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films see resurgence

### Creative wave

Local artist makes a  
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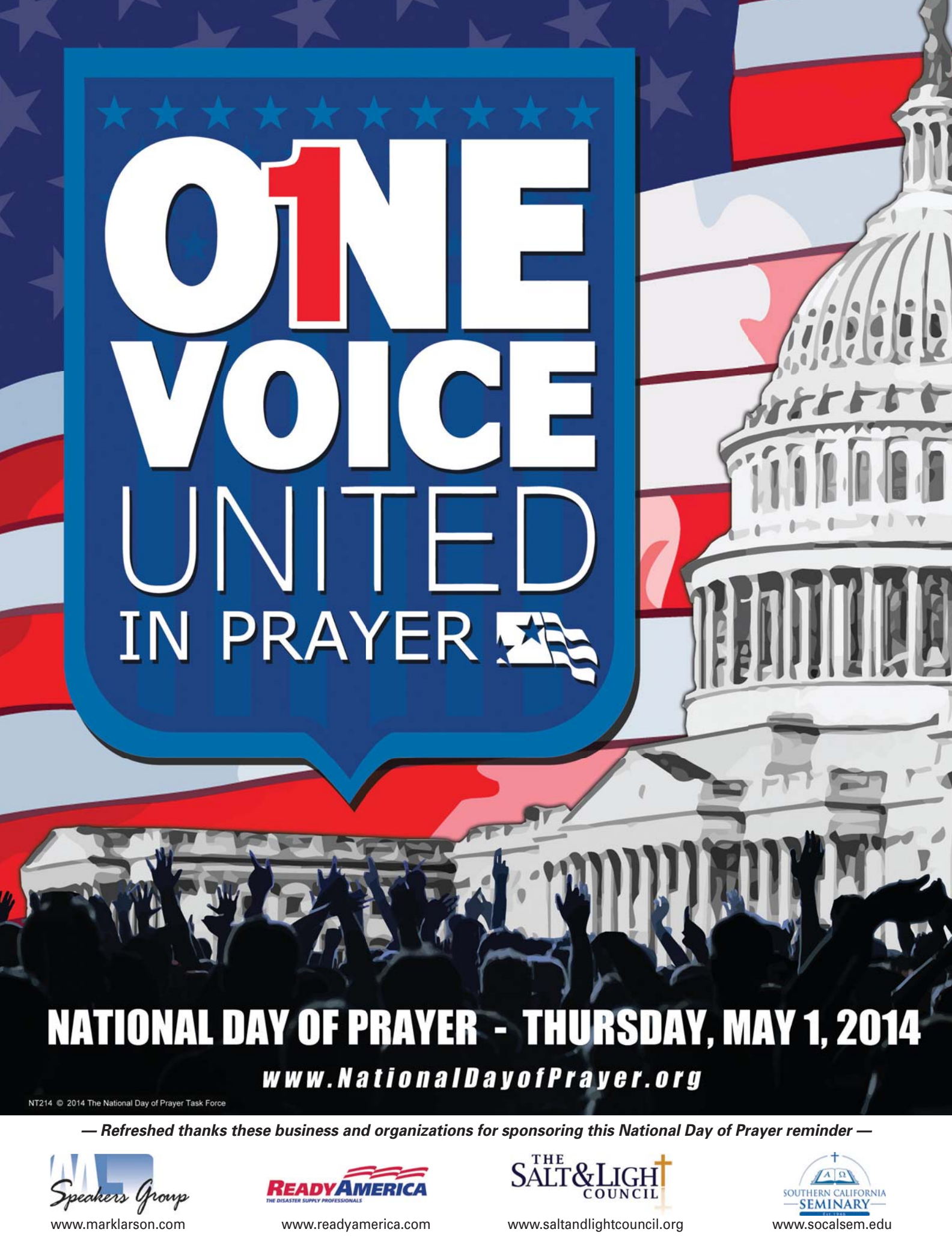
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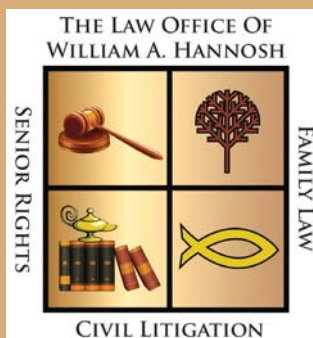
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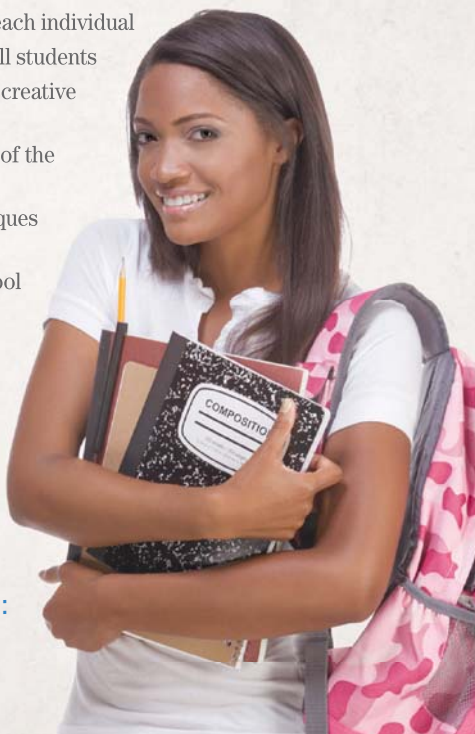
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## Publishers' note

This month, a major motion picture opens in theaters nationwide based on the best-selling book, "Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back."

Whether the story is credible is debated widely, even among the most ardent Christians.

We're not here to settle the debate, but the release of the movie provides an opportune time to dialogue about the truth of Heaven and its wonder.

In November 2013, a Harris Poll found that 68 percent of Americans believe in the existence of Heaven. A belief in life after death is high up in our culture.

Yet, it is difficult for us to comprehend the existence of Heaven. "No eye has seen, nor ear has heard and no mind has conceived what God has prepared" (1 Cor. 2:9 NIV).

If our view of Heaven is based upon what we know on earth, we will not even begin to understand the realities of Heaven. God has assured us that Heaven is like nothing we have experienced before and that it is a place where pain and sorrow will no longer exist.

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Lamar & Theresa Keener  
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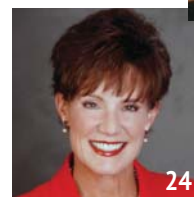
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DEAN NELSON

## A wild lesson in pursuit

"Listen!" one of the men hissed.

We had been standing around the campfire in northern Minnesota, toward the end of the two-week Boy Scout camp, doing what Boy Scouts usually do when standing around campfires. We threw stuff into the flame to see what would burn, tried to stand as close as possible without getting singed (grateful for the smoke because it kept the mosquitoes away -- briefly), pretended we



were going to toss the newest Scouts in as a sacrifice to the Great Scoutmaster in the Sky. But one of the Scout leaders got our attention. It seemed he heard something. Then we heard it.

"Ching... ching... ching..." approaching.

"It's Santa Claus!" I said, cracking up everyone in the circle under the age of 21.

The sound got louder, and we got quieter. Soon, two painted, muscular Indian braves came out of the woods to the edge of our campsite. Now everyone under 21 was terrified. One of the braves had an ankle bell that chinged when he walked. They both walked slowly, deliberately, toward us. The one with the ankle bell moved inside our circle, between the fire and us, and began to walk even more slowly, sizing up each scout

with a look of disdain. The other brave paralleled him, but walked behind each of us, on the outside of the ring.

The inside warrior made a complete circle, slowed even more and began again. He was clearly looking for something. Or someone. When he got in front of me, a tiny, shivering 14-year-old with an overbite, he pushed his terrifying face close to mine and sniffed ferociously. I could smell him, too. He was mostly

animal. His eyes were dots that revealed only blackness—like a falcon's—and I trembled like his hamster meal. He moved on. I reminded myself to breathe.

He got two campers past me, then whirled back and screamed at the top of his lungs (or maybe that was me screaming?) and he leaped through the air, knocking me into the warrior stationed behind me. Instinctively, I struggled at first, but

realized the futility and gave up. When I did, they picked me up, produced an arrow, and put my hand around it tightly. They thrust my arm toward the fire so the wooden shaft of the arrow would be blackened slightly. I pulled the flaming sword back and blew out the small fire. Then they turned me toward the forest, one warrior walking in front of me, the other behind me, and marched me out, making me hold the arrow high above my head in triumph.

It started dawning on me what this meant. I was chosen—"tapped out"—for membership in the Order of the Arrow, the elite organization of Scouting. I was no longer just a Scout. Either that, or it was the most sensational child abduction incident in our camp's history.

I knew that I was in for a long night.

The tradition is that the newly selected member is initiated by a night of silence alone in the forest. That part didn't bother me. I did have a little concern for the predators in the forest, though. There were bears up there. Wolves. Bobcats. Snakes. Bats. I feared the mosquitoes the most. They've been known to suck the badges right off a Scout's shirt. You could spray graffiti on their wings, they're so big. And the ticks. And Lyme disease.

After the first couple of hours, I started getting used to the silence, and to the subtle sounds in the forest. I wondered if I'd sleep.

Somewhere in the middle of the night I heard something else. Something walking. It was too steady to be a wild animal. Soon it made a sound that I recognized. No one clears phlegm like my dad. He was the assistant Scoutmaster.

"Dean?"

I thought about how to respond without breaking my vow of silence. But you can't not respond to your dad.

"Over here." I stood up.

"Come with me. You can sleep in my tent tonight." I never saw him. I only followed his footsteps back to the campsite, where I went inside his tent, laid down, and immediately fell asleep.

This was a father who could not stand the thought of his creation spending one night in the darkness, afraid. A father who broke the man-made rules to pursue me. My fear was gone, and I could finally rest.







Dean Nelson directs the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University. His book on sacred living is "God Hides in Plain Sight: How to See the Sacred in a

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# Heaven is for real

## What will it be like?

By Sean McDowell

If you knew for certain that you only had three days left to live on Earth, how would you spend your remaining time? Recently I posed this question to a group of high school seniors. Their answers included skydiving, traveling, surfing, and (of course) sex. I followed up with a simple question, “So you think there may be some pleasures and experiences in this life that if you don’t partake of them before you die, you may miss out in Heaven?” All but two of them said, “Yes.”

Sadly, the prospect of Heaven had simply not captured their imaginations. Despite the unsurpassable majesty of Heaven, they thought there were experiences in this life that could be more fulfilling and exciting. Could the same be true for us? Is it possible that we have failed to capture the wondrous beauty of Heaven?

In a quote from Randy Alcorn’s book, “Heaven,” science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov writes, “I don’t believe in the afterlife, so I don’t have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.” This view, sadly, is common even among Christians. Our vision of Heaven is often limited to an extended, boring, uninspiring church service. Somehow Heaven has not captured our imaginations and transformed our lives.

How did this happen? Where did we get such a view of Heaven?

Lacking an eternal perspective can set us—and in particular, young people—up for discouragement and sin. So many of us think there are certain plea-

tures that if we don’t experience them now, we may never. Since God will forgive us, why not indulge? So many of us think we want sex, money, drugs, good grades and popularity. But what we were truly made for is to be in relationship with God and others now and, ultimately, to dwell in Heaven. Missing this truth can have disastrous consequences in this life.

In Alcorn’s provocative book “Heaven” the author demonstrates that an unbiblical view of Heaven has deeply infiltrated the church. In fact, he says that if we truly understood the reality of Heaven, it would radically transform our present lives. We would have far more resolve and boldness if we saw the world from an eternal perspective.

### What is Heaven like?

We have too often been taught to “spiritualize” the new Heaven and new Earth into a non-physical realm. But here is the problem with such a view: The New Heaven and New Earth can’t be merely spiritual (understood as non-physical) for we will be resurrected. A non-physical resurrection is like a colorless rainbow. It’s a contradiction! We have misunderstood the biblical doctrine that the New Heavens and New Earth are a physical place where God and his people live together, surrounded by physical beauty with real gardens, cities, kingdoms, rivers and banquets. We will be resurrected with physical bodies to live in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

The world we live in now offers us a glimpse of the joys and pleasures we will experience in the New Heavens and New Earth. Alcorn explains, “All our lives

we’ve been dreaming of the New Earth. Whenever we see beauty in water, wind, flower, deer, man, woman, or child, we catch a glimpse of Heaven. Just like the Garden of Eden, the New Earth will be a place of sensory delight, breathtaking beauty, satisfying relationships, and personal joy.” In other words, the greatest joys of life in the present are merely signposts to an even greater reality in Heaven. Consider a few of the biblical descriptions of Heaven.

### Heaven as home

Heaven is described as home: After a long trip on the road does anything seem more appealing than going home? Sleeping in our own beds, a home-cooked meal and fellowship with family and friends are some of the greatest joys in life. When Jesus spoke of his pending death, he spoke of building us a home with his Father in heaven (John 14:2). To understand Heaven is to grasp the real meaning of home. Undoubtedly many people have had difficult home lives. But our true home in Heaven will have all the good aspects of home, increased many times, without any of the bad.

### Heaven as community

There will be community in Heaven. Without the presence of sin we will be free to be more relational than we are now. Heaven is not like the Buddhist nirvana, where people lose their individual personalities. Rather, we will maintain our identities, memories, gifts and passions to be used for God’s glory and the good of the larger community. The New Jerusalem in Heaven is often described as a city of dazzling beauty



**“I go to prepare a place for you...”**

**— Jesus**

(Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2). Cities are full of inhabitants, streets, buildings, cultural events, entertainment, athletics, and other community events. If the New Jerusalem didn't have these city-defining characteristics, then why would Scripture so often refer to it as a city? Heaven will have the positive aspects of the city minus the crime, poverty, pollution and corruption that mark cities today. To imagine such a beautiful community is to take a large step toward envisioning the world God is planning to bring about as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### **Heaven as rest**

Heaven is described as a place of rest. One reason we will rest is because we will serve God in Heaven. There will be work in Heaven! But this is not work as we often experience it today. There will not be pressing deadlines, stressful co-workers, homework assignments or bitter competition. Rather, we will feel truly fulfilled because we will work in a manner fitting to the way God has designed each of us. The pain, corruption and sin that tarnish work today will be gone forever. We will be free to work for the benefit of God, others, and ourselves. Have you ever felt truly fulfilled as a person? Have you ever felt the power of truly serving other people? That was a small taste of what work will be like in Heaven. And as a result of our work in Heaven we will experience the most peaceful and fulfilling rest imaginable.

### **Common questions**

Will there be sex in heaven? While there may not be sexual intercourse as

we presently understand it, there will be deep pleasures beyond anything we can presently grasp. In his book “Miracles,” C.S. Lewis explains how sex is a signpost for an even greater fulfillment in heaven:

“I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer ‘No,’ he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don't bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate: he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for it.”

Will there be animals in Heaven? While the Bible does not answer this question conclusively, there are significant clues indicating that animals will be with us in Heaven. For one thing, animals have always played a significant role in God's creation. Animals populated the Garden of Eden, God saved them in the flood, and they were present at the birth of Christ. And there is precedent for believing they will populate Eden restored as well. Consider Isaiah 11:6 “The leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them.”

Second, the Bible teaches that animals have souls (Genesis 1:30; 2:7).

While they are not human souls and animals are not made in the image of God, animals and humans do share a unique feature: they are living beings. This does not guarantee that animals survive death but it does indicate that God may have a future plan for animals as he does for both mankind and Earth. It would be consistent with God's character for Him to populate Heaven with animals.

### **The truth about Heaven**

Heaven is not merely a lofty idea created to give people comfort amid the pain of life. Rather, Heaven is a real place, awaiting believers in Jesus after their death. As Jesus demonstrated in his resurrection, death is not the end but merely a portal into eternal life. Shortly before his death Jesus put it this way: “In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

Have you taken the time to really reflect on the reality of Heaven? When we die we will eternally be with our Creator! Do you get goose-bumps just thinking about it? Are you eagerly anticipating the day when this life ends and you enter into God's presence forever without any of the painful effects of sin? If not, it may be possible that you have lost a vision for the majesty, beauty and power of heaven. ■

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*Sean McDowell, an expert in the biblical worldview, is an assistant professor in the Master of Arts program in Christian Apologetics at Biola University. He also serves as head of the Bible Department at Capistrano Valley Christian Schools.*

# Heaven became real

## How a skeptical author came to believe a little boy

By Anita K. Palmer

Before she became a writer of *The New York Times* best-selling books, Lynn Vincent spent 12 years as an investigative reporter for the news magazine *World*.

Her work was cited in Congress and before the U.S. Supreme Court. Confronting corrupt politicians and deceptive clergy sharpened Vincent's antennae for lies and supercharged her relentless focus on truth.

Vincent next became a sought-after author of hard-hitting nonfiction books. She knocked out titles like "Never Surrender," with U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Jerry Boykin, one of the founders of Delta Force, and "The Blood of Lambs: A Former Terrorist's Memoir of Death and Redemption." Not to mention, "Going Rogue," with Sarah Palin. She was profiled in *The New Yorker* magazine.

Why, then, would Vincent put her national reputation on the line to tell what many would consider a far-fetched story of a little boy's supposed visit to heaven?

If you aren't among the 10.5 million who have purchased a copy of "Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back" or one of its ancillary products, here's a quick synopsis. A small-town Nebraska boy named Colton Burpo claimed that when he was nearly 4 he visited heaven during emergency surgery for a ruptured appendix. There he met Jesus and John the Baptist, as well as (spoiler alert) a miscarried sister his parents, Sonja and Todd Burpo, had never told him about.

Was this implausible tale just the hallucinations of a severely ill youngster with a vivid imagination? Or was it the true story of a real visit to an actual, physical heaven?

Vincent had to answer those questions before she would accept the assignment to co-write with Todd Burpo.

"There were those things that Colton knew that he couldn't have known, such as the miscarriage," Vincent said. Here's another example, among many: Colton described meeting "Pop," Todd's grandfather, who died 30 years before Colton was born, and whom the boy correctly identified as a young man in a photograph he'd never seen before.

Vincent also probed the motives of Sonja and Todd, a pastor of a small Wesleyan church in Imperial, Neb.

"Todd and Sonya resisted writing a book, which was a point in the believability column. In fact, (Todd) had to be convinced to do it," she said, describing him as old-school. "He was practically dragged to the table by another pastor in his same denomination who saw how people were finding hope and comfort from the story."

### If we believe it

Confident of the character of the Burpos, Vincent verified the facts of the story where she could and took the rest at face value. But there were a few claims that gave her pause.

The wings, for example. Colton said that in heaven everyone—except Jesus—has wings.

True, the Bible doesn't describe people in heaven wearing wings. Does the lack of a mention in the Bible mean something doesn't exist? Vincent wondered.

She discussed the issue with her editor, who also was concerned about the reaction both from skeptics and from biblical conservatives who might label the account heretical. "Do I leave the wings out because I'm going to lose credibility with some evangelical Christians?"

"We both said that either we believe



PHOTO BY VINCENT REMINI

San Diego resident Lynn Vincent, who co-wrote the book "Heaven is for Real" with Todd Burpo, said her own views on heaven shifted after working on the book project. It went on to become a mega best-seller and is the subject of a new movie by the same name.

the story or we don't," Vincent said. "And if we believe it, then it's God's story and we don't get to edit it."

### A figurative door

Vincent said no one was expecting this small book—divine or not—to break even, let alone break sales records and touch millions.

Readers aren't the only ones the story has affected.

"I've always been a 'here-and-now' Christian, figuring I'd worry about heaven when I get there," said Vincent, a former naval air traffic controller who came to Christianity as an adult.

She smiles and points to the new edition of "Heaven is for Real." The cover is a photo of a little boy peering through a gigantic light-filled door. (It is a tie-in to the soon-to-be released major motion picture, directed by Randall Wallace of "Braveheart" and "We Were Soldiers" fame and featuring Greg Kinnear and Kelly Reilly. Connor Corum stars as Colton.)

"The project opened a figurative door for me," the author said. "Now I see this life and the afterlife as one life."

It's changed the way she prays, too. She now pictures herself approaching the Father, joining all the saints who already are at the altar "from every time and nation," and knowing she's speaking to an actual Person.

Smiling, she said, "There really is a 'there' there."

---

Anita K. Palmer is a freelance writer in San Diego.



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# the Passion of Hollywood

A decade after Mel Gibson's blockbuster, faith-based films see resurgence

by LORI ARNOLD

A decade has passed since film critic Phil Boatwright joined millions of people in a deliberate and dark spiritual pilgrimage into theaters around the globe. The darkness spoke as much about the violent nature of the film they came to see as it did of the ambiance of the dimly lit viewing stations.

Even before it hit the movie theaters, controversy swirled around Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ." But by the end of the movie, which chronicled the last 12 hours of Jesus Christ leading up to his crucifixion, memory of the debate had faded from the minds of Boatwright and many others.

Even now, Boatwright vividly remembers a scene that he called not only "technically impressive, but emotionally impacting."

"The end of Christ's journey at Golgotha is seen from above, the camera pulling back and up, the image becoming blurry, as if we are looking through some moist substance," Boatwright said. "Then, a

drop of water splatters on the earth. It is God's tear, a symbolic cinematic gesture revealing the Father's pain. This we have never seen before in a film depicting the crucifixion. It becomes clear how much our Creator loves his Son, and us."

Released just over 10 years ago, Gibson's epic film was a trailblazer on numerous fronts. Unable to find a studio to support his project, "The Passion" was funded exclusively by Gibson, who spent nearly \$30 million in production costs and, ac-

cording to Forbes magazine, another \$15 million in marketing. He was well paid for the endeavor, with the film earning \$611.9 million worldwide, according to the online data site Box Office Mojo.

The film will make its first-ever appearance on commercial



Top to bottom: 'The Passion of the Christ,' 'The Passion of the Christ,' 'Courageous,' 'Fireproof'

television on Palm Sunday with its premier on the UP network at 6 p.m. April 13. The edited-for-television version will run with limited commercial interruption.

Rated R for its cringe-worthy portrayal of Christ's beating and death, it still remains the No. 1 film for the category of audiences over age 17, a rating label usually spurned by faith-based audiences. It also remains the top-grossing U.S. film for both "winter" and "February" opening weekend releases.

With more than \$370.8 million in domestic sales, it is the top-grossing faith-based film in history and the 25<sup>th</sup> highest grossing movie ever on American soil.

"If only one soul came to realize we are more than physical and mental beings, but also spiritual ones, then the effort and expense was worth it," said Boatwright, who is editor of Preview Online and a columnist for Baptist Press. "I suspect, however, there are many such conclusions by those who had never seen spiritual subject matter addressed on a movie screen."

Even so, most faith-based entertainment experts point to "The Passion of the Christ" as a bellwether film that nudged Hollywood into rethinking its position on the Christian market.

"I think that movie set an understanding in Hollywood that there is a market for faith-based films, films with a strong Christian content and obviously, by the significant financial success of that movie, people are willing and able to go and watch," said Chris Stone, a certified brand strategist and founder of the Raleigh, S.C.-based Faith Driven Consumer, which connects motivated Christian consumers with the companies who are open to a clientele with strong biblical values.

#### 'Gold in the hills'

There is precedent that faith-based consumers will spend money on entertainment that meshes with their values. According to Box Office Mojo, Christian-themed movies have earned \$1.3 billion since 1980. Of the 86 movies listed on Box Office Mojo's Christian films list, 57 were released post "The Passion."

Boatwright said he believes Holly-

wood responded with a Eureka attitude of "There's gold in them there hills," reminiscent of California's gold mining era.

"It is a business and whenever a subject stimulates box office grosses, you can expect further exploitation of that genre," the culture watcher said. "After the success of 'The Passion,' many filmmakers realized there was an overlooked audience. From it was born a faith-based arm of at least one major film studio."

Other studios also responded by establishing faith-based divisions, though many of them have since disappeared from Hollywood's ever-evolving landscape. And although there was movement among lower budget faith-based projects, particularly for the home theater market, the advent of big-picture Christian-themed movies have been slow to the market. The notable exception was the Chronicles of Narnia trilogy, which ranks immediately behind "The Passion" in second, third and fourth on the all-time Christian list, with a total domestic take of \$971 million.

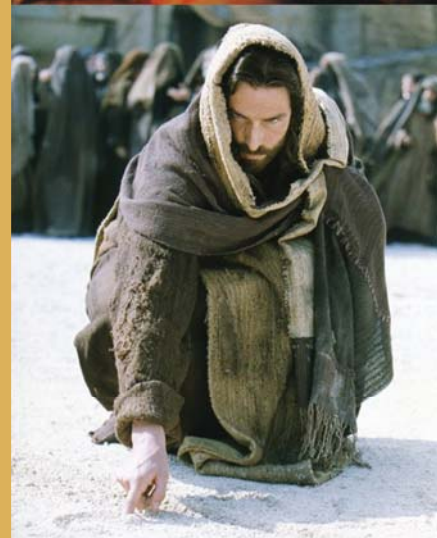
Also finding success was 2009's "The Blind Side," a secular film that highlighted the Christian faith of its main characters, luring the Christian market in droves and earning the picture \$256 million in domestic sales and earning its leading actress, Sandra Bullock, an Academy Award.

#### Independent approach

While Hollywood's big studios have been slow to react with megahits, numerous churches and smaller film companies have emerged on the industry scene, improving production quality and storylines.

"A studio production has a major advantage—a big budget," Boatwright said. "The big budget gives you the best of everything, from caterer to editor. But if the Holy Spirit is upon a low-budgeted project, miracles can happen."

Among those making an imprint in the industry are brothers Alex and Stephen Kendrick, both associate pastors at Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga. Under their leadership, the church-owned Sherwood Pictures has produced "Flywheel" (2003), "Facing the Giants" (2006), "Fire-





Nathan (Ken Bevel) is a proud and committed father in the film 'Courageous' (2011). The film is one of several produced by Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga.

proof" (2008) and "Courageous" (2011). Their three most recent films combined to earn \$78.2 million in gross sales and are No. 14, 8 and 7, respectively on the all-time Christian films list.

"They have a respect for the film-making process and for narrative style," Boatwright said. "Story and character are important to them. If you want to get a message across, you need to get involved with the premise and the characters. There are others learning this cinematic process."

#### 'Year of the Bible Movie'

For many Hollywood watchers, this year has emerged as a case study in how two divergent paths—the surprising but undeniable success of Gibson's megahit and the slow and steady strides of small-budget films—have intersected with a series of major Christian-themed motion pictures on the turnpike, prompting some to dub 2014 "The Year of the Bible Movie." This spring alone, "Son of God," "Noah," "Heaven is for Real" and "God's Not Dead" will hit theaters.

"I don't believe all of the biblically based movies coming out this year have anything to do with 'The Passion,' but I think that since then, the filmmakers had more confidence making these biblically themed movies that they want to make, knowing that there really is an au-

dience out there who will go to it," said Karen Kovell, founding director of the Hollywood Prayer Network.

"Darren Aronofsky has been wanting to make 'Noah' for 16 years, so 'The Passion' didn't give him the idea, but I believe it gave him the confidence that it could be a success, because of the numbers."

In June, a remake of "Left Behind" is set for release, while the big budget "Exodus," debuts ahead of Christmas.

"It took quite a while for that to take hold and mature but we have made some significant process now," Stone said. "It took longer than I thought. It has now been 10 years and there was significant spell between then and now for there to be a significant Hollywood impact with big budgets, significant stars in the arena of a biblically themed movie."

#### Growing influence

Stone believes the success of movies like "Fireproof" and "Courage" has helped to keep pressure on the entertainment industry.

"Hollywood has come into the picture after all of those churches and other small production companies did what they did," he said. "I think it fed, it created ... from a cottage industry comes a major industry."

Helping to feed that industry are Christian universities, which are now ex-

panding their film and communications departments in an effort to influence culture. One of the pioneers of the movement is Biola University, which launched its annual Media Conference 16 years ago. In addition, it hosts a film festival and staffs a Studio Task Force that engages more than 250 Christian professionals working in the entertainment industry who meet quarterly at CBS Studio Center in support of the campus' Cinema and Media Arts department.

"We are not trying to make films for the Fireproof audience, but for mainstream audiences that have messages that reflect our values," said Associate Professor Jack Hafer, chairman of the Cinema and Media Arts department. "I don't know how Biola got where it is as No. 1, but watch them the next five years—it's going to be exciting."

#### Content challenges

While 2014 promises to be a megayear for Bible-themed movies, not all Christians are celebrating. Among the movies most heavily criticized is "Noah," which prompted a disclaimer from the National Religious Broadcasters and Paramount Pictures, the production company behind the Russell Crowe film. In their joint "explanatory message," the authors warned the movie was "a dramatization of the major scriptural themes and not a line-by-line retelling of the Bible story."

"Everybody needs to consider that Hollywood made it and Hollywood is imperfect," said Stone, who advocates for open dialogue with Hollywood power brokers. "If we want to build a relationship with Hollywood, if we want Hollywood to give us entertainment that we value, we have to do two things. We have to go see it in enough numbers where they are making a profit and we have to speak out positively and negatively and say, 'This is what we like; thank you for producing it,' and 'You know, if you wanted us to like it more you might consider this.' We live in a world of consumer feedback."

Kovell agreed.

"I think it's very important for the Christian audience to understand that films are not evangelism tools. They are entertainment," she said. "My passion is



to encourage the church to go to these movies and then talk about the content with others, explaining what they believe was from the Bible and what was fabricated to make a better movie,” she said. “They should not judge the material but use it for discussion. The films are not made to lead people to Christ, but we are responsible as Christians to use any opportunity to share the good news of the gospel—and these films happen to be the perfect tools to do that.”

Kovell said even projects that do a bad job of capturing a Christian worldview can be used for good if faith-based consumers approach Hollywood with the proper heart.

“We see Hollywood as the world’s most influential mission field and believe that if Christians would stop boycotting, hating, judging or ignoring Hollywood, but pray instead, then we could make an eternal difference on our culture and the world,” she said.

### Extreme reactions

It is a surprise to virtually no one who seeks entertainment choices from the filter of their faith, that Hollywood has long ago lost its way but those working behind the scenes believe it’s time to change the mostly visceral approach believers have used when dealing with gatekeepers of film and television.

“Christians feel very passionately about Hollywood and the two extreme responses prevail: Either they are mass consumers and idolize the celebrities and films, or they hate it and believe it’s directly from Satan’s pit,” Kovell said.

“Our approach is to take that passion from both extremes and challenge people to channel that into praying for God to come in and touch the hearts and lives of the people creating our culture—films, TV, news, Internet, video games and music—and not only change their lives but also change the content that they are creating. We also pray for the Christians here to be salt and light as they live and work in this tremendously difficult marketplace.”

The notion of being salt and light extends beyond prayer. Boatwright hearkens back to the early days of his career reviewing movies. He entered the industry shortly after the 1988 release of Martin Scorsese’s “The Last Temptation of Christ,” viewed by many in Christian circles as blasphemous.

“The Christian community was up in arms over that film, going so far as to pressure Universal Studios to not release it,” Boatwright said. “Their opponents asked, ‘How can you ban a film if you haven’t even seen it?’

“That got me to thinking. If a movie-maker has the right to put whatever he wants into a film, shouldn’t a filmgoer have the right to know what the content of that film consists of? So, I began publishing a guide that furnished the reason

## Top-grossing faith-based films

According to Box Office Mojo and its Christian genre database, 89 movies with tracking data were produced since 1980, generating \$1.25 billion in gross theatrical ticket sales. The website defines the genre as “movies produced by Christians that promote or embody their religions.”

### Top ten

1. The Passion of the Christ (2004)	\$370.8 million
2. Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005)	\$291.7 million
3. Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian (2008)	\$141.6 million
4. Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader (2010)	\$104.4 million
5. Son of God (2014)	\$ 43.8 million
6. The Nativity Story (2006)	\$ 37.6 million
7. Courageous (2011)	\$ 34.5 million
8. Fireproof (2008)	\$ 33.5 million
9. Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie (2002)	\$ 25.6 million
10. One Night with the King (2006)	\$ 13.4 million

### Other notables

12. The Omega Code (1999)	\$ 12.6 million
13. End of the Spear (2006)	\$ 12.0 million
14. Facing the Giants (2006)	\$ 10.2 million
15. Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed (2008)	\$ 7.7 million
17. Luther (2003)	\$ 5.8 million
20. Left Behind (2001)	\$ 4.2 million
23. To Save a Life (2010)*	\$ 3.8 million
31. Grace Unplugged (2013)	\$ 2.5 million
64. Billy: The Early Years of Billy Graham (2008)	\$ 347,328

Source: [www.boxofficemojo.com](http://www.boxofficemojo.com)

\*To Save a Life was written by Jim Britts, New Song Community Church in Oceanside. A majority of the cast and crew were from the North County and many of the locations were filmed there as well.

for the rating, giving a heads-up to parents and concerned moviegoers.”

### Tools for viewers

Film reviews from a Christian perspective are now prevalent, with sites such as Movieguide, Christian Film Database, Plugged In and Boatwright’s own Preview Online providing easy access to faith-based viewers.

Stone’s ministry goes a step further by working directly with a wide range of corporations to offer goods and services to a maturing Christian market.

“Christian consumers and, in the case of our work, faith-driven consumers, are hungry for entertainment content that resonates with them,” the brand strategist said. “We are no different than any other market segment. We have unique needs. We have differentiated wants and needs and are we’re seeking an outlet for that. Hollywood, this year, has an opportunity to provide for those needs and desires, to meet that need and to profit from it.”



Kirk Cameron stars as Caleb Holt in ‘Fireproof’ (2008). The film was also produced by Sherwood Baptist Church.



Roma Downey plays Mary, the mother of Jesus, in 'Son of God' (2014), produced by Downey with her husband Mark Burnett.

The experts believe it is imperative that Christians respond by supporting the films, even if the content falls short of expectations.

"I think the media is interested to see what Christian consumers are going to do, whether faith-driven consumers are going to vote with their wallets and their feet," Stone said.

"If it doesn't work out, it will be a long time before we see it again. If we want Hollywood to continue making prod-

uct that is targeted at us then we need to engage with them. We don't have to roll over and take what they send, but we have to engage with them."

#### Sincere dialogue

The best approach to that engagement, Stone said, is through healthy dialogue.

"So many people in the Christian community have been in the business of 'What do we not like' and we are on the reverse of that," the marketing expert said. "We are in

the business of 'What we do like.' Instead of a boycott, we promote a buycott. Find somebody you like to do business with and do business with them. Create a relationship with them and shape the relationship based upon interaction.

"If you don't tell people what you want how are they going to give it to you? If we don't engage... we can sit home and pout and we can go play the victim or we can get up and be a vibrant part of the community and say, 'This what I believe. This is why I believe and I have the freedom to express it just as you do and be part of the discourse.'"

The end result, he added, is pointing people back to the redemptive power of the cross.

"Everybody's got an opinion," Stone said. "My ultimate thought is does it, in an overall sense, meet my needs as a consumer and does it provide me an opportunity to have a conversation with someone and share the gospel of Jesus Christ?" ■

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## 2014: Year of the Bible Movie

The Chinese may be celebrating the Year of the Horse, but fans of faith-based films have declared 2014 the Year of the Bible Movie. Here is a summary of what to expect in 2014:

### 'Son of God'

Produced by the husband-wife team of Mark Burnett and Roma Downey, the epic picture was mostly a recast from the couple's 2013 blockbuster mini-series "The Bible."

According to Box Office Mojo, "Son of God" ranked second in ticket sales its opening weekend, selling \$31.49 million. It came in \$5 million under the No. 1 movie of the week, newcomer "Non-Stop." In its second week the movie grossed just \$10.4 million, a 60 percent drop, but still managed to land in the No. 5 spot.

According to Box Office Mojo, the movie ranks fifth all-time in overall gross ticket sales for Christian films and fourth in opening weekend tills in the same category, beating out "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader."

### 'Noah'

Perhaps the most anticipated faith-based film of the year is director Darren Aronofsky's "Noah," starring Russell Crowe, Emma Watson and Jennifer Connelly. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Aronofsky has contemplated a film based on Noah since his success with the 1998 film "Pi."

With a budget in excess of \$125 million, there has been persistent public wrangling between Aronofsky's creative intentions for the film and Paramount Pictures' desire to not alienate its significant ticket draw—Christians.

Critics of the film said "Noah" takes liberties with the biblical content by focusing on such topics as environmentalism and overpopulation.

In late February, the National Religious Broadcaster issued an "explanatory message" with Paramount telling moviegoers to expect "a dramatization of the major scriptural themes and not a line-by-line retelling of the Bible story." The disclaimer, they said, would appear on all future marketing materials.

In the statement, Dr. Jerry A. Johnson, president & CEO of NRB, called it "an imaginative interpretation of Scripture, and not literal." At the same time, he thanked the studio for taking on a film with strong biblical content.

Johnson also advised believers to use the non-Scriptural moments in the film as teaching moments to engage others in a respectful dialogue about the greatest selling book of all times.

### 'Heaven is for Real'

The captivating story of heaven from the eyes of a pint-size package—who reveals compelling details of his ethereal trip after a near-death experience—hits the big screen April 16. "Heaven is for Real," starring young newcomer Connor Corum, with Greg Kinnear and Kelly Reilly as his parents, is based on the blockbuster best-selling book by the same name.

The book, released in 2010, spent 64 weeks in the No. 1 spot on The New York Times' best-seller list. Published by Thomas Nelson, the non-fiction work was co-written by San Diego author Lynn Vincent and Nebraska pastor Todd Burpo, whose 4-year-old son experienced a taste of heaven after he nearly died during surgery to remove his burst appendix. Three and a half years after the book's release, it remains on the Times best-seller list, having sold 10.5 million copies in 25 languages.

For the film adaptation, "Heaven is for Real" widens its scope, incorporating Todd's struggles in deciding to go public with Colton's story. His son's story not only impacts the Burpos, but also their small town, which was inundated with media in light of the revelations about the child's experience. While immensely moving and comforting for some fans, the book has its critics and skeptics.

### 'Left Behind'

Set for release sometime this year is a remake of the 2001 picture "Left Behind." Starring Nicolas Cage, Chad Michael Murray, Cassi Thomson, Nicky Whelan and Jordin Sparks, the remake focuses on the first few hours after the Rapture and "the chaos of the world in the wake of millions of people vanishing with no explanation."

The reboot is directed by Vic Arm-

strong and produced by Paul Lalonde, who also co-wrote the script with John Patus. Filmed in Baton Rouge, La., the \$15 million action-thriller will be released through Stoney Lake Entertainment.

As with the original, the remake is based on the best-selling series by Alpine resident Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. The original movie was released on DVD in September 2000 and then hit the theaters in early 2001. With more than 65 million copies sold, it is estimated that one in eight Americans has read at least one of the 16 books.

### 'God's Not Dead'

Art imitates life in Pure Flix Entertainment's "God's Not Dead," which released March 21.

The screenplay, based on the Rice Brooks book by the same title, depicts the 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.

Produced by David A.R. White, a founding partner in Pure Flix Entertainment, the film centers on 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 flunk his young student.

Also featured in the film are Christian rockers the Newsboys and Willie and Korie Robertson, stars of the A & E reality show "Duck Dynasty," who appear as themselves.

### 'Exodus'

Just in time for Christmas, noted English director Ridley Scott is expected to release his big budget film "Exodus," starring Christian Bale as Moses, and Aaron Paul, Sigourney Weaver and Ben Kingsley.

The storyline, crafted by Bill Collage, Adam Cooper and Steven Zaillian, centers on Moses as he leads the Israelites out of Egypt and their forced bondage as chronicled in the Bible's second book.

Scott's previous directing work includes "Blade Runner," "Thelma and Louise," "Robin Hood" and "Prometheus." "Exodus" will be distributed by 20th Century Fox.



# Reasons to believe

## Evidence for the resurrection

by MART DEHAAN

**I**n a world filled with belief systems making religious claims, how can you know what to believe? How can you know who to follow? This article offers ten pieces of evidence and witness that verify that following Christ is reasonable. As this evidence is examined and tested—we find that it can also be trusted.

### 1 A public execution assured his death

During the Jewish Feast of Passover, Jesus was swept away by an angry crowd into a Roman hall of justice. As He stood before Pilate, the governor of Judea, religious leaders accused Jesus of claiming to be the king of the Jews. The crowd demanded His death. Jesus was beaten, whipped, and sentenced to a public execution. On a hill outside of Jerusalem, He was crucified between two criminals. Brokenhearted friends and mocking enemies shared in His deathwatch. As the Sabbath neared, Roman soldiers were sent to finish the execution. To quicken death, they broke the legs of the two criminals. But when they came to Jesus they did not break His legs, because from experience they knew He was already dead. As a final precaution, however, they thrust a spear into His side. It would take more than resuscitation for Him to ever trouble them again.

### 2 A high official secured the gravesite

The next day, religious leaders again met with Pilate. They said Jesus had predicted He would rise in three days. To assure that the disciples could not conspire in a resurrection hoax, Pilate ordered the official seal of Rome to be attached to the tomb to put graverobbers on notice. To enforce the order, soldiers stood guard. Any disciple who wanted to tamper with the body would have had to get by them,

which wouldn't have been easy. The Roman guards had good reason for staying alert—the penalty for falling asleep while on watch was death.

### 3 In spite of guards, the grave was found empty

On the morning after the Sabbath, some of Jesus' followers went to the grave to anoint His body. But when they arrived, they were surprised at what they found. The huge stone that had been rolled into place over the entrance to the tomb had been moved, and Jesus' body was gone. As word got out, two disciples rushed to the burial site. The tomb was empty except for Jesus' burial wrappings, which were lying neatly in place. In the meantime, some of the guards had gone into Jerusalem to tell the Jewish officials that they had fainted in the presence of a supernatural being that rolled the stone away. And when they woke up, the tomb was empty. The officials paid the guards a large sum of money to lie and say that the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept. They assured the guards that if the report of the missing body got back to the governor they would intercede on their behalf.

### 4 Many people claimed to have seen him alive

About AD 55, the apostle Paul wrote that the resurrected Christ had been seen by Peter, the 12 apostles, more than 500 people (many of whom were still alive at the time of his writing), James, and himself (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). By making such a public statement, he gave critics a chance to check out his claims for themselves. In addition, the New Testament begins its history of the followers of Christ by saying that Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many

infallible proofs, being seen by [the apostles] during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

### 5 His apostles were dramatically changed

When one of Jesus' inner circle defected and betrayed Him, the other apostles ran for their lives. Even Peter, who earlier had insisted that he was ready to die for his teacher, lost heart and denied that he even knew Jesus. But the apostles went through a dramatic change. Within a few weeks, they were standing face to face with the ones who had crucified their leader. Their spirit was like iron. They became unstoppable in their determination to sacrifice everything for the one they called Savior and Lord. Even after they were imprisoned, threatened, and forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus, the apostles said to the Jewish leaders, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). After they were beaten for disobeying the orders of the Jewish council, these once-cowardly apostles "did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

### 6 Witnesses were willing to die for their claims

History is full of martyrs. Countless men and women have died for their beliefs. For that reason, it is not that significant to point out that the first disciples were willing to suffer and die for their faith. But it is significant that while many will die for what they believe to be the truth, few if any will die for what they know to be a lie. That psychological fact is important because the disciples of Christ did not die for deeply held beliefs about which they could have been honestly mistaken. They died for their claims to



The Garden Tomb, just outside the ancient walls of Old Jerusalem, is believed by many to be the garden and sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, and therefore a possible site of the burial and resurrection of Jesus.

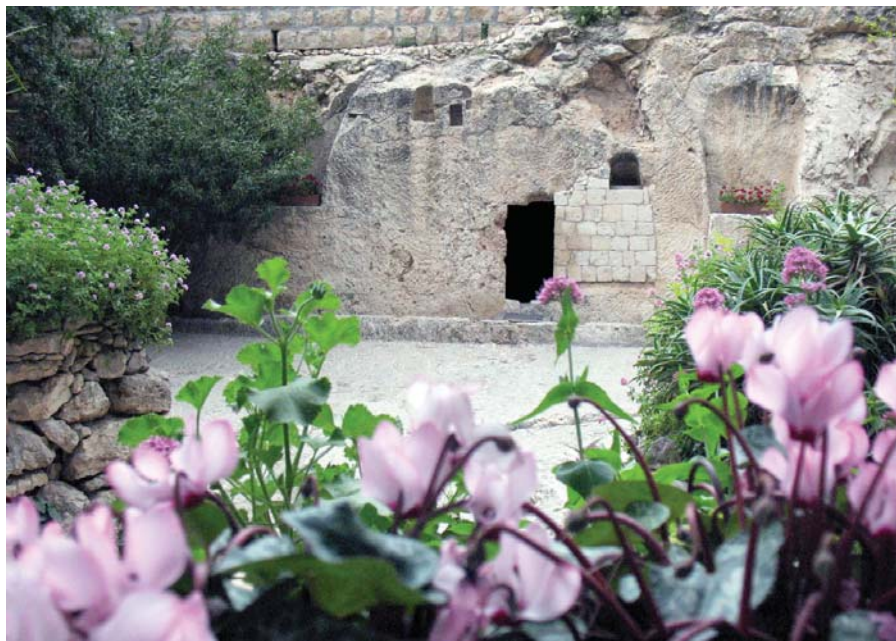


PHOTO BY THERESA KEENER

have seen Jesus alive and well after His resurrection. They died for their claim that Jesus Christ had not only died for their sins but that He had risen bodily from the dead to show that He was like no other spiritual leader who had ever lived.

## 7 Jewish believers changed their day of worship

The Sabbath day of rest and worship was basic to the Jewish way of life. Any Jew who did not honor the Sabbath was guilty of breaking the law of Moses. Yet Jewish followers of Christ began worshipping with Gentile believers on a new day. The first day of the week, the day on which they believed Christ had risen from the dead, replaced the Sabbath. For a Jew, it reflected a major change of life. The new day, along with the Christian conversion rite of baptism, declared that those who believed Christ had risen from the dead were ready for more than a renewal of Judaism. They believed that the death and resurrection of Christ had cleared the way for a new relationship with God. The new way was based not on the law, but on the sin-bearing, life-giving help of a resurrected Savior.

## 8 Although it was unexpected, it was clearly predicted

The disciples were caught off guard. They expected their Messiah to restore the kingdom to Israel. Their minds were so fixed on the coming of a messianic political kingdom that they didn't anticipate the events essential to the salvation of their souls. They must have thought Christ was speaking in symbolic language when He kept saying over and over that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem to die and be resurrected from the dead. Coming from one who spoke in

parables, they missed the obvious until after it was all over. In the process, they also overlooked the prophet Isaiah's prediction of a suffering servant who would bear the sins of Israel, being led like a lamb to the slaughter, before God "prolong[ed] His days" (Isaiah 53:10).

## 9 It was a fitting climax to a miraculous life

While Jesus hung on a Roman cross, crowds mocked Him. He helped others, but could He help Himself? Was the miracle suddenly coming to an end? It seemed like such an unexpected ending for someone who began His public life by turning water into wine. During His three-year ministry, He walked on water; healed the sick; opened blind eyes, deaf ears, and tongue-tied mouths; restored crippled limbs; cast out demons; stilled a violent storm; and raised the dead. He asked questions wise men couldn't answer. He taught profound truths with the simplest of comparisons. And He confronted hypocrites with words that exposed their coverup. If all this was true, should we be surprised that His enemies didn't have the last word?

## 10 It fits the experience of those who trust him

The apostle Paul wrote, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in

you" (Romans 8:11). This was the experience of Paul, whose heart was dramatically changed by the resurrected Christ. It is also the experience of people all over the world who have "died" to their old ways so that Christ can live His life through them. This spiritual power is not evident in those who try to add belief in Christ to their old life. It is seen only in those who are willing to "die" to their old life to make room for the rule of Christ. It is apparent only in those who respond to the overwhelming evidence for Christ's resurrection by acknowledging His lordship in their heart.

### You're not alone

You're not alone if you find yourself honestly unconvinced about whether Christ rose from the dead. But keep in mind that Jesus promised God's help to those who want to be right with God. He said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own" (John 7:17 NIV).

If you do see the reasonableness of the resurrection, keep in mind that the Bible says Christ died to pay the price for our sins, and those who believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead will be saved (Romans 10:9-10). The salvation Christ offers is not a reward for effort, but a gift to all who in light of the evidence put their trust in Him. ■

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# Creative *Wave*

Local artist makes a splash with seascapes, cartoons

by LORI ARNOLD





Norm Daniels sticks out like a creative thumb when he plops down at San Diego beaches—an easel and canvas in one hand, paints and brushes in the other. He might as well be an alien in the land of surfboards, sandcastles and sea gulls.

“I love it when kids come up while I’m

painting on location and ask me what I’m doing,” the Pine Valley resident said.

“Always, it is the same conversation:

“Kid: ‘What are ya’ doin’ mister?’”

“Me: ‘I’m painting.’”

“Kid: ‘Are you an artist?’”

“Me: ‘Do you think I am?’”

“Kid: ‘Hmmm. Yeah, I think so.’”

“Me: ‘Are you an artist?’”

“Kid: ‘Oh yeah!’”

At this point, the self-taught painter and sea lover becomes impromptu teacher.

“I lower the easel and hand them the brush and let ‘em paint,” Daniels said. “Always makes the parents nervous, but



Artist Norm Daniels adds some strokes to a canvas in his garage studio in Pine Valley. His lifelong love of the ocean is a common theme in many of his works.



Daniels has painted many San Diego landmarks, such as the Old Point Loma Lighthouse at the Cabrillo National Monument.

it is so fun watching these kids paint. Sometimes the parents buy the painting, even. But always, it makes a big smile for everyone, and oil paint is easy to, eh, fix—if it needs to be adjusted a bit.”

The forgiving power of oils is not lost on Daniels, a longtime believer who still marvels at the forgiving power he’s found in his Christian faith.

“I know that I am a big goof,” he said. “I make such huge messes and selfish mistakes. In God there is forgiveness, acceptance and hope.”

Daniels has put that hope into overdrive in recent years as he’s coped with a series of small strokes that impacted his speech and the left side of his body.

“That was a scary time,” he said. “There was lots of pain in the back of my noggin.”

The health scare prompted Daniels to resign his post as executive director of Pine Valley Bible Conference Center, where his wife of 32 years, Patsy, remains conference coordinator. With the stress of administrative duties behind him, and after following the doctor’s orders, changing his diet and weaning off of steroids, Daniels is nearly healed.

“At last I’m really close to being back



to my goofy, old self again,” he said.

The professionally trained architect spent a season of his life in the Sierras with his family while he served as artist/architect for Hume Lake Christian Camps. During his tenure with Hume, Daniels designed several buildings for the facility and honed his art skills creating scenery, posters, and production art for youth-led dramas. Daniels now focuses full time on his art—an unintended, but vital, component in his recovery.

“Just working and practicing and growing as an artist takes lots of time, so actually I’m thankful that the stroke gave me the gift of time,” he said. “Kinda weird, huh?”

“If I never sold a painting again, I would still paint and draw. Of course, I’d go hungry, but I would still paint as long as God gives me breath. Indeed, it is a passion. How thankful I am for this opportunity.”

### Doodles to fine art

Daniels’ first commissioning of art came by way of his childhood peers who watched him doodle during class. It wasn’t uncommon in those days to find a Mad magazine tucked into his science textbook.

“I was always being asked to draw posters or sketches for all the other kids’ projects,” the father of three grown children said. “It was fun.”

Decades later his notebooks and journals still boast sketches and cartoons, a visual testimony to his father’s influence.

“My dad was a pretty good cartoonist, so I’ve loved and drawn ‘toons’ since I was a youngster,” he said.

It would be a mistake, though, to box Daniels into a single style. While his “Hula ToOnS” line has a cheery, whimsical side with nods to the Aloha spirit and Southern California’s early love affair with the VW beetle and bus, his repertoire includes Plein Air impressionism of local landmarks and breathtaking surfscapes and other marvels of creation that he calls representational impressionism, “meaning things look like what they are, not abstract, and not photo-realistic.”

Each style of his artwork seems to capture an element of his personality. For instance, he maintains his Hula ToOnS are “not to be taken too seriously, so if you are, then stop it right now!” A self-confessed “reformed fundamentalist,” Daniels said it took years for him to realize being a Christian artist didn’t require him to focus his work on the artifacts of the faith.

He likened it to Scottish athlete Eric Liddell, upon whom the 1981 film “Chariots of Fire” was based. As shown in the



Next to San Diego, the islands of Hawaii provide Daniels with plenty of colorful settings to bring out the brushes and paints.





The iconic Volkswagen bus, a fixture in Southern California during the 1960s and '70s, is a favorite subject of Daniels.

movie, Liddell was able to carve out a place in life for both missionary work and running.

"I love the quote from 'Chariots of Fire' where Eric Liddell says: 'I know that God made me for a purpose, for China, but He also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure.' So cool. When I paint, I feel His joy and pleasure."

### Pursuing color and light

Daniels' delight with the ocean, nurtured by his once-daily surfing exploits as a teen living in La Mesa, is a hobby he still pursues "now and again." His tidy garage-based studio—situated in the foothills a good three-quarters of an hour east of the closest shoreline—boasts the expected art supplies, a retired surfboard designed for the big waves he no longer chases, a poster celebrating the colorful pageantry of the VW bus, and a commercial sign paying tribute to Rick Griffin, the late "surf artist" and illustrator who is one of Daniel's artistic influences.

"There is something so special about the salt air and sand and the sport of surfing," he said. "It is extremely peaceful and pleasant, although the peace can be interrupted by the occasional sheer terror of the reality of not being at the

top of the food chain out there—or getting your keister pummeled."

At the center of it all is vibrant color, a medium he uses to recreate that which was created by his Creator, giving him a voice without words.

"My vocabulary has so few colors," he said. My art palette is unlimited," he said.

Daniels channels those colors in his quest to reproduce light, the main thing he observes when he studies nature.

"(Its) the way light reflects color and

shape," he said of his view of creation, particularly the pull of the ocean. "The impact of light upon your eyes. Every one gathers to watch a sunset because of the light. Sometimes there is spontaneous applause, too. We all see it. Maybe an artist doesn't really see it better, maybe we just take a little longer to look at it and study it, then attempt to capture it with paint on canvas. And sometimes there is spontaneous ap-

See **DANIELS**, page 37



An artist not to be pigeonholed, Daniels' eclectic style also includes seascapes and tropical oases, including this colorful rendering of a bridge at Paradise Point Resort on the shores of Mission Bay.

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Rx for active living

# Old exercise technique proves new again

by CAROL LEBEAU

My fondest memories of childhood revolve around swimming—winters indoors at the Family “Y,” summers in the outdoor city pool through the Amateur Athletic Union age-group swimming program.

Even more than the actual competition, I loved the workouts. Socially fun and physically challenging, I was blessed with coaches who worked hard to motivate my teammates and me to reach our full potential as young athletes.

One of the most fun and creative swim workouts I recall used a training technique called *fartlek*. (Now imagine poor Coach Meyers as he announced the next set would be “fartleks” to a bunch of immature 12 year-olds!)

Actually, when it comes to fitness, the funny-sounding word is nothing to snicker about. *Fartlek*, a Swedish term meaning “speed play,” is a form of interval or speed training that can be highly effective in improving speed and endurance.

Coach Meyers would blow the whistle and we’d swim 100 percent effort in short spurts. The next whistle meant slow and easy for a minute or so. We’d repeat the process until exhaustion set in.

There’s no doubt, *fartleks* made me a faster swimmer. (And after all these years, it still makes me smile.)

Well guess what? Apparently, what’s old is new again. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, high-intensity training tops the list of hot fitness trends for 2014. They no longer use the term, *fartlek*, but the principle remains.

The popular fitness routine has evolved and is now called high-intensity impact training or HIIT. As with my *fartleks* experience, it still focuses on short bursts of high-intensity exercise fol-

### DID YOU KNOW?

*Fartlek*, developed in the 1930s, comes from the Swedish word for “speed play” and combines continuous and interval training. *Fartlek* allows the athlete to run at varying intensity levels over distances of their choice. This type of training stresses both the aerobic and anaerobic energy pathways.

lowed by short periods of rest. Fitness experts and devotees claim the technique yields twice the results in half the time.

Shannon Fable, with the San Diego-based American Council on Exercise, says the growing trend makes sense for fitness buffs with busy lives. She says HIIT is a regimen that meets needs in the time they have available.

HIIT (*fartlek*!) workouts have been around for years, but thanks to intense workout programs such as CrossFit, P90X, Insanity, TurboFire and Tabata Training, more and more fitness fanatics are turning to the practice to get fit.

But if all that intensity isn’t for you, no worries. The list of trendy routines for 2014 includes everything from ancient stretching practices to new twists on personal training. Also scoring high this year ... fitness programs for older adults, and children’s exercise programs.

So pick out a workout plan that sounds fun to you and let’s all keep moving in 2014!!



Carol LeBeau is a former 10News anchor, Staying Healthy reporter and current Health Champion for Palomar Health, avid runner, bicyclist and ranked, rough water

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



### Art days offer family fun

OCEANSIDE — The Oceanside Cultural Arts Foundation will present the 22nd annual Oceanside Days of Art, a family-friendly festival, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 26 and 27 at the corner of Coast Highway 101 and Pier View Way.

The free event is a juried fine art festival featuring more than 100 local artists from throughout Southern California selling a variety of unique artwork, including paintings, sculptures, stained glass, ceramics, fine jewelry and photography.

The activities also include live stage performances, children's and adult's hands on art activities, street chalk artist, painting and sculpture demonstrations. The Oceanside Museum of Art, located adjacent to the event, will offer free admission during both days of the festival. On Sunday, the Green Fair will be taking place across the street with

earth friendly activities for guests.

An on-site food court will provide a variety of eating options.

Learn more, including the entertainment line-up at [www.ocaf.info](http://www.ocaf.info).

### 'Heaven Can Wait' on stage

POINT LOMA — Westminster Theatre and Vanguard Productions will present the classic comedy "Heaven Can Wait" April 4 to 6 and 11 to 12. Friday and Saturday shows begin at 8 p.m., with Sunday performances set for 7 p.m.

Written in 1941 the Harry Segall play has been remade into several films, including "Here Comes Mr. Jordan," "Down to Earth" and the 1978 "Heaven Can Wait" film starring Warren Beatty and Julie Christie.

The story follows the journey of a man whose soul is accidentally plucked from his body and sent to heaven 60 years too early, but the angelic messengers are too late to restore him.

The theater is located at 3598 Talbot St. Learn more at [www.vanguardsd.org](http://www.vanguardsd.org) or call (619) 224-6263.

### Networking post-prison programs

CHULA VISTA — The Re-Entry Prison and Jail Ministry is seeking information for its resource directory on Christian organizations that assist inmates being released from correctional facilities through residential home, support group or emergency programs.

The ministry's website contains an exhaustive list of programs, including support groups for alcohol and drug addiction, designed to help ex-offenders transition into productive lives.

In addition to its resource list, the Chula Vista ministry hosts workshops, operates a correspondence program, provides one-on-one ministry and promotes networking.

Learn more at [www.reentry.org](http://www.reentry.org) or call (619) 421-6263.

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### Ramona walk benefits clinic

RAMONA — The Ramona Pregnancy Care Clinic will hold its 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk for Life fundraiser at 9 a.m. May 3. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

Participants may gather donations from sponsors or pay a \$25 entrance fee with all proceeds going to support the clinic's services to women, teens and families. Prizes are awarded for the top fundraisers in the categories of Lover's Lane, Family Court, Dog Walk, Babies Parade and Friendly Circle.

The clinic provides a variety of free services, including pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, peer counseling, prenatal classes and distribution of baby and maternity clothes, as well as other supplies.

Billed as a family event, the 2.5-mile walk starts at Collier Park and heads to the clinic's offices before returning to the starting gate.

After the walk participants and the community can participate in games, en-

tertainment, brunch and Cold Stone Ice Cream.

Pledge forms are available online.

Learn more at [www.friendsofrpcc.org](http://www.friendsofrpcc.org) or call (760) 789-7059.

### Volunteers sought for Easter Outreach

CHULA VISTA — The South Bay Christian Outreach Coalition, in conjunction with numerous churches and ministries, will host a community outreach to the homeless and other needy residents from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 19 at Harborside Park.

Volunteers are still being sought to help serve the estimated 250 families who are expected to be served through a hot meal, haircuts, the distribution of gently used clothing and personal care items, and health and dental screenings. There is no charge for any of the services.

Last year's inaugural event resulted in the distribution of more than 1,800 items



Volunteers from area churches served the homeless last year by washing feet, distributing food and clothes, and providing haircuts.

of clothing, 700 meals, 60 foot washings and gifts of new socks, and 50 haircuts. In all, 342 volunteers served 306 registered guests. Through the outreach, 174 people received prayer, while 34 commit-



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ted to a personal relationship with Jesus.

In addition, the coalition will celebrate Easter through an evangelistic message of hope. Several worship teams will perform.

Participating organizations include the International Christian Center, Lighthouse Christian Fellowship, The Rock Church Homeless Ministry, Chula Vista Church of Christ, EastLake Church, Warriors4Christ LIFE group, Grace Full Gospel Ministry and Gives Hope Ministry.

"We believe every human being to be worthy of our concern and will apply the resources made available to help and uplift their spirits and human condition," the event news release said.

Vendor and information booths will also be available.

Learn more about needed food, toiletry and sleeping items, visit [www.sb-coalition.org](http://www.sb-coalition.org) and click on the Easter Outreach link.

## Dessert theater to mark Good Friday

EL CAJON — Narratives Church will present a Good Friday Dessert Theater at 7 p.m. April 18.

The evening will feature a reader's theater production of "The Last Words," by Ronald D. Vaughan. The simple but moving

drama explores the seven last words from the cross from the perspective of those impacted by the crucifixion. The readings are interspersed with music.

The dessert portion of the evening will offer a variety of dessert bites.

Tickets are \$5 or \$15 per family.

Learn more at [www.narrativeschurch.com](http://www.narrativeschurch.com) or call (619) 249-6386.

Ramona Pregnancy Care Clinic

## Walk For Life 2014

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## Baloche goes live with new project

Paul Baloche, whose worship songs are among the most popular in recent years, was scheduled to release *LIVE*, a new deluxe CD/DVD, on April 1. The Integrity Music project was recorded live with a congregation of 1,000 worship leaders from across Canada during one of the artist's "Lead Worship" workshops in Ontario; it includes new anthems, classic hymns and familiar choruses.

"Raw, spontaneous, and unpolished," Baloche said. "Our hope was to capture a true and honest expression of worship to our God."

It includes new songs co-written by Baloche with Matt Maher, Brenton Brown and Aaron Shust, along with the Easter-inspired, "He Is Risen," co-written with Graham Kendrick. The song was pre-released on iTunes as a Digital Deluxe Single that included a video.

## Curbing teen suicide

Michael Sweet, singer/songwriter/guitarist for the multi-platinum rock band Stryper, has released his debut single, "I'm Not Your Suicide," the title song from his upcoming solo album with Big3 Records. The album is due to hit the streets on May 6.

Proceeds from the release of the single will benefit Childhelp.

Sweet, who wrote the lyrics to "I'm Not Your Suicide" as a way to illustrate a positive alternative to hurting children, said he felt compelled to partner with Childhelp after discovering that nearly half of all children who have been abused consider suicide.

Through his partnership with Childhelp, Sweet's goal is to raise awareness

of the National Child Abuse Hotline, which offers 24/7 professional crisis counseling, and to champion the organization's "Speak Up Be Safe" program, a child abuse prevention program for children in grades 1 to 6.



## Top gospel song CD

Maranatha! Music makes David Letterman and his Top 10 list seem obsolete with its latest compilation in the Top 25 Series CDs. *Top 25 Gospel Songs 2014 Edition*, released March 18, boasts all original artist recordings from some of industry's most popular Gospel artists.

"It's not easy to narrow down the top 25, but we've created an album we feel is today's best of the best, and we couldn't be more proud," said Randy Alward, president and CEO of Maranatha! Music.

Featured artists include Tamela Mann, Tye Tribbett, Israel Houghton & New Breed, Anthony Brown & group therAPy, Mary Mary, Fred Hammond, Dottie Peoples, Micah Stampley, Charles Jenkins & the Fellowship Choir and Chicao Mass Choir.

Since its inception, the Top 25 franchise has sold nearly 2 million units.

## Yancy devotional

Eclectic singer-songwriter Yancy, nicknamed "Queen of Diversity" for her varied styles, has released *Jesus Music Box: The Devotional!*, based on last year's album by the same name.

The 12-week devotional for pre-teens matches a different chapter to each song on the album. The book, distributed by Elevate Entertainment, covers a variety of topics, including standing up for Christ, how God provides, prayer, why we worship, the promise that God is always with us and more.

Yancy said every time a student hears one of the songs from the album, they

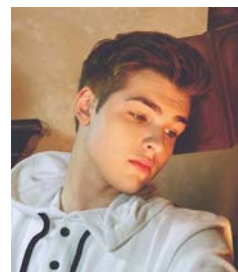
will be reminded of the daily devotional lessons and the Scriptures upon which they are based.

"I love breaking down the message of the songs and helping underline and highlight those subjects and thoughts with Scripture from God's Word," said Yancy, who previously released a successful devotional book tied to her *Rock-N-Happy Heart* album. "I'm excited to help students grow in their faith by encouraging them to spend time in the Word and prayer daily."

## Sending a pure message

Sixteen-year old singer and songwriter Levi Mitchell, a former member of Los Angeles-based Boy Band Project, has launched a new website to promote abstinence.

His Pure Till Marriage site offers 10 reasons to refrain from sexual activity until marriage. Guests can use the site to pledge to remain pure until marriage and offers those who have already had sex an opportunity to start out fresh with new pledges for abstaining.



According to Levi, who also models and dances, more than 1,200 people viewed the site during its first hour of operation after the young solo artist tweeted about it. Nearly 200 people made pledges in that first hour.

## Rapper goes 'Mental'

Christian rap/hip-hop artist KJ-52, whose single "Tonight" was the most-added radio song the week of its Feb. 3 release, will debut its newest album *Mental* April 29 under The Paradigm Collective label.

The band kicked off its House Party Tour: 20 Nights of Purpose on Jan. 31. The tour originally included an April 15 date in Coronado, but it has since been scrapped. Southern California fans can catch up to the group in Irvine on June 21 as part of Fishfest at Verizon Wireless Amphitheater.





MercyMe, which releases its eighth studio album on April 8, will headline the June 20 Spirit West Coast festival in Ontario. Other artists include Tenth Avenue North, Sanctus Real, Kutless, Colton Dixon and Plumb.

## MercyMe to headline Spirit West Coast one-day festival in Ontario

Spirit West Coast returns to Southern California with a new format and a new location.

The single-day festival will be held June 20 at Citizens Business Bank Arena and will feature headliners MercyMe and Tenth Avenue North. Also appearing will be Sanctus Real, Kutless, Colton Dixon and Plumb.

MercyMe will release its latest album, "Welcome to the New," featuring the energetic single "Shake" on April 8.

A sister Northern California festival is planned June 22 in Concord.

The streamlined festival means organizers are able to cut ticket prices to draw even more guests. Tickets start as low as \$15.50 for the Ontario event, plus added taxes and fees. VIP packages are also available at \$75.

"For a number of reasons SWC has de-

cided to take an entirely new direction in 2014 by presenting two single-day, non-camping events in communities that have never experienced a SWC festival in their region before, the Inland Empire and Bay Area," said Jon Robberson, the festival's director.

Because of the one-day format, organizers are no longer saddled with the extensive logistics and infrastructure required to offer camping and other extended activities.

"God has impacted thousands at SWC events of the past and that opportunity is continuing for 2014," the director said. "As a nonprofit ministry our goal and purpose is to not only provide incredible Christian music entertainment but even more so to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The 2014 event model allows us to

accomplish these goals and we're excited about seeing many newcomers turnout plus the many thousands who have attended Spirit West Coast in the past."

In a posting on the Spirit West Coast website, Robberson said the festival is considering all of its options as it goes through this transition.

"Honestly, sometimes change like we're experiencing in 2014 makes me a little nervous; I think the unknown is always like that," he said. "But I've seen God do incredible things through change many times, including with Spirit West Coast. God has a complete plan for SWC, be it back to a three-day, camping event in the future or a continued series of single-day events. He knows exactly what He is doing with Spirit West Coast in the future. Like Abraham in Hebrews 11:8 when "he went out, not knowing where he was going," God knew and He knows where SWC is going, too."

Learn more at [www.spiritwestcoast.org](http://www.spiritwestcoast.org).

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# Escaping the comfort zone

*I'm here to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.*

I've heard that said from the pulpit more than once, when the next thing to be taught from the pastor might be a bit *uncomfortable*.

It's an excellent concept, you know. Those who are hurting need consoling and support. Others are so comfy that they seem to miss the essentials and freshness in life, so a nudge or kick in the pants may be in order.

In our country we are blessed with so much that the slogan "America the Beautiful" could be changed to "America the Comfortable."

Most of us live a charmed life when compared with much of the rest of the world. Generally what counts as poverty in the USA looks wealthy when contrasted with millions living in squalor in other nations.

We reside in an exceptional place and, for the most part, live very good lives. In a recent Heritage Foundation report, scholar Robert Rector notes this, based on U.S. Census data:

"The typical poor household, as defined by the government, has a car and air conditioning, two color televisions, cable or satellite TV, a DVD player, and a VCR. If there are children, especially boys, the family has a game system, such as an Xbox or PlayStation. In the kitchen, the household has a refrigerator, an oven and stove, and a microwave.

"The home of the typical poor family is in good repair and is not overcrowded. In fact, the typical average poor American has more living space in his home than the average (non-poor) European has."

Yes, there are plenty of situations in our country that aren't nearly this

positive, and those are addressed with plenty of our tax dollars. But I'm not being political here. I point this out to help us realize how beautifully blessed we are, overall. And, if we as comfortable citizens are too used to what we enjoy, it seems we may risk taking everything for granted... and missing opportunities.

For years I wanted to do something outside my own comfort zone. Wasn't sure what, exactly, until back in 1997 when I received an invitation to travel with the Bible League to Vietnam. Much to my own surprise, I felt confident about the project, even though it involved visiting persecuted Christians in what's known as "the underground church" in that communist country. Oh, and we were "placing" Bibles along the way (a.k.a. "smuggling"). We also went inside a refugee camp on the border between Thailand and Myanmar (Burma), a place so sad that even the U.N. didn't want to deal with it.

Outside of my comfort zone, indeed. Along the way I met some of the most inspiring people. To this day, their stories of courage resonate in my mind and heart. In the face of seemingly insurmountable odds—poverty, disease, prison, torture, violence—they rose above circumstances to do the right things in life.

## Building confidence

When we step out of what's comfortable, exploring new worlds, we expand friendships and learn new things. For me, it began with seeing poverty in a different way, gaining fresh perspective. No, you and I can't solve all the world's problems, but we can start, and do something, somewhere.

From that first out-of-the-comfort excursion to Southeast Asia, I've been

to China several times on medical and humanitarian outreaches, to Tibet, Afghanistan, into the war zones in the Middle East, you name it.

Through it all, I learned that confidence builds as we find our gifts and daily "niches" of involvement. And most often, it's the people we want to help who end up touching us in numerous ways.

Yes, I've been blessed to be able to travel, but I also know that the chances to boldly connect with others are right down the street, around the corner, at school, work or church. There's no shortage of needs under our noses.

## Start with small steps

Just imagine how much better the world would be if each of us did just a little more each day, committing to that which takes us out of easier spots.

Are you stuck in a big, fat on-the-couch comfort zone? Only you know for sure. I discovered that if a person feels increasingly restless, edgy, cynical, ungrateful, even bored... it could be time for something new.

That doesn't mean buying more "stuff"... nor does this mean finding less positive ways to "escape." While a shopping spree or makeover can be helpful in shifting attitudes, it's only temporary.

Looking for new ways to reach out to others...especially when it's *uncomfortable* at first... is something worthwhile, with lasting value, built for a lifetime.



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

show airs mornings 6-9 on KCBQ 1170AM. Learn more at [www.marklarson.com](http://www.marklarson.com).



# Timothy Winters, longtime San Diego pastor, passes away

Dr. Timothy J. Winters, who retired last summer as senior pastor of Bayview Baptist Church where he served for 40 years, passed away on March 15, just shy of his 73rd birthday.

A memorial service was held March 26.

When taking over the reigns at Bayview in 1973, the congregation had 60 families and was meeting in a converted three-bedroom house. Today, the church numbers 2,500 and meets in the 40,000-square-foot Martin Luther King Jr. Christian Center, a multilevel, multipurpose building that also houses the Nubia Leadership Academy, the first church-based charter school in California.

In addition to his preaching, Winters was a well-respected Bible expositor whose talks specialized in debt-free living, evan-

gelism, discipleship and church growth.

Before becoming a pastor, Winters served as a police officer in San Diego. His friend and colleague Robert Earl Houston, senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Frankfort, Ky., said in a memorial blog that Winters wanted to be "on the cutting edge and not just a preacher, but an effective communicator and visionary." The two would occasionally share their pulpits.

"Dr. Winters often took controversial stands and helped those who were in trouble because he understood that the job of the church is not to kill its wounded but to help restore them," said Houston, who at one time pastored San Diego's New Hope Friendship Baptist Church. "He believed



in redemption as an act of grace that should be modeled."

Winters launched Christian Growth Ministries to help other pastor and ministry leaders. He led his last training session less than a month before his passing, Houston said.

Committed to education, Winters graduated from San Diego City College, United States International University and Glendale Graduate School of Theology. He was ordained in 1971. He earned his Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in 1997.

Over the years he was involved in numerous civic projects designed to improve the community. Last summer he was presented with the 10News Leadership Award for his transformational work.

He served on numerous boards, including the California Missionary Baptist State Convention and the National Baptist Convention of America.

He is survived by his wife Betty, daughters Phyllis and Tori, and several grandchildren.

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KIMBERLY RUBY

# The Daniel Plan: Tuning up your temple

"Health doesn't belong in the church" my then-pastor told me many years ago, as I watched one of the diabetic members pile a load of baked goods on a plate and grin by me. We were sure to always have a "spread" of pies, donuts, cake and chips (good-folks' drugs of choice) available at every function.

"Sure to bring them back," he said.

The plumped-up sheep continued to load up their flock with high sugar, fat and salt at every open door opportunity. Then, when one of the members suffered from a preventable, catastrophic illness brought on by years of "temple neglect," the ladies would rush in to the temporary rescue with "The 911 Church Casserole," a term I coined for the healthy, low-fat entrée, accompanied by a hearty green salad and sugar-free dessert, they would bring the ailing member—for a whole week straight.

Our congregation, sadly, was not alone.

Mesmerized by the wild success of Pastor Rick Warren's "The Purpose Driven Life" more than 10 years ago, I shot off an email to his Saddleback Church in Lake Forest praising the book and its messaging, but raising my concern that as the faithful we were getting more spiritually healthy and purposeful in our commitment to be shining lights, we were going to "self-extinguish" because of horrible health habits. I never heard back, but other believers were coming to the realization that to be "set apart" and proclaim the healing message to a hurting world, we had to stay out of caskets prematurely.

Our penchant for the unhealthy has not always been the case. In the Old Testament, for instance, Daniel—a strapping young Hebrew man—set himself apart for God, refusing to dine on the junk food (picture Annie Green

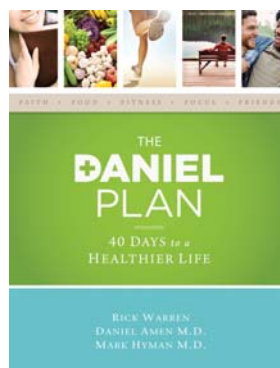
Springs Wine and Ho Hos) of the foreign gods. Confident he was being set aside to be used by God, he challenged the King of Babylon to a "health test." Daniel won and went on to interpret some pretty far-out dreams and managed to avoid being chomped to death by some famished lions in a dark den.

It turns out we can learn something from old teachings, as Rick Warren showed us last year. The Southern California pastor, who leads a membership in excess of 23,000, had an epiphany; After baptizing over 827 adults one bright spring day he realized of the 145,000 pounds of humanity he dunked, they were all, well, excessive...including himself! He needed to get healthy, drop 90 pounds and invite his congregation to be set apart like Daniel to be used for mightier things. He confessed he had been a "poor steward" of his own health and enlisted the help of top physicians, an exercise physiologist, nutritional chefs and a team of enthusiastic volunteers and created "The Daniel Plan."

## Abundance, not deprivation

The Daniel Plan's website best describes it "as a ground-breaking, healthy lifestyle program where people get better together with love as the motivation. It's a story of abundance, not deprivation, relying on God's power and the support and encouragement of friends." The five essentials of The Daniel Plan include: faith, food, fitness, focus and friends, all dedicated to promoting an abundant life that includes a vibrant faith, an energized body and a sharp mind.

Energized last November upon hearing The Daniel Plan book/DVD set



would soon be released, my husband, Brandon, a certified health coach, Annalisa Larm, a registered dietician, and I set out on a journey to observe one of the very first churches in San Diego to implement the program.

The classes at Sweetwater Community Church, led by athlete and health enthusiast, Karen Bates, were wonderfully inviting. Karen taught us the wonders of smoothies made from all raw ingredients using chia seeds, fresh fruit, protein powder, almond butter and coconut milk. No trans-fat baked goods anywhere to be found! Each session included helpful tips and practical advice from health experts.

Philippians 1:6 says "For I am confident of this very thing; that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

In mid-March we started our first Daniel Plan series at Foothills Christian Church, the first of many we plan. If you are interested in gaining freedom from disease and learning the skills to live a healthier life, please email me at kim@ucprx.com. Until next month, may you thrive and live with hope!

Learn more about the plan at [www.danielplan.com](http://www.danielplan.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.



## 4 tips for telling kids the Easter Story

I won't ever forget the first time I told my oldest son about Christ's death and resurrection. It was right after he spit up on my shoulder, and just a few minutes before I placed him gently in his crib. I don't think he understood much at all that evening. He certainly didn't ask any questions. In fact, I'm pretty sure he already was asleep.

He was an infant, about six months old.

I've repeated that routine most nights since then, and have now incorporated it into a bedtime song. For his twin brother and sister, I began telling them the gospel message much earlier, right after birth.

With the Easter celebration upon us, parents often wonder: What's the "right time" to talk to a child about such a con-

cept as death—specifically, Jesus' death? May I suggest the answer is *now*?

We tell our children every day that we love them, so why should we wait until they're older to share with them a much greater message about love? That is, that the God of the universe loves them even more—so much so that He died on a cross for them.

For some parents, though, this can be a difficult subject. Here, then, are four suggestions to make it easier.

**1. Be positive.** Talking about Jesus' death on the cross is easy because it has an ending far greater than anything Disney ever will produce. Sure, if the story only were about death, it would be difficult, even awful. But Jesus rose from the grave and is alive!

When I tell the gospel to my children at night, I never stop at Jesus' death. If we're reading the chapter about the cross and the tomb, we don't end there. I want them to go to bed knowing that the God of the universe conquered sin and death and couldn't be kept in the grave—and because of that, they can have eternal life. It's called "Good News" for a reason.

**2. Be honest.** Being positive is easy, but we shouldn't overdo it. In other words, don't mumble the words "Jesus died," hoping no one hears. Explain *why* He had to die. Sadly, some children's Bibles skip Jesus' death by saying He "went away" for a while, as if He got lost on a long hike on a Galilean mountain. I tell my twin 2-year-olds: "Jesus died on the cross for your sins and my sins and He rose from the grave!" They know it by heart and get

excited. My 6-year-old has never said, "Wait, Jesus *died*?"

**3. Be encouraged.** Believe it or not, our children know about death before we even tell them. Kids step on ants and see lifeless animals on the road. They watch flowers wilt and leaves fall. Death is all around them. Why should they think humanity is any different? Scripture seems to assume that children—even ones not told the entire gospel message since infancy—are able to "handle" the concept of death. In Deuteronomy, God commanded the Israelites to teach their children the "statutes and ordinances," which included all sorts of commandments that referenced death and animal sacrifices. Children were to be told about the Passover—a story that has as its core the blood of a dead lamb being wiped over the door.

**4. Be biblical.** Stick with what Scripture says, and you'll be fine. There are plenty of resources to help, from the Big Picture Story Bible (younger children) to the Jesus Storybook Bible (older children). Each tells of Jesus' death and resurrection in simple language. There are good DVDs, too. We've enjoyed the Read and Share Bible DVDs, which are geared toward young children and recount Bible stories in 2- to 3-minute animated segments. Volume 2 in that series tells the Easter story.

The Easter story literally is the greatest story ever told—and it's true! That's reason enough for me not to wait.



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

DAVID & LISA FRISBIE

# Spring tip for busy couples: Get a marriage tune-up!

Your rich uncle in Manchester passes away, leaving you his nearly new Bentley convertible. According to the terms of his will, the car is shipped to you free of charge. One day you're driving a 10-year-old Toyota; the next day you own a Bentley!

There it sits in your driveway—\$250,000 worth of refined British driving machine. The Horizon Blue paint gleams, the parchment leather interior shines with a deep luster, the tan convertible top raises and lowers with the mere touch of a button. Staring at it one day you realize that this car is worth about what you originally paid for your house!

Would you be willing to change the oil occasionally, keep the tires inflated, and do some routine maintenance to keep your new inheritance in first-rate condition? Is that too much to ask, now that you own something so valuable?

Just imagine owning a nearly new Bentley but letting it waste away day by day, because you were too busy, or too focused elsewhere, to care about maintaining your beautiful automobile. What a tragedy! Yet it's much the same for your marriage—which is worth far more than a British car.

Something of such great beauty and value—your relationship with your spouse—needs regular care and attention in order to stay in great shape. New marriages are particularly vulnerable to swift decay in the quality of the couple's relationship. As the rush of hormones and endorphins gradually yields to childbirth, financial stress and the pressures of life—intimacy and togetherness can suffer.

"Why doesn't he pay attention to me like he used to?" a young wife may worry.

"What happened to that fun girl I used to know?" a young husband may



wonder.

The lack of maintenance produces feelings like these—and many more. As we allow our hopes and expectations to go unexpressed, our wishes and needs tend to go unmet. Living with unmet needs can produce unhealthy emotions such as anxiety, self-pity, resentment or a martyr complex. Before long we start blaming our partner for a wide range of issues and problems, while seeing ourselves as innocent and noble victims. This is a distorted and inaccurate view of reality, made possible only when we ignore our issues instead of focusing on them and dealing with them.

### Time for assessing

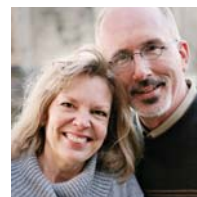
Even the best of marriages needs regular attention in order to avoid gaps in communication, the potential for misunderstanding and the buildup of unmet needs in one or both partners. Without careful and regular tune-ups, any relationship—even one that has lasted for decades—may begin to show signs of wear, damage and decay. That's why it's so helpful to purposely sit down with a third

party just to talk about your marriage.

Write it onto your calendar and make a marriage tune-up a regular part of your annual or seasonal schedule. A marriage retreat may work for this purpose, too—but only if the two of you are interacting with the material, not just sitting in the crowd as passive listeners.

In order to form a more perfect union... take time to regularly check up on how your relationship is doing. Sit down with a counselor or your minister, or share a quiet, intentional evening with a wise married couple that's been through these things before. While you're both together in a safe and supportive environment, carefully unpack any misunderstandings or disagreements you've had.

You don't need to wait until there's a crisis or a major issue. Wise couples know that if you take care of the small things—while they're still small—they don't blow up and become big things later. Healthy couples realize that every relationship has petty disagreements and daily misunderstandings—until you resolve them by paying better attention to each other. These couples understand that if you pay attention to these seemingly small things on a regular basis—giving your relationship a fresh tune-up—your marriage can not only go the distance, but also shine brightly while doing so!



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

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

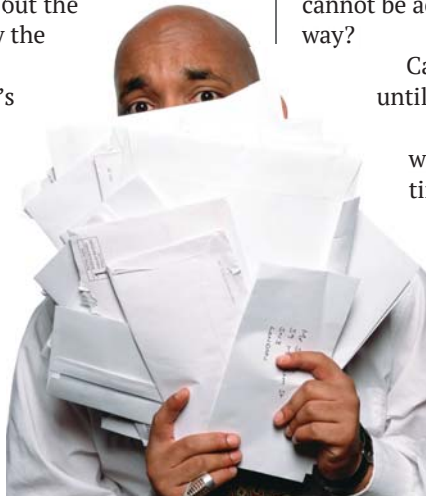


# Power up principle: Avoid the use of debt

Does the topic of money trigger feelings of excitement, anticipation, peace of mind? Or rather fear, dread, *even* panic? As I look to the future, I have come to the conclusion that economic uncertainty is our new normal so we need to be prepared to weather it. So how do you practically maintain a sense of calm when the next crisis may be lurking right around the corner?

Let me begin with this illustration. When we bought our first home we decided to move our 30-gallon fish aquarium across town—without draining the tank. While it wasn't among the smartest things we have ever done, we did learn some valuable life lessons as we watched how the fish responded. After carefully setting the fish tank on the front seat of the truck, we slowly began our short journey. In spite of how cautiously my husband tried to drive, the water in the tank sloshed violently splashing all over the front seat. What was fascinating to watch, however, was that while the surface of the tank was literally forming small white caps, the fish in the tank had instinctively dropped to a water level in the lower part of the tank oblivious to the turbulence just a foot above them. They rode out the chaos unfazed by the wild ride.

In last month's column I briefly touched on five fundamental principles that cultivate a sense of financial contentment. Let's explore one of those five principles that



will help you prepare to live *below the white caps* regardless of what's going on around you: Avoid the use of debt.

Solomon warns us in Proverbs 22:7 that “the borrower is servant to the lender.” One of the most basic and powerful tenets of good financial health is the limited and wise use of debt. From a biblical perspective, borrowing is not prohibited. However, we are cautioned to carefully consider the many consequences of our borrowing decisions. Besides limiting future financial options, there is the heavy burden debt can bring into the marriage and family, the discord and discomfort between family and friends when (despite good intentions) a loan has gone unpaid, the crushing burden of student loans and credit cards ... and the list goes on. The consequences multiply exponentially when storm clouds gather—economically, relationally, psychologically and spiritually.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when considering taking on debt:

Does this make economic sense? Will the economic benefit be greater than the cost?

What is your underlying motive for taking on this debt?

Will this fulfill a goal in your life that cannot be accomplished in any other way?

Can you defer this decision until a later date?

Do you see a responsible way to pay this back in a timely manner without violating your other financial priorities?

Do you have other assets that could be sold to satisfy this debt if necessary?

If married, are you and your spouse in agreement with this de-

cision? Don't gloss over this one!

If this involves family or friends, does it have the potential to damage the relationship if anything goes wrong?

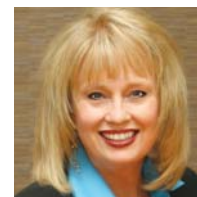
Is there a sense of peace as you consider this option?

Where you find yourself today isn't nearly as important as where you head in the future. If you are dealing with consumer debt, *eliminating* it can provide an immediate tangible return on your investment, not to mention a tremendous sense of financial freedom.

Next, consider a long-term plan to reduce your future financial obligations by paying down loans on appreciating assets like your home. Then, exercise great caution when taking on more commitments that will leverage future resources. Use the questions discussed above to begin your evaluation. If you don't feel you can be objective, seek wise counsel from trusted people in your life—parents, friends or professionals. Debt presumes on the future so handle these decisions with great care.

Reducing or eliminating current debt while taking steps to cautiously manage future debt will help you avoid those inevitable white caps on the surface of your life. It can truly be an exciting journey with benefits on so many levels!

So take a deep breath and jump right in.



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

professionals, she also serves on the board of directors for Kingdom Advisors. Learn more at [www.sfsinonline.com](http://www.sfsinonline.com).

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# Spring forward: Now is fertile time for exploring new life

All around us, we can see “spring has begun to sprung.” It’s the season when new life is bursting from every direction. Ground that had been stark and lifeless through the winter now begins to sprout with new buds of color as evidence of growth from the previous season. In many ways, spring brings the internal promise of a new season to our lives as well.

While we may want to embrace the beginning of a new season, the lingering feelings and recollections of past seasons can challenge our hope for brighter days. Whether it be those trying seasons of family life mixed with juggling a career or education, or seasons of methodical routine that offer few opportunities to pause and catch your breath, “sinter” seasons in our life can be difficult to shake. Our hearts can easily become overwhelmed and heavy with concerns, while the world around us seems overflowing with hopefulness and optimism.

How then do we turn from the old seasons and face the tomorrows ahead with a renewed perspective for our lives? The outward shifts we long for lie in the shifts we make on the heart level. For this reason, the Bible tells us: “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” (Proverbs 4:23).

Guarding our hearts from the previous seasons of our life gives us permission to turn our hearts from old memories, old habits and old mentalities which allows us to turn toward better things for

our future.

But where do we start, in turning our hearts?

The first shift always begins with turning our heart back to God. Maybe we’ve experienced seasons of nearness to God before but have walked away unintentionally. Maybe we’ve never turned our heart to God before and have only ever heard of a relationship with Christ through other people. Or maybe we’ve turned our heart to Him but the rules and regulations of religion have made it easy to turn away.

For many people, turning their heart to God has become a rigor of trying to be good, think good or act good. They just can’t seem to stay good. So why try?

It’s as if they are holding a bar of soap, and every time they blow it, instead of coming to God openly and asking Him to help them make changes in their life, they pull out the soap and try to wash away the past. For some, the soap is their own good works. For others, it is their excuses or reasonings.

In either case, there never seems to be enough soap to wash away the residue of the last season.

## Turning the heart

God’s grace rescues us from believing the lie that our old self defines us and, instead, redeems us from thinking that we must constantly pay for our past. Every one of us has made decisions that need God’s grace. It is forgiveness freely given to us at Christ’s expense. When we turn our heart and experience over to the wondrous power of His grace, we become a brand-new person in Christ with wholeness, vitality, and a fresh, new start!

Paul writes in Scripture, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Turning our heart to God marks the beginning of a new “spring” season in our life; new buds of hope and anticipation, for ourselves and our families, begin to be visible. Areas that seemed lifeless now begin to have new leaves of promise.

## New beginnings

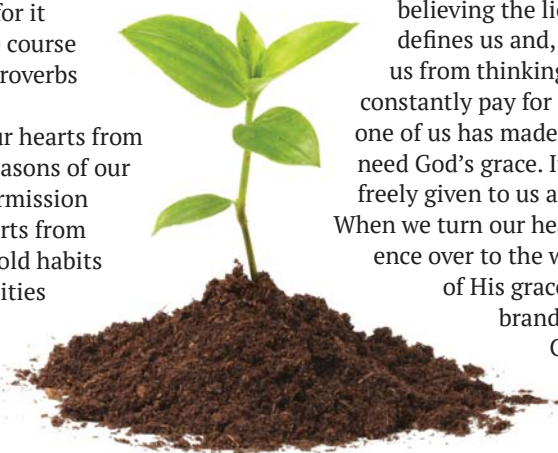
Just like spring, Easter marks a season of new beginnings. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we can now bury our past and arise with new perspective, fresh vision and a renewed sense of purpose. Easter offers the opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned in the past while providing the perfect soil of grace and forgiveness to start again. Being planted in a local church allows God to water and nourish our hearts with the nutrients we need to grow and flourish season after season.

As spring continues to blossom with vivacity and new life, take a moment to reflect this Easter on the areas that God wants to bring to life. All around you He is already at work. His promise to Isaiah still rings true today in our lives, “For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?” Isaiah 43:19



Sergio De La Mora is the founding and lead pastor of Cornerstone Church of San Diego, a thriving multiethnic church with campuses throughout San Diego and Tijuana. He

has influenced a multi-generational and multiethnic community in English and Spanish for more than a decade. Learn more at [www.turningthehearts.com](http://www.turningthehearts.com).





## DANIELS...

Continued from page 23

plause (of his own work)."

Although Daniels seems to major in self-deprecation, his work is seriously appreciated. In addition to numerous high-profile surfers, his work has been purchased by Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll, La Jolla resident Fernando Aguirre, founder of Reef Sandals, and the San Diego offices of DPR Construction. Overseas, collectors of his art hail from England, Australia, Costa Rica, Austria

and Puerto Rico, where his work is featured in a gallery in Rincon.

Closer to home, his pieces are represented in galleries in San Diego, Laguna Beach, Hawaii, and, as Daniels deftly points out, in the trunk of his car. His work has also been featured in the trade show booth of Big Wave pioneer Greg Noll and in the Noll Surf Shop in San Clemente.

He has also illustrated for Surfer magazine and several children's books.

The artist's large studio paintings command \$500 to \$2,000, while his smaller framed plein air works sell from

\$300 to \$700. His Hula ToOnS pieces are \$100 to \$500. He also has a box of small unframed studies that are available for under \$100 apiece.

"I don't imagine that I'm changing the world with my paintings, but it is quite satisfying and humbling when someone comments that the painting reminds them of a special place or time or simply makes them happy. Sometimes," he added, "they even will buy a painting—and that makes me happy." ■

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# Adding up my ignorance

There's been a lot of talk lately about Common Core, the new national education initiative, and the way students are now being taught to do basic math. From what I can understand, based on this example of Sam and his marbles, kids don't just add two numbers to get one answer. They "decompose" numbers and perform several additional problems to solve the original problem.

I've been told that this process allows students to learn "various strategies to solve addition and subtraction problems." But why complicate something just because you can? Eight plus 7 will always be 15, no matter how much you decompose it.

I confess that I (obviously) don't know much about math or Common Core and the debate over its evils or merit. What I do know is that if this is the way kids are being taught today, I would never survive elementary school. Back then, I barely knew my own name.

Picture this: It's the first day of first grade and the bright classroom is filled with eager students sitting quietly at their desks. The teacher calls the roll, gently sounding out names which are answered with a "here" by child after child. She finishes with the Zs and asks, "Is there anyone whose name I didn't call?" I raise my hand.

"What's your last name, dear?"

"Keltz," I answer, embarrassed as all eyes turn to me. We're sure I'm in the wrong room, and even first-graders know when to savor someone else's pain.

"Oh! I did call your name, sweetheart." She smiles and puts a checkmark on her list. "Elizabeth J. Keltz."

"No, my name isn't Elizabeth," I reply, frightened, and pleased, because I am the center of attention, and curious, because someone else in the room has the

same last name as I do. "I'm Joanne."

"I see," she says with a puzzled look on her face, and calls the office secretary, who calls my parents, only to find out that, in fact, I am Elizabeth J. Keltz—the "J" being Joanne.

Now I'm puzzled, because I'm pretty sure no one ever told me that.

I've redeemed myself as the kid who couldn't find the right classroom, but am now forever pegged as the first-grader who doesn't know her own name. What a stupid-head.

Things apparently got a little better over the years, as evidenced by my fourth-grade report card. The teacher gave me high marks in language arts, science and social studies. But in mathematics? She wrote, "Joanne could use more work on the fast recall of multiplication and division facts, especially those involving 7, 8 and 9." (She also wrote that I offer "a great deal to our class discussions," which I think was a polite way of saying I talked a lot.)

To be honest, I still have trouble with my multiplication facts, especially those involving 7, 8, and 9. (And it will come as no surprise to anyone who knows me that I still talk a lot.) But I'm not stupid.

Sure, I'm not the first person you'd call if you needed to divide a cookie into three equal pieces so that everyone got the same number of chocolate chips. And yet I've still managed to grow up to be a reasonably successful adult with a keen interest in learning, someone who can carry on an intelligent conversation on myriad topics.

But even I admit there's a lot of stuff they taught in school that I never learned. I did learn at an early age that touching frogs won't give you warts. But even though I took high school biology, I can't dissect a frog or tell you where its vital organs are located, even if said frog is already partially dissected by the

Sam has 8 red marbles and 7 green marbles. How many marbles does Sam have in all?

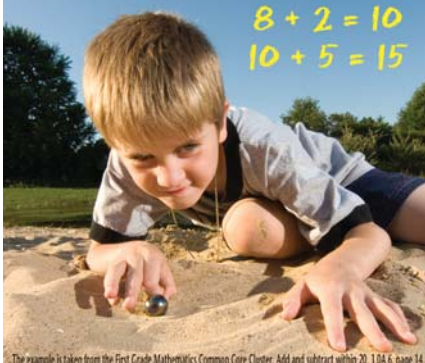
$$\cancel{8 + 7 = 15}$$

**Common Core Math:**

We know that  $8 + 2 = 10$ , then we can decompose the number 7 into a 2 and a 5. First we added  $8 + 2$  to get 10 and then added the 5 to get 15.

$$7 = 2 + 5$$

$$8 + 2 = 10$$

$$10 + 5 = 15$$


The example is taken from the First Grade Mathematics Common Core Cluster: Add and subtract within 20. 1.OA.6, page 14.

blades of a lawn mower.

While I'm sure that knowledge of frog anatomy comes in handy for some adults, the less complicated fact—that frogs aren't contagious—has been far more useful to me. I really stole the show at my brother-in-law's outdoor wedding, for example, when I caught a frog with my bare hands.

And that's my point.

Learning should be about solving problems, not creating more of them. Forget complex math. Teach kids how to chase and then catch a frog at a dinner party (with bonus points for doing it in a dress and heels). That's a core skill that'll actually come in handy later in life.



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

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



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