

ISSUE 11

REBUILT

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REBUILT

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— AN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE —

We're a global magazine with versions published in the USA, Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Philippines.

WELCOME TO REBUILT

Somehow you have stumbled upon a copy of *Rebuilt Magazine*. Maybe it was an accident, maybe you are just bored, but maybe it's because you want to know if it contains something worthwhile. We hope it does.

Rebuilt is written, laid out, and printed by young adults in the USA, the Philippines, Europe, and parts of Southeast Asia. What brings us together is our love for Jesus. Our desire is to write about topics focusing on God, life, and college. We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking as it encourages you to pursue a strong relationship with God.

Rebuilt has been publishing issues since 2018. All credit goes to God. We're not sure how else to explain it!

A little space to be creative

Rebuilt Magazine welcomes your original submissions for publication consideration.

Email your illustrations, poetry, comics, short stories, & photography to:

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As A Matter of Fact:

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is a word our culture throws around pretty often. It's cheery, open-ended, and looks nice in cursive hanging on a wall. You might hear someone say, "just have faith," and what they're saying is that you should trust things are going to work out. According to Google, the term means having "complete trust or confidence in someone or something." Using this definition, we could list a few things we put our faith in, like romantic relationships, the next vote for a political office, or a college degree. In this article, we're looking at what the Bible says about faith.

The Bible says that we are justified ("made righteous") with God by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection.

This is what it means to be born again: recognizing our separation from God because of our sin, we accept the salvation offered to us through Christ (Romans 3:23-24). We now have His power to turn away from our sin and have faith that Jesus physically came to Earth, lived a perfect life, was put to death, and rose again. Christians don't have faith in their abilities or count on their strength to get them through life. We recognize that without Jesus, we're lost, and we have nothing. By our faith in Jesus, we get to know our Creator, live to serve Him and others, and have confident hope that we will spend eternity with Him.

When life gets hard, we walk by faith.

Some people say Christianity is a crutch, and they're absolutely right! Life is hard, and if it's not hard for you right now, give it time. Walking by faith means believing God when He says He will never leave you (Deuteronomy 31:6) and recognizing that God is in control (1 Chronicles 29:11). When we face difficulties in life, we run to God and find comfort in Him (Matthew 11:28-29) and remember that Jesus said He's preparing a place for us in Heaven. He's going to take us there one day to be with Him (John 14:3). We trust God when He says that our suffering is producing something in us, meaning that our suffering isn't meaningless (Romans 5:3-5). And so, as 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (ESV).

Faith without good deeds is dead.

James 2:19-20 points out the lunacy of belief not leading to action: "You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?" Having faith in what Jesus has done and believing Him when He says He's coming back moves the Christian to do something. If someone told you that the roof of the room you're sitting in was about to cave in at any moment,

you'd prove you believe them by scrambling out the door. Your belief will move you to action. Christian faith is the same way. There are plenty of things God has for His people to do once they're born again, like getting involved in a local church (Hebrews 10:25) and telling other people about what Jesus has done for us (Matthew 28:16-20). When you have faith in Jesus, you'll see the needs of others, and you'll want to do something about them. These good deeds do not save us, Jesus does, but

HAVING FAITH IN WHAT JESUS HAS DONE AND BELIEVING HIM WHEN HE SAYS HE'S COMING BACK MOVES THE CHRISTIAN TO DO SOMETHING.

they work together with our faith, giving evidence of the change that has happened in our hearts.

Faith isn't just a catchphrase for the Christian. It keeps us going, despite circumstances, because we have work to do. Psalm 23:4 says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (ESV). This is what it means to have faith.

NO ONE READS THE BIBLE

HOW BIBLICAL ILLITERACY IS TRENDING, EVEN AMONG CHRISTIANS



Bible literacy, or "basic knowledge of the people, stories, and themes that point to the coming of Christ to save the world," is at an all-time low.¹ Going to church doesn't even help the issue. According to Robert B. Sloan, President of Houston Christian University, "We get some interesting pop psychology and leadership exhortations, but it is fairly unusual to enter a Christian church and hear the minister take a piece of scripture, read it, explain it, teach it, and apply it."² If we make it to church, and many of us don't, we're not encouraged to open the Bible for ourselves. Pastors are content to provide and parishioners are content to consume the "inspirational high" without knowing the full context of what the Bible actually means.

The statistics are staggering: "two-thirds of Americans identify themselves as Christians, yet only six percent of that group embrace the great majority of principles and commands from the Bible."³ We believe there is something to be gained by adopting the title of Christian, yet we let ourselves off the hook when it comes to reading, understanding, and applying the Word. Professor and author Kenneth Birding says this discrepancy isn't benign like we might assume:

Christians used to be known as "people of one book." Sure, they read, studied and shared other books. But the book they cared about more than all others combined was the Bible. They memorized it, meditated on it, talked about it and taught it to others. We don't do that anymore, and in a very real sense, we're starving ourselves to death.⁴

Our perpetual starvation is made worse because we're numb to the fact that it's happening. There are many factors that keep us from actively pursuing God's Word

"TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS CHRISTIANS, YET ONLY SIX PERCENT OF THAT GROUP EMBRACE THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PRINCIPLES AND COMMANDS FROM THE BIBLE."



like distractions (ahem, social media, anyone?), misaligned priorities, and being too busy.⁵ All of these can be small, daily hindrances but they cumulate to a skeleton-like faith that's brittle and hollow.

Additionally, knowing the Bible even on a surface level has historically provided a general sense of right and wrong that has kept us safe and well-adjusted. Think: loving our neighbor and refusing to lie. Without that, we're getting our moral compass from somewhere else—namely, ourselves. We're apt to abide by our own truth sourced predominantly from emotions which fluctuate greatly. Our default setting is motivated by what's in our best interest, so no wonder there is such disunity when we all put the individual first.

If you're biblically illiterate, the question is: why? Some of us fall into the category of simple ignorance; we don't know how to dig into the Bible, but we'd like to. Others of us, though, willfully ignore the Bible and it's understanding because we know that we'd then be accountable to do what it says. We'd be without excuse. On the other hand, for those who do read the Bible regularly growing in knowledge and understanding will continue to be a lifelong pursuit, too. God is infinite so we'll never exhaust the depth of what it means to know Him. In our digital age, we have more resources and study tools than anyone has ever had, ever. How foolish of us to keep spiritually starving when abundance is at our fingertips.

^{1 & 3} denisonforum.org/biblical-living/bible-reading-unprecedented-low-america/

² robertbsloan.com/2013/03/11/but-if-not-the-miracle-of-dunkirk/

^{4 & 5} biola.edu/blogs/biola-magazine/2014/the-crisis-of-biblical-illiteracy

A MOTH TO THE FLAME

FROM DRUGS AND SUICIDE TO A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Looking back on when I arrived to my first year of college, I was so ready. Not to learn, but to be “free.” I thought I wanted to be in school, but I suppose that I was just tired of living at home with my parents and their rules. I knew better than them after all, didn’t I?

I quickly caught on to the party scene at school where I began to experiment with new substances. I trusted the people around me who would recommend new drugs to try, and eventually I began to crave the temporary releases that exhaling smoke would give me. I thought that the psychedelics I consumed would open my mind and solve all my problems. This is where it all went wrong. Terribly wrong.

Within my second month of college, I tried LSD for the first time. As an artist, I was thrilled by the fun colors and moving textures that I’d see while I was “tripping,” which I’d describe as being similar to the style of a Van Gogh painting. I felt artistically “awakened” whenever I would create art while under the influence of LSD, and eventually, MDMA, magic mushrooms, as well as marijuana. My artistic thoughts and creations were always so different from anything I could create when I was sober, and I constantly longed to be in this state of creative enlightenment.

When COVID hit in 2020 and everything went virtual, my boredom trapped me into a loop where I’d trip at least once a month (sometimes weekly) so that I could “open my mind” and express myself through art or writing. I continued this cycle for months until I took too many psychedelics one day and all my fears and anxieties confronted me head on. This experience shattered who I was in a single day, and I haven’t been the same since.

My newfound freedom quickly became a prison of severe anxiety, which I was trapped in for almost over three years. I didn’t realize how lost I truly was. I was like a moth to a flame, and I nearly flew into the fire. Right as I was about to enter the fire, something changed.

It was almost as if I was walking through a dense fog within my mind, and I couldn’t imagine or even hope for a



future anymore. I was going to kill myself, but then an area of the fog cleared up. Something, no someone, quietly told me that it wouldn't end for me here. I began to cry. I chose life that day. Only now I've realized that it was God who pulled me away from the fire—ever so patiently pulling me back to Him.

After hospitalizing myself and going to a life-changing therapy program, I began to seek out and find the good things in life. It was trial and error, but this time the errors always led me into a better direction than before. Eventually, a year after my hospitalization, I realized that the path I had been on for so long wasn't the one I wanted to be on anymore, so I made the difficult decision to leave a three year relationship behind. It was probably one of the hardest things I've ever had to do.

Shortly after my breakup, I was on the phone with my sister and Jesus got brought up in our conversation. I told her that I was interested in learning about Him again. I had no clue about my interest in God until I said it out loud. I wanted to be shocked by my decision, but in my heart I was ready. God must've known I was ready and wanted me to know it for myself too.

This is when I began reading the Bible again. Soon after talking to my sister, I texted my dad asking him about which book of the Bible would be best to start in, but I made sure to clarify that I was "asking for a friend." He was not so easily tricked; he knew that the friend was me. With his suggestion, I started reading the gospel of John.

Reading through the book of John, I learned that God has so much love for us, but I had trouble wrapping my head around *why*. From previous friendships and relationships, I had become so used to conditional human love. A love where you give, then you—maybe—get some back. But, that love could end in an instant if you do something wrong.

I had the expectation that God must have the same conditional love, yet He came to earth as a human—who would experience the same pain and suffering as we do—all just so that He could love us, serve us, and sacrifice Himself for us so that we may be with Him forever. Talk about real love! I never experienced so much love from someone, and God's love was so overwhelming that I didn't know what to do with it all when it first started pouring in.

God's timing is so perfect, and He came into my life exactly when I needed Him. I started back in school after a year off with the heaviest course load I've done in my whole college

experience, went through a breakup almost immediately at the start of the semester, became involved with an amazing church multiple times a week, moved into a new house, and on top of it all I worked every weeknight and often struggled to get enough sleep—an experience where the weight of it all would've completely crushed the old me before I was saved by Jesus.

While I cannot say this semester was easy, God guided me through every single moment—the highs and the lows—and I can hardly express in words how grateful I am for the Lord and His guidance. I've learned that He never has and never will leave me, and He will give me peace and comfort in any moment of my life when I come to Him.

"I THOUGHT THAT THE PSYCHEDELICS I CONSUMED WOULD OPEN MY MIND AND SOLVE ALL MY PROBLEMS. THIS IS WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG. TERRIBLY WRONG."

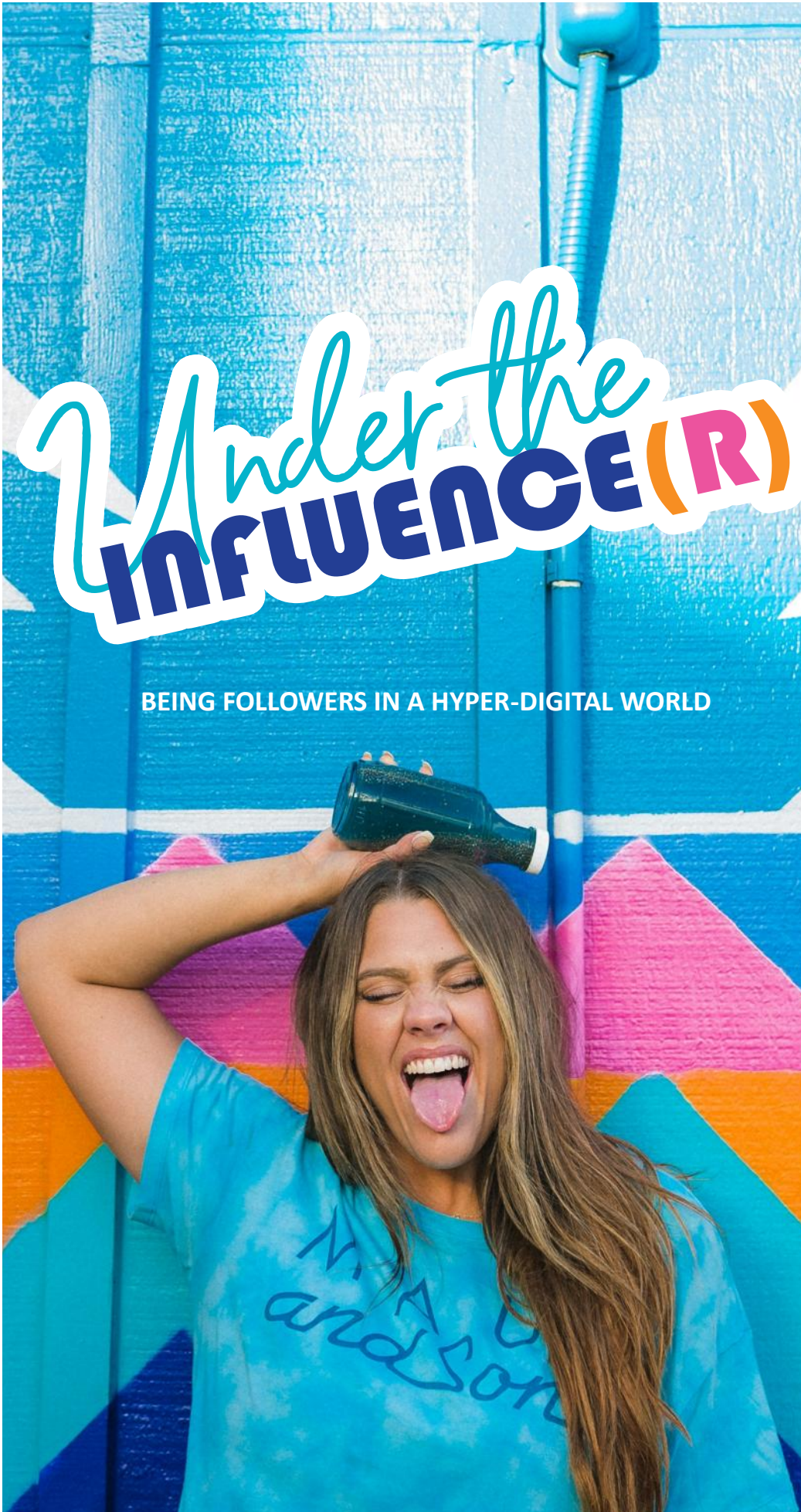
A verse that really stuck with me at the beginning of my relationship with Christ was Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end." It served as a helpful

reminder that the Lord will always be my guide when I follow Him. No matter the situation, He is with me and showing me the way—His way.

Every day I learn something new about God and about who I am to Him, and it's been a beautiful journey of growth and reshaping myself to be more like Jesus Christ. I'm so thankful for everything the Lord has done, all to eventually lead me back to His eternal love and overwhelming grace. Even in the lowest lows of my life, He stood by me, patiently guiding me back home.

As I conclude, I am filled with such joy reflecting on all of the wonderful ways that the Lord has saved me. He is truly the path to life and love. Nothing in my life has brought me as much peace, joy, comfort, happiness, growth, and love as Jesus has brought me. As my parents would say... "Thumbs up for Jesus!"

- DAPHNE



Under the INFLUENCE(R)

BEING FOLLOWERS IN A HYPER-DIGITAL WORLD

The familiar late-night glow of a 6.4-inch screen captures the eyes and imagination of nearly 6.9 billion smartphone users existing in the world today. That siren of the screen has our fingers scrolling through the latest shorts to see what everyone is up to, even if you have never met them. Something about seeing other people's innermost thoughts, desires, opinions, and adorable dog calls out to our deepest desires and keeps us wanting to see what's around that proverbial screen scroll (bend).

Maybe you've found yourself laying in bed alone watching people who seem to have direction in their lives tell us about their day, what they ate, or their latest success. And it isn't just a nighttime thing; we grab a quick scroll through social media between classes, as we wait for the dentist, in line while waiting to check out at the store, and even when sitting around a group of friends. Once you start, it's like an addiction. You just can't stop. We are not just talking about those cute pet videos you send to your friend group chat, we are talking about all those people who fill your feed with their world (a carefully curated one) and all they want you to care about.

We like being in the special club that gets to unbox a new makeup product and see the mental breakdown they had this week because life isn't fair. These people

“WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? IT'S HARMLESS, RIGHT? IT'S A GOOD WAY TO UNWIND AND RELAX. BUT WHAT WE ARE REALLY DOING IS LITERALLY SUBSCRIBING TO PEOPLE AND THEIR WAY OF THINKING, LIVING, AND DOING.”

tell us that they love us, that we are part of their family, that we are their community, and that we understand them in ways that even the physical people in their lives couldn't. Even if we don't follow specific people, we start building an algorithm of shopping vlogs, sneaker reviews, and the success of people we wish we were. We linger on the darker videos and listen to countless hours of people telling us what they think and believe, and as Christians, before we know it, we don't realize what's happening to us. We're under the influence.

Social media has normalized not being normal. Where else can you act like a high schooler and do stuff you wouldn't do in front of a stranger on the street? YouTube has celebrated being normal, and now every platform has normalized privileges as if they are expected and deserved. We ignore the realization that we rub off on each other, allowing us a platform for a socially acceptable way of giving into our innermost desires for self-indulgence.

In the Bible, we have the *luxury* of seeing this play out time and time again. Samson had a ton of strength, but in the end, his lust and desires got the best of him when he married the wrong woman. King David, literally called by God a "man after God's own heart," stays home from war (maybe he was tired of the fighting and keeping up a disciplined life) and sees a woman he cannot resist and ends up murdering her husband so he can have her. We may not end up in that extreme of a situation, but we do see many ill effects of how we spend our time and what it fills our minds with.

Those finger scrolls on our screens do more than entertain us. They are our crutches, our safety net when boredom strikes; they make us feel like we are part of the bigger world if we are feeling insignificant, and let's

go one step beyond that: "If everyone's like me, then I am alright." But as Christians, we are in this fight for God's Kingdom today. Ephesians 3:12 says, "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" We are at war, and God gave each of us a calling to help and bring people to see Christ. David's answer to his sin was to turn to his own logic, but the further we look to the world for the answers to our boredom and comfort, the worse the response will be.

What's the big deal? It's harmless, right? It's a good way to unwind and relax. But what we are really doing is literally subscribing to people and their way of thinking, living, and doing. They make us desire things we never knew we wanted or needed to be whole. We allow their way of thinking to take center stage above the teachings of the Bible. When dealing with a hard situation, it's immediate gratification to turn to our screens and find the answers from the world (or the people we think wise). The more we escape to these people, these ideas, taking in what others think, the more we think like and look like the world—bottom line.

What happened to the wise, older Christians in our lives? The wise older saints, the passionate Jesus-following friends and family, and the pastors of our churches are among many voices in a sea of opinions, drowned (or deadened) by our preferences, which we allowed in by the current culture. What's the answer? Delete all social media apps? Not necessarily. We are still called to live in the world, but the hard part is that we still are to be separate: "*Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one*" (John 17:13-15).

Instead of quick fixes and escaping from reality, who is our identity found in? Jesus, or the world? Who is king of our lives and hearts? Before you pull up your phone to pass a few minutes waiting in line, or when it's quiet and you want a quick distraction from that paper you are supposed to be writing, turn to Jesus. Ask Him to refresh your mind. Get in real community, too. Find a local church that can be part of the rhythm of your life and get some good influencers in your life.



A Time to Tarry

The first time you catch the holy ghost,

It grabs your mind,

sets your soul,

sets your sanity ablaze.

But,

on your first time, your very first time,

you shrink like someone called your name,

you're surprised because it's not the name assigned at birth, but one only a few know like *Long Head Ricky* or *Slick Rick* for Richard

Not soft like Mama calling you *Richy*.

Your body stiffens,

you drop your head and tears stumble

onto the deep-rust-colored carpet

that looks like dried blood,

that looks like minutes after your mother fell, and

The deep red in her body crept across the tile as if she was

s p r e a d i n g the gospel.

The first time your mother's body

spun out of control was on an ordinary Saturday.

The birds held their usual conferences about

worms or nesting decor outside your bedroom window.

The wind was new-day fresh as you

lay in bed daydreaming of breakfast.

That's a strange thing for someone to mull at the start of a day.

But, the weekend

guaranteed something warm, not the granola or pop tart

a school day permitted,

& Sundays were for church with no promise of breakfast before Sunday school.

You romped down the hall toward the kitchen,

the thought of instant grits and toast already warm inside you;

your slippers seemed to find every creaky board on

the old wooden floors.

Each step

creak, crack, creak, crack

your very own theme music.

If you were a superhero, you would have been called

The Weekend (already taken), or

Saturday Man.

Either way, you were something special on a special day heading

for special start,

one foot in front of the other.

Something hard and large, large enough to
tremble through the house

& you doubled back,

stilled yourself and listened.

"Mom!"

It didn't come from the bathroom—a loud thud and crash,
like a body or a lamp or a body hitting a lamp.

"Mama?"

You realized the noise came from inside her room.

& you ran, knocking over the kitchen nook barstool

& ran past the family photos lining the hall

& ran—no collapsed into her bedroom door as you swung it

open.

Something about the sight of

your mother spasming on the ground.

Her hair splayed across the floor,

life and its tributaries flow from the back of her head,

mouth opening and closing wordlessly like

a fish or toddler throwing a tantrum,

made you grow up.

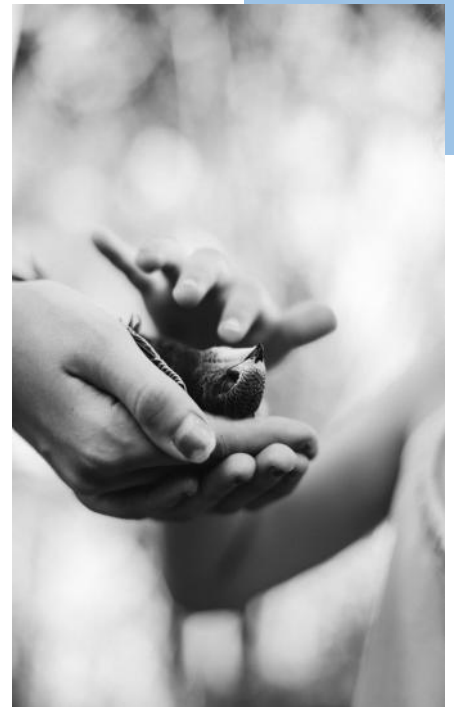
Thirty-five minutes

& eleven seconds is how long

the sirens took to reach

the front of your apartment

building.



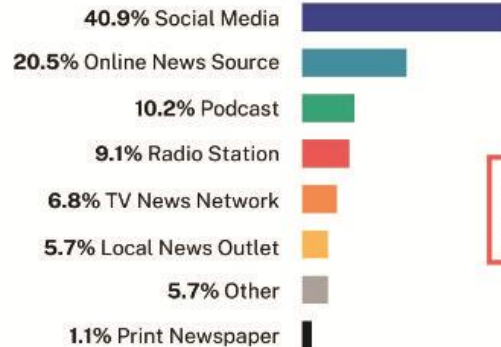
Something fell.

This poem was written by Té, a Nigerian-American writer.

STUDENT POLLS

PEW Research Center found that 50% of U.S. adults get news from social media sometimes or often. The results are eye-opening.

Where do you get your news?



44 students surveyed

What is one thing you learned recently that challenged your perspective?

Here are the top responses based on category



Science & Technology

"Elon's brain chip and the ethics behind it." - Zean

Finances

"Each class costs about \$60 per class period when you break down the numbers." - Aaliyah

Advice

"Expect the unexpected. Things can change in a heartbeat." - Cole

Faith & Religion

"I recently had a deep dive into religion and what it's been in our lives with my roommate. We're both non-religious, but it was insightful." - Edi

Controversy & Politics

"Land isn't just PROPERTY. There is a westernized concept that land's use is to own it, rather than to live and love and grow. Land isn't just something to buy. It holds history." - Lily

Nature

"Being outside is good for your mental health." - Gabby

Work & Education

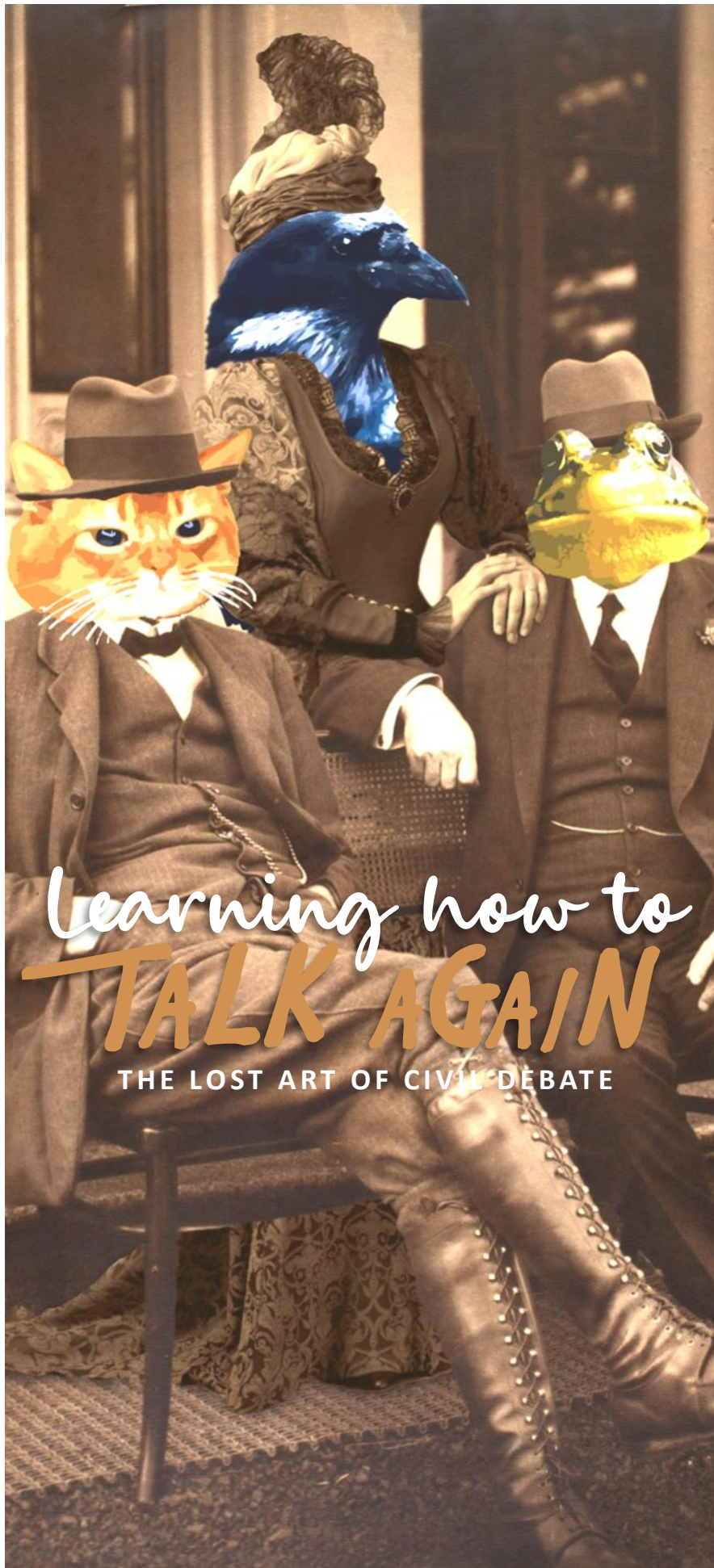
"In a helping field, you have to be able to put aside your biases to help." - Riley

Ideology & Philosophy

"The existence of two personalities inside one person: moral good and moral evil." - Teigan

Life & Health

"That even if it seems like it, not everyone is doing as good as they might seem." - Ari



Learning how to **TALK AGAIN**

THE LOST ART OF CIVIL DEBATE

No one seems to understand what an actual debate is anymore and it's because they've become rare to see. Though before defining what a debate is, let's talk about what it's not. A debate is not dropping a comment on a post that triggers an entire sect of the internet, nor is it a one-sided yelling match like the ones you see at protests. A debate is not being the loudest person in the room, nor is it insults voiced through a mic at an interview. That is the kind of communication that we see more often than an actual constructive conversation on a topic with opposing views.

The underlying common factor in the scenarios listed is a lack of dignity, along with an overdose of pride. Nowadays, people want to be heard, yet no one wants to listen. This gets no one anywhere, and only further separates an already divided nation. We've talked about what a debate is not, now let's talk about what it is, starting with its key ingredient: dignity.

REPRESENTING MORE THAN OURSELVES

Dignity is, "the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect" according to Oxford Languages. As Christians, we are taught to, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."¹ We are supposed to speak with graceful intentionality, keeping in mind how we are not only representing ourselves, but Christ.

When having a rather triggering conversation with someone, especially if they are not of the same faith, we have to bear this in mind so we don't let our tongues get us into unnecessary trouble. Proverbs wisely explains why: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."² Stirring up anger is not productive towards anything. Instead, it stops our ability to build relationships with those we are called to love. This is real tolerance. That is, being

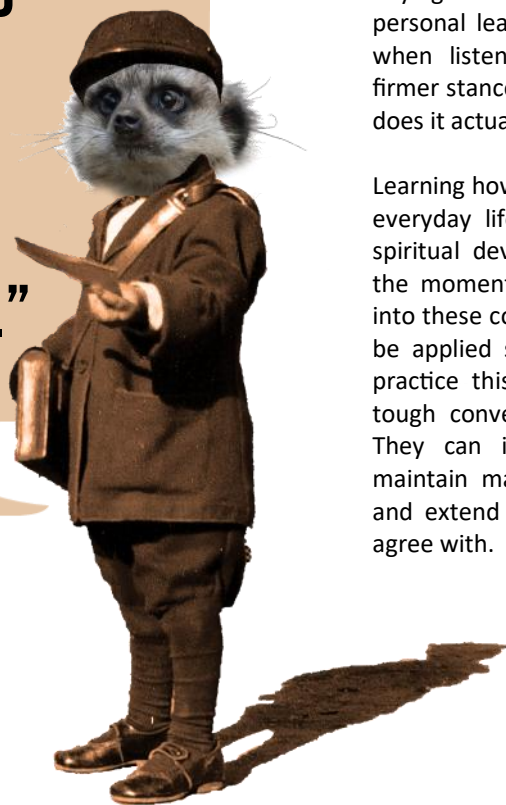
able to tolerate difficult conversations or experiences with others long enough to cultivate a meaningful relationship despite differences.

On the more practical side, avoiding challenging conversation limits people's ability to understand if they are wrong about something, or gain further insight into why they may be right. Or, it could prevent people from discovering a different solution altogether! Gathering all sides to a story, no matter how much patience it takes, does more than just help each person feel heard. It allows truth and context to be further uncovered by nabbing pieces of it through all the different perspectives that are presented.

THE COST OF NONSENSE OFFENSE

A few years back, a professor at an American university gave an exam in his Civil Procedures II course.³ On the exam, he wrote a question that had two redacted (meaning not spelled out) racial slurs

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from a hypothetical court case. The entire question was posed in a way to show what an actual case could look like. However, despite the care taken to ensure the students knew the question was strictly for educational purposes, a student was offended and got the professor barred from campus, where he could no longer attend university events or even speak to his former colleagues and students.

The result of this verdict does not just fall on the student, but also on a justice system too afraid to cause a stir. It is extreme cases like this that prove how important it is to learn how to tolerate mature topics that could be offensive. How far does censorship have to go to avoid offending anyone? How many students lost out on the opportunity to learn from a professor who knows what happens in an actual courtroom? The moral of the story is that the inability to read the room and keep one's head about oneself could cost others essential education and even their livelihood.

LEARNING TO TALK AGAIN

The key to having constructive, educational conversations is to start with a heart of humility. Asking yourself, "What can I learn from this person?" is a great start. Going further into that as Christians, remember that we are to, "put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth."⁴ We must speak with grace to show the love we are called to give and to better represent Jesus.

Another tip is to be patient and allow people to share their side of the story, their entire story, and not interrupt. This goes along with being a good listener. Paying attention to what the person is saying is where personal learning and growth happen. Consider this when listening, does the information give you a firmer stance on the hill you've prepared to die on, or does it actually prompt you to step off of it?

Learning how to cultivate challenging conversations in everyday life is critical for individual, societal, and spiritual development. It may be uncomfortable at the moment, but the more dignity is implemented into these conversations, the more real tolerance can be applied so honest love can be shared. You can practice this at work, school, church, etc. because tough conversations don't have to cause a scene. They can instead be taken as opportunities to maintain manners, learn about a new perspective, and extend empathy towards a person you do not agree with.

¹ Ephesians 4:29

² Proverbs 15:1

³ thefire.org/news/lawsuit-professor-suspended-redacted-slurs-law-school-exam-sues-university-illinois-chicago

⁴ Colossians 3:8

Failure is not fun, but contrary to popular belief—it IS an option. Since it is, why not learn from them? Let me tell you a story.

FAILED PLANS

I was 21-years-old and thought I had everything figured out. My dad had another drinking spell where he was refusing to go to treatment. By that time, I lost count of how many times he had relapsed. I planned to drive four and a half hours home and then transport him three hours to the Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center. That way he could get the help he needed. This wasn't the first time making the trip to the VA. I executed the plan on a beautiful April day. However, my dad ended up passing away during the trip to the VA. My plan failed in a big way, more than I could have imagined.

Let's look at another example of failure but this time from the Bible. Saul, a religious leader, was on a mission to Damascus from Jerusalem. He planned to take Christ's followers as prisoners back to Jerusalem (Acts 9:2). However, Jesus literally stepped in the way on the road to the city of Damascus and prevented him from fulfilling the plan. Read more about it in Acts chapter nine. Saul's plan failed.

THE OUTCOME OF SELF-TRUST

The failure of my plan showed that I wasn't in control. It made me re-evaluate what I was doing in life. It spurred me on to a search ultimately ending in salvation in Jesus. Without the failure, I would never have considered anything wrong with how I was living. God opened my eyes to how I didn't include Him in the plan. That was before I knew "God's thoughts are nothing like mine, and His ways are far beyond anything I could imagine."¹ Can you think back on past failures where something didn't go the way you planned? Did anything good come from it? Not to say that every failure guarantees good things, but God really does have a plan for everything.²

Saul's failure also showed him that he wasn't in control. Jesus opened Saul's eyes that day to the flaws of his plan. Saul thought he was doing God's will by persecuting the Christians; however, he wasn't. If he was, Jesus would not



have said, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?"³ So instead of persecuting Christians, he became one. Saul became Paul the Apostle.

WHOM SHOULD WE TRUST?

I have heard it said before that no one hurts us more than we hurt ourselves. Now considering the phrase, wouldn't it be logical to not trust in ourselves? However, the reality is that most of us do. This leaves God out of the equation, resulting in things not adding up. Where should we place our trust? The answer is God. For He is the only One whose, "Works are perfect, and all His ways are just."⁴ He is the only one we can fully trust, "For no word from God will ever fail."⁵ I came to salvation in Christ because of the chain reaction set forth by my failed plan. Looking back, I can see how God was working in all of it. Paul could also relate since Jesus interrupted his plans, and it led him to become a believer. The encounter left him blinded and helpless, needing to be led by hand to Damascus. He remained blind there for three days before a believer named Ananias, at God's command, came and laid hands on him. Afterward, Paul received his sight and the Holy Spirit.

WORKING THROUGH FAILURES

We will fail again, but with God, there is hope and victory because of Jesus. It doesn't mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, hungry, destitute, in danger, or threatened with death. In failure we tend to run from God, but He wants us to run towards Him. He isn't surprised by our failures because He is all-knowing. That is why God sent His son Jesus to die in our place, for our sins, so we can have a relationship with Him. When we fail, we can go to Him, ask for forgiveness, and move on knowing we are covered by the blood of His Son, Jesus. Hang onto passages like, "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them."⁶

See, failure is an option. It just isn't the preferred one. God will teach you about yourself and Him if you allow Him to. Let the Lord use your failures to shape you to be more like Him. "Come close to God, and God will come close to you,"⁶ and through that, you learn how to be more like Him.



original art by Daphne

ONE GUY'S TRUE STORY

ONE THRILLING RIDE: A ROLLER COASTER OF FAITH

I remember as a kid, maybe 10 or 12, I loved going to my local theme park. This theme park had many thrilling rides, and I had been on most of them. This year in particular I was finally tall enough to ride the big roller coaster. Along with my sister, we walked to the start of the line, and suddenly the fear of the coaster became real. I felt overwhelmed with the tall hills and fast speed. It was daunting, and I no longer wanted to go on the ride I had been so excited for. With some effort, my sister was able to coax me into the line to face my fear. After a long wait, it was our turn to get on. As we walked to the seat, the fear overwhelmed me again, and I panicked. My sister grabbed my arm and told me it was going to be fine. I calmed down and took my seat. The coaster started to go and climb slowly. My nerves built, and I had butterflies in my stomach. We reached the top of the hill, and we very quickly whipped down the other side. I was filled with joy and excitement, and my fear was gone. After getting off, I begged my sister to go again. We rode the coaster many more times that day.

I find that my faith story is very similar to the memory I just described. I spent the first 20 years of my life not getting in the line to faith. I never really knew what it looked like to be a believer in Jesus, and I didn't understand why people were lining up to be His followers. I grew up in a family that did not go to church or believe in the Bible. On rare occasions that we did attend church, it was extremely boring. Faith was just something we didn't do – with the exception of my grandma. She was an amazing person, someone who was contagiously kind and had the superpower to talk to anybody about anything. She had a drive to be herself and to talk about her faith with others. She was struck with many diseases towards the end of her life, like dementia, multiple strokes, and half blindness in both eyes, but she wouldn't let that get to her because she loved Jesus. My grandma was truly someone who was on this roller coaster of faith. As a freshman in high school, she passed, and my family lost the light that connected us to Jesus. My family was hurt by her loss, and I became enveloped by the fear of death. I couldn't let my mind wander at night, and I would shiver at the thought of dying and there being nothing afterwards. I searched for distractions and ran away to things that made me feel better, like video games and porn. I was lost, scared, and without purpose.

I continued to feel alone, and avoid faith. Even when I was in college, pursuing my dream of becoming a game developer, I still felt like something was missing. My life was going well, but I was still stuck in the same issues that made me feel ashamed and alone. I wanted to break

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I NEEDED SOMETHING THAT WAS UNLIKE ANY OF THE OTHER THINGS I HAD TRIED – I NEEDED JESUS.

free of those burdens but couldn't find the right things to help me. Then I met someone, someone who reminded me of my grandmother. She was amazing, and she believed in Jesus. We started dating, and my life began to turn around. I thought she would be the answer to my problems and hardships with life, but I still continued to mess things up. I even started to hurt this person I loved so much. I was in love, and yet I still needed something to help me break out of my sins and restore the relationship I was slowly ruining. I needed something that was unlike any of the other things I had tried – I needed Jesus.

So I started to take Him seriously. I went to the theme park and got in line to get on the roller coaster. At first it was a bit half hearted. Just attending church and being around other believers. But I started to feel convicted during the sermons and learned more about my sin and how it impacted me and those around me. I learned more and more about Jesus and how I could be born again into the person God wanted me to be. But it was hard, and the wait to get to the roller coaster was long. There were aspects about my life I hated, but there were also parts I wasn't ready to give up. I hit my breaking point when I was struggling with temptation. I cried alone praying to God to take my sins away from me. I prayed He would help me to start cultivating a real relationship with Him and to help me give my life to Him.

I remember being asked by one of the church members to come to a bible study on Wednesday nights. I was finally at the front of the line, and this was my moment to get on the roller coaster. Time to trust Jesus with my life. I had a panic moment, but I had many people around me to grab my hand and say it was going to be okay. Then the coaster started to move up the hill. Various actions propelled me forward in my faith: focusing on reading the bible every day, learning what the bible says, unlearning the things I thought it said, and having fellowship with other Christians. I started to feel not so alone and more connected. I started to feel closer to God,

winning my battles with sin. I no longer felt so trapped, and I had the freedom to pick God's way. My faith and trust started to grow.

Then I reached the top of the hill. As I whipped down it, God's blessings were poured out onto me. Over the next year I would experience the craziest and most challenging year of my life. I got engaged to the woman I love, and we were married three months later. My wife and I were baptized at our church. We moved to a new home together where we could be more closely connected to the church. We went on our first mission trip together. God pushed me to grow and learn more about what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Today I find myself excited to continue to get in line and ride the roller coaster of faith. With each ride comes new growth paths and learning. Each time I have to climb the hill to see what God has for me on the other side. My current path involves growing in discipleship through a doctrine class, getting more involved in service with church, learning about God's plan for my life, and becoming more connected with Christians and people around me.

I still have so much more to learn about God. I am still young in my faith, but I am also excited to see where He brings me. He has blessed me with purpose and grace. I am grateful to follow Christ and be a part of His church. My prayer for those trying to find that missing piece in your life is that you find the courage and faith to get in the line. You are created in the image of God, and He has amazing plans for your life. *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago"* (Ephesian 2:10, NLT).

-Connor

Why You Need a CHURCH (NOT JUST A CAMPUS MINISTRY)



DON'T FALL INTO THE TRAP OF THINKING CHURCH IS OPEN TO INTERPRETATION

There's this phenomenon that happens every year across college campuses. Thousands of well-meaning, well-intended young Christians leave their hometowns to embark on their college education. A massive part of this transition involves saying goodbye to everything they're familiar with, including the church they grew up in. Some stop going to church anywhere, unfortunately (life got in the way, apparently). Others find something that resembles church in a lot of ways: a campus ministry. But is it enough? Will this placebo suffice for a couple years until they graduate?

"A campus ministry can be unmatched in helping students connect with other likeminded believers, especially in an ideologically hostile academic or social setting. A good one will help equip Christian students to defend the faith, serve the poor, and be held accountable to each other. A good campus ministry is a gift from God. But it is no church," writes Russell Moore, author and Editor in Chief of *Christianity Today*.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Moore goes on to say, "The reason many students

identify primarily with a campus ministry rather than with a church isn't because of any flaw in most campus ministry organizations. It's because, too often, we evangelicals have a deficient view of the church. We assume it's any gathering of people who believe in Jesus and who do churchly things. Many Christians assume the church exists simply to help us learn more about Christ and pool our resources for missions."

However, that assumption about church is not what we see in the Word of God. If church was merely a gathering of Christians, then you could argue that not only could a campus ministry be a church, but almost any gathering of a couple of Christians could be considered one too. That's not the case according to the Bible. Church is so much more than that.

Moore describes it like this:

"In the Bible, a local church—with all its ridiculous flaws—is an unveiling of the mystery of the universe (Eph. 3:6). She is in a one-flesh union with Jesus such that, as in a marriage, everything that belongs to him belongs to her (Eph. 5:22–33). A congregation, in covenant

with one another as an assembly of Christ's people, is a colony of the coming global reign of Christ (Eph. 1:22–23), a preview of what his kingdom will look like in the end (1 Cor. 6:1–8). Where there is a covenant among believers—a disciplined community of faith—the Spirit of Jesus is present among them, just as God was present among the people of Israel in the temple of old (Matt. 18:15–20).

“When the church judges a repentant sinner to be a genuine believer, the congregation is speaking with the authority of Jesus when they plunge him beneath the waters [speaking of baptism] (Matt. 28:18–19). When the church judges an unrepentant sinner to be persistent in his rebellion, it's with the authority of Jesus that the congregation pronounces him to be a stranger to the people of God (1 Cor. 5:4–5; Matt. 18:15–20). When we gather for worship as a congregation in covenant with one another, we're not simply fueling our individual quiet times with praise choruses. We're actually ascending to the heavenly places together, standing before Christ and all of his angels on Mount Zion (Heb. 12:18–29).

“The Scriptures reveal to us what we would never discern on our own. The church—not an ideal congregation but the real one you go to every week, with the lady who smacks her gum and the man with the pitiful combover hair and the 1970s-era audio system and the kids banging Tonka trucks on the back of the pew in front of you—is the flesh and bones of Jesus. It's his body, he tells us—inseparable from him as your heart and lungs and kidneys and fingers are from you (Eph. 5:29–30; 1 Cor. 12:12–31).”

In summary, we can't say, “I don't love being a part of church, but I certainly love Jesus.” It is comparable to saying you adore your friends, but you never actually spend time with them. Like, what? Your attitude about Jesus and His church reveals a lot about where your heart really is. You cannot just “take a break” from church or think “it's not a big deal,” because Jesus loved the church.

FINDING THE BALANCE

Alright, so maybe you're convinced now that church is important to God, but knowing the truth and actually doing something about it are two different things, especially when things seem at odds with how it feels. Frankly, a campus ministry can often just seem more spiritual, like they're more alive than a local congregation. Perhaps you're meeting people left and right there that seem “on fire” for the mission of Christ,

more so than anyone you remember at your church back home. It should be inspirational, but it also needs to be tempered with the fact that sometimes it is zeal without direction—“youthful idealism.” Church, by contrast, is filled with people who are young and old, rich and poor, black and white. These differences mean friction will arise—not everyone will cheer a wild idea to advance the gospel, for example—but it also means that zeal for the gospel could be channeled into more impactful, far-reaching ways with the guidance of more mature leadership.

All of this to say, however, that campus ministry is still relevant. Being involved in one while in college is vital. So where is the balance? Here is Moore's advice, and our recommendation, too:

“First, resist the temptation to keep your membership in your home church. Join a church in your college town, as soon as you find one with a commitment to Christ and the Scripture.

“Second, find a church where some people will know your name, and will know if you aren't present. Find a place where someone will kindly ask “Where were you?” if you miss a week.

“Third, spend some time with people in your congregation who aren't in the same place in life as you—a lonely senior adult, a harried 30-something mom, a sarcastic 14-year-old kid.

“Fourth, humbly pester the leaders of the church for some way for you to exercise your gifts in the congregation—and let the leaders recognize and encourage your gifts. This means submitting yourself to serve the body in whatever way the church deems necessary. Most often, this will be something more Christlike than glorious, such as cleaning toilets or serving in the nursery.

“Fifth, find a campus ministry that seeks to work alongside the church. Look for a ministry that wants to enhance what's already happening in your life in discipleship and spiritual growth and mission in your congregation. Be very wary of a campus ministry that isn't constantly asking you, “Where are you in church—and what's happening there?” And be very, very wary of a campus ministry that seems to resent the time you spend with your church as “competing” with their ministry.”

So, be sure to find, and get deeply involved with, a good campus ministry. Take every opportunity to serve and lead, both within your campus ministry and among your classmates through your example of faithful living. But also be sure that you don't miss the place and call of church during your college years. Being actively involved in a local church may feel “slower-paced,” and might feel optional, but it's part of God's unfolding plan. Don't miss being a part of it.



Religious ‘Nones’ are now the largest single group in the U.S.

When Americans are asked to check a box indicating their religious affiliation, 28% now check “none.”

A new study from Pew Research finds that the religiously unaffiliated—a group comprised of atheists, agnostic, and those who say their religion is “nothing in particular”—is now the largest cohort in the U.S. They’re more prevalent among American adults than Catholics (23%) or evangelical Protestants (24%).

Researchers refer to this group as the “Nones.” Back in 2007, “nones” made up just 16% of Americans, but Pew’s new survey of more than 3,300 U.S. adults shows that number has now risen dramatically. Pew asked respondents what, if anything, they believe, and research shows that “nones” are not a uniform group.

Very few “nones” attend any kind of religious service;

however, many claim to believe in God or another higher power.

“Nones” aren’t all anti-religious. Many say religion does some harm, but many also think it does some good. Most “nones” have a positive view of science, but they reject the idea that science can explain everything.

“Nones” could also prove to be an important political group as Gregory Smith, a lead researcher on the study, says. “Religious ‘nones’ are very distinctive, among the most strongly and consistently liberal and Democratic constituencies in the United States.”

Smith points out that “nones” are also less civically engaged than those who identify with a religion—they’re less likely to vote. Within the “nones”, however, atheists and agnostics are more likely to be politically and civically engaged, whereas those who responded that their religion is “nothing in particular” are far less likely to vote.

Pew also found that, overall, “nones” are less likely to volunteer in their local communities than religiously-affiliated adults. The survey also found that this group is less satisfied with their local communities and social lives than religious people.

While many people of faith say they rely on Scripture, tradition, and the guidance of religious leaders to make moral decisions, Pew found that “nones” say they’re guided by logic, avoid harm, and desire to avoid hurting people when making moral decisions.

“Nones” tend to be young, white, and male. 69% are under the age of 50. Similar studies by Pew and other groups such as the Public Religion Research Institute have found that people of color are far more likely to say religion is important in their lives.

At first glance, “nones” appear to be evenly divided by gender. But digging deeper into the data shows that men are significantly more likely to say they’re atheist or agnostic whereas women are more likely to describe their religion as “nothing in particular.” Smith says that’s consistent with other research as well, which shows women tend to be more religious on average than men.



American couple in their early twenties and one other missionary killed by gang in Haiti

Three American missionaries working for the organization Missions In Haiti, including a young married couple, Davy (23) and Natalie (21) Lloyd, and mission director Jude Montis (45), were tragically killed in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The incident occurred on May 23, 2024, following an ambush as the Lloyds left a church. Davy Lloyd, known for his deep affection for Haiti since childhood, had been speaking with his father on the phone during the attack, describing the situation and pleading for help.

The assailants overwhelmed security guards and proceeded to loot the compound where the missionaries were based. Davy Lloyd was tied up, beaten, and subsequently dragged into a house, while his wife and Montis were also taken hostage. The attackers looted the compound and fled with their stolen goods. The situation took a tragic turn when more armed men arrived, leading to a violent confrontation.

Lloyd barricaded himself with his wife and Montis in a building, but the attackers managed to breach the defenses. All three missionaries were shot and Davy Lloyd and Montis were set on fire. Lloyd's burned body was later found at the scene.

The White House expressed condolences for the victims and urged the deployment of international police forces to Haiti to address the security situation.

Despite the escalating violence in Haiti, Davy Lloyd's parents, who founded Missions in Haiti in 2000 and live in Haiti, have chosen to remain committed to their mission and the children they're caring for, declining opportunities to leave the country.

Missions in Haiti's website says its goal is, "to see the Gospel of Christ make a difference in the lives of Haiti's young people. Although the entire nation is steeped in poverty, the children suffer the worst. Thousands are malnourished, uneducated, and headed for hopeless lives apart from Christ."

The organization runs House of Compassion, offering housing for 36 children, split evenly between boys and girls. They remain there until they complete their education and become independent. Additionally, they manage Good Hope Boys' Home, accommodating 22 boys. The organization has also established a church, bakery, and a school with over 240 students.

The murder of Davy and Natalie Lloyd and Jude Montis underscores the dangers faced by missionaries and aid workers in Haiti amid escalating gang violence. Their unwavering dedication to their mission despite the huge risks highlights their profound commitment to serving people and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Perhaps, they too agreed with the late Jim Elliot, who gave his life for the gospel: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

[cnn.com/2024/05/24/us/american-missionary-couple-haiti/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2024/05/24/us/american-missionary-couple-haiti/index.html)

The Strange Reality of Being a

CHRISTIAN

COLLEGE STUDENT

An interview with Rona, Gladness,
Joshua, Peter, Elizabeth, and
Daphne – college students in the
Philippines and USA

If you are to truly live out your Christian walk while being a student, you are choosing to enter a difficult environment. It will be challenging, but you will definitely grow. Are you ready? Read on to gain insight from a few everyday Christians just like you who have chosen to enter in the strange, new dimension of college life as a true follower of Christ.



TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU WERE CHALLENGED AS A CHRISTIAN WHILE IN COLLEGE.

Rona (R): Explaining to classmates about the Bible was hard because they saw God as someone not important. They assumed I was just trying to add them as a member instead of trying to invite them to my campus ministry or church. I just wanted them to know Jesus.

Gladness (G): As a leader in my church while in college, managing my time wisely was challenging. Preparing for church responsibilities, while staying on top of my studies could default to duty, but I had to fight to make sure it was actually because I wanted to serve God and be close to Him.

Joshua (J): Most of my classmates aren't Christians, so they base their opinion on what they saw on social media to decide what's right for them. My views as a Christian are very different, and when I don't agree with them it tends to turn into arguments. I love to debate, but I have to stop myself because it's not always worth it since they are blind to the truth.

Daphne (D): I had to make the choice to walk away from someone in my life

because I could see how that relationship was making me distant from God and my family in Christ. I never realized prior that doing something I wanted to do (putting God first) could be so conflicting and challenging.

Elizabeth (E): I had to decide how I was going to prioritize my time with God, where I was going to church, and how serious I was going to be about my faith in the newfound freedom of all college had to offer.

WHAT ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH RIGHT NOW? HOW ARE YOU FIGHTING IT?



(R): What God is calling me to today may not make sense, but I don't have to understand it to obey. What helps is simply serving God and pleasing Him. It also helps to be around more mature Christians who correct me and I can build real relationships with.

(G): Deciding where I am supposed to go next, such as pursuing a career and finding a job. I know God has better plans, though, and I want to commit to ministry.

(J): I can trust myself too much, as if I have all the answers. I have to ask God to humble me and give me knowledge that's from Him.

(Peter): I am struggling to avoid sin. I know I am fighting it because I'm not comfortable about it. Recently, I began to read the Bible daily, which is going pretty good.

(D): I've been struggling with the insecurity of growing as a Christian. It feels like puberty all over again—but spiritual this time. Rather than ruminating on my imperfections, I am working on turning to God when I mess up and surrendering my failures to Him right away.

WHY ARE YOU SURE THAT BEING A CHRISTIAN IS HOW YOU WANT TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?



(R): It's easy to think that shiny objects and dreams have the answer to life, but they never quench your thirst. My inner heart always knew there was something more because of how empty I felt. It's a constant inner battle unless you know God. I have found that Jesus is worth it all in this life and the next.

(J): When I studied other religious figures like Buddha, Confucius, and Muhammed, they just said to follow a certain life path and rules. Jesus is the only one who said, "Follow Me." He's the only one that actually gives life meaning, but He is difficult to follow. Following rules would have been easier.

(D): I ran for so many years. When I thought I was too far-gone, Jesus chased me and welcomed me home with open arms. I finally hit the bottom of myself and realized I needed Him. I feel at home with Him, and I never want to leave Him again. Looking back at who I was and where I was before Jesus (or "BC"—Before Christ) is a dark place I never want to go back to.

(E): I am sure I want to be a Christian for the rest of my life because I have found nothing else that satisfies like Jesus does. I trust He is worth more than anything I could sacrifice.



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