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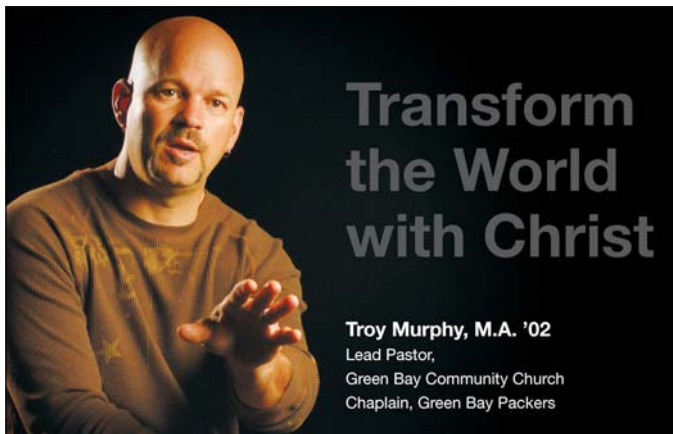
Piercing the darkness

Comedian Chonda Pierce overcomes depression, grief

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Chillin' for the summer

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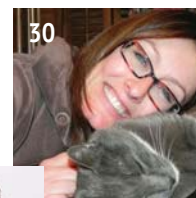
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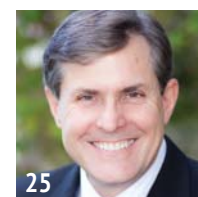
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When vocation chooses you

In the novel “Lying Awake” by Mark Salzman, the main character, a nun, becomes confused in her spiritual calling at the convent where she lives. The visions she used to have no longer occur, now that her epilepsy has been successfully treated by a doctor.

At the end of the novel, the nun’s Mother Superior approaches and asks if she will give one of the new nuns spiritual direction on discerning God’s will.

“I don’t feel I know anything about God’s will, Mother,” the nun said.

“Yet you’re still here, trying to do his will anyway,” the Mother Superior said. “That’s the kind of understanding I meant. The doing kind, not the knowing kind.”

Both women then watch as birds busily work and call around the fountain in the garden. The birds “seemed to have the best understanding of all,” Salzman writes. “They answered yes to everything.”

One of the mistakes we make in our culture is that we think the words “occupation” and “vocation” mean the same thing. They don’t. When they overlap, it’s a truly great thing. But it’s rare, I think.

An occupation is something we pursue. It is a goal we set out to achieve, as in “I am applying for a job.” We move toward occupations at the encouragement of guidance counselors, parents, standardized tests (watch out for those, though. The one I took said I was especially suited for farming or selling insurance!), and reading posts online with headlines like “The 10 Hottest Jobs for You!”

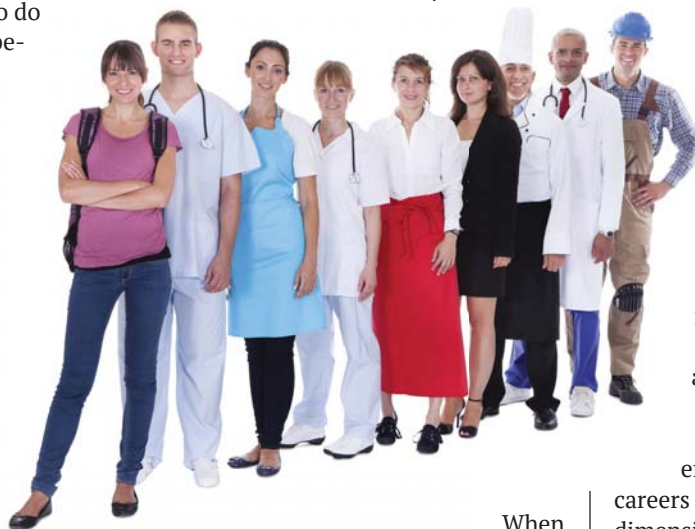
A vocation is different.

“Vocation does not come from willfulness,” writes Parker Palmer in his

book “Let Your Life Speak.” “It comes from listening.”

Vocation comes from the inside out. It’s part of discovering our true selves and our true purposes in the world.

My wife is an accountant. That’s her occupation. She has an MBA from a major university, and uses her accounting and finance skills to help a medical technology company make products that will help relieve suffering, and help make the shareholders more money.



When our church became affiliated with an organization called Stephen Ministries, she signed up for the training. Stephen Ministers help provide compassionate care to individuals in personal crisis. The relationship between the minister and the one in need can last weeks, months or longer. The ministers don’t provide money or advice. They are trained to avoid the temptation to solve problems and meet specific needs. They simply provide compassionate presence to people who can’t continue on their own and give them the opportunity for their troubled hearts to rest. The only thing that Ste-

phen Ministers can promise is that they will listen to those who need them, and that they will pray for them.

After being a Stephen Minister for a brief period of time, she said to me, “I know what I am put on earth to do.”

She spends most of her time being a wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt and accountant. One hour per week she provides presence to her “care receiver.” But it is during that hour that she feels most “called” or “ordained.” That’s when she experiences the visible form of the invisible Spirit. That’s her vocation.

The writer Frederick Buechner said, “We can speak of a man’s choosing his vocation, but perhaps it is at least as accurate to speak of a vocation’s choosing the man, of a call’s being given and a man’s hearing it, or not hearing it.”

In a university setting, such as the one where I work (is it an occupation? A vocation? Both?), it is tempting to measure our effectiveness by charting the careers of our alumni. A more difficult dimension to measure is whether our institution is helping students find their true calling, to go where they are most needed, and where they most need to go. Are they saying “yes” to that call from Within?

Maybe we should start offering a degree in listening.



Dean Nelson directs the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. His book about seeing God in everyday life is “God Hides in Plain Sight: How to See the Sacred in a Chaotic World.”

**“OK, I’ve done all I can do here, I need to just die.”
- Chonda Pierce**

Piercing the darkness

Comedian Chonda Pierce overcomes depression, grief

by LORI ARNOLD

Chonda Pierce thrives under the bright stage lights. Her clean comedy, tempered with authentic insights on Christian life, resonates with audiences eager for a little comic relief of their own. But more than a decade into her career, Pierce was blindsided by an inner darkness that not even her faith, mega-watt stage lights—or laughter—could cure.

“I got so depressed I didn’t want to leave the house,” Pierce said in a telephone interview from her Nashville home. “I didn’t want to leave my bed. I really got to that level where you think, ‘OK, I’ve done all I can do here, I need to just die.’ Of course, when you are the breadwinner for about 20 people and you say that, they are going to get you help real quick.”

Pierce then erupts into laughter so strong and deep that if you listen carefully you can practically hear hints of her South Carolina accent. Settling down, Pierce goes on to offer the punch line, this one deeply serious.

“It was one of the most traumatic things of my life and yet it was the greatest thing that ever happened,” Pierce said. “I learned so much. It became like

a new story.”

Though sarcasm and humor came naturally to Pierce, comedy was not on her radar. But while winding down her theater arts degree at Austin Peay State University, she took a job imitating Minnie Pearl at Opryland. She performed five times a day, six days a week with a goal of showing people how God had redeemed her own life.

“I didn’t really know that I wanted to be a comedian, but I wanted to tell a story,” she said. “I had enough education behind me to know this is kind of a hard story. You shouldn’t just dive right into it; let me start softening the blow with some funny stories. And before long the funny stories grew and grew and all of a sudden someone starts calling you a comedian.”

While comedy has proven to be a successful outlet for many performers, there has also been wide-ranging documentation of many comedians dealing with depression and addictions—Johnny Carson, Woody Allen, Rodney Dangerfield, John Belushi, Chris Farley, to name a few. Just last year Robin Williams took his own life.

“Anything can be used for good or

evil,” Pierce said. “I think sometimes people hide away in comedy.”

Through her treatment and therapy at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital and a Christian-based center in Scottsdale, Arizona, Pierce learned to cope with a dysfunctional childhood that included a manic depressive father.

“I can see where healing has come,” she said. “I can watch old videos of mine and I can see where the steps toward healing and recovery and redemption started interjecting, and now I think I’m the funniest I’ve ever been in my life because I am so much more relaxed than I’ve ever been in my life. And that is such a sweet kind of healing.”

Significant loss

The treatment plan for Pierce spanned 18 months and included processing the sorrow of losing her two sisters in fairly quick succession.

When Pierce was 16, her older sister, Charlotta, 20, was killed in a head-on crash while heading home from work. Less than two years later, Pierce’s younger sister, Cheralyn, 15, was diagnosed with leukemia. She died 21 days later.

By the time Cheralyn was diagnosed



as terminal, their pastor father quit his pulpit and left his wife. In that same time frame her older brother, David, got married and left the family home. Practically within a breath, Pierce was alone with her mother. The family of six—once the heart of their holiness church—dissolved.

“You kind of become an armchair shrink for your family trying to figure out what the heck happened,” she said.

It wasn’t long before Pierce began overhearing whispers and rumors about her family.

“As a teenager that was painful,” she said. “That was as painful as the death of my sisters. The most painful part was feeling like you carry the scarlet letter a little

bit for your family’s sake.”

The trauma of Pierce’s childhood, steeped in the abuse that came from the manic—and secretive—mood swings of her father, warped her image of God.

“Trying to figure out the difference between a heavenly father and an earthly father is quite the journey, especially when your father is a pastor,” she said. “Most of us look at our pastors in that way. He takes on that first insight of what God is like, the fatherhood of God. So when that is broken it’s hard to figure out who God is when He says ‘I’m your

heavenly father.’ ... It truly muddies the water of getting to know who God is.”

But the very characteristics of God, those infinite traits that distance Him from humankind, are what rescued Pierce.

“Sometimes when I look back I think the greatest gift and miracle of my life is how the Lord revealed himself to me in tender ways so that I could feel that fatherhood of God and feel fatherhood again.” She said. “That’s such a sweet gift.”

More grief

The depression treatment Pierce received proved invaluable a year ago when

THE 'QUEEN OF CLEAN' COMEDY

A highly sought after Christian comedian, Chonda Pierce has had seven DVDs certified RIAA Gold (sales exceeding 50,000) and four certified Platinum (for sales of more than 100,000 units). In addition, Pierce ranks among Pollstar's top-selling live performers and has been certified as the "Top-Selling Female Comedian," in both secular and Christian markets, by the Recording Industry Association of America.

she suddenly lost her husband David to a stroke. The couple had been married 31 years.

"You know, I've been through some stuff, but this is the hardest," she said.

"We struggled there toward the end of his life. He had his own struggles he was working through and you think, 'We are going to live happily ever after any time now,' but when the happily ever after is taken away from you—oh, my goodness!" A deep sigh punctuates her words.

After David's death, Pierce canceled as many shows as possible as she grieved for the man she loved since she was a teen. About six months ago she resumed a somewhat regular tour schedule, even as the sorrow ebbs and flows.

"Grief is so individualized for each

person's circumstances, it's something that no one can help you do," she said. "There's no going around it. There's no shortcut through it.

"Grief is... You just have to do the time. It's like a prison sentence," another spontaneous laugh emerges. "There's no parole. You don't get off for good behavior. Some days I do really well and then some days (I) just fall apart."

Even through the grief, Pierce said she's immensely cognizant of the need to mourn well, and, like it was with depression, comedy has been her salve.

"People watch your life more on how you handle your life in trauma than they do when you are handing life in a successful time," she said.

"I'm back enjoying it now. I hear the laughter now and I feel the laughter.



So it's much more enjoyable. There was a time when the story was so tender. I could hardly say his name without falling apart."

One of her comforts has come from the scriptural mandate to take care of widows and orphans.

"He knew there would be such pain in their heart that it would take the entire body of Christ to take care of them," she said. "I get choked up thinking, 'Wow, centuries ago He knew that it was going

Getting past the past

Some days, when the darkness tries to usurp the light, comedian Chonda Pierce remembers the words of her psychologist brother, Mike Courtney.

"You can't afford to go there."

In fact, the siblings—raised in a dysfunctional home where their pastor father was a manic depressive who at times became abusive—rely on their faith and each other to get past their past.

"You kind of become an armchair shrink for your family trying to figure out what the heck happened," she said of the trauma she felt as a teenager after the death of her two sisters.

Although her brother was 10 years older

and married by the time she hit her mid-teens, they remained close.

"He is the hero of my faith," Chonda said of Courtney, whose own battles with addiction derailed his pastoral ministry.

"He was a prominent pastor in his denomination and blew his life wide open," she said.

After going through rehab and earning a doctorate, Courtney documented his journey in the book "Failure and How I Achieved It."

For her part, Pierce battled severe depression that resulted in two separate stays at residential treatment centers.

"That is our legacy," Pierce said. "It's

one of survival and that life is not always easy or fair, but God is faithful and there when life is not so great. It doesn't mean that God is not good. It means life isn't always good."

After completing her last in-house treatment at a Christian facility in Scottsdale, Arizona, Pierce said she was blessed by the care she received there, but recognized that the steep price would be a barrier to most people.

"It was so wonderful and so needed but I didn't know hardly anybody who could afford something like this," she said of her two-week treatment.

It wasn't long after her stay that the



to be so difficult. He knew I was going to be in that club.' That blesses me so much that this God of the universe called out two whole sectors of people that we are to watch out for. That's powerful."

While the Pierces' happily-ever-after was interrupted in this life, the comedienne is hoping that one day she will get another 'happily-ever' with her estranged daughter.

"It's been the toughest and greatest mystery," she said. "I don't talk about it much because I don't want to do a thing that would hinder the hopes of reconciliation."

A sounding board

In the meantime, Pierce works to keep her depression at bay by taking care of her spiritual, physical and mental needs, while taking her audiences along for the ride. That often means opening her shows with material that pierces the sides and then working her way to more serious matters, frequently admitting her own struggles.

siblings decided to start their own treatment facility, Branches Counseling Center, in hopes of widening access to those in need. The center operates in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where Courtney is executive director and Pierce serves on the board.

"I think it's interesting because when I started on my road to recovery—and we're all in recovery—when I began recovering from the traumas of my life, God found me a job where I just told *everybody*, and I think somewhere along the line between the comedy and the testimony, the purging was lifesaving for me," she said.

Pierce's dream is that others may find their own purging mechanism.

"I have just learned, maybe I'm wrong, but authenticity always wins out. Just be honest," she said. "If I'm having a good day, a bad day, if my faith is strong, if I'm struggling, I have told my audience the truth, and every time I have seen God work amazing in the room where I just chose authenticity rather than to mask what was going on deep inside.

"He knows what to do with that better than anything. He can't do a whole lot with your fakin', He can't do a whole lot with your whinin', but when you speak truth He can set people free with that."

In the end, she said her goal is for her own headstone to say, "There was an elephant in the room and she talked about it."

"If I lived my life on that emotion of who He is and why He's allowed things to happen the way they've happened, what a fragile relationship we would have. So I can't do that.

"I tell people all the time, whatever is going on in your heart and your mind, get it out because your body will deal with it one way or the other," she said. "It will either show up in sickness or depression or addiction."

Not only has Pierce shared her experience through her own book "Laughing in the Dark: A Comedian's Journey through Depression," she frequently tackles the subject during her live shows.

"I say this almost every night in concert: Either I am crazy or God is who He says He is so I have to choose which one of those things I want to bank on," she said. "No one wants to say they are crazy so I

I have to base my relationship with Him on who He is, and I choose to believe He is the Creator. He is the God of the universe. He is the Alpha. He is the Omega. Therefore the things that have happened from my birth until I see Him again, it's just what life has unfolded.

"I have chosen to not live by emotion. Sometimes it's *just* a choice." ■



would rather just say, 'OK, God is who He says He is. And that is what I'm going to choose to do. I don't always feel it.'

Learning to control her emotions instead of letting her emotions control her has been a critical tool for her recovery, Pierce said.

"The gift of depression has been, for me, that I can serve Him and honor Him and glorify Him because of who He is, not because of how He makes me feel. What I've learned through depression is you cannot bank on your feelings because, one, there's menopause and the mood will change and two, there is depression. There's the ups and downs. There's too much caffeine." ■

This Barrio Logan freeway underpass is one of more than 20 'microsites' where The Rock Church's Ever Here Movement holds Sunday worship services.

PHOTO BY MINGO PALACIOS

Street-level worship

Finding church in unlikely places

by LORI ARNOLD



Robert Cortes poses with Samantha, a homeless woman who placed all her panhandling coins in the offering during a church service on the loading dock of a grocery outlet on Market Street.

Robert Cortes spent hours roaming the streets of downtown San Diego as he handed out fliers for a weekly outdoor worship service on the loading dock of a discount grocery store. So he wasn't surprised to see Samantha, one of the regular parishioners, panhandling on a busy intersection hours before the start of service.

After chatting a minute, he continued on with the flier distribution. Hours later he spotted Samantha camped out in the folding chairs as he watched the worship service from the back.

"She did not see me watch as she dropped all the coins she begged for into the tithe envelope," he said. "On my way home, driving, I was in tears having just witnessed the story of the widow's two mites right out of Luke."

The following week, after a technical glitch left them with extra time in the

service, Cortes recounted the widow's parable with the congregation. Without naming Samantha, he shared the act of generosity he witnessed the previous week.

"Tears began to roll down her cheeks," Cortes said, adding that Samantha had never heard the parable before that morning.

About 20 people surrounded her under the shade tent, their make-shift sanctuary, and prayed that she would find housing. Within months she was accepted into a housing program.

Such stories are not uncommon for the Ever Here Movement, a ministry of Rock Church. Through the ministry, worship services are held at a variety of unlikely microsites around the county: gymnasiums, Laundromats, parks, a retirement home, military housing, hotels, auto repair shop and a workplace co-op.

Right: A Grocery Outlet loading dock is the venue for church in the East Village area of downtown San Diego.

Below: The Ocean View Laundromat in Logan Heights serves the Spanish-speaking community.

Beyond San Diego, other microsite locations include El Centro, Antioch, Fullerton, Illinois, Hawaii and the Philippines.

“I can tell you that God is on the move and it is a common occurrence to witness miracles of restoration,” Cortes said. “When you can fill the gap between the church and the street—not only with outreach but a gathering, a place that people can come that would never come to a church—you start to claim ground for the Kingdom one block at a time.”

Until recently, Cortes has worked with four different downtown sites but has been tapped to expand the ministry into the North County, where Rock Church has a satellite campus.

The concept of the microsities ministry emerged two years ago when Mingo Palacios, then the young adult pastor, wanted to use streaming technology to host an Easter Sunday for those not able or willing to attend a traditional service.

The service was held at a local shelter and drew more than 70 people, 15 of those converting to Christianity. Subsequent services were held in the basement of a bar and a local college.

Palacios now overseas the Even Here Movement, which uses nearly 150 volunteers at more than 25 sites. The program serves more than 600 people weekly, many of them homeless or disenfranchised.

“I was that guy that did not want to touch a homeless person,” Cortes said. “They were aliens to me. Just picture me in a hazmat suit serving the homeless a bottle of water at a distant or not getting too close for a hug, but then God broke my heart for this group that’s either homeless or poor, on the fringes of our communities.”

New life

Cortes’ heart for street ministry emerged from his own conversion from a



PHOTO BY ROBERT CORTES



PHOTO BY SAM MARIE

prosperity chaser to Christ follower.

“All I knew is I wanted to be wealthy and own a business,” he said. “So I found an investor and opened some cell phone and pager stores.”

He eventually sold those to follow his passion for cooking. He moved to Hawaii to open Jackie’s Kitchen, named for its famous owner Jackie Chan. He worked 75-plus hours a week for five years before leaving the company.

“I was really burned out and I broke up with my fiancée due to infidelity,” he said. “My life was in ruins. I sold everything. Heartbroken, I backpacked over a month in a rural part of Japan visiting

over 100 temples. While I was in Japan something was pulling on my heart, guiding me protecting me.”

He moved back to his native Miami, where he gave his life to Jesus.

“My encounter with God was clear,” Cortes said. “He was alive and at work in my life. I only remember saying, “God do with me what you will.”

After moving to San Diego for a job, he plugged in at Rock, taking advantage of its school of ministry. That led to his ministry work with microsities.

“I just felt at home,” he said of the ministry he refers to as the “Tip of the Spear.”



PHOTO BY SAM MARIE

A new convert is baptized in a kiddie pool in the parking lot of one of the microsites.

“Out in the street, there are times I feel like God is using us to literally pull people out of Hell,” Cortes said. “His nature and character are far and wider than anyone can ever imagine. His measure of grace over others, and me, is far bigger than anyone or anything. I serve a God that knows me intimately.”

Serving in community

The beauty of such ministries, he said, is that people are rarely serving alone. The support and camaraderie that comes with serving side-by-side helps to strengthen everyone involved.

“When you’re part of a bigger family and your core team, you do it together, you’re never really alone, which was a big

support for me when I was so new, having never done any ministry,” he said.

“When God uses broken and rebellious people to be his hands and feet, it always blows my mind because, really, for God to use me, who was He kidding?” Cortes said. “If you would have told me, ‘Hey Robert, I’m going to have you go to this crazy on-fire-for-Jesus school, then I’m going to break your heart for the people that disgust you, then I’m going to use you to launch and then help lead a ministry on the front lines on the streets and in the darkest areas of San Diego’... well I would have told you are 100 percent insane.”

Cortes, who owns an online marketing agency, said his story proves that anyone can serve in ministry.

“Start somewhere, do something, find out how God designed you and find a ministry that nurtures those gifts and watch God use you,” he said. “I feel like I got front row center concert tickets to the biggest concert on the planet.” ■

Learn more at www.evenheremovement.com.

IMPACT195 TRAINING

IMPACT195 is Rock church’s year-long School of Ministry. The name comes from the number of days that students are immersed in biblical training, discipleship and practical outreaches. It was through this school Robert Cortes said he was given the tools for street ministry.

“I would have never been that bold and courageous without that training,” Cortes said. “That place has a special place in my heart.”

Since completing the program, Cortes said he’s been involved in vision casting for the school’s mission track. He is also expanding his role within the microsites ministry.

“If I could, I would toss people into the school and watch God do His thing,” he said “It’s a down-on-your-knees-and-face crazy experience, but God always meets (you) exactly where you are, loving you the whole way.”

Learn more at www.i195.org.



A banner advertises the Sunday morning church service being held on the loading dock of a grocery store.



PHOTO BY SAM MARIE

Even Here Movement leaders tell two Iraqi women about Jesus Christ at Zion Market.

Microsite locations

The Even Here Movement hosts more than 20 microsite locations in San Diego County, with additional sites in other California cities, Hawaii and the Philippines. Plans are underway to expand into North County, where Rock Church has a satellite church.

Rock Thrift Store – 8 a.m.
Retail storefront
3191 Sports Arena Blvd., San Diego

Teralta Park – 10 a.m.
Public park
Orange Avenue and 40th Street, San Diego

Southern Hotel – 10 a.m.
Downtown underground theater
1159 6th Ave., San Diego

El Dorado Hills – 10 a.m.
Condominium community
3828 Pendiente Court, San Diego

Proteus Fitness – 10 a.m.
Military family friendly community
841 1/2 Orange Ave., Coronado

Lindo Lake Park – 10 a.m.
Community park
12660 Lindo Lane, Lakeside

Genesis Recovery – 10 a.m.
Recovery center / closed to public
24352 Featherstone Canyon Road, San Diego

Ocean View Laundry – 10 a.m.
Laundromat (Spanish)
3109 Ocean View Blvd., San Diego

Family Gym – noon
Fitness gym
101 17th St., San Diego

Co-Merge workplace – noon
Collaborative of local entrepreneurs
330 A St., San Diego

Gateway Village Military Housing – noon
Military community
2741 Mendonca Drive, San Diego

The Orchard – noon
Retirement community
4040 Hancock St., San Diego

Grocery Outlet – noon
Meets in loading dock
1002 Market St., San Diego

City Heights Rec Center – noon
Community center
4380 Landis St., San Diego

Chicano Park – noon
Community park (Spanish)
Logan Ave. and Cesar E. Chavez Pkwy., San Diego

The Arlington – noon
Open-air housing complex
701 7th Ave., San Diego

Wells Park – noon
Food truck site
1153 East Madison Ave., El Cajon
email debrasuechilders@aol.com for info

Bay View Military Housing – noon
House church for the military community
1845 Coral Sea Road, San Diego

James Gang Co. – 6 p.m.
Printing company in OB
1931 Bacon St., San Diego

Salgados Auto Repair – 6 p.m.
Auto repair shop
3680 Fairmount Ave., San Diego

San Diego State University – on summer break
Love Library on north walkway
5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego



From **TERROR** to **Joy**

Writer Margaret Feinberg shares breast cancer struggles, lessons on joy

by JONATHAN MERRITT, RNS

**“...the church isn’t
always a safe place to
be when you’re sick.”**

Vertigo. Anemia. Depression. Receding gums. Early menopause. A double mastectomy.

These are just a few of the many terrors that Margaret Feinberg hid from the public after receiving a breast cancer diagnosis in 2013 before age 40. While the popular Christian author’s books have sold nearly a million copies and she speaks to more than 80,000 people each year, she couldn’t find the words to share

this part of herself.

“I felt shame after the diagnosis, wondering if I had somehow brought it on myself,” she said. “And I felt a little embarrassed since it involved my female body parts.”

With the weight of her secret mounting, Feinberg sought the advice of Matt Chandler, the prominent pastor of the 11,000-member Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, and a recent cancer

The experience revealed the “crappy theology” and “tired teachings” held by many Christians that promise prosperity and a clean bill of health to the faithful.

survivor himself.

Chandler said she had two options: Round up the wagons and tell no one, or invite her readers into the journey. She decided to test the waters of the second option, but the results were not what she'd hoped for.

“Many people were supportive and prayerful, but then there were those who filled our inboxes with unsolicited medical advice, stories of everyone they knew who had died from cancer, retribution theology and accusations that I had brought the cancer on myself because of a hidden sin or lack of faith,” Feinberg said. “Those kinds of comments are devastating when you’re in the fight of your life.”

The responses taught her “the church isn’t always a safe place to be when you’re sick.”

With half a dozen trade books and numerous Bible studies published for the popular “Women of Faith” network and LifeWay Christian Stores, Feinberg continued to tour the country to teach at churches and conferences — darting back to her home in Denver for chemotherapy in between trips. But she continued to conceal the cavalcade of agony from her readers and fans.

Feinberg has now decided to break the silence and share much of her battle in a new book, “Fight Back With Joy.”

In it, she shares dreadful side effects of treatment known all too well by cancer survivors:

“I had anemia, fatigue, rashes, irritable bowel syndrome, mouth sores, itchy eyes, ringing ears, vertigo, chest pain, receding gums, drilling headaches, even nerve pain that felt like electrocution coursing under my skin. They poisoned me until my toenails fell off and some-

where in there I experienced an early menopause. There was so much torturous pain.”

At her lowest point, Feinberg admits struggling to maintain the will to live.

“Once during treatment, I caught myself thinking, ‘I’d rather be dead,’” Feinberg said. “In those moments, if God would have let me die, I’d have been more than okay with that.”

Many Americans can relate to her struggle, and not just women. An estimated 1.66 million people in the U.S. received a cancer diagnosis in 2014 alone. Approximately 66 percent of them survived five or more years after the diagnosis.

But even those familiar with the disease may be surprised by the spiritual lessons Feinberg said she learned. The experience, she said, revealed the “crappy theology” and “tired teachings” held by many Christians that promise prosperity and a clean bill of health to the faithful. As a result, many Christians aren’t equipped to face such crisis.

“She’s always been a gifted Bible teacher,” said Christopher Ferebee, Feinberg’s agent for nearly a decade. “But there’s a new depth to her writing now that she’s faced this trial. When you can see God’s face in the abyss, it changes you.”

Feinberg decided to see the experience as an opportunity to rediscover a cornerstone Christian virtue: joy. Through participating in an ancient Jewish grieving ritual, she found joy in mourning. She attempted to impart joy



to others by gifting red balloons to other patients in the hospital cancer ward and baking brownies for nurses. She even sang cheerful songs in CAT scan machines.

Through the experiment, she realized that Christians have misunderstood the Christian quality. While many Christians teach that joy is better than the circumstantial emotion called “happiness,” Feinberg says the two are inseparable.

And though it is tough to muster in times of suffering, deep joy is almost always accessible even if it looks different than we expect.

“Joy is far more than I ever thought or been taught,” said Feinberg, recently named by Outreach Magazine as one of the top young leaders shaping the American Christian church. “It’s a more dynamic, forceful weapon than most of us realize. When we fight back with joy, we lean into the very presence of God — the one who fills us with joy, even on our most deflated todays.”

She said she believes joy can be an effective armament to fight diseases such as cancer because it reduces anxiety. But she doesn’t think it is a replacement for proper medical treatment, which she credits with the success of her fight.

After more than a year of treatment and a double mastectomy, doctors have told Feinberg that she’s cancer-free. But she is well aware that it could return at any moment.

“I live in fear, but I’m not controlled by fear,” she said. “I’ve found my capacity for joy expanding against all odds.” ■



Gained in Translation

Missionaries in China hope an old translation of the Bible will revolutionize the church

by JUNE CHENG | WNS

In 1874, a group of Chinese and Western language scholars commissioned by the American Bible Society completed the first translation of the Bible into colloquial Chinese, allowing everyday Chinese people to read and understand the Word of God. Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, a Jewish convert and Episcopal bishop of Shanghai, worked for 11 years to transform the elegance of the Old Testament Hebrew into Chinese; and for the next 40 years, the text became the standard Bible for the Chinese.

Yet today, most Chinese Christians have never read this Jingwei Version Bible or even know of its existence, as few copies survived the missionary martyrdoms and Bible burnings in the early 20th century and the Cultural Revolution in the '70s. In its place, the 1919 Chinese Union Version gained popularity and is now the only Bible version the Chinese government allows, rolling hot off the presses of the government-controlled Amity Press in Nanjing, China.

The Union Bible, used by the tens of millions of Christians in China, is a literal translation of the English Revised text, and also relies heavily on the earlier Jingwei Bible with about 80 percent of the text remaining the same.

While some take issue that the Union Bible is not translated from the original Greek and Hebrew, a bigger problem is that the government has control over revisions and corrections in new editions of the Bible.

Continued on page 18

Bible translation expands in the Middle East despite deadly extremist attacks

by LORI ARNOLD

Wycliffe Associates is working to expand its underground translation ministry in the Middle East and Central Asia, even though 40 percent of the Bible translators living and working in the area have been killed or reported missing over the past year.

“While we mourn those who were lost, we are committed to continue their work, supporting national translation teams in this part of the world,” Bruce Smith, president and CEO of Wycliffe Associates, said in a news release.

Extremist groups in the region are known to operate freely and are systematically wiping out Christian minorities. Some Christians have been abducted and interrogated in an attempt to force them to renounce their faith, while others have been beaten, jailed, and put to death. In all, 11 of Wycliffe’s 28 Bible translators have been targeted by the extremists.

Even so, the translators, cognizant of efforts to silence their work, have remained dedicated to filling the gospel gap in a region with nearly 1,000 languages. As many as 280 million people have no access to the Scriptures because of language barriers.

As a result, Wycliffe Associates is currently raising \$300,000 through its Scriptures for New Frontiers initiative, which is designed to equip these local translators with the technology and training they need to work more safely.

“Given the realities of the world in which these

translators live and serve, some people might think the best thing they could do right now is to go into hiding and lay low for a while,” Smith said. “But that isn’t their plan at all.”

The funding will be used to develop the technology, training, and resources required to translate the Bible as quickly and effectively as possible.

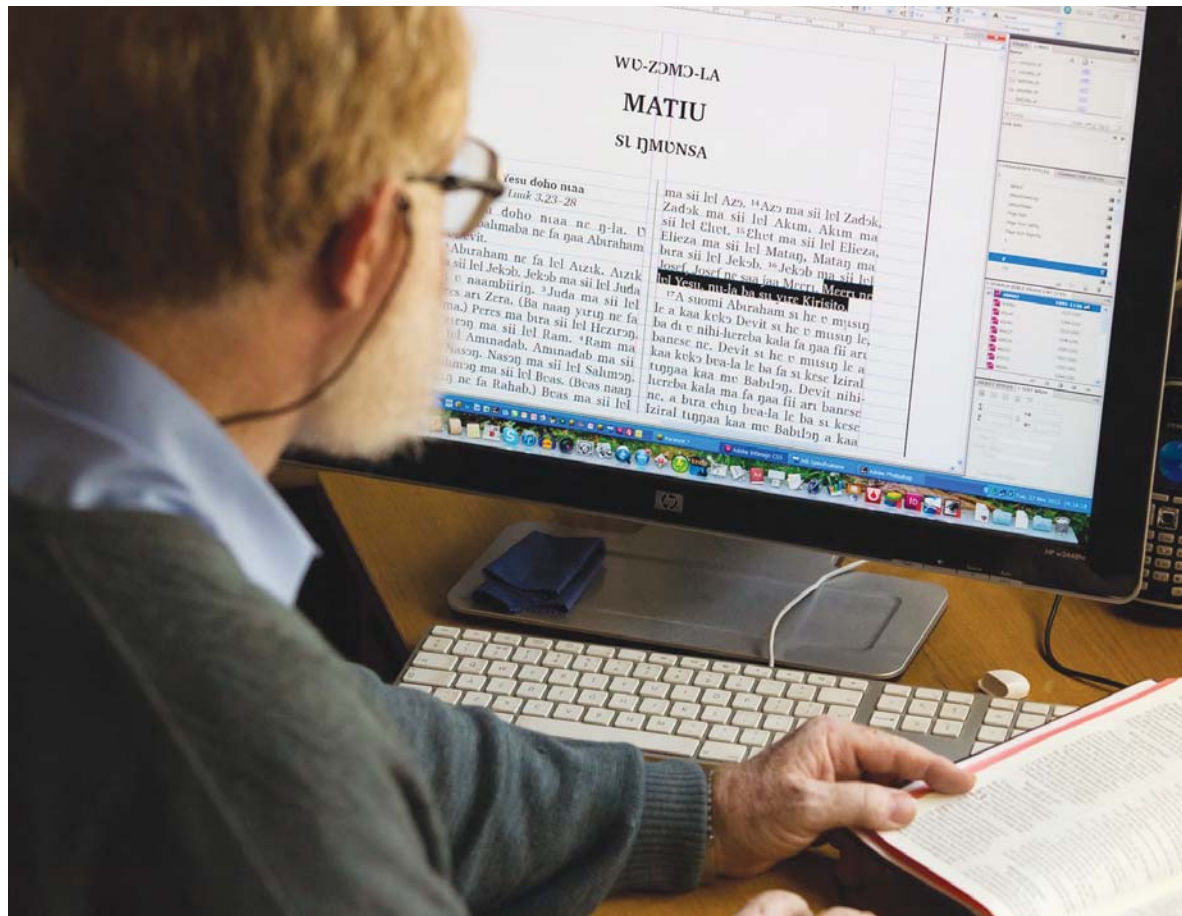
Translations of the books of Genesis, Luke, and Acts have already been completed by some and are ready for production and distribution.

The Scriptures for New Frontiers initiative provides open source Bible translation technology, training to support national-led translation efforts, digital Scripture distribution, and resources to empower local underground translators.

“The church is growing rapidly in these countries through the sharing of God’s Word, even through means such as God revealing himself to non-Christians in dreams,” Smith said.

Smith says these Bible translators want the Scriptures to be distributed by every possible means, and they “want an audacious number of printed copies, which reflect their conviction that everyone who speaks their language needs to have God’s Word.”

Worldwide, Wycliffe’s Bible translation is currently in progress for 2,195 languages, and 1,023 languages in the world have at least one book of the Bible. With 531 language translations completed, the organization is striving to achieve the goal of beginning the translation of God’s Word into the 3,100 remaining languages by 2025. ■



WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS PHOTO



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...few copies survived the missionary martyrdoms and Bible burnings in the early 20th century and the Cultural Revolution in the '70s.

Continued from page 16

For the past few years, Jared Brown (name changed for security purposes) and a fellow American missionary have scoured libraries, museums, even antique bookstores around Asia and the United States for portions of copies of the Jingwei Bible. With help from experts on Schereschewsky, they found microfilms of the text, footnotes by the translators, and later revisions, which Brown pieced together to recreate the original text of the Jingwei Bible. In January, he printed 5,500 copies, keeping the original language but changing the characters from traditional to simplified form for use inside China.

Brown's interest in the Jingwei stems from his views of textual criticism—the Jingwei is based on the Majority Text, meaning it takes into consideration all available biblical manuscripts, while the Union Bible places more weight on certain biblical manuscripts that are believed to be more reliable. Bible scholars have long disagreed on which method is more accurate, yet Brown believes the Jingwei Bible should interest those on either side of the debate for its historicity as the first Mandarin Bible translation, its scholarship in translation, and its independence from government interference.

“The main thing that the Union Bible was trying to push was ‘Let’s try to be more literal, let’s see if we can get more of the English mindset,’” Brown said. “There’s no doubt, the one that we got right here is much more Chinese.”

The Jingwei has a more Chinese rhythm in its verses, and without the pressure of conforming to English phrases, it uses Chinese four-character idioms called chengyu to express the original sentiment. While the Jingwei uses older words (think the “thees” and “thous” of KJV), local pastors find the translation more beautiful and clear. For instance Joshua 1:9 says “be strong

and courageous,” which the Union tries to translate directly from the English to a phrase that means something closer to “strengthen willpower.” The Jingwei uses a chengyu that has the exact same meaning as the original.

The Communist government also makes changes to the Union translation at its discretion. For instance, certain biblical terms used by Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the 1850 Taiping Rebellion who claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus, were taken out from the Union Bible. The government feared Christians reading terms like “chosen people” would follow in Hong’s footsteps in starting an uprising that killed about 25 million people. Brown has also found editions of the Union Bible that take out references to baptisms: “The fact that the government is in charge of all revision and all corrections and all printing—that’s a huge problem because it was never given to the government. The Lord makes it really clear as far as who is responsible.”

One of the biggest issues Chinese Christians may have in accepting the Jingwei is that it uses the term Tianzhu for God, a name typically used by Catholics. Protestants have long argued about the best name for God, some using Shangdi while others use Shen. Shangdi is the name of a supreme god in China’s traditional religion, and some missionaries used it to imply that China had an idea of a monotheistic god but forgot who he was. Others dislike the term because it made God just one of many of China’s gods. On the other hand Shen was a broader term for god (with a little g). The translators of the Jingwei opted for Tian-



zhu, which means “heaven and earth’s keeper.” While Christians who hear the term may think of Catholicism, Brown pointed out that in every other culture Catholics and Protestants used the same name for God without any problems.

Beijing pastor Jeremy Jin first heard of the Jingwei two years ago through Brown, and in reading the Bible found that although it took time to adjust—he had spent years preaching and memorizing verses from the Union Bible—the literary style flowed better and the meaning was clearer. In March, Jin started using the Jingwei at his 20-person house church, one of 10 pastors now using it in their churches.

The printing of any version of the Bible outside of government control is illegal in China, so Brown is spreading the word through other missionaries and local church pastors. By summertime, he hopes to create a Jingwei Bible app, which would make it impossible for the government to stop the spread of the Bible.

The importance of the Jingwei Bible for Chinese Christians is less about the translation itself than about having a Bible they can trust, Brown said. “They don’t have an understanding that the Bible is reliable. And I think—whatever Bible it is—if you have the understanding the Bible is reliable, it would revolutionize the church in China.” ■

Candace Cameron Bure in 'A Christmas to Remember.'



'A Christmas to Remember'

It's Christmas in July for the Hallmark Channel, which has launched production on its original film, "A Christmas to Remember."

The film, shooting in Vancouver, stars Candace Cameron Bure ("Full House," "Dancing With the Stars," "Just the Way You Are") and Paul Greene ("Bitten," "Perfect Match"), Sarah Strange ("Garage Sale Mystery"), David Lewis ("Man of Steel") and Marcus Rosner ("When Calls the Heart").

The Christmas comedy, written by Mark Amato, chronicles the story of a young relationship advice columnist who learns a surprising lesson about love when her holiday flight to New York takes an unexpected detour. It is produced by Harvey Kahn and directed by Ron Oliver.

"A Christmas to Remember" is part of movie channel's annual Countdown to Christmas.

Fundraising set for football and faith film

Burbank-based Avondale Pictures is in the midst of a crowd-funding campaign in advance of the Aug. 19 release of its first feature film, "Shake Off the World." The film's principals are hoping to raise \$30,000 through the campaign.

The film, about a high school football player whose life is turned upside down, is in post-production after a 25-day

shoot in Lumberton, N.C.

"We strive to

make relevant faith-based films, of unsurpassed quality, that the whole family will enjoy," the company's website says. "Our goal is to celebrate our faith through film, creating a better world, while producing content that inspires."

The debut film is written and directed by Chuck Williams, who, as an assistant director, has worked with James Cameron, Rob Cohen and Kathryn Bigelow, among others. He also stars in the picture as Police Chief Jack Kerrington.

Additional casting includes newcomers Aaron Mees; Johna Edmonds, a former Miss Carolina; and Jessica Lynch, a U.S. Army supply clerk, who was taken hostage, at the age of 19, and held for several weeks by Iraqi troops before being rescued by U.S. forces.

'Old Fashioned'

"Old Fashioned," which had the highest opening for "faith films on less than 300 screens" when it hit the silver screen in Valentine's Day, has been released on DVD.

The film centers on Clay Walsh (Rik Swartzwelder), a former frat boy who gives up his carousing ways and now runs an antique shop in a small Midwestern college town. There, he has become notorious for his lofty and outdated theories on love and romance. Swartzwelder also directed the film. As Walsh explores his own views on relationships, audiences are shown that

pursuing a God-honoring love relationship isn't archaic—even in secular times.

Pure Flix releases three DVDs

Pure Flix Entertainment, the independent filmmakers who produced "God's Not Dead" and "Do You Believe?" has released three of its movies to DVD.

"Hope Bridge" follows a teenage son's sorrowful and twisting journey after he begins a search for the truth behind his father's suicide.

"Dancer and the Dame," a family comedy for children 12 and older, tells the story of Rick Dancer, a down-on-his-luck detective who is paired with a fussy canine cop called Princess.

The all-age family adventure "Pirate's Code: The Adventures of Mickey Matson" follows two heroes who take on a crew of modern-day pirates.

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Liberty Bible College & Seminary

19th century hymn gets Redman update

Singer-songwriter Matt Redman updates a classic favorite, "It Is Well With My Soul," on his new full-length album *Unbroken Praise*, which released June 16.

The album was recorded live at the world-renowned Abbey Road Studios. In his rendition of the hymn, written by American lawyer Horatio Spafford after a 1873 steamship mishap in the Atlantic killed his four young daughters, Redman adds a few verses and lyrics to the well-known chorus.

"I often think about how a song can travel so far around the world, but also into the deepest places of someone's heart, giving them something they can grab onto even in the craziest moments," Redman said of the album.

The album is the 12th for Redman, a

prolific songwriter who has also contributed to a variety of Passion event albums. Among his best-selling songs are "Blessed Be Your Name," "Heart of Worship" and "10,000 Reasons."

Needing Jesus

Worship artist Mike Lee, who debuted his freshman album *Awakening Hearts* last year, has wasted no time releasing his next project, *All I Need*.

The newest album is produced by Cody Norris and Scott Cash, along with Ed Cash, who has also collaborated with Chris Tomlin, David Crowder and Kari Jobe.

Unlike the first album, the new EP is more stripped-down, offering a glimpse into his artistic, personal and spiritual growth.

Writing for the title track came dur-



ing a particularly vulnerable time for the mixed martial arts instructor. In addition to the demands of touring, Lee was faced with his dad's cancer diagnosis and his wife pregnancy.

"So often I'm looking at the Word and writing with an audience or a congregation in mind, but this was one of those times when I wrote without thinking about what anyone else would hear," Lee said. "I had so much going on that the only way I could think to communicate was to sing to the Lord. As a thread through the whole of this season, it is fitting that God, as all we need, would be the central theme of this collection."

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New project for Blessid Union

Blessid Union of Souls, an alternative rock band that made a name for itself in the 1990s, has released *Live at Never on Sunday* a project captured on both CD and DVD. The album includes the band's mega hits "I Believe" and "Hey Leonard (She Likes Me For Me)," as well as fan favorites "Let Me Be the One," "Oh Virginia" and "Lucky to Be Here."



Although their early work focused primarily on a secular sound, the songs have gradually showcased more and more

Christian underpinnings, influenced by the faith of lead vocalist Eliot Sloan.

Over the years, the group's songs have been featured in several movies such as "Pokemon: The First Movie;" "Contact," featuring Jodie Foster; and "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective II." They have also appeared on several TV shows including Late Night with Conan O'Brien, Live with Regis, CBS This Morning, Weekend Today, and Cold Case.

For His glory

Timed for release in advance of Independence Day, Shadowlands Music recording artist David Britton is celebrating his newest EP, *American Glory*, a four-song album that includes his own version of Lee Greenwood's classic, "God Bless the USA." *American Glory* also features "America the Beautiful," an original tribute to the military called "The Warrior," an orchestrated version of the "The Star Spangled Banner" and a bonus track of the baritone's a capella version of the National Anthem.



Classically trained, Britton studied at Westmont College in Santa Barbara.

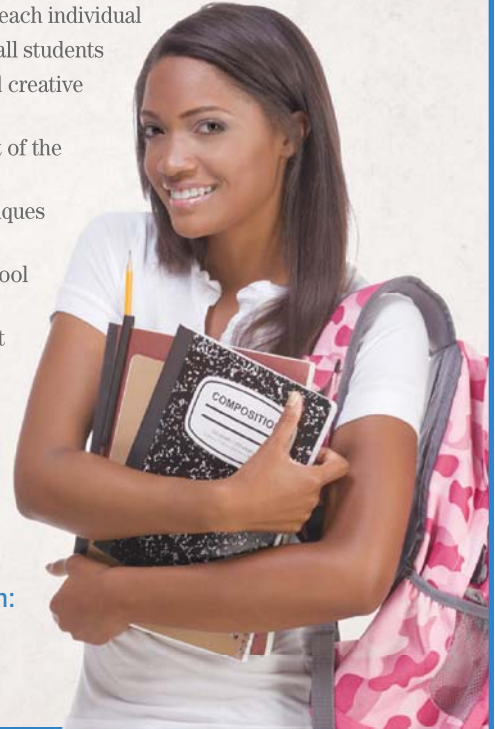
"Above all else it is my desire that those who listen may see past me to the One who created all things," the artist said.

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Marriage conference at Shadow Mountain

EL CAJON — Shadow Mountain Community Church will host the Generations Marriage Conference July 31 to Aug. 1.

The conference will feature Bill and Pam Mutz, with special music by Mary James.

Admission is \$45 and registration is available online.

The church is located at 21000 Greenfield Drive

Learn more at www.shadowmountain.org or call (619) 590-2110.

Bible clubs honor work projects

SAN DIEGO — Five area schools have been recognized for community service projects conducted by students involved with the annual Project 25 Day, sponsored by Urban Youth Collaborative.

Now in its sixth year, this year's campaign involved 1,100 students throughout the county who participated in 50 service projects that "touched 10 countries, raised \$19,500, generated over 9,000 youth-led volunteer hours, and impacted countless lives."

PROJ25
STUDENTS IMPACTING SAN DIEGO ► 2015

Their efforts prompted San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer to declare May 16 "Project 25 Day in the City of San Diego."

Students at Coronado Middle School and High School took first place for their project, a dinner and auction that raised \$6,000 for a South Asia ministry that educates girls rescued from human trafficking. Other winners were Liberty Charter High School, which took second place and Kearny and Torrey Pines High Schools, which tied for third place.

Overall, 1,100 San Diego students participated in 50 unique community service projects that touched 10 countries, raised \$19,500, generated over 9,000 youth-led volunteer hours, and

impacted countless lives. Mayor Kevin Faulconer proclaimed May 16, 2015 "Project 25 Day in the City of San Diego."

Urban Youth Collaborative is a network of youth ministry leaders who are conducting Bible clubs at schools across the country. The goal is to "link all 280 public middle and high schools in San Diego County with a local church partner by 2020."

"Connecting churches with schools makes transformation possible in the lives of students and the church community," the ministry website said.

Learn more at www.proj25.org

Family Vacation Bible School

CLAIREMONT — First Baptist Church Clairemont will hold its annual family Vacation Bible School from 5:45 to 8:30 p.m. July 19 to 24,

Classes will be held for all age groups, including adults. A light meal will be served nightly.

The theme for the week is "Journey Off the Map: Unknown to Us, Known to Him," based on Isaiah 30:21

The church is located at 3219 Clairemont Mesa Blvd.

Learn more at www.fbcclairemont.org or call (858) 273-4642.

Classic car show returns

SPRING VALLEY — Christian Rods and Customs will hold its 16th Annual Classic Car and Bike Show from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Aug. 29 at Faith Chapel.

Most of the proceeds from the free event will benefit Calvary Ranch and Restoration Ranch, two San Diego County drug and alcohol recovery programs.

In addition to the show, which includes competition trophies for a variety of classes, the event will offer food for purchase, music, raffles and vendors.

The registration fee for cars is \$20 to \$25. There is no year or model limits for the show. The first 100 registrants



Christian Rods and Customs will hold its annual car show at Faith Chapel on Aug. 29 to benefit Calvary Ranch and Restoration Ranch.

will receive a participant's plaque, dash plaque and raffle ticket.

The church is located at 9400 Campo Road.

Learn more at www.christianrodsandcustomssd.com or call (858) 679-8153.

Thriving women share stories

EL CAJON — The Thrive Conference, a two-day global empowerment event designed to promote the international ministries of women working in some of the most hostile regions of the world, returns to Narratives Church on Sept. 25 and 26.

This year's theme is "Streams in the Desert."

Launched on the East Coast several years ago, the conference made its West Coast debut at the El Cajon church last year. Another conference is scheduled for Los Angeles the week prior to the San Diego County event.

The event—sponsored by International Women's Ministries, a division of Advancing Native Missions—will include dessert on Friday night, breakfast snacks and a tostada bar for lunch on Saturday.

All proceeds will benefit the work of Advancing Native Missions.

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

For information, call (619) 379-5674 or visit www.advancingnativemissions.com/thrive.





EVENTS ONLINE

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

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Psalm 139:14

MARK LARSON

Chillin' for the summer

Now that we are in the midst of our long, hot summer, I can't help but think back to those "Good Ol' Days." As a Baby Boomer kid, everything seemed simpler and less stressful then.

Here's one thing I've realized about that time: Viewed through today's culture, my Mom would have been cited by the cops and my brother and sisters and I could have been hauled off to Child Protective Services.

(NOTE TO MOM: Take a breath, there's some clarification to come...)

She was (and still is) a wonderful mother, especially when she had to go it alone as a single mom for several years. But the times were so different. The level of trust in our neighbors was greater and overzealous lawyers hadn't yet taken so much fun out of things. We were not overly cautious.

On a typical summer day at our house, the sun would come up, and breakfast was served (in all its greasy, eggs-and-bacony glory) then there would be Mom's charge to us: "OK, go do something, go outside, play with your friends, read, whatever—just don't get into trouble. When I call you in for dinner, be here."

That's not exactly how she said it, but you get the idea. We were off into our Midwestern neighborhood to explore and learn, sometimes the hard way. (Nearly torching my buddy Doug's tree house comes to mind, but I digress.)

Ah, those were the days. It was Independence Day for weeks, not just July 4th. The summer break was all about creative liberty. It was also about lots of junk food.

Today, little kids aren't allowed anything resembling being "free range." Parents need to know what their children are doing, and make sure it's age appropriate. Be involved but not smothering.

In one town earlier this year, a couple

of siblings walking home from a visit to their neighborhood park (just down the street) were cited by authorities and parents ticketed. In contrast, my friends and I used to put many miles on our Schwinn bikes, heading all around our city—without helmets. We went to the park and playground all the time. (Even today Mom hasn't heard all of the stories.)

We knew not to talk to strangers and learned that actions had consequences. Sometimes we skinned knees, or sprained ankles and assorted dumb stuff, but our guardian angels kept us under God's protection.

Now in super-sensitive America, if a parent even *appears* to "neglect" a child for even a second, someone will criticize...and often call the cops. It's suddenly everyone else's business.

In a recent Florida case, a young boy was placed under government control after it was alleged his parents "left him at risk." In his own backyard.

He was 11 years old. Not exactly a toddler wandering into harm's way. It turns out that he was locked out of the house when Mom and Dad couldn't get home in time. It was rainy and traffic was awful, so they were delayed. While waiting he played basketball for 90 minutes.

Then it got ugly. A neighbor called the cops and the parents were handcuffed and taken away. It took several weeks before clearer heads prevailed and the young man and a brother were allowed back home.

Adding to the legal mess was the reality that, in Florida and other states, *there is not a minimum age for a child to*



be left alone. Imagine the possibilities when your child is, say, 21 but out on his own without protective gear.

Of course I'm not saying kids should be left to run wild without any rules, and I know there are new threats around us each day. But what's summer without some sense of adventure? Especially when the government is prodding kids to get off the couch and get active.

Kids need to be kids, and this season is when young men and woman can learn courage, resourcefulness and entrepreneurship. But of course in our 21st century world, even an impromptu lemonade stand can run afoul of authorities (especially the health department).

Let's find new ways to truly enjoy summer, as families and with trusted friends. Relax, have fun, do what is right and certainly be aware of surroundings...with good humor and yes, a spirit of adventure.



Larson is a longtime Southern California radio/television personality. His voice is heard on KPRZ 1210AM and his weekday talkshow airs 6 to 9 a.m. on AM 1170 "The Answer." He's also a news analyst on KUSI TV. Learn more at marklarson.com.

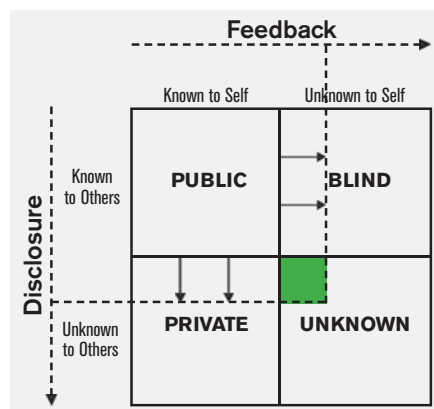
Windows 2 C U & me

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” I Corinthians 13:12 KJV

When I first learned about the Johari Window, way back in graduate school, I thought it had to be some kind of eastern mystical concept related to Hinduism or Buddhism. I remember feeling a bit relieved when I learned that it was actually a simple tool developed by a couple of American psychologists for improving interpersonal dynamics.

The name, Johari, is actually a combination of their first names: Joe and Harry.

The Johari Window is a common sense way to explain how you see yourself and others. Imagine that you look out through this window at others and they see you through this same window.



Reading it like a graph, you’ll see that the vertical side of this window represents information about you that is known to others. “Others” may be your family, or your coworkers, or people at church, etc. The horizontal side of the window represents information that you know about yourself. So the Johari Window represents how you as an individual relate to a particular group.

Each of us would have different size window “panes” depending upon the group we are looking at. For example, if you have been attending a small group Bible study for many years, then that group will know you really well, in contrast with people you recently met at the gym.

The first quadrant of the window represents all the information that is known by others about you, as well as the information that you know about yourself. If you are an open book, rarely keep secrets from other people, and you know yourself well, then this area of the window would be large compared to the other three quadrants (as shown on the graphic by the dotted lines).

This first pane of the window is referred to as the “Public Area.” Healthy people tend to be part of a group where you can be yourself, share personal information, and receive support and guidance. We should strive to have multiple support systems in place where intimacy and trust is fostered.

One of the best ways to grow in understanding of ourselves is to let others give us feedback in areas where we are blind. This is indicated in the second quadrant of the Johari Window, known as the “Blind Area.” We all have our blind spots, aspects of our personality or habitual behaviors that we do not see clearly, but others do.

You can probably think of someone in one of your social groups who comes across as a “know-it-all” or possibly someone who talks way too much, but they are unaware of how their behavior is coming across to others. They are oblivious to the impact of their poor social skills.

The third pane of the window is the “Private” portion of our lives. Clearly, we all have information that we keep to



ourselves. However, intimacy and close-

ness to others requires taking the risk of sharing some of our struggles. As a person self-discloses and moves Private information to the Public area, the hidden part of the window decreases. Generally, this process is a sign of self-confidence and positive mental health. As Rick Warren is quoted as saying, “You are only as sick as your secrets.”

The final pane of the Johari Window represents “Unknown” information about ourselves that no one knows, including ourselves. This might be unconscious motivations, defense mechanisms or repressed memories. Generally speaking, the more baggage we carry around within us, the more we tend to feel anxious, depressed and out of control.

This is where godly counsel may help each of us considerably. Finding a safe place to share your private struggles and receive gentle feedback is often a painful but growing experience. It can be laborious process to clean the windows of our lives, but if it leads to greater self-understanding and improved interpersonal relationships then the effort is worth the time.



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JANICE THOMPSON



Practically speaking... Becoming a wise investor

When I mention the word *investor*, do legends of the investment world like Warren Buffett or John Templeton come to mind? Perhaps you think of a major investment bank or a variety of Hollywood movies where Wall Street personalities dream up clever—and sometimes immoral—ways to grow a vast amount of wealth. Most of the time, these bigger-than-life images of investors tend to make us think that this is a world reserved for a special few, when in fact this is far from the truth.

Whether you are already investing in some kind of financial instrument, prefer to just hide money under your mattress or feel you can only *dream* about saving or investing, it is important to understand—we all are investors.

Yes, that includes you!

Every day you are trading something of present value for the hope of a future reward. Here's the point:

Every day you are trading something of present value for the hope of a future reward.

Whether it's your time, talent or your treasure (money, real estate or a business), you're putting something at risk in exchange for something you expect to be more valuable at some point in the future. For example, when you invest your time at work, you expect a paycheck. When you pursue higher education or another certification, you might anticipate a career advancement. With your treasure, you make a financial commitment with the expectation of a current yield or some kind of growth down the road.

Since we've now established that *you are an investor*, there are three funda-

mental principles I want you to understand as I begin a series about investing over the next several months.

You are always investing in something.

Grasping this concept will help you understand the true bottom line. The question isn't whether or not you are investing, but is rather "*What are you investing in?*" This concept applies to much more than financial assets—it applies to everything you are and everything you do. Ultimately, there are two things that will outlive us and last for eternity—God's Word and people. An impressive balance sheet is meaningless unless God owns it all and redeems it for His purposes in your life.

All investment entails a measure of uncertainty.

You may recall in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25 that not only does one of the servants entirely avoid investing his talent, but he also actually packs it away like an unsown seed. It *cannot* bear fruit. This servant had an asset that he didn't put

to work because he was afraid of what might happen. The other two servants understood that they were not given assets simply to keep and enjoy, but rather to do their best to leverage them for a future reward.

There is no perfect investment.

Looking for the ideal can quickly become an ordeal! There are three essential characteristics to every investment that you need to acknowledge: 1) **Risk**, because you are exchanging something certain for something uncertain; 2) **Delay**, since you're exchanging something present for something future; and 3)

Hope of Gain, since you're exchanging something you consider lower in value for something you consider higher in value. When you make an investment, you have decided that the risk and delay are worth the potential gain.

From my professional observation, what is often missing is a basic understanding of how to build wealth prudently and make it grow effectively over time. It gets complicated! And it is impossible to eliminate all the unknowns: *The only thing certain about the future is that it is uncertain.*

The best way I know to minimize overall risk is to first have a plan in place to eliminate all consumer debt and second to build an easily accessible emergency fund equal to living expenses for three to six months. This enables you to ensure that even if a particular investment does not work out you will have enough resources to meet your basic obligations.

In the next two articles in this series, I will explore nine questions you can use to help evaluate your own *financial* investment decisions. These principles can help you avoid some common mistakes, help you understand more about your investor personality, and help you focus on what really matters!

Now that we have our foundation in place, Warren Buffett look out!



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‘Dad, who is Satan?’

Teaching kids the basics about God can be easy—at least compared to other subjects.

For instance, even a young toddler quickly can learn the answer to “Who made you?” And after that, they just as easily can learn the answer to two related questions: “What else did God make?” (Everything.) “Why did God make you?” (For His glory.)

But if you raise children to think biblically and even theologically, pretty soon they’ll toss a curve ball your way and you’ll be left speechless, not sure how to respond in simple, kid-level language.

“Dad, who is Satan?” my 3-year-old son asked a few weeks back.

I know the “adult answer.” But the “kid-level answer”? I was speechless.

No doubt, my son knew Satan was bad—his books and DVDs certainly implied that—but that only got him so far. That’s because we’ve taught him that *a lot* of people in the world are bad and that there are “mean people” who would harm him. Satan, though, is *far, far worse* than your everyday “bad” person. And he’s technically not even a *person*. So what do you say?

My first answer? “He’s the embodiment of evil.” Thankfully, my wife intervened and gave me some tips—well before I confused my son. And then I read my favorite theological resource (Wayne Grudem’s “Systematic Theology”), added some verses, and boiled it down to four points to share with my son:

1. Satan is God’s enemy—and evil. He’s not just “really bad” or “really, really bad”—although that may help kids understand the definition. No, he’s much worse. He’s God’s enemy. The Bible calls Satan the “evil one” (1 John 5:19), the originator of sin, a murderer

from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44). He’s also an angel who fell from heaven (in case your child asks about that, too). It’s wise to reserve a word specifically for Satan.

My children sometimes act “bad,” but never “evil.”

2. God is more powerful. God created the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the mountains, the oceans, the rain, the snow, the sunshine, the sand, the dirt, the trees, the grass, the elephants, the giraffes, the dogs and the cats. In other words, God created everything my kids and your kids already love. *Of course* He’s more powerful. And when He was done with all of that, He created us. And what did Satan create? Sin. When you look at it that way, there’s no contest.

3. Satan wants you to do bad things. And he will tempt you all of your life. Just ask Adam and Eve, David and Solomon, or even Peter and Paul. But my son already knows all about temptation, as does his Daddy and Mommy, and as does every 3-year-old in the world. If he had his way, he’d grab his sister’s toys, his brother’s toys, and then go in a corner and play by himself. Oh yeah, and he’d stop in the kitchen and grab a big spoon and the half gallon of ice cream, too. He knows all of that is wrong, but he’s no different than the



rest of us. His temptations simply are a bit simpler. And funny.

4. God gives you the power to overcome it all. My son knows the Gospel message by heart, and he knows he has a choice to do right and wrong. He simply struggles with the decision. The Apostle Paul put it this way: “God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus overcame temptation from Satan, and then later in life He told his disciples: “He has no power over me” (John 14:30). What does that mean for my son? It means he has hope—as a 3-year-old, as a 33-year-old and as a 73-year-old. It means that if he believes Jesus is Lord, then He’s not lost in his sins. It also means He can overcome temptation. And it means he has the power to share his toys.



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

A lifestyle of generosity

I had my bags packed and was about to leave the hotel room. I glanced around to make sure I hadn't forgotten anything. The order and cleanliness of the room reminded me how thorough the housekeeper had been that week—replacing the coffee and creamer each day I had used it; neatly arranging my toiletries in the bathroom; even hanging up my clothes that had fallen to the floor.

I remembered a recent conversation with a friend. I don't remember how the topic came up, but he told me he typically left a tip for housekeeping service in a hotel. I was a little embarrassed that it was not something I had ever done. But now I remembered the conversation. I pulled out a bill and placed it on the dresser. I wrote a quick note on the hotel stationary, "Thanks for your good work!"

••••

I'm standing in front of the gift card display at the grocery store. The party starts in about an hour. I've found a nice birthday card (it has to be funny or I won't buy it) and now I'm going to get a gift card. Unfortunately, I'm not a very creative person when it comes to gift giving, so a gift card will have to do. I find the one I want and reach for the \$25 card. My hand stops. Seems a bit miserly. I grab the \$50 one instead. It's only money.

••••

We started supporting Jaimie a few years ago. She is with a youth organization that works with inner city youth. I was impressed with her energy and enthusiasm, so when she sent me a support request I talked it over with my wife. We were pretty stretched in our charitable giving, but decided to support her a little—\$25 a month. Not much, but every little bit helps. About a year later she dropped me a quick e-mail. There had been a glitch in the bank autopay and our support had stopped. I went online to correct the error and get it started again. I was about to check the

\$25 box, when I thought, "Why not a bit more." I marked \$40 instead.

••••

I mention each of these vignettes because as I've grown older I've learned something. As I look back over my life, I can remember a number times—with regret—that I was a bit too stingy or a bit too miserly. But I can't remember ever regretting being too generous.

There is a strange economy that happens when we give. The more you give, the more you get. The more you bless, the more you are blessed. When you add an extra "0" to that check; when you say "yes," to that worthy cause; when you buy five more Girl Scout cookie boxes than you intended, there always seems to be an added blessing that comes—never a deficit.

The apostle Paul was on a mission of mercy when he wrote the letter we know as Second Corinthians. The church in Jerusalem was suffering extreme hardship and poverty and Paul was gathering a collection for them from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (northern & southern Greece). The churches in Macedonia—which themselves were notoriously poor and persecuted—had been particularly generous. Paul writes about them:

"In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave

themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us."

2 Corinthians 8:2–5 (NIV)

Notice what Paul says. They gave *during their own difficult times*. Their own poverty "welled up in rich generosity." They gave beyond their ability—out of their poverty. They *begged* for the opportunity to give. They gave to *others* because they had already *given themselves to God*.

The churches in Macedonia had learned a lesson that has taken me a

As I look back over my life, I can remember a number times—with regret—that I was a bit too stingy or a bit too miserly. But I can't remember ever regretting being too generous.

lifetime to learn. We were created to be givers, not takers! When we take and exploit and greedily hold on, we are miserable and frustrated and unhappy. When we give and give and bless and bless, our own needs seem to be magically met and we experience joy and peace and contentment. This is because we were created by God to be givers, not takers.

And we can't possibly give more than the God who created us, who gave us the ultimate gift of his Son to bring us into a right relationship with him. That's a gift worth sharing with others.



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JOANNE BROKAW

Hello, my name is...

I was at a gathering recently and the host was introducing me to everyone. "This is Susie," she said, introducing me to a young woman. The woman reached out to shake my hand and reintroduced herself. "Hi, I'm SusanaMarie."

"Do you prefer SusanaMarie or Susie?" I asked.

"My name is a mouthful," she said, "so I'll answer to anything."

"But which do you prefer?" I asked again.

"Oh, SusanaMarie, of course," she laughed. "That is my name."

I wasn't trying to be a jerk. I understand the dilemma of being called by anything but your actual name.

For reasons known only to my parents, they decided to name me Elizabeth and then call me by my middle name, Joanne. I have spent the rest of my life explaining that while my license, bank account, school attendance sheet and medical records says Elizabeth, I still prefer to be called Joanne. The conversation usually goes something like this.

Teacher, taking attendance on the first day of school: "Elizabeth Keltz?"

Me: "Here."

Teacher: "What do you prefer to be called?"

Me: "Joanne."

Teacher: "Joanne? Why Joanne?"

Me: "It's my name."

Teacher then calls the office, who calls my mother, who explains that my name is Elizabeth but everyone calls me by my middle name, Joanne.

Teacher, after getting the clarification from the office: "Why don't they call you Liz? That's a pretty name. Or why not Beth?"

Me: "Because my name is Joanne." I then dissolve into a fit of tears.

That exchange usually set the stage for a school year in which I would be called everything from JoJo to Betsy

by well-meaning adults and classmates intent on trying to be my pal. (And let's not

forget the more mean spirited among my classmates, who brought down the house with Lizzy Lizard.)

Listen people, my name is Joanne. Well, it's also Elizabeth. OK, so I have a hard time keeping it straight myself. I had to call our mortgage company the other day. After I gave the customer service representative the account number she said, "I just need to verify some information. What's your name?"

"Joanne Brokaw. I mean, the account is under Elizabeth Brokaw."

Silence.

"See, I go by my middle name but the account is under my real name."

Silence.

"I mean, Joanne is my real name, too, but my first name..."

Sigh.

"Can I just verify my social security number?"

I'm obviously suffering from some weird split personality disorder. It might explain why I can perform tasks for which I seem clearly not qualified while at the same time fail at tasks that I should be able to handle in my sleep.

It explains why, for example, I can handle all of our household finances even though I can never add 2 and 2 and get less than 5 (Elizabeth is good with money), and why I am always down to the wire on deadline despite the fact that I've written 99 percent of the piece weeks before (Joanne is a creative procrastinator).

It probably explains why, when I'm



at a screen-
ing or media event

(Elizabeth gets invited to all the good parties), I prefer to talk to the waiters and waitresses rather than the celebrities (Joanne likes to socialize in her own income bracket).

It's why I can get up in front of an audience and speak coherently on almost any topic without hesitation (Elizabeth can work a crowd), but can't call customer service to discuss my cell phone bill without breaking down in tears (Joanne has some emotional issues).

It's also the reason that I try to make sure I call people by the name they want to be called, even if it seems odd or is a mouthful. SusanaMarie likes to be called SusanaMarie. Not Susie or Sue or Bob.

At my age, I confess that I've given up correcting people. I answer to Jo, Joan, Joanna, Elizabeth, Mrs. Brokaw, Mommy, Hey Lady, and ArfArfArf. I know who I am, and so does God. That's all the really matters, doesn't it?



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

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

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