 people making commitments to Christ, prompting the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to extend the project into this year.

"We will never be able to know all of the numbers, but we do know that God did a mighty work and that He changed hearts all over the country," said Franklin Graham, president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which was founded by his father.

The association plans to show "The Cross," which was aired to four million people on Fox News and numerous online sites, at other venues in time for Easter.

"Pastors have told us again and again that the program is Spirit-anointed," Graham said. "Some churches have told

us that they are going to show 'The Cross' on Good Friday or Easter. This is a tremendous idea—what a perfect time."

More than 26,000 churches across the United States officially registered for the project, making it the largest U.S. outreach in the 64-year history of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. In addition to Fox News and various

online sites, "The Cross" was shown in churches, living rooms, bookstores, coffee shops, prisons, rescue missions, and even drive-in theaters and aboard cruise ships.

Some of the impact stories from the campaign will be included in a Billy Graham special called "Hope Across America," which will be broadcast this spring across various platforms.

Graham also plans to honor his father's Nov. 7 birthday by bringing back the My Hope campaign for the next five years.

"We want the week of my father's birthday to be Evangelism Week across America," continued Graham. "We want to continue to produce powerful evangelistic programs and material that churches and individuals can use to reach the lost around them for Christ."

The program is available for viewing online at www.myhopewithbillygraham.org. Free DVDs can be ordered by calling (877) 247-2426.

Principals recognize benefits of Bible clubs

WARRENTON, Mo. — Nearly 88 percent of school principals responding to a national survey about the impact of Child Evangelism Fellowship acknowledge that its Good News Clubs have been "a positive experience for their school."

Commissioned by Child Evangelism Fellowship, the survey also found that 52.2 percent of the 224 principals in 28 states interviewed reported a noticeable improvement in behavior on a part of the students who participate in the clubs.

"The students who are in the Good News Club rarely receive discipline referrals to the office," one principal responded. "Undoubtedly, the club has been a successful part in our curbing bullying and classroom disrespect."

Founded in 1937, the Good News Clubs require parental permission for children to attend. The elementary school clubs offer a mix of Bible instruction, memory verses, songs and fun-filled games and activities.

The ministry now employs 710 people to handle the demands of training, screening and equipping more than 25,000 volunteers who lead the clubs in schools across the country.

Learn more at www.cefonline.com.

Translation ministry expands reach with eye glasses

ORLANDO, Fla. — Volunteers with the Wycliffe Associates Community Development provided more than 200 pairs of free handcrafted eye glasses for the seeing-impaired in Brazil.

The ministry's Eye Glass Program specializes in serving people in remote language communities who have vision impairments that include damage due to high UV exposure. The glasses open up the opportunity for sight-impaired indigenous people to read God's Word for the first time in their own language.

Many of the recipients came from remote regions where access to eyeglasses doesn't exist, a Wycliffe release said.

A team in Paraguay will begin to pass on the training to indigenous communities where they will have the ability to build their own eye glasses.

Learn more at wycliffeassociates.org.

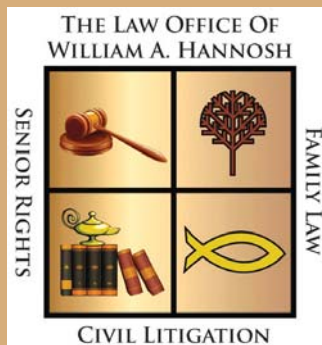
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Author issues music challenge

Hours removed from his conversion experience, Al Menconi waited patiently for his roommate to awake. He had just read Romans 10:9, which says, "...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

"I thought is *that* all there is? I can do that! So I did, I was, and I am," Menconi said. "I really didn't understand Christianity and I was raised in a church that taught Christianity was keeping a set of rules. Well, by that time, I tried *everything* the world said would bring me happiness and I was the most miserable person you would know."

Menconi said that he wanted to 'prove' his faith and told his roommate that he was quitting sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. To keep it short—and clean—he told me that he'd give me 30 days. Well, that was the first Christian Music Challenge and it's lasted over 40 years."

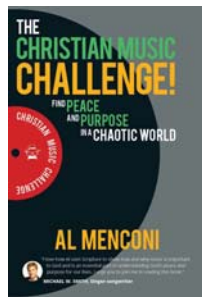
That simple pledge, built on the foundation of Christ's redemptive story, transformed not only Menconi's life, but also thousands of others he reached through Al Menconi Ministries. It's now the subject of his latest book, "The Christian Music Challenge."

"God says that if you keep shoving the empty thoughts and ideas from man's perspective instead of what God teaches into your brain, eventually you will struggle in two areas of your life," Menconi said. "Your faith in Jesus and the joy of your salvation."

Menconi describes the book as a personal journey to discover how God uses music to help believers rediscover His peace and understand His purpose for their lives.

"God will give us peace if we keep our focus on Christ," he said. "I can't think of a better way than through listening to Christian music."

Learn more at www.almenconi.com.



Book encourages happy wives

Chula Vista resident Arlene Pellicane has released her third book, "31 Days to Becoming a Happy Wife." The companion book, "31 Days to Becoming a Happy Husband," was published last summer.

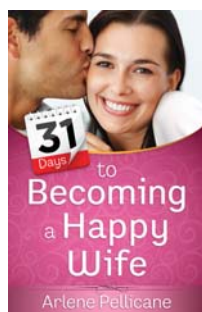
Pellicane authored the book to help women who struggle with their responsibilities as a wife and mom as they try to meet expectations they place on themselves.

In the book—presented in daily readings—Pellicane explores five character traits needed for a successful journey toward happiness: being hopeful, adaptable, positive, purposeful and yielded.

She also provides helpful tips like these: Spend less time in front of the television or social media and more time face-to-face; stop comparing your marriage; use creativity and a sense of humor in the bedroom; and work as a team with your husband.

In addition to her writing, Pellicane is a public speaker who has been a guest on Family Life Today, The 700 Club, The Better Show, Turning Point with David Jeremiah, and The Hour of Power.

Learn more at www.arlenepellicane.com.



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"With GOD, all things are possible"
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His dedication to God comes from his personal experience in the Spirit while fasting. Several years ago he was "called away" to pray and fast, one day per year of his life to prepare for his ministry. During the fast, his only solid food was the Word of God where he feasted daily on the Teachings of Jesus, flavored with the Letters from Peter, James, John, and Paul.

He's the author of *What Did Jesus Say - The Seven Messages from the Master*.

Now, here's the opportunity for your group to meet a man who speaks with strong conviction and deep compassion as he presents his personal testimony.

Walking with the Master begins with his "born again" experience in his early years to the near-death experience at 23 that introduced him to the Voice of the Lord. From there he tells the story how the Lord took him from being a stutterer all his life to becoming a Motivational Speaker delivering over 2500 speeches throughout America. He also talks about his painful divorce after getting injured in 2007, not able to properly walk for 18 months (requiring back surgery).

Then came life-threatening bladder cancer and three operations. Even though they said his cancer was terminal and would kill him within three to five years, he believed in God's healing power of prayer and fasting. Two years later his doctors pronounced him "cancer free" and released him from their care.



Rev. Terry Allan Christian

His testimony encourages everyone to trust **"WHAT JESUS SAID"** above all others and to understand the importance of prayer in the midst of their difficulties and heartaches. He also reveals how to tell the difference between the hardships caused by one's personal life choices versus the adversities brought on by Satan to compromise their Christian faith.

This program can be presented in a 30- to 90-minute format depending on your needs. To schedule him for your next meeting call 832-341-LOVE (5683).

www.foundationsforlife.org

Intense classroom is setting for 'God's Not Dead'

Christianity and modern culture collide on the big screen with the March 21 release of "God's Not Dead," a cinematic snapshot rooted in the reality of today's higher education.

The screenplay is based on the Rice Brooks book of the same title, published a year ago by Thomas Nelson. The film adaption is produced by Pure Flix Entertainment, which has been involved in more than 75 faith-based projects, making it the world's largest inspirational film studio.

Although the movie centers on an adversarial relationship between college freshman Josh Wheaton (Shane Harper), a devout Christian, and Professor Radisson (Kevin Sorbo), his dogmatic and argumentative philosophy instructor, several other storylines add dimension to the plot. In addition, the Christian megaband Newsboys is featured in a scene from the movie, as are Willie and Korie Robertson, stars of the A & E reality show "Duck Dynasty," who appear as themselves.

At the center of it all, though, is the ongoing tension created when Professor Radisson forces Wheaton to prove the existence of God over the course of three short class presentations. If Josh fails to convince his classmates of God's existence, Radisson vows to fail his young student.

"It's meaningful for him (Josh) as a Christian, as a person of faith, and as a theist who wants to defend the love he has for a God he believes to exist," said Harper, who has appeared in the films "Flipped" and "My Name is Khan." His TV work includes "Good Luck Charlie," "Wizards of Waverly Place" and "So Random." Harper said, "But it's also so important because there's all these kids in the class, too, who are swayed by this bully figure in Professor Radisson."

Sorbo, who has starred in "Soul Surfer," "Hercules" and "Andromeda," said he enjoyed the paradoxes of the script.

"The teacher becomes the pupil and the student becomes the teacher, and it's a wonderful story; and that's one reason why I think I was attracted to the part," Sorbo said.

The film is produced by David A.R. White, a founding partner in Pure Flix Entertainment and a seasoned actor. His TV roles including three years in the CBS sitcom, "Evening Shade," with guest appearances in "Coach," "Saved by the Bell," "Sisters" and "Melrose Place." His big-screen credits include "Six...the Mark Unleashed," "The Moment After" (Parts 1 and 2), "Mercy Streets," "In the Blink of an Eye" and "The Visitation."

www.godsnotdeadthemovie.com

'The JESUS Film'

The world's most viewed film in history, "JESUS," which has been screened billions of times around the globe, has been re-mastered frame by frame. The upgrade includes the addition of high definition and a new musical score in Dolby 5.1 surround sound.

The enhancement comes as the movie, re-titled "The JESUS Film," celebrates its 35th anniversary with theatrical showings in select cities beginning in March. The high-definition film, in partnership with Cinedigm and Mission Home Video, will also be available on Blu-ray, DVD and

digital format in retail and online stores nationwide April 1.

Based on the Book of Luke, the film's script has been reviewed for biblical accuracy by 450 leaders and scholars. Virtually every word spoken by Jesus is quoted from Scripture.

"The JESUS Film" has been officially recognized by The Guinness Book of World Records as the "Most Translated Film" in history, and is now available in 1,197 languages. In addition, more than 200 million individuals worldwide have indicated a decision to follow Jesus after viewing the movie.

"While the film has introduced billions



College freshman Josh Wheaton (Shane Harper), a devout Christian, and Professor Radisson (Kevin Sorbo), face off in "God's Not Dead." The movie releases March 21.

of individuals around the world to the person of Jesus, few in the U.S. have ever seen it," said Dr. Erick Schenkel, executive director of The JESUS Film Project, a ministry of Cru. "We believe this new re-mastered version will give audiences an accurate picture of who Jesus is and why individuals around the world have chosen to follow Him, shown with production values they have come to expect."

www.jesusfilm.org

'Unstoppable'

"Unstoppable," the Kirk Cameron documentary that grossed more than \$3.2 million during a two-day live event, is now available on DVD.

Released by Provident Films, Cameron's movie was inspired by the death of a family friend who succumbed to cancer at the age of 15. Cameron, a former child star who now acts and directs, used the film to capture his own journey in understanding of the role of tragedy in our lives by going back to the beginning—Adam and Eve.

"This is a very personal journey for me. I have been researching the whole idea of God in the midst of tragedy for 25 years ... my wife and I started a camp for terminally ill children and their families, so we see the frailty of life," Cameron said. "For a mother and father to deal with losing and burying a child, there is a ripping of the heart that is unimaginable."

www.unstoppablethemovie.com



Grant exits Grammys early

Contemporary Christian singer Natalie Grant, nominated for two Grammy awards and in attendance for the Jan. 26 award show, left the gathering early citing disappointment in some of the behavior she witnessed.

"We left the Grammy's early," Grant tweeted to her fans. "I've many thoughts, most of which are probably better left inside my head. But I'll say this: I've never been more honored to sing about Jesus and for Jesus. And I've never been more sure of the path I've chosen."

Although she didn't get specific, several of the acts were overtly sexual and one, involving megastar Katy Perry, celebrated witchcraft and was described by many as "satanic."

Grant was nominated for Best Gospel/Contemporary Christian Music Perfor-



mance for "Alive (Mary Magdelene)," and Best Christian Music Song "Hurricane."

www.nataliegrant.com

Entertainer Carmen says he's now cancer free

TULSA, Okla. — Recording artist and evangelist Carmen Licciardello, who announced last year he had terminal cancer, has posted on his Facebook page that he is now cancer free and preparing for a tour.

"Greetings from the other side of the valley. Well things are progressing unexpectedly well," the singer, known primarily as just Carmen, declared before explaining some of the treatments the doctors used to attack the cancer and a lurking pneumonia virus.

The Feb. 7 note followed a dire message he posted just a week earlier requesting



prayer following discovery of an infection.

www.carman.org

Hillsong mixes it up with new album

Hillsong United, never known for playing it by the book, is mixing it up again with its first remix, "White Album," releasing March 4.

The album features classic songs like "Hosanna," "From the Inside Out" and "The Stand" along with more recent hits "Relentless" and "Oceans."

"We haven't changed our focus, which is to honor Christ and give voice to a generation passionate about God; but continuing to create, experiment with and expand on those musical expressions is at the heart of The White Album (Remix Project)," said United's Joel Houston, who added they are hopeful the album will introduce a new generation to songs used by churches the world over for worship.

www.hillsong.com/en/united



"I came to Patrick Henry College because I wanted to be a writer and learn how writing for a living could bring glory to God. I was not disappointed. It may take years for me to process the priceless role of Patrick Henry College, helping me to fulfill the writer-dream I've had since second grade."

Chelsea Kolz

PHC Alumna, Literature;

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college.phc.edu

Izaiah needs specialty van

SAN DIEGO — Baby Izaiah, who suffered staggering life-threatening injuries in 2010 after a drunken teenager drove a car into the toddler and his grandfather as they were taking a stroll, underwent emergency surgery Feb. 5 for an intestinal blockage.

He remained hospitalized at Rady Children's Hospital for more than a week while he regained his strength. Izaiah is a familiar face at the hospital, where he spent seven months undergoing treatment, including six surgeries, for his severed spinal cord and other injuries from the crash.

The latest development was further complicated by the fact that the family's handicap-accessible van is inoperable and Izaiah's parents had to delay their trip to the hospital until a friend with a truck arrived to transport him and his bulky medical equipment.

Linda VanKessler, the family spokeswoman and co-founder of the faith-based Passion 4 KIDS, said her ministry is actively searching for an accessible van for the family.

Learn more at www.passion4kids.org or call (760) 518-2780.

Village Theater play features bluegrass and gospel

RANCHO SANTA FE — The Village Church Community Theater presents the "Cotton Patch Gospel" March 14 to 16.

This "Greatest Story Ever Retold" is a rollicking, foot-stomping, hand clapping musical in which the ministry of Jesus as recorded by Matthew and John is

presented in a setting of rural Georgia with country music songs. Herod is the mayor of Atlanta and inevitably, Christ is lynched by local thugs only to rise again. A reverential retelling of the book of Matthew, it takes the Bible's passionate intensity and directness for contemporary meaning and has been called "a powerful drama and joyous celebration" that will lift your spirits and renew your hope.

The production features a band of Grammy-award winning country/bluegrass musicians.

Performances are set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, 4 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday.

The church is located at 6225 Paseo Delicias.

Learn more at www.villagechurchcommunitytheater.org or call (858) 756-2441, ext 128.

Ugandan orphans to sing in Lakeside

LAKESIDE — The Ugandan Orphans Choir, part of Childcare Worldwide, will appear in concert at 4 p.m. March 9 at the Lakeside Community Presbyterian Church.

The choir features 10 adolescent singers who are chaperoned by four adults. Their current tour will take them throughout California, Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon and Utah.

As a sponsored mission of Childcare Worldwide, the choir tours are designed to share the traditional rhythmic



The Ugandan Orphans Choir

dances and songs of Africa, while working to build a bridge between people in the West and children in the developing world. Proceeds raised from the tours are used to meet their spiritual and physical needs, including education.

The church routinely offers concerts as part of an ongoing outreach to the community.

The church is located at 9908 Channel Road.

For more information, call (619) 443-1021.

Locals present at national music conference

SOLANA BEACH — A student and a teacher from Santa Fe Christian Schools recently served as panelists at a convention hosted by the National Association of Music Merchants, the world's largest international music gathering.

The Jan. 23 to 26 event drew 96,000 registered attendees to Anaheim, including fellow Santa Fe Christian students Gregory Melconian, Parker Siu and Blain Weeks. In addition to students, the NAMM convention attracts music industry leaders, famous recording artists, instrument manufacturers and publishers from around the world.

Band Director David Hall and SFC student Amber Gokey were panelists in a session designed to help musicians get the most out of their practice time. The techniques—based on observations and interviews with 1,000 music students—were based on nine distinctive practice personalities.

"It was great to have so many musicians and music teachers hungry for more effective ways to practice," Hall said. "I was glad that Amber and I were able to help steer them in the right direction."

Learn more at www.sfcs.net.

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Rancho San Diego hosts Easter gathering

RANCHO SAN DIEGO — Rancho San Diego Easter Celebration, a community-wide gathering, will be held at 9 a.m. April 20 at The McGrath YMCA Recreation Field.

Sponsored by The Gathering Church and the YMCA, the event will include pre-service activities.

Deron Higgins, pastor of The Gathering, will speak on "Why Easter?"

Participants are asked to bring their own lawn chairs.

Learn more at www.gatheringrsd.org.

San Diego church launches radio program

PARADISE HILLS — Puritan Evangelical Church of America has launched a new radio program, "Man's Chief End," which is featured from 5:30 to 6 a.m. every Tuesday on KPRZ 1210 AM.

The program features various sermons preached at the Southeast San Di-

ego church.

"The name of the program is to draw attention to the purpose of our creation and Christian redemption, as expressed in our Westminster Shorter Catechism question and answer No. 1," said Pastor Grant Van Leuven.

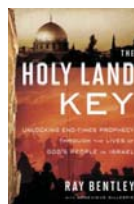
The question and answer reads, "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

"We endeavor to influence God's people to know and live their purpose in life as the Apostle Paul describes in First Corinthians 10:31: "... whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," Van Leuven said.

Learn more at www.puritanchurch.com.

Bentley releases book on prophecy

SAN DIEGO — Ray Bentley, senior pastor at Maranatha Chapel in Rancho Bernardo, has just released the prophecy book "The Holy



Land Key: Unlocking End-Times Prophecy Through the Lives of God's People in Israel," written with Genevieve Gillespie.

The book, released by Waterbrook/Multnomah, explores "little-known aspects of prophecy, including details revealed in the seven Feasts of the Lord, prophetic patterns discovered in the lunar cycle, and glimpses of God's future kingdom revealed in the stories of well-known figures from Scripture," according to a website for the book.

In addition to his pastoral duties, Bentley is a crusade speaker and also hosts the daily Maranatha Radio show. He has written five other books.

Gillespie, co-president of the San Diego Christian Writers Guild, is the in-house editor at Maranatha.

The book carries endorsements from Jerry Jenkins, Ann Graham Lotz and Dr. David Jeremiah from Shadow Mountain Community Church.

Learn more at www.theholylandkey.com.

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Please Join for us for AWE Wednesday March 5 during one of the start times above in the Chapel on 4th avenue and continue at your own pace through the contemplative spaces.

*A special family track is available during the 3:30pm, 5:30pm, 6:30pm, & 7:30pm start times



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Snooze, interrupted

“There is no rest for the weary.” That’s a longtime truth that I am frequently reminded of these days. Here’s a related line: “The hurrieder I go, the behind-er I get.”

Why are we more tired? Or shall I ask, “Why am *I* so tired?” Because daily schedules are filled to the max. Too often it’s due to doing the unnecessary or trying to impress others who we don’t really care much about. There’s also the constant pull of social media and numerous technological wonders, each competing for time and attention.

Working for a living, growing businesses and chasing dreams is a good thing. Piling on endless appointments and “make-a-nice-impression-appearances” is another. Too much on the daily to-do list leads to fatigue and less effectiveness in all things.

Trust me on this topic.

I’m the worst offender when it comes to over-scheduling myself. And I can rationalize better than anyone about why I must attempt to do everything, preferably if I can find a seemingly noble excuse for doing it.

I have been immersed in this sleep-deprivation issue. After all, I thought I simply *had* to handle many self-created deadlines and projects. *So much to do, so little time.*

Yesterday, I gave myself kudos for carving a few minutes out of my schedule to do something I rarely do: Nothing. I decided I could benefit from a half-hour nap.

I’m not a napper, as a rule. Sometimes Mr. Sandman arrives while I’m on the couch, watching evening TV while reading and multitasking, when suddenly I lean back and presto, it’s major league ZZZZZZZ’s.

Those moments provide the stuff of family lore. When my daughter is in town she has great fun snapping pic-

tures of Dad, zonked out, mouth open and ready to catch flies. Thank goodness threats of “If you want to stay in the Will, I better not see that on Facebook” still work.

Anyway, I digress... back to my nap plan. I assessed the schedule for the coming days and knew that without a little snooze I would be in bad shape.

Interrupted snooze

It was off to my home “man cave” on a beautiful spring-like day.

I opened a window to enjoy the warm breeze and closed my eyes while trying to mentally condition myself to “sleep fast.”

Then it happened again, as usual. Just at the moment of bliss, on the edge of slumberland,

a buzz saw from next door revved up. My neighbor

decided it was a perfect time to catch up on *his* schedule. Apparently the tool *du jour* was some sort of loud device that was used as a soundtrack from a dental horror movie. So much for a snooze.

My good friend next door is like that. I’ll call him Ray (since that’s his name). Ray is a MacGyver character who can make all sorts of valuable things out of what seems to be nothing. Give him a fragment of wire and he can mold it into a refrigerator. He’s always building something, and is a champion recycler of other people’s supposedly useless “stuff.”

He is also “retired.” I have never heard as much unusual tool noise coming out of one place, and he’s more active than ever since he quit going to the plant every day. Good for him.

Adding more pressure

Of course my neighbor who does heroic at-home projects can make me feel like I should add even more to-dos to my schedule. My idea of a domestic

fix-up project is to call 411 and find someone who knows what they’re doing. I can’t keep up with the kinds of things Ray does well. It’s just not my gift.

But it’s an illustration of why Americans are overloaded and more tired than ever. We have so many pressures, keeping up with the Joneses (or Rays), taking the kids to one more after-school activity or attending just one extra reception to look good in business or community. It seems it’s never possible to catch up on rest.

Lessons on time

The more life goes on, the more I find that I am learning a valuable lesson on the use of time, and the importance of priori-

...a buzz saw from next door revved up.

ties. A little introspective thinking helps sort things out too. But nothing works better than giving ourselves the gift of strategically placed rest.

Just now I was feeling a fresh sense of accomplishment, sitting here in a chair by our pool. Sensing contentment as I wrap up writing this column, once again I’ve learned something important about living.

I sit back, close my eyes, smiling, as I begin to succumb to the nap urge—only to be interrupted by Ray, starting up his power mower.

Bless his heart.



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

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

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MICHAEL FOUST

6 reasons to break that smartphone addiction (and spend more time with your kids)

Perhaps I should have seen it coming. My 5-year-old son and I were getting on our bicycles, preparing to take a leisurely ride down the road, when he gave me an ultimatum.

“Dad, don’t get on your phone one bit.”

A dozen things entered my mind. Can I go 30 minutes without looking at my iPhone? What if, during one of our stops, I want to check my email or look at the latest news on Twitter, or even open the Weather Channel app when I see that dark cloud on the horizon?

“OK,” I said.

So for 30 minutes we rode down the road, had a pleasant time, and I survived.

Humans always have had distractions from the more important things in life, but I sometimes wonder if smartphones—through the marvel of technology—have compiled every distraction into one handy handheld device.

Whatever your hobby or craze or temptation, the iPhone or Android phone is right there, ready to help. Smartphones are that wardrobe from the Chronicles of Narnia books and films: There’s good, and plenty of bad, and before you know it, you’ve spent hours in another world.

I’m beginning to ask myself more and more often: Do I have to know everything about everything, right then and there? Should I give every person in the world the right to interrupt my life at any moment of the day? The answer to those, of course, is “no,” but there’s another one that I also have to ask: Can it wait? To that, I’m beginning to answer “yes.”

I’m learning I need to set more limits on my usage. Here, then, are six reasons I want to use my smartphone less and less around my kids:

1. It’s what my son wants. His two

younger siblings probably do, too, but they can’t verbalize it yet. And I’m sure my oldest son isn’t the only child in the world like this. No, every second with my children isn’t a Hallmark precious moment, but I’m sure I’ve missed a few while staring at that tiny screen.

2. I don’t want to raise children addicted to technology. By that, I mean I want to set a better example. Children do everything that we emulate. If we stare at our iPhone or Android phone all the time when we’re around our children, there’s a good chance they’ll do the same, too, someday. Our society, after all, already is a slave to the latest technological gadgets. I don’t want my kids to remember their father as the one who stared at his smartphone while at the kitchen table, at the couch and on the mower.

3. It allows me to devote my full attention to my children. This seems obvious, but when I’m on my phone, I’m not involved with my kids. If I choose ahead of time that I’m not going to be on my phone, my mind is ready to think of topics of conversation—like birds and worms, or planes and trains (my oldest son is 5, after all).

4. I won’t regret it. Smartphones as we know them are only about six years old, but I doubt any of us will get to the end of our lives and say, “If I could do it all over again, I’d spend more time on my smartphone. And post more stuff on Facebook.” My children are all 5 and under. I’m living in the days that I’ll



later treasure.

5. Because smartphones are addictive. Sure, I’ve had 15-second sessions on my smartphone, but I’ve also had 15-second sessions that turned into five- and 10- and 30-minute stints. That’s the nature of social media and the Internet. There’s always something you didn’t know, and you didn’t know you didn’t know it until you logged on.

6. Because it’s good discipline. In the Christian life, it’s wise to deprive ourselves of earthly things we really, really want, like usage of the iPhone or the Android phone when we’re around our kids. As I type this, I really, really want a pizza—and lots of football on TV. Neither, though, are good for me in the quantities I desire. As Christians, we should work to reshape our sinful nature so that we no longer strive for earthly things, but eternal things (Colossians 3:2). We are to really, really want Christ.



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

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KIMBERLY RUBY

Deadly diet sins that rob the body of wellness

The following seven dietary sins are common and frequent detours en route to experiencing a more vibrant life. Take a quick inventory of your own daily dietary habits and select one smart solution per week to build a better body while ramping up your vitality. Better yet, pass this article on to someone you care about and enroll them in the journey using the “buddy system” for encouragement and accountability.

Seven Diet Sins

1. White death mornings — Starting your day with excess refined white sugar and white-flour foods might make you feel sluggish and not able to perform at your fullest potential. Beware of the bright packaging, empty calories and familiar cartoon characters. Blood sugar levels peak, then drop, and what true nourishment have you really gained? Fight the white and feel energized.

Smart solution — Come back to oatmeal! Oatmeal has “staying power” with its high molecular weight and water-soluble fiber. A warm bowl with a few walnuts, along with fresh fruit, might be the answer. I also encourage my patients to try Greek yogurt with fresh fruit, or eggs with vegetables a few times a week. Topped with naturally low-calorie salsa, eggs are one of God’s perfect foods.

2. Over-sweet snacks — My rule of thumb is “farm to fork, earth to table” when it comes to recognizing real food over highly processed choices. Are the snacks you choose often just sugary candy bars disguised with a little extra protein?

Smart solution — Next time you are in a grocery store, take in the selection of perfectly packaged, brilliantly colored fruit! The shapes, the sizes, the textures, the tastes. All straight from the orchards, zero processing and chock-full of nutrients, fiber and water for lasting, low-calorie fullness. A blessed bounty

for your body.

3. Lunch through a window — On an average, my patients visit fast-food restaurants four to five times a week. One of my patients confessed he eats all three meals most every day “through a window.” This very expensive deadly sin, over a period of time, will add unwelcome weight and may contribute to disease. High fat, sugar and salt are what you crave and the fast-food giants have the recipe to keep you coming back.

Smart solution — Plan ahead and brown bag it twice a week! Better yet, visit a discount retailer and choose from a variety of great lunch containers that come with cold packs. Make a healthy sandwich, add fruit and Sun Chips or buy a delicious ready-made, high-protein salad at your local grocery store.

4. Eternal Food Breaks — Don’t go hours and hours without nourishing your body during the day, while consuming the majority of your calories late at night! If you are too busy to eat every three to four hours, you are too busy.

Smart solution — Don’t be a victim of putting yourself last on the health totem pole. Pack a healthy lunch and set a timer to remind yourself to eat one nutritious food item every three or four hours. You will feel better and not over-indulge at the end of the day.

5. Liquid calories — Don’t drink your calories! This is one of the toughest habits to break. So many of us are like hummingbirds when it comes to sweet beverages, going from one sweet sensation to the next. Cut the hand-to-mouth sugary habit addiction.

Smart solution — Brew various flavors of boxed teas, allow to cool, then refrigerate. Serve as a chilled, non-caloric delicious drink.

6. Sodium sponges — Most Americans are getting well over the new



dietary guideline which reduces the recommended intake of sodium to 1,500 milligrams per day. In fact, the total can be four to seven times that amount when consuming excessive processed and fast foods. High sodium diets may contribute to high blood pressure, America’s silent killer.

Smart solution — One of my favorite, healthy diets is The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension). I’ve seen my patients lose weight and keep it off. Enjoying whole grains, fruits and vegetables in their most natural, unprocessed state is the strategy.

7. Screen eating — Distracted eating while watching a TV or a computer can result in over-consuming calories by 30 percent!

Smart solution — Make eating a treasured ritual! Sit, taste and minimize distractions around you. This is your time. Mindful eating results in an increase in satiety and allows your brain and body to process better. You will feel more satisfied and energized.

From dietary sins to “small-step” victories, the choice is yours and the rewards many. Please feel free to drop me an email and share any creative solutions you’ve found. I’ll be waiting. (kim@ucprx.com).



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

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

Power up principle: The power of contentment

Have you ever asked yourself “How much is enough?” Will more *stuff* really bring you the satisfaction you’re looking for? The answer is “perhaps for a little while,” but it fades quickly. During my years of practice, I have observed interesting dynamics that lead to contentment. There are people who have achieved financial independence yet are not what I would describe as satisfied. On the other hand, there are people who have not achieved financial independence yet evidence an engaging spirit of contentment. The world is constantly bombarding us with messages designed to stir up a sense of dissatisfaction. I have found that contentment is less *about what money can buy* and more about a right attitude toward those things.

If you haven’t learned to be content with what you have, you’ll never be content with what you want...

This kind of contentment doesn’t just happen. It is deeply rooted in our perspective about money and possessions. It takes being grounded in solid principles that guide our financial decisions and it takes intentional steps or right processes to get there. Paying attention to these three things can ultimately produce both internal satisfaction and external outcomes we value. Allow me to briefly draw some parallels between these three elements and how they lead to contentment.

Perspective

Your worldview has everything to do with *why* and *how* you make decisions. For example, if your approach to life is “he who dies with the most toys wins,” your decision-making process will be guided by the endless and empty pursuit of accumulation. On the other hand,

if you begin with a biblical worldview your behavior will be influenced not by cultural forces but by an understanding of your stewardship over what God has given you to manage.

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, one of my favorite biblical passages, illustrates this perspective. You will make different choices once you have settled Who owns it all and your subsequent responsibility to the Owner. It gets you off the accumulation treadmill and on a path toward contentment.

Principles

There are five fundamental principles I start with in any financial discussion. They apply regardless of how many zeroes are in your paycheck or on your balance sheet. I plan to expand on these in future columns, but for now will simply summarize them here:

- Spend less than you earn
- Avoid the use of debt
- Build an emergency reserve
- Stay focused on long-term goals
- Develop a heart of generosity

With these principles creating your financial decision-making framework, you will make more competent decisions that ultimately produce a sense of contentment.

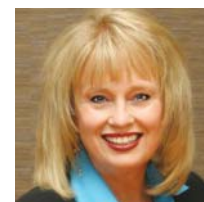
Processes

Money is generally used in one of the following ways: for lifestyle needs, debt, taxes, charity or investing in the future. There is an interesting cause-and-effect relationship between these categories. For example, the *more* I pursue lifestyle desires, the *more* I will typically pay in

taxes and the *less* I will have available to go toward giving or long-term goals (college savings, retirement planning, business ventures, etc.). Processes can be developed for each one of these categories to help minimize the negative impact and positively direct the outcomes you want to achieve.

On many occasions I’ve talked with people who never stopped to evaluate their financial finish line or answer the question I originally posed to you at the beginning of this article, “How much is enough?” If you haven’t learned to be content with what you have, you’ll never be content with what you want because more is never enough! I urge you to seek financial counsel if you don’t have a plan designed to address each of these uses of money.

Are you confident the decisions you are making today are moving you toward contentment? If financial contentment has more to do with your attitudes, beliefs and systems, where do you need to start? Remember, the right perspective leads to committed values, the right principles lead to competent decisions, and the right processes lead to confident outcomes. If you get these right, you will be able to distance yourself from fear- or greed-based decisions and be well on your way toward experiencing lasting contentment.



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.

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Pursuing the 10 ancient words that bring life

A quick scan of the headlines tells us that things are not as they could be. Scandals and greed fill one page while addiction, crime and corruption fill the next. Things are broken.

The result?

We are tired, cynical, divided and afraid. I know I can get that way.

What if the very antidote to our obsessed, compulsive, suspicious, divided and worn-out culture is something very *ancient*? Would you believe it? I know it may sound simplistic: 10 ancient words that bring life?

Yeah, right (maybe there's something good to read on the next page...).

But what if these 10 Words could make our community safer, happier and better? Places where our kids could play and learn and grow without fear or danger. And what if you could go to work knowing that everyone played fair and honest? And what if your family was built on something solid and secure, without worry or threat lurking around the corner or hiding under the bed? What if you were satisfied, calm and rested? Sound impossible?

Will you take a risk with me and at least consider the impact that these 10 Words could have on you and on those around you? Do you want to see them?

Here they are, THE 10 Words (the word *Dialogue* means 10 words) that bring life:

Contentment

Truth

Generosity

Fidelity

Peace

Respect

Rest

Reverence

Worship

God

Read the list carefully, slowly. Maybe your eyes jumped ahead to No. 10 and you're thinking that this looks vaguely familiar. You're right. It is. You see, the 10

Words that bring life are actually 10 words God gave a long time ago. You might know them better in their "Thou shalt not" version as The 10 Commandments.

Let me take you on a little trip to The 10 Words back story.

Did you ever see the movie "The Ten Commandments" with Charlton Heston? It's based on the book of Exodus (*The Leaving of Egypt*) the second book in the Bible. The story highlights what happened when a small band of God's people moved to Egypt to survive a famine that gripped their land. During their 400-plus year stay (400 years is longer than we have been a country) they began to grow in numbers from just 70 people to two million.

Their number grew so great that they became a threat to the Egyptians. So Pharaoh—doing what Pharaohs do best—made the Israelites their slaves, complete with oppressive work conditions. God's family had no land, no government and no rights. Moses, born into this harsh environment and chosen by God, led God's exit strategy for His people out of slavery and into freedom.

Sounds like good news, right? Here is the problem. They had no idea how to be free. All they had known was slavery. So they were told what, how and when to do everything.

Here's the rub... After finally being set free why did God give His family a set of rules?

Because they had never been responsible for themselves for 400 years and now they're responsible for everything. God gave them boundaries to keep them free. God called His people His special treasure, people he cared about and wanted to have a relationship with.

Containing rebellion

God knows that rules without a relationship lead to rebellion. Read these words:

"I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery." Exodus 20:2

God said I'm "*your*" God. Not "*the*" God or "*a*" God, but *your* God. I'm personal and I care about you. I'm the one who set you free and I want you to stay free. I'm giving you a map to live free in community with one another. In fact, The 10 Words were just the beginning, the foundation. God gave many more laws—over 600—for life as a community, including health standards, civil guidelines and religious practice. They all reflect what God values.

Instead of being restrictive they are actually freeing, life-giving words.

Boundaries stifle chaos

Now imagine a world without these standards for life. You get the picture. What we think of as restrictive or close-minded, God sees as love.

God gave us laws to live by the same way we give them to our children. To direct their lives and protect their lives from what they don't know yet. The bottom line is that God loves us too much not to give us rules to live by.

Jesus said it this way when asked what was the most important law, "Love God and Love people..." and with that statement, Jesus summarized the 10 Words that give life.

Maybe God's 10 Words let us know that He really does care about us more than we believe.



Deron Higgins is the founding and lead pastor of The Gathering in Rancho San Diego. He also teaches at San Diego Christian College and Christian High School,

where he coaches boys volleyball. He and his wife Annette met while on staff at Hume Lake Christian Camps. Learn more at www.gatheringrsd.org.

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John 3:3,16

JOANNE BROKAW

Writing is a dangerous job

If I had a dollar for every time someone told me they wished they had my job, I wouldn't have to do this job anymore. I could fly to the tropics and spend the rest of my life lying on a beach, drinking refreshing beverages and reading mystery novels.

I don't know what everyone finds so glamorous about what I do. I spend all day in my pajamas. I do shower, but rarely put on makeup or do my hair. I go for days at a time without seeing another human except my husband, and depending upon what kind of day he's had, he may not even count.

Trust me, there's nothing glamorous going on around here.

I think people are drawn to the perceived freedom that comes with my job. They think I lie around all day doing nothing and get paid for it. Ha! Wouldn't that be nice?

The reality is that writing is a dangerous job.

For example, I once almost electrocuted myself while writing a column. I was sitting on a metal folding chair, working at my desk (another benefit of working at home: high-class office furniture), and the chair was missing the rubber tip on one of its legs. The power cord to my printer was under that leg; as I fidgeted around in the chair the metal leg sliced through the cord and shorted out the printer.

There was a flash of light, a loud bang, and when the smoke cleared, a large scorch mark on the hardwood floor. I'm convinced that if I hadn't been wearing rubber-soled slippers, I would have been toast.

Another hazard is weight gain. Not only do I sit on my behind all day, when I'm stumped for a story idea, I eat. If there's nothing good to eat, I bake. Even now, I'm itching to whip up a batch of chocolate chip biscotti, which I will un-

doubtedly eat in its entirety tomorrow while I stare at the computer screen trying to come up with another story idea.

Trust me. You can try and curb your cravings with rice cakes, but in the end only chocolate will get the creative juices flowing.

Beware the self-talk

Let's not forget what happens mentally when you spend all day with no one to talk to but a cat, two dogs and six chickens. It starts out innocently enough, giving your dog a command to turn down the radio or asking the cat what he wants for breakfast. But when you find yourself in the grocery store asking the eggs if they know who their mommy is, you've reached the point of no return.

Everyone asks me where I get my story ideas. If there's one question that'll send a writer over the edge, it's that one.

We all live in constant fear that today's idea will be our last, that tomorrow the well will run dry and we'll be sitting there with a deadline looming and wind whistling through our ears. And as anyone who suffers from panic attacks can tell you, something *potentially* happening is the same as it *actually* happening, so the resulting anxiety from the possibility of writer's block can really wreak havoc on your nerves.

Which, of course, makes you want to eat. Or bake.

And that's just the beginning. We haven't even gotten to carpal tunnel syndrome, back and neck problems caused by hours spent hunched over the keyboard, fingers slammed in filing cabinet drawers, or the possibility of an IRS audit because you claimed a case of White Zinfandel as an office expense.

King of the hill

Of course, there are benefits to writing. I have a staff made up of dogs, a



cat and chickens, which makes me the smartest person in my office and also the highest paid. How's that for a confidence boost?

Yes, I do set my own hours, which means that if I'm feeling creative in the morning, I work in the morning. If I come up with a brilliant idea at midnight, I write at midnight. Even better, my doctor told me—and this is the honest truth—that it's healthy to take a nap every day, so I should go ahead and snooze for a half hour in the afternoon. I probably couldn't do that at a real job, even with a doctor's note.

As for running out of ideas? There's always something happening that's worth writing about. And when I'm truly stumped, the dog can always take over.

It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.



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

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

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