

March 2016

# refreshed

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# The gentle hand of grace

Most of us have done something dumb, where we can't believe we put our lives, our jobs, our relationships, at risk, just because we weren't paying attention. Here's how it happened when, just days before my wife and I were going to leave the country for our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I discovered that my passport had expired. We had the plane tickets, the apartment, everything, lined up. But it looked like I torpedoed the whole thing—a trip we had been planning for two years.

I called a passport service in Washington D.C., fully ready to agree to anything he demanded.

"This happens all the time," the bored voice in Washington, D.C., told me. "We'll fax you some documents now; fill them out, sign them, and send the papers and your expired passport to us by FedEx right away."

I did what I was told, feeling like I was talking to hostage takers telling me where to drop off the money if I wanted to see my baby again. Name the time. Name your price. Add some zeroes to it. I won't call the authorities. Just give me back my trip, I beg you!

True to their word, they sent the

forms immediately. I filled them out in the FedEx parking lot, stuffed them in an envelope, wished them Godspeed, and slowly drove home. Things seemed OK between my wife and me on the surface. We told the kids about it. My daughter would pass me in the house, pause, and hug me unsolicited, as if it were my last cigarette before the execution. I caught my son staring at me from another room. "What?" I asked. He slowly shook his head. "You are so screwed," he said.

The earth didn't start spinning again until Monday morning, when I called Washington. Yes, they had my passport, and yes it was already at the U.S. State Department being rushed through. I should have it by tomorrow, they said. That was one day before we were leaving. A little tight, but a livable margin.

They called Monday afternoon. Bad news. I had forgotten to sign the back of one of the forms. Passport rejected.

My wife saw my body language and stood behind the chair I was sitting in while I discussed my options on the phone. She reached down and began to massage my shoulders. I tucked my chin at first, hoping she was actually feeling

for my windpipe, but when I realized she was getting the picture that our anniversary trip was not going to happen because of me, after two years of planning, and she was still willing to share this shameful moment with me, I understood the concept of grace.

"There's still a chance this will work," the emotionless voice in Washington said. "Sign the form now, fax it to me, and we'll take it in first thing Tuesday. We'll get it on the earliest overnight and you might have it by 8 a.m. Wednesday.

The airport shuttle was coming at 9:30 a.m. It was the only option left.

At 7:30 a.m. a van pulled in front of the house. The driver had an envelope. I signed for it before he was completely out of his vehicle. Two hours later another van arrived and took us to the airport.

Within a day we were riding bikes along canals in Bruges, Belgium, playing in the North Sea, enjoying the art and sights during the days and the jazz clubs at night. I massaged Marcia's shoulders a lot.

I remember the trip. I remember the tension I caused. But what I remember most was, at my lowest point, I did not

get condemnation. I got a neck rub. I got a massage that said, "We're in this together, regardless of how badly you screwed this up."

Bringing out flaws to our loved ones can be the very means that moves the relationship forward. How else do we remain in our deep relationships? How else do we grow? With God or anyone else? It is within the frame of families that we learn how to become advocates for one another.

Family life in general is a series of small surrenders that move us downward, but actually lead us upward. It's about giving away power and rights. It's about being unselfish. It's about feeling the way God feels—where we take delight in letting someone else's life be more important than our own.



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."

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# Bill would offer school elective credits for off-site Bible study

by LORI ARNOLD

SACRAMENTO — When Gail Blake-Smith took an early retirement from ATT she was looking for something to keep herself busy. That's when her teenager came home from school asking questions about topics that contradicted their Christian faith.

"I told her rather than give her my opinion, let's take a look at the Bible and read what God said as an answer to her questions," Blake-Smith said. "She was satisfied with the answers."

The exchange prompted the woman to wonder how other students were processing what they were learning. That's when she discovered Released Time Christian Education and launched a chapter in Chino Valley.

Released Time is a national U.S. Supreme Court-sanctioned program that allows public school children to leave their regular school studies for Bible teaching one hour a week. Seventy years ago Released Time brought the program to California, and now at least 30 other states have similar activities. In 1952 the Supreme Court said the program

was constitutional because it was initiated by parents, held away from school property and funded entirely by individuals and religious organizations. An estimated 1,000 programs are being offered nationwide involving more than 250,000 students from kindergarten through high school.

"Any faith-based organization has the freedom to offer Released Time classes as long as they meet the criteria established by the Establishment Clause," she said. "In New York, I just confirmed that 700 Jewish students in public education attend Released Time one hour per week, and Mormons also offer Released Time in Utah."

Supporters of Released Time cite various studies that show students benefit from religious education, including a 2003 study of the Oakland Unified School District by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

"The study concluded that the students improved, after one year, in three categories of literacy skills: comprehension, spelling and vocabulary," Blake-Smith said, adding "As we know, when students feel good about

themselves, they apply themselves and do better in class."

Now, the California Released Time Christian Education Association is hoping to join at least four other states—South Carolina, Ohio, Georgia and Utah—in allowing high school students to apply the Bible study toward the electives needed for high school graduation. Participation in the program is completely voluntary.

Blake-Smith is working with state Sen. Mike Morrell (R-Rancho Cucamonga), who was expected to introduce the bill, known as The Parental Choice Released Time Credit Act, before the Feb. 19 legislative deadline, one of his staffers said. Under the proposal students could receive two credits for attending the classes.

"Approximately 75 percent of our Released Time elementary students do not attend church," she said. "Some are clueless when we mention Noah or Moses and think that they are new boys on campus. Some have never seen a Bible or been to a church."

*Learn more at [www.letsgivehope2ourteens.org](http://www.letsgivehope2ourteens.org).*



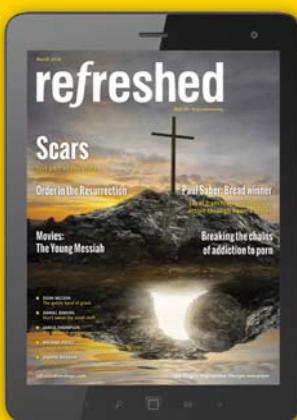
An elementary school student listens as someone reads the Bible during her weekly Released Time class. A pending state bill would allow high-schoolers enrolled in the program to earn elective credits toward graduation.

## Correction

A February story on San Diego's new Youth for Christ director used the wrong last name. The director's correct name is Josh Collier. Refreshed regrets the error.

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# Order in the Resurrection

## Jesus didn't stumble from the tomb

by MICHAEL KELLEY

**W**hat does it look like to rise from the dead? We've all seen the TV dramas in the operating room when the heart monitor suddenly goes flat with the ominous and unceasing tone. Then the shock paddles are brought in and the formerly and technically dead person is brought back to life. Maybe it's like that—jolts running through the body.

Or maybe it's the way most of us feel on a particularly early morning when the alarm clock goes off. We jump out of sleep, but as we switch the near blinding light on, it takes a few moments to rub the sleep out of our eyes. We have a sense of weakness in our hands and fingers as the blood starts to get going again, until we can eventually stagger to the bathroom to turn on the shower. Maybe it's like that, only greater—we need a couple of hours to regain control of our faculties and get some strength to just sit up.

But something tells me that Jesus didn't stumble out of the tomb. Something tells me He didn't cough and gurgle, or need the blood flow to return to His extremities on Easter Sunday morning. Sure, His death was messy. Undignified.

Bloody. Gruesome. Embarrassing even. But His resurrection? That was different.

I love the fact that John, right in the middle of his Easter morning account, drops a little detail into the narrative that not only describes the resurrection of Jesus, but helps us see it. Feel it. We see Mary coming to the tomb—hopeless and despondent, her faith dying with Jesus. We hear the night sounds starting to fade as the sun begins to rise. We sense the stillness—the emptiness—of the air. We see her tears and feel the crushing weight of her even greater grief as she discovers in the darkness of the morning the stone rolled away. We hear her shrill cries as she sobs out her testimony to Simon Peter and John that grave robbers have come and stolen the body. Then comes the running.

We hear the panting. We feel the hot breath. We see the younger of the two outrun the older. Then, by the first rays of light, we see along with, first, John and then Peter, that the tomb is indeed empty. That's when we get the detail:

"The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by



itself" (John 20:7).

It's a curious little detail to include, don't you think? John was there; he saw the whole thing. It's possible that the memory was so ingrained into him that he wanted to record every last detail.

But maybe too, buried in this little detail, is a commentary about the nature of the risen Lord. Jesus was raised to life, and when He was, He took on the dignity befitting Him. He simply got up in an unhurried manner. Like the Lord of All Creation that He is, He took a few moments to put things in order, even going so far as doing something like making His bed. Jesus didn't stagger and stumble, bleary-eyed and numb from the coils of death; He rose as a conquering hero. And He strode out of the tomb like He owned the place. Because He does.

This is not like the resurrection of Lazarus whom Jesus pulled out of death. Just a few chapters earlier in this Gospel, he came out of the grave "bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth" (John 11:44). Jesus Himself gave the order to "loose him and let him go" because Lazarus couldn't do it himself.

Jesus took a few moments to give us a little glimpse into the fact that centuries before the cross and the tomb, creation was broken by sin. It was set in a spiral of disorder where up was down and left was right. Everything was flipped on its head, but when He stepped out of the tomb, He announced to that broken creation that He was setting everything back the way it was always supposed to be. Out of disorder and into order. Out of death and into life. Out of brokenness and into wholeness. And maybe that reordering started with that simple act of taking what might have otherwise been a wrinkled, tattered mess, and folding it up neatly.

Then He walked out into the light. ■



Michael Kelley serves as the Director of Groups Ministry for LifeWay Christian Resources. He is also the author of *God and Boring: Finding an Extraordinary God in an Ordinary Life*. Follow him on Twitter at @michaelkelley or read more content like this at [www.michaelkelley.co](http://www.michaelkelley.co).

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# Scars

## Just part of the story

by TIM WALKER



**J**esus restores what is broken. And even though we may have scars, the scars are not our entire story, merely part of our story. Easter isn't just about the cross, it's about the empty tomb.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, the wounds were still on His hands and His side. He didn't make them disappear. He didn't make it seem as the brutality that He just went through never happened. He could have. He could have made those disappear quicker than Wolverine can heal his mutant body. But, instead, He chose to let them remain.

I have scars that remain. I have one that is on my chin. My cousin hit me with a golf club when I was a little kid. I have scars that people can't see as well. I have scars from school, when I was always on the B team. Always there, but never visible.

I have scars from when my mom died.

I have scars from things I've looked at, thought, said or did.

And while I can ask for forgiveness from God, or myself, or for others, sometimes those scars remain. They don't just disappear. They can still hurt.

And while so much of Christianity is about God forgiving and choosing not to remember, I still remember. I still know that what happened, happened.

That's why I love that when Jesus appeared to His disciples, He still had scars. He still had nailprints in His hands. He still had a wounded side.

But those were no longer about what happened. Those wounds meant something else. Those wounds meant that Jesus' death restored a relationship between us and God. Those wounds meant that Jesus understood brokenness, pain and more.

And they were still there. But they no longer meant that it was the end of the story. Those wounds were part of the story.

The wounds no longer have to be my story, they can be part of my story.

There's more to me than my scars.

And there's more to my story than them as well. ■



Tim Walker is a husband/father/writer who is navigating faith, marriage, parenthood and mid-life. Follow his blog at [www.timswords.com](http://www.timswords.com).



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# BREAD WINNER



## The Paul Saber file

### Personal

Wife: Dianne  
Adult children: Graham and Hannah (Rovazzini)  
Born: Detroit, Michigan  
Education: Bachelor of Science degree from Central Michigan University

### Restaurants

- Saber's Coney Island – 1980
- McDonald's franchises (14) – 1985-2001
- Senior Vice President, USA Corporate Division of McDonald's – 2001- 2003
- Panera Bread and Bakery Café (78) – 2003-present

### Boards

- Samaritan's Purse
- Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
- Horizon Christian Fellowship
- Harvest Christian Fellowship, Riverside
- Pepperdine University
- Life Without Limbs
- Issachar Initiative, where he is chairman

### Previous posts

- Ronald McDonald House
- Ronald McDonald Children's Charities
- National Leadership Council (McDonald's operators), chairman
- Billy Graham-Franklin Graham Festival in Albuquerque, NM, chairman
- San Diego Billy Graham Crusade, executive committee
- Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, chief operating officer

## Local franchiser puts faith in action through Panera stores

by LORI ARNOLD

**P**aul Saber had no intention of spending his life's work in the restaurant business. Even so, he opened his own hot dog shop, Saber's Coney Island in New Baltimore, Michigan, right after earning his degree in political science and psychology. The young entrepreneur intended it to be a bridge before entering law school, which was his dream.

Although the hot dog shop was just a stopover of sorts, Saber said he especially relished the winter months, when his older brother Mark came to work for him during the off-seasons of the Pittsburgh Pirate's minor league farm system. Mark enjoyed the business, too, eventually opening his own McDonald's franchise in Indiana.

"He really fell in love with the restaurant industry," Paul Saber said.

While Mark thrived under the Golden Arches, Paul entered law school.

Then the phone rang.

Mark, his wife Sarah and their three children were involved in a horrific car crash involving a coal truck. Only the two older children survived.

"Obviously, my life changed radically that day," said the younger Saber, who served as executor of his brother's estate. "I got pulled back into the restaurant industry."

He not only lost his best friend, but also the man who led him to the Lord. It was on Christmas Day 1975 that Mark and Sarah baptized 18-year-old Paul in their bathtub.

"We were pretty good Catholic kids but we didn't know much about the Lord," he said.

Mark's death was a deep loss, and as Saber worked through his grief he leaned on his faith and family.

"I probably thought I was going to live forever until the morning that my brother died; then I realized that we are guaranteed nothing," he said. "We are not guaranteed the next breath. That created in me an urgency to live for the Lord and stop living for myself."

"For me, that was a defining moment in my life where it became less of me and more of Him."

### A new direction

Saber quit law school and started franchise training with McDonald's, eventually buying three stores in the Atlanta area. After his wife, Dianne, and their son developed asthma, they relocated to New Mexico where he opened 14 franchises. Over time he became involved with several McDonald's committees and eventually sold his New Mexico stores to work for the company's Chicago headquarters.

"After about a year (in Chicago) I recognized that I was not really built for corporate America," Saber said. "I had been an independent business person for most of my life. I started looking at other concepts and Panera, at that time, was really kind of growing, pretty much in the Midwest and out East, but not to the west of the Mississippi really, other than Denver."

He secured rights to the Panera Bread and Bakery Cafés in the San Diego region and launched Manna Development Group. When considering the company name, he turned to John 3:62.

"It's where the Lord talks about He's the Bread of Life," Saber said. "We were getting ready to open up a bakery. I thought what more appropriate way to signify who we were as a bakery, that the real Bread of Life is Jesus Christ?"

"Moses and the children of Israel had manna from heaven, which nourished them for a day. He is our nourishment for life. So we decided the Bread of Life was an easy one for us."

In addition to San Diego, Saber also acquired market rights to Orange County and most of Los Angeles, naming them Risen Our Daily Bread and Risen, respectively. His franchises in Michigan come under the banner of Bread of Life. He now owns 78 franchises, including one in Indiana, and expects to acquire as many as 20 more. In all, Manna employs 2,980 people.

"We're looking always to expand," he said.

### Breaking bread

The yeast of Manna's operation is giving, a trait he attributes to his parents, who raised him and his five siblings to serve others, which often meant volunteering to shovel snow for the neighbors.

"We were not raised wealthy but

### If I were a sandwich ...

So if the CEO of a Panera franchise group were to have his own sandwich named after him what would it be?

Paul Saber, president and CEO of Manna Development Group, which owns and operates 78 restaurants in Southern California, Michigan and Indiana, never gave it much thought before our interview. After a few minutes he made up his mind: Open-face BLT sandwich which stands for Bold, Loving and Truthful.

"I try to be bold in all that I do,

loving in the way I do it, sharing the truth," he said. "I pray that is how my life is seen. I don't want to ever be seen as compromising. Everything that I have is the Lord's. It's not Panera's. It's not controlled by a board of directors at Panera. It's all God's. I can either see the joy in that and the wonder in that and the opportunity to share all that I have by glorifying God or I can believe that there is another point in time that I will be able to do that, but I don't live my life that way."



Paul Saber and his wife, Dianne, have two adult children.



Since 2003, Paul Saber has established 78 Panera Bread and Bakery Cafés, mostly in Southern California. His company employs 2,980 people.

we always never seemed to want,” he said. “I always watched my father give to others.”

His faith, he said, only served to enhance that giving spirit. Manna’s motto is the Golden Rule, which is manifested through an in-house initiative called Share the Dough. About 50 percent of his employees have opted to contribute to the project through payroll deductions. The program began as a missions support endeavor to construct churches and schools in underdeveloped countries. Closer to home they reach out to the needy at Christmas and Thanksgiving. Over time, the program has expanded inward, offering grants to employees facing financial hardships.

“As that program grew we started to recognize, as our organization grew, that within in our own company, our family of employees, they had needs—in many cases needs we would have never known about,” the CEO said.

All of it, Saber said, is an effort to show the gospel in action, not just words.

“We believe that impacts people,” he said. “Everyone at some point in their life is in a place where they are questioning, they’re hopeless, they’re unsure and so we believe and trust in the Lord ... that we are there to reflect Christ’s love. When people are in need or wanting answers, we’re there. We don’t force it on you but we’re clear that’s who we are, from our orientation to how we train, to prayerfully how we run the restaurant.”

#### Uniquely positioned

In addition to his corporate work, Saber

has served on a variety of boards, including the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan’s Purse. He is also chairman of the Issachar Initiative, which is assessing worldwide ministries in an effort to more effectively reach the four corners of the globe with the gospel.

“I’ve surely recognized in my life that every one of us are uniquely created and every one of us are uniquely positioned exactly where we are at the exact moment in time and so what we do with that positioning and that uniqueness that God’s created in us is going to determine how God uses us going forward,” Saber said. “So instead of worrying about what am I going to do in five years for the Lord or what am I going to do in two years or what is my company going to be like, what am I doing with it today? How am I using the resources he has blessed me with today?”

Saber admits that he had no idea when he opened his hot dog shop at age 22, that his career trajectory would lead away from law school and back to food service.

“Back then I was envisioning my life and what I wanted,” he said. “The Lord changed all that. So I don’t ever envision anything other than just how blessed I am. I’m exactly what the Lord promises. He can take things that are foolish and confound the wise. I was a semi-good student, came from a modest home and the Lord has done all of it.

“I’m more or less in sort of awe at what God can do when we are obedient and open our hands. I don’t ever really know what’s coming I just know that ‘here I am,’ and if the Lord wants to use me I am available.” ■



Rancho Santa Fe resident Paul Saber doesn’t leave his faith at home while operating his 78 Panera franchises.

## The Issachar Initiative

Paul Saber, who serves on the boards of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan’s Purse, is also chair of Issachar Initiative, which provides resources and seeks to equip missions groups around the globe toward more efficient ministry by uniting their efforts.

“I saw ministries all doing great things but similar things,” Saber said. “As you look at the 2,000 years since Christ’s ascension, the four corners of the world that the Lord told us to go to still has not been met, and yet we have more ministries than what we know what to do with.”

#### Members of the collaborative effort have been:

- Assessing existing ministry groups
- Creating a database of ministry models and service areas
- Sponsoring summits to address the vision
- Garnering new partnerships

#### With an eye toward:

- Helping ministries see the “big picture”
- Reducing duplication of efforts
- Equipping existing ministries
- Directing resources
- Engaging and steering new outreaches to unserved areas

“When corporations view the globe they try to figure out how to get their product in every part of the world,” Saber said, citing such giants as McDonald’s, Coca-Cola and Apple.

“You may go to some of the poorest places in the planet—in the outstretched four corners of the world—and you will find Coca-Cola, you will find McDonald’s and you will find someone on a cell phone. It’s because they take a very deliberate strategy and look at the globe and look at it as a marketing opportunity. The Christian world has not done that.”

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF BIOLA UNIVERSITY

Paul Saber, who has a successful franchise business with Panera Bread, was a keynote speaker at last spring’s MBA Distinguished Speaker Series at Biola University.

# Breaking the chains of addiction to porn

by LORI ARNOLD

**A**aron Reinicke was one of 10 children raised in a Christian home. He knew right from wrong, yet by the time he reached legal age, his life had become quite careless. The mess began when he stumbled upon some pornography. He was 11 years old.

"That's the age that most kids in America are first exposed to pornography and start their struggle with it," Reinicke said. "The neurochemical rush that washed over me hooked me as if it were a drug. I was an insecure adolescent who desperately wanted someone to validate me. It seemed like the Playboy centerfold wanted me and even longed for me."

"Despite feeling ashamed I was instantly captivated. Game Over. My insecurity also found comfort in smoking pot and drinking heavily in high school. While these compulsive behaviors deadened the emptiness inside me, they left me alone and

unfulfilled."

Never more so than at age 18, when he got into a drunken brawl while attending a party.

"My drug buddies stood by stoned and afraid or unconcerned while I got jumped on and beat up by four or five other guys. That night lying in bed I prayed, 'Jesus, if you're real show yourself to me.'"

The next day—after having shunned earlier attempts by family and friends to have him turn to the God of his childhood—Reinicke finally acquiesced, allowing a family friend to pray over him.

"What a time of ministry it was," he said. "God showed me hurts and resentments in my life and most of all God showed me His love and healing presence. He knew everything about me, and in my brokenness He loved me just the way I was. I met God and He changed my life."

He dove into the Bible, learning all he could about God. He began telling everyone he knew

about Jesus.

"I went back to stores where I'd

shoplifted and returned the money," Reinicke said. "Some of the managers wanted to know why I was doing this and I was able to share Christ with them."

## Porn use rampant among Christians

"I never smoked pot or got drunk again. I was active in church and evangelism and cross-cultural missions outreaches. But the pornography came and went over the years."

Reinicke was not alone. Research indicates that up to 50 percent of Christian men are involved in pornography. A recent study re-



Aaron Reinicke was able to redeem his marriage to Melinda Reinicke after working through his own porn addiction. Aaron Reinicke now specializes in sexual addiction through Reinicke Counseling Associates, which he co-founded with Melinda.

leased by Barna Group, shows that church leaders, including pastors, are not immune to the secretive sin.

The Porn Phenomenon study, released in mid-January, found that a staggering 64 percent of youth pastors and 57 percent of pastors

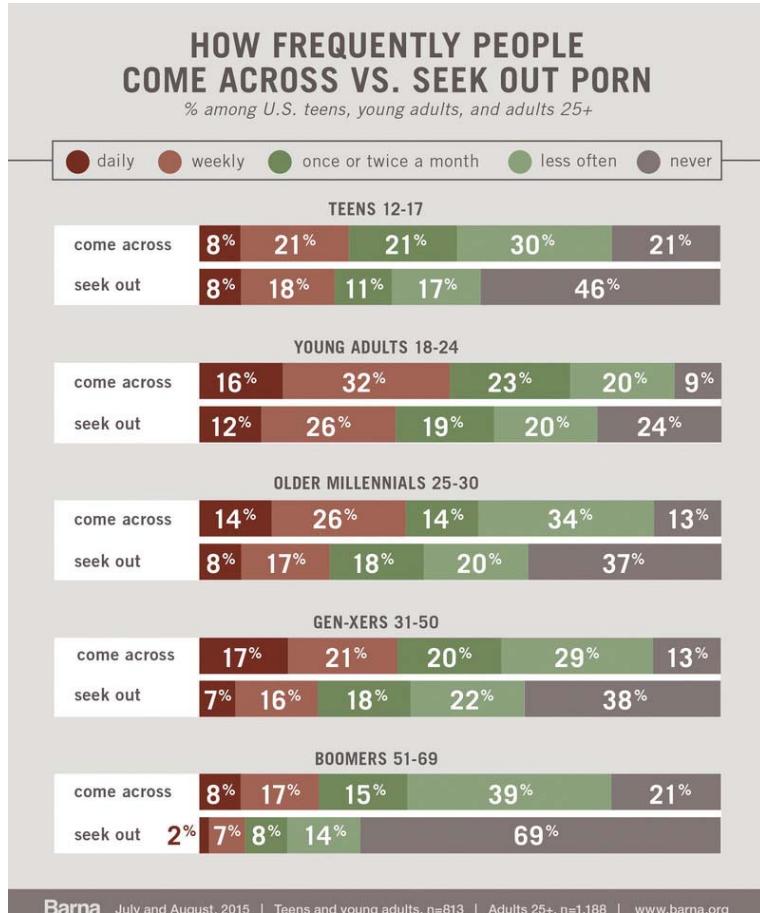
admit to a current or past struggle with porn. Taking a closer look at the here and now, 21 percent of youth pastors and 14 percent of pastors admit to a current struggle with pornography. In all, about 12 percent of youth pastors and 5 percent of pastors admit they are addicted to porn.

The study was commissioned by Josh McDowell Ministry, a Cru ministry based in Plano, Texas.

"It is vital to raise awareness about the threat of Internet pornography," Josh McDowell said. "Pornography violates all relational values between the individual and self, the individual and society, the unity of our families and our moral fabric and fiber as a nation. When we objectify and demean life by removing the sanctity of the human person, our future is at risk."

In light of the study, McDowell and his ministry are hosting a Set Free Global Summit to address some of the issues raised in the study. The conference will be held in Greensboro, North Carolina April 4 to 7 and will include some of the nation's preeminent Christian experts on the issue of pornography in the church. At the summit, researchers will unveil a study presenting detailed porn stats by denomination.

Researchers surveyed 3,000 people in four online studies, including in-depth surveys among the general population, American



## What can the church do about porn?

According to a new study by Barna Group, use of pornography within the church nearly mirrors secular statistics. Aaron Reinicke of Reinicke Counseling Associates, himself a former porn addict, said the church can better address the issue of pornography within its walls in a number of ways.

- Educate parents and teens on healthy sexuality as a beautiful creation of God for marriage. The best sex educators for kids are informed and shame-free parents who can give accurate relational and sexual information. We parents need to proactively utilize natural opportunities all through the growing up years of our children to share the beauty of God's plan for sexuality.

- Church leaders can have compassion for men who come to them confessing their porn struggle. All of us as Christians need to understand how the brain can become hijacked and addicted to porn.

You need a lot of help to quit. You can't do it alone. It's not as easy as just stopping it because you know it's wrong.

- The church can help wives who discover their godly husband has been using porn. The wife can seek help for herself even if her husband is not yet ready

to seek treatment. RCA Counseling has both individual and group counseling for spouses of sex addicts.

- Perhaps someone reading this wants to start a support group in their own church. First talk to your church leadership and share your recovery story. Many of the Christian sexual integrity recovery groups presently offered around the county started just this way.

- Church leaders can schedule one-hour Steps to Freedom training with their pastors and ministry leaders on how to help porn users and their spouses who come to you in crisis.

- The church can refer people in need to expert help. RCA's website has helpful articles for both the porn user and their spouse. There are also Christian support groups for recovery from porn in churches throughout the county listed at [www.unleashedsandiego.com](http://www.unleashedsandiego.com). Groups are available for both male and female addicts, as well as spouses.

In addition to materials and resources, RCA also offers a variety of specialized classes.

*Learn more at [www.rcacounseling.com](http://www.rcacounseling.com) or call (619) 298-8722.*

teenagers, Christian pastors and the Christian church.

### Getting hooked younger

Sadly, researchers said the study discovered younger and younger exposure to pornography, increased desensitization and an escalating usage of pornography, particularly among teens and young adults. For instance, nearly half of young people actively seek out porn weekly or more often.

"Most disappointing is that teens and young adults age 13 through 25 years are unconcerned about porn usage and don't consider it morally wrong," said Reinicke, a marriage and family therapist. "It is so widely accepted as mainstream that people are blind to the damage it does in forming healthy sexual intimacy."

The counselor also pointed out that the Barna study revealed that 80 percent of pastors currently using pornography felt shame about their habit, while more than half said they live in constant fear that their porn use will be discovered. The use of porn by women is also on the rise.

"This fear and shame is keeping them trapped just as surely as the porn is," Reinicke, who co-founded Reinicke Counseling Associates, with his wife, Melinda. The couple operates three offices in the county.

"James 5:16 says 'If we confess our sins to one another and pray for one another, we will be healed.' So the very thing the struggler needs to do is the very thing he or she fears. The good news is that confidential help is available and every day men and women are finding release from shame, fear and sexual obsession. They are finding a sense of integrity, power and restored intimacy in their lives."

### Power of redemption

One of Reinicke's counseling specialties is treatment of pornography addiction, where he allows his clients to benefit from his own deeply personal journey,

"At times of stress, pornography seemed impossible to resist," he said. "I felt like such a failure and hypocrite. Each time I messed up I cried out to God in shame and repen-

tance and thought, 'I will never do this again.' But then there would be another time of weakness. I was part of the 30 to 50 percent of Christian men ensnared by pornography. I was too ashamed to tell anyone."

It was a secret he carried with him into his marriage.

"When I met and married Melinda she didn't know I had a struggle with pornography," Reinicke said. "No one knew—and that was the primary reason that pornography still had a hold on me. I went to graduate school and became a marriage and family therapist. Some years into our marriage I finally confessed my humiliating secret sin to Melinda.

"She was safe to open up to. She clung to God's presence through it. She shared her hurt and sadness and disappointment and frustration but she didn't hate me. She told me that she decided to fight beside me against the enemy of our souls instead of seeing me as the enemy. Encouraged by her grace, I shared my shameful struggle with men who could also pray for me like Melinda was."

Over time, God began to show Reinicke deep wounds that were tied to his addiction.

"I had more victory and fewer slips," he said. "I thought I would always have to fight lust and limp through life with my thorn in the flesh. But God had something better in store.

"I have experienced the transforming power of Christ to change not only my behavior but also my deepest longings. The allure and struggle with porn is no longer enticing. The pleasure center of my brain now enjoys the healthy, simple pleasures of life and doesn't crave the empty high. I have to resist temptation from time to time like we all do but I'm not struggling with the intense cravings I once did. I am dealing with my emotions and life's challenges head on and finding strength in my relationships including God, like never before. I am enjoying a life filled with serenity, purpose and fulfillment. I have more fun now than I ever did when porn was in my life." ■

*Learn more at [www.rcacounseling.com](http://www.rcacounseling.com). To read the Barna study, visit [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org).*

## national news

### Evangelist helps end Oregon siege

BURNS, Ore. — Evangelist Franklin Graham was lauded by the FBI for his role in helping to negotiate the end of a standoff at an Oregon wildlife refuge.

In a Feb. 12 Facebook post, Graham acknowledged his role in getting the four remaining armed holdouts to surrender without incident. They were the last ones remaining at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which they had seized to protest the arrests of two local ranchers who were imprisoned for setting wildfires on federal land.

"I had been asked by the FBI to help in the negotiation process and had been talking with the holdouts by phone every day for about a week, encouraging them to do the right thing," Graham wrote. "We continually pleaded with them to just listen and do what they were told."

Jeff Banta, Sean and Sandy Anderson, and David Fry took Graham's counsel by leaving the complex, ending the 41-day occupation.

"They did the right thing by surrendering and coming out with their hands up," Franklin wrote. "We've seen too many unnecessary shootings in this country. I believe that some of these, though not all, could be avoided if people would only listen and obey law enforcement."

### Gospel greats give water

LOS ANGELES — Gospel singers and Grammy award-winners Donnie McClurkin and Marvin L. Winans were part of a contingent of volunteers who hand-delivered 6,000 cases of water to churches in Flint, Michigan.

Residents of the city, located northwest of Detroit, have been without clean drinking water since a switch in the municipal water system resulted in toxins being pumped into local homes.

McClurkin and Winans, both affiliated with Perfecting Fellowship International, joined Penske Corporation, Wayne Metro, and Wal-Mart in the Feb. 11 water distribution effort. In addition to churches, the water was delivered to residents who would be unable to visit water distribution centers during operational hours.

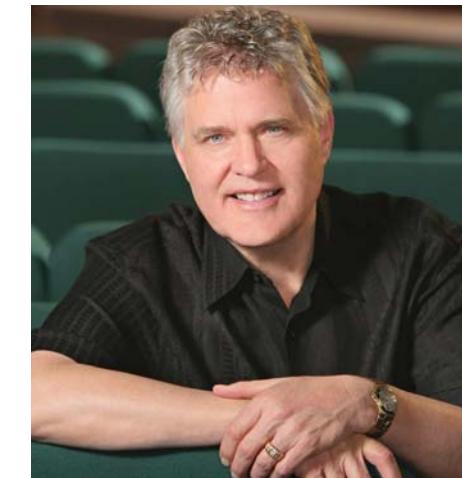
Members of New York-based Perfecting Faith, where the overseer is Pastor Donnie McClurkin, raised \$5,000 to purchase more than 2,000 cases of bottled water.

"This is not a one-time donation," McClurkin said. "We will put forth our best efforts to continue to aid and assist Flint residents as long as there is a water issue."

### National prayer gathering

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A diverse coalition of national religious leaders will converge on the nation's capitol for a seven-hour prayer gathering on April 9.

United Cry DC16, a nationwide call to pastors, Christian leaders, churches and individuals, will be held at the Lincoln Memorial. Jim Garlow, senior pastor at Skyline Church in La Mesa, is scheduled to participate, along with George Wood, Ronnie



Jim Garlow, senior pastor at Skyline Church, is one of the featured speakers for the April 9 prayer gathering United Cry DC16 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C.

Floyd, Anne Graham Lotz, Harry Jackson, Sammy Rodriguez and Doug Stringer.

"America is in crisis," said Lewis Hogan, founder of the United Cry DC16 gathering. "People are worried about their jobs, families, future, terrorism, racial conflict and the attacks on biblical values. Only a united church can heal a divided America."

The emphasis of the event will be to ask God for forgiveness, blessing and spiritual awakening in America, and to declare the United States is "one nation, under God."

The assembly marks the anniversary date of the end of the Civil War, April 9, 1865. It will be commemorated by Bernice King, daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and his niece Alveda King. The pair will lead the crowd toward repentance for racial division.

"We are gathering not to protest, but to pray, not coming to complain about policies or politics, but to lift up our leaders and cry out for God's mercy and blessings upon the United States of America," Hogan said. "There is hope for America and we are contending for it."

### Inmates get free spiritual survival guides

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two of America's largest prison book distributors marked Lent by sending 2,200 free copies of a comprehensive Christian spiritual survival guide to inmates and chaplains in jails and prisons across America.

Prison Book Project, of Titusville, Florida and Christian Library International, of Raleigh, North Carolina, each shipped 1,100 copies of "Daily Light on the Prisoner's Path" to both state and federal correctional institutions on behalf of Prisoner's Path Books of Washington, D.C.

Written specifically for men living behind bars, "Daily Light on the Prisoner's Path" incorporates all the daily morning and evening Scripture readings found in traditional "Daily Light" devotionals. It also serves to counter common prisoner dispositions of dread, despair and defiance with practical Christian teachings on anger, forgiveness, true repentance, restoration and sonship.

To help with the project, United Charitable, the fiscal sponsor of Prisoners Path Books launched a crowdfunding campaign seeking \$15,000 in tax-deductible donations to fund the Lenten giveaways.

# 'The Young Messiah' imagines Jesus as a boy

by MICHAEL FOUST

The New Testament contains a total of 12 verses about Jesus' childhood, the last of which sums it all up with this amazing sentence: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

Christians throughout the centuries have tried filling in the gaps with their own imagination, wondering, for instance, whether Jesus really did obey His parents in every instance and even what *games* He might have played with the neighborhood kids.

On March 11, a movie about the life of the young Jesus hits theaters when "The Young Messiah" opens nationwide, imagining what the Christ child would have been like as a 7-year-old. It's based on Anne Rice's book, "Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt," although co-writer and director Cyrus Nowrasteh changed several controversial moments in that novel—ensuring for instance, that the young Jesus on the big screen doesn't do anything that can be construed as sin.

Although the film's concept may be provocative to some Christians, Nowrasteh told *Refreshed* that the story was written to attract the support of believers across the spectrum, including conservatives. Among the endorsers is Johnny Hunt, a Georgia pastor who formerly served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Kevin Palau, president of the Luis Palau

Association.

Nowrasteh hopes the film will be a "Passion of the Christ" for the entire family.

"I've had a lot of people say to me, 'I came in skeptical, but I fell in love with it.' There's nothing in this movie that contradicts anything in the Bible," Nowrasteh said.

Count me among those skeptics who was won over. Although we must be careful so as not to place "The Young Messiah" on par with Scripture, it does a nice job of presenting a plausible view of Jesus' childhood. He is loving and caring, often going out of His way to help not only family members but also strangers. He's devoted to His Heavenly Father, waking early and walking outside one quiet morning to pray. Significantly, this portrayal of a young Jesus performs miracles—which could be a non-starter for Christians who believe He didn't begin doing that until He was an adult.

The movie also stands out with its portrayal of Mary and Joseph as earthly parents who love and protect their son—even if they're uncertain how it all will play out.

"How do we explain God to His own Son?" Joseph asks at one point.

"The Young Messiah" is rated PG-13 for some violence and thematic elements.

*Michael Foust is an editor and writer who reviews films and blogs about parenting at MichaelFoust.com.*



A young Jesus takes a journey to Jerusalem in a scene from "The Young Messiah." The film opens March 11.

## Spirit West Coast returns

Spirit West Coast will return to Del Mar June 23 as part of its partnership with the annual Del Mar Fair.

The daylong lineup is expected to be announced in March, when tickets go on sale.

In addition to the San Diego concert, Spirit West Coast will also sponsor concerts in Ontario on June 10 and Concord on June 12. Both of those concerts will feature MercyMe, Jeremy Camp, Matthew West, Phil Wickham, NF, Blanca, Urban Rescue and For All Seasons.. Tickets for both of those concerts are already on sale. The line-up and ticket sales dates will be announced later.

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

## Oceans of Grace releases bilingual album

Oceans of Grace, consisting of family members who served as missionaries in



Chile, release their first full-length album in late February. The two-disc, self-titled project features 10 original worship cuts written by the group's members and recorded in both English and Spanish.

Although they recorded the project in Atlanta, the multi-generational group resides in Calera de Tango, Chile. Brothers Eric and Gabe Phillips share lead vocals; the collective also includes Eric's wife Debi, friend Hector Ramirez and Gabe's daughter Sayen.

"We believe worship transcends language," said Eric Phillips. "One day people from every nation, every tribe and every tongue will sing together, worshipping at the feet of Jesus."

The album features Third Day frontman Mac Powell, who guests on the cornerstone track, "I Know That You Love Me," as well as Casting Crowns' drummer Brian Scoggin, who contributed on every song.

## Album addresses ISIS threat

Integrity Music and David C. Cook have partnered with Voice of the Martyrs to release a new album to raise awareness of Christian persecution at the hands of Muslim extremists.

The album is called "i am n," after a movement already launched by Voices of

the Martyrs. The nonprofit has already raised more than \$5 million in aid for Christians who have been displaced by the self-proclaimed Islamic State known as ISIS.

The "i am n" movement takes its name from the symbol used by ISIS militants who, after moving into northern Iraq, began identifying Christian-owned property by painting the Arabic letter ن or "n" on homes and churches.

This single letter conveyed the accusation that the occupants were "Nazarenes"—followers of Jesus of Nazareth—giving them the ultimatum to convert to Islam and stay in the community, leave, or die.

The 12-track album features All Sons & Daughters, The Brilliance, Paul Baloche, Lincoln Brewster, Travis Ryan, NCC Worship, Desperation Band, Rend Collective, Israel and New Breed, and Greg Sykes.

David C. Cook is contributing to the effort with its "i am n" book and curriculum.

## Audio Adrenaline single to hit the big screen

Audio Adrenaline's "Sound of the Saints," which officially released on radio



formats in January, will jump to the big screen on April 1 with the highly anticipated release of "God's Not Dead 2."

Early birds can get a sneak peek of the movie version on March 18 when the film's soundtrack will be released.

Co-penned by Audio Adrenaline founding member Mark Stuart and current lead vocalist Adam Agee, along with Seth Mosley and Jared Anderson, the song was largely inspired by the band's Hands and Feet Project—an organization they founded in 2004 to help orphans and children throughout Haiti.

An enhanced arrangement of the title cut from the band's best-selling project, the "Sound of the Saints" single features the His Little Feet International Children's Choir and is now available with the album at digital retail.

## Prayer briefing scheduled

SAN DIEGO — Faith Community Church will host “Transforming the Culture through Prayer,” a briefing hosted by the Southern California National Day of Prayer team, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 2.

The event is being held in partnership with the Northern California National Day of Prayer.

The gathering will feature biblical worldview experts on Islam, media, gender and prayer who will work to develop a strategic impact strategy for the community.

Speakers will include Maggie Schubert (gender), Eric Euren (Media - pastor and TV producer), and Khadijah Baratzadeh-Askari (Muslim) and Shari Bonnard (NoCal NDP). Thomas Bush, who heads the SoCal NDP, will lead the sessions.

An on-site prayer team will also be available.

An optional catered lunch—chicken wrap, pasta salad, fruit salad, chips, dessert, and bottled water—is available for \$8. Advance registration required for the lunch.

The church is located at 2285 Murray Ridge Road.

Learn more at [www.prayerassist.org/national-day-of-prayer-briefing](http://www.prayerassist.org/national-day-of-prayer-briefing) and click on the events link.

## Rescue Mission holds graduation ceremony

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Rescue Mission will hold its spring graduation at 6:30 p.m. April 8 at First Presbyterian Church in downtown.

The ceremony will honor men and women who have successfully completed their 12-month residential recovery programs. The event celebrates the accomplishments each graduate has made, with God’s help, during their year-long journey. There will be special music and testimonies from two of the graduates.

Current program participants also attend to honor their brothers and sisters and to be inspired by the possibilities that await them.

As part of the ceremony one male and one female graduate each shares their story of recovery. A local Christian band or church choir provides entertainment for the day and, of course, all graduates receive an official diploma.

A dessert reception will be held following the ceremony.

The church is located at 320 Date St. Learn more at [www.sdrescue.org](http://www.sdrescue.org).



The San Diego Rescue Mission will hold its spring graduation ceremony at 6:30 p.m. April 8 at First Presbyterian Church in downtown San Diego.



The gospel quartet Men 4 Christ will headline an Easter concert for House of Blues monthly Gospel Brunch.

## Skyline Church files religious freedom lawsuit

LA MESA — Skyline Wesleyan Church has filed a lawsuit against the California Department of Managed Health Care, saying its mandatory requirement to provide abortions as part of its employee insurance coverage violates its rights.

“Churches should not be forced to pay for the killing of innocent human life,” said Erik Stanley, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, which is representing Skyline. “The government has no right to demand that church health insurance plans include coverage for elective abortions—something that violates the most sincerely held religious beliefs of this church and nearly all churches throughout the state. California is violating its own laws and constitution, as well as the U.S. Constitution, by strong-arming churches into having this coverage in their plans.”

The suit was filed Feb. 4 in state court and is similar to a federal suit ADF filed last October on behalf of Foothill Church in Glendora, Calvary Chapel Chino Hills in Chino and Shepherd of the Hills Church in Porter Ranch. In its Skyline case, ADF cites violations of the state’s Administrative Procedures Act, as well as both the federal and state constitutions.

“Because Obamacare requires employers to provide health insurance coverage, the California mandate has left churches with no way to opt out of paying for abortions. Californians should not be forced to choose between following their deepest convictions and submitting to unlawful and unnecessary government mandates,” said Jeremiah Galus, also of ADF.

Local attorney Charles LiMandri, founder of the Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund, will serve as local counsel on behalf of Skyline.

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

## Men 4 Christ in concert

SAN DIEGO — The House of Blues San Diego will host an Easter Sunday concert by Men 4 Christ from 10 a.m. to noon March 27 as part of its Gospel Brunch series.

The concert is presented by MANDATE Records.

Tickets are \$44 and subject to added fees.

House of Blues is located at 1055 5th Ave.

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



Dr. Michael Farris, chancellor of Patrick Henry College and chairman of the Home School Legal Defense Association, is one of several speakers featured at this year’s San Diego Home School Convention, set for April 15 and 16.

Sessions are held the first Tuesday of the month.

The church is located at 11330 Campo Road.

Learn more at (619) 660-5000.

## Monthly marriage workshop

POINT LOMA — The Rock Church’s Marriage Ministry offers monthly workshops featuring expert insights by marriage professionals and pastors. The next “Better—God’s Desire for Your Marriage” workshop will be held April 17.

The sessions examine God’s design for marriage, with biblical and practical instruction to equip couples to better understand what God desires for marriage. Topics to be covered include sex and intimacy, communication, finances, in-laws and conflict resolution.

Future classes are scheduled for May 15, June 12, July 17, August 21, September 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20 and Dec. 11.

The cost is \$15 per couple.

The church is located at 2277 Rosecrans St.

Learn more at [www.sdrock.com/events/16636](http://www.sdrock.com/events/16636).

## Local convention tackles home school issues

SAN DIEGO — The San Diego Home School Convention will be held April 15 and 16 at College Avenue Baptist Church.

The convention explores Christian home-based education. Attendees will be treated to instruction and inspiration from national speakers who are experts in their fields.

Among them will be Dr. Michael Farris, chancellor of Patrick Henry College and chairman of the Home School Legal Defense Association. Farris will discuss diminishing parental rights in the Golden State and what parents can do to reverse the trend.

Other speakers include Professors Sandra Stotsky and James Milgram, who both served on the validation committee for the English Language Arts Common Core Standards but rejected them because of the detrimental effect on academic achievement; and Norm Wakefield, founder and executive director of The Spirit of Elijah Ministries International.

The church is located at 4747 College Avenue.

The event will include a Q&A panel and an exhibit hall.

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

## Panel discussion on anxiety

LA MESA — “My Therapist Sez...” a monthly community-oriented panel discussion featuring various mental health professionals from the region, will be held at 6:45 p.m. April 12 at Skyline Church.

The topic will be “The Art of Healthy Marriage.” The program will be moderated by Dr. Don Welch, founder and president of the Center for Enriching Relationships and counseling pastor at Skyline.

Rev. Bill and Pam Farrel will be the guest speakers.

## Mount Helix sunrise service

The 91st annual Mount Helix Easter Sunrise Service will be held March 27 from 6:30 to 9 a.m. in the amphitheater under the cross. This year’s sponsor is Christ Lutheran Church in La Mesa. Its praise band will provide the music.

There is no parking at the hilltop park, so organizers have arranged for free shuttle service beginning at 5:30 a.m. The shuttles are available from Fire station parking lots on Vivera Drive; the Brigantine Restaurant parking lot at Fuerte and Grossmont; and Grossmont Center parking between Wells Fargo Bank and California Bank and Trust.

The amphitheater is concrete so attendees may wish to bring chairs and blankets.

For more information, call (619) 462-5211.

## Sunrise service at Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park

The 33rd annual Balboa Park Easter Sunrise Service will be hosted by La Jolla Presbyterian Church on March 27.

The service starts at 6:30 p.m. and will feature the Chancel Choir, L.A. Brass and the renown Spreckels Organ. The sermon will be delivered by the Rev. Paul Cunningham, a pastor from La Jolla Presbyterian.

The offering will benefit the San Diego Rescue Mission.

For more information, call (858) 454-7324.

## Coronado Beach sunrise service

Resurrection Lutheran Church continues its years-long Easter Sunrise Service, which begins as the sun rises on March 27. A large bonfire, starting at 5:30 a.m., will ease the waterfront chill.

The ecumenical service, with several hundred expected, includes special music.

The location is 101 Ocean Blvd., on the north end of the beach and across from Sunset Park.

To learn more, call (619) 435-1000.

## ONLINE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more Community News and an online Calendar of Events for San Diego County, please visit [www.refreshedsandiego.com](http://www.refreshedsandiego.com).

# Practically speaking—The sandwich generation

My mother-in-law moved in with us the day she became a widow and lived with us for the next 27 years. At one point, I found myself caring for an aging parent and growing children while pursuing graduate school and career goals. Perhaps you find yourself in a similar balancing act and, if so, welcome to the sandwich generation. Since I've "been there, done that," let me share a few things I learned along the way.

**For your parents** — Life becomes more complicated in just about every way as they age. Their loss of independence is challenging on so many levels. Tread lightly but begin encouraging them to look more closely at their situation. It is a delicate conversation for sure, but introduce a time to talk this over with them *sooner rather than later*. For additional resources visit Eldercare.gov. Here are areas you will want to cover:

**Their desires:** It is important that they be heard and honored as much as possible. Balancing my mother-in-law's needs with her desires was one of the toughest heart tugs I've ever experienced.

**Finances:** Keep a watchful eye on their fi-

nancial picture. The potential for elder abuse abounds as diminished capacity sets in.

**Medical:** Do they have the proper legal documents in place that allows someone to direct their health and care-giving needs?

**Trust or will:** Review this every few years, especially while they are of sound mind. This critical step will save you immense headaches later.

**Long-term care:** Since Medicare has very limited benefits, what is the plan for extended care needs? Do they have enough savings or a long-term care policy? My husband and I funded a minimal policy for his mother's care since we knew the financial responsibility would fall on us. It proved to be a wise move allowing us to secure the best of care during her final days without derailing our own financial plan.

**Important documents:** Find out location and request copies (deeds, investments, legal docs, etc.).

**Professionals:** Get a list of their professionals, e.g. attorneys, doctors.

**Friends:** Make sure you know contact information.

**For you** — Squeezed in the middle and feeling it? Here are some financial aspects to consider:

**Prioritize:** Saving for your retirement should be at the top of your list unless you plan on living with your kids later.

**Spending plan:** Make a plan to live within your means and stick to it.

**Check-ups:** An annual review with a financial adviser can help you stay on track.

**Plan for care:** If it is likely the cost of care for your parents will fall on you, start planning for it now. Check available government programs such as Social Security or veteran's benefits. And while you're at it, make provision now for your own care.

**Involve family:** Include siblings if possible. You may be able to look at alternative scenarios together or make provisions for the future (e.g. chipping in for long-term care insurance).

**For your children:** This is the perfect opportunity to model for them the way to honor parents. After all, this will be you someday.

If you don't want to end up living with your children later, avoid dipping into your retirement savings to pay for college. They can repay loans with their future salaries but your retirement savings might be the only resource to supplement your Social Security.

If you have boomerang children at home (older children who have returned to live with you), ensure everyone is clear on all expectations—before they move in. Don't be afraid to discuss their contribution to expenses or set a target date for their planned departure.

Explain what changes may come about as you are required to give more and more attention to your parents. Usually children only need their questions and concerns to be addressed before making the adjustment, especially if grandparents are moving in.

If you're a part of this burgeoning generation, take time *now* to work on a flexible, multi-generation plan. It will save stress, heartache and expense in the years to come. Being sandwiched in the middle isn't easy, but honoring your father and mother and raising your children in the way they should go are high and blessed callings.



Janice Thompson is a certified financial planner and co-founder/CEO of One Degree Advisors, Inc. A frequent speaker on financial topics and mentor for financial professionals,

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

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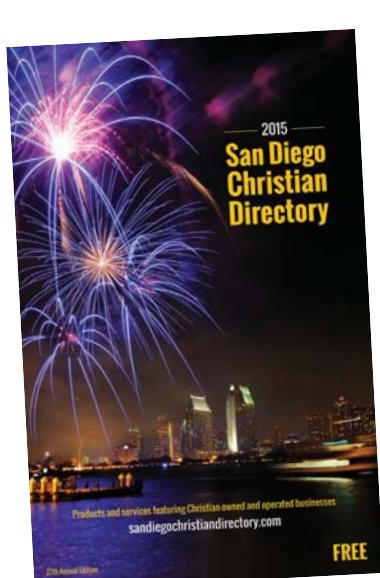
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# 3 ways to teach your kids about death and the cross

My 4-year-old daughter Maggie has always been a bit studious for her age. She knew colors when she was 2, was reading the entire alphabet when she was 3, and by the time she turned 4, could read a digital clock.

So I was a bit surprised when my wife told me toward the end of last year that Maggie had failed a holiday pop quiz. The question from my wife was the same one that Charlie Brown shouted to all of his friends: What's Christmas all about?

Maggie's answer: "presents." I'm sure she said it in an oh-so-sweet voice, and I bet she even had an oh-so-precious smile on her face, but she also was oh-so-wrong. Christmas, my wife told her, is about Jesus—even if presents can be part of innocent holiday fun. By the end of the day Maggie had watched a cartoon about baby Jesus and had been read a book about baby Jesus, and it's safe to say she went to bed that night knowing that Christmas *wasn't* all about dolls, dollhouses and pretty pink necklaces.

## ...Easter isn't about death but about life...

Of course, it's easy to teach children about Christmas, with its spotlight on a sweet tiny baby surrounded by animals and shepherds on a clear, starry night. It's such a "sterile" and "clean" story that even non-Christians are attracted to its power.

But what do we do about Easter? Instead of a baby, we have a bruised and bloodied man. Instead of shepherds in worshipful awe, we have mocking, hate-filled onlookers. Instead of a stable, we have nails, a

crown of thorns and a cross. And instead of a story about life, we apparently have a story about, well, death. How do we teach our children *that*?

At first blush, it may seem like we shouldn't. I don't let my kids watch scary cartoons, much less horror films. Shoot, I won't even let my 4-year-olds watch "Kung Fu Panda."

Maybe we should just follow the crowd, replace Christ with the Easter bunny, and gorge ourselves with chocolate. And that sounds like a fine idea—until we realize that Easter isn't about

death but about life; that it's part of the greatest story ever told, and that the souls of our children are literally at stake.

So what do we do when our kids say, "Mom and Dad, what's Easter all about?" Here's one way to start:

### 1 Teach them the truth of Christ.

Our children can handle stories about death, simply because they already know about it. Each summer they watch flowers wilt, and each autumn they see trees shed their leaves. They step on ants on the sidewalk, and view motionless roadkill on the side of the interstate. Death, in other words, is all around them—even if we futilely try to "protect" them. They *don't need protecting*. Before they even could crawl, my children were hearing about Jesus' death on the cross. Not once have they said, "Wait, Jesus died?!" It's all they know.

### 2 Teach them the love of Christ.

As tempting as it is to explain Christ's death by blaming those "mean soldiers," we shouldn't. That's because He willingly went to the cross, because His death was necessary for the forgive-

ness of our sins, and because His actions were driven by *love*. The Bible even says it was planned before the beginning of time (1 Peter 1:20). We can excitedly tell our children that Christ "died for your sins and my sins because He loves us." In fact, it's a love far superior to *our own* love for our children. Isn't that a story worth sharing?

### 3 Teach them the marvelous ending.

If the Easter story ended with Jesus' death on the cross, not even I would want to share it with my kids. But it doesn't end there! Jesus conquered death, rose from the grave, and because of that, those who believe in Him can live forever with Him! It's an ending that beats anything our kids will ever get from a Disney, Pixar or DreamWorks film. And it's also more exciting than anything resembling an Easter bunny.



Michael Foust is the father of four small children and blogs about parenting at [michaelfoust.com](http://michaelfoust.com).

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# Don't sweat the small stuff

"Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" — Jesus

What if you could slow down the effects of stress and time on your body by taking a daily pill? There are no negative side effects. Would you take this pill? I bet you would.

Our fitness club offers a free body analysis to determine your health age compared to your chronological age. As it turns out, my wife is four years younger than her chronological age, while my health age is exactly the same as my

chronological age.

Bummer! I thought I was doing better than that.

Although the trainer took into account things like body composition, amount of sleep, exercise, and diet, there is a very important component that seems to be missing in his analysis—thought life.

How important is your thought life in the aging process and the quality of your life? Research has shown that your mind and body are inexplicably intertwined and that your propensity to develop illnesses of aging and your ability to recover

are directly tied to factors related to your mental state.

Stress accelerates biological aging, whether in the form of the "fight or flight response" or in the more subtle form of a negative attitude. It's almost as if the cells in our bodies are listening when we experience suffering in the form of anxiety, trauma, depression, and the like.

In a nutshell, cellular reproduction is impacted while under psychological stress, including the chromosomal end caps (telomeres) that help keep the double helix chromosomes from unraveling. It is very clear now that telomere length reduction is directly related to aging.

This may sound like old news, but recent research continues to show that aging slows down when people take specific steps to change the focus of their thoughts.

Those of us who focus our thought life on anticipating danger are at risk for rapid cell degeneration. Perceived threats may come in the form of threats to our ego, our bank accounts, our jobs, or... the list is endless. We choose to focus on these potential threats, usually out of fear. Going from crisis to crisis is no way to live, and

our cells seem to know this, too.

In addition to seeing danger and threats on a daily basis, ruminating about the past is linked to shorter telomeres. Do you carry around stressful thoughts long after the event has happened? If you live in the past by dwelling on previous stressful events, or if you anticipate bad things happening in the future, you are unknowingly doing damage to your health.

God's Word is clear about how important it is to take a Sabbath rest from our work, but how often do you take a Sabbath rest from your worries? In Matthew 6:25ff, Jesus instructs us to set aside our worries and concerns about the future. Truth is, the vast majority of things we tend to worry about never really materialize.

The challenge is to be grounded in the present moment rather than time-traveling in our minds to the past or the future. Jesus points out that each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:34), so adding all the past and potential future troubles only compounds our stress and our propensity to age and develop age-related illnesses.

OK, I'm not going to worry about my biological age and my chronological age being the same, but instead I'm going to focus on things I'm grateful for right now. In the big scheme of things, the battle is already over and God is the victor.

Everything else is small stuff.



Daniel Jenkins, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist at Lighthouse Psychological Services in Mission Valley. He is also a professor of psychology at Point Loma Nazarene University. Learn more at [www.lighthousepsy.com](http://www.lighthousepsy.com).

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# Writing in real life

One of the misconceptions people have about writers is that we loll around all day in our pajamas while brilliant prose magically pours forth from our fingers, usually minutes before deadline. We don't work, therefore we're always available for lunch, errands or babysitting. We can do whatever we want, whenever we want, and we make gads of money doing it.

OK, yes, sometimes I work in my pajamas, but most of the time I get dressed. (Yoga pants and sweat shirts count as getting dressed, right?) And yes, I am free during the day to run errands and have lunch with friends, and I used to babysit (we all know how that story ends). I also grocery shop and cook and do laundry and pay bills and answer the phone and let in repairmen. And I would clean, if I was the kind of woman who cleaned.

In between real life, I write.

I'm not complaining. This life is a gift, primarily because I'm not cut out to spend eight hours a day with other humans. I used to have a corporate job in marketing, but after close to two decades working for myself it's clear that I should only be allowed to interact with other people in small doses, and only when a paycheck

isn't on the line.

I had a part-time office job a few years ago. I was told I talked too much to the clients, even though the main part of the job was talking to the clients. Turns out I was also supposed to do paperwork. Well, I can do paperwork or I can talk to clients, but I can't do both and especially not at the same time. Apparently, that was a job requirement.

So writing at home is perfect for me. No humans to annoy me, so I should be able to get a lot done, right? Just me and the dogs and the cat. It's definitely cozy to have my furry four-legged companions curled up in slumber while my fingers speed across the keyboard, a pot of hot tea steaming on my desk, snow falling softly on the roof while bright red cardinals visit the bird feeders just outside the window.

I should really write fiction.

The truth is that my dogs, while lovely companions, are two of the squirrelliest canines ever to walk the earth. They don't get along (that's a whole book in itself), so they're always separated by gates. If I'm in a room with one dog, the other dog barks. If I switch rooms, they switch barking. The only time they get along is when the fire

trucks go by; then they join together in a serenade that rivals the wild wolves of Yosemite.

There's a lot of barking going on over here.

Some writers work while listening to music. I need quiet. When I'm in a creative zone, it's almost as if the wind is speaking to me and I'm hurrying to get the words down before they disappear forever. I need complete silence to do that.

It's not only the barking dogs that distract me. There's also a nifty little invention called Netflix. Couple that streaming gem with my talent for rationalizing anything I want to do as research, and let's just say I do a lot of research during the day.

But maybe the hardest misconception to overcome is that writing is easy. It's not. It's hard work. It's a lot of sitting on your behind, spending hour after hour after hour typing words that you hope turn into sentences which, if the wind is blowing from the north and Venus is aligned with Mars, turn into paragraphs that tell a story. Hopefully you make enough money doing that every month to pay for your

**...it's almost as if the wind is speaking to me and I'm hurrying to get the words down before they disappear forever.**

Netflix subscription.

Even if you're not typing, you're writing in your head, because you're always on a deadline. And writer's block is a real fear. Of course, if you get stuck for an idea, you can always take a barking dog for a walk in the softly falling snow and come home to a freshly brewed pot of tea, while the rest of the world goes to work.



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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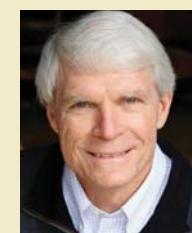
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