

TAKE TWO: GIVE ONE TO A FRIEND



KANSAS

FAITH AND FAMILY

MEMBER



MEMBER



PUBLISHED THE LAST THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH

VOLUME 25 NO. 3

JANUARY 2026

“THEREFORE GOD EXALTED HIM TO THE HIGHEST PLACE AND GAVE HIM THE NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY NAME...” PHILIPPIANS 2:9

The real Christmas angels

By Melissa Spoelstra

Angels are not winged cherubs playing harps and sitting on clouds. In fact, the only heavenly creatures described as winged in the Bible are called “cherubim” and “seraphim” (Isaiah 6:2; Genesis 3:24), and their full description can be unnerving.

Still, Scripture mentions “angels” more than 300 times, and they most often appear in human form. Angels were present when God created the world (Job 38:4-7) and throughout the Bible. They are particularly preva-

lent in the Christmas story.

When individuals like Zechariah, Mary and Joseph or groups like the shepherds received messages from the Lord regarding some confusing situations in their lives, each responded in different ways. As we consider these encounters, we can focus on this truth: We may not be able to control our circumstances, but we can choose our response to them.

ZECHARIAH

An angel appeared to Zechariah to notify him that his wife would have a baby.

Put yourself in Zechariah’s shoes for a moment. At this time in biblical history, God’s people were coming out of 400 years of silence. During the intertestamental period (the time between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New), messages from God were rare. Angel appearances were the stuff of the Old Testament stories of Moses, Gideon or Daniel.

Zechariah’s initial response to the angel included fear. After the angel delivered God’s message about a child, Zechariah responded

with human logic. He questioned the angel based on age and perhaps biology. Before we judge Zechariah, I wonder if you can relate to him? I often leave God’s supernatural capabilities out of the equations in my own circumstances. This dialogue between Zechariah and Gabriel reminds us that anything is possible with God. He reigns over both heaven and earth.

MARY

Like Zechariah, Mary had questions regarding the angel’s notification. She initially wondered how she could possibly have a child but then progressed toward acceptance. One scholar pointed out that while Zechariah’s question (Luke 1:18) seemed innocent, it was asked in doubt. In contrast, Mary’s question, “How can this be?” (Luke 2:34) arose

from faith. Zechariah was also a seasoned priest in Yahweh’s service, while Mary was a young Jewish girl. While friends would be thrilled at Zechariah and Elizabeth’s conception, Mary would likely be rejected by her community. God’s call on her life demanded great sacrifices, but she was able to respond with

Continued on page 5

A New Beginning for Kansas Faith and Family

By Faith BroKar

We are thrilled to share an exciting new chapter in the life of our publication. This year, we had the privilege of purchasing *Southwest Kansas Faith and Family*, a newspaper rooted in uplifting stories, Christian values, and strong family-centered community journalism. It is an honor to continue that legacy—and to build upon it in meaningful, inspiring ways.

With this new beginning comes a renewed vision. To reflect our commitment to reaching and serving believers and families across the entire state, we have renamed the publication *Kansas Faith and Family*. This change represents more than a new title—it signals our

dedication to expanding our coverage, widening our community connections, and celebrating the many ways faith is lived out throughout Kansas.

From small-town congregations to growing ministries, from family features to testimonies of God’s goodness, we look forward to shining a light on the stories that strengthen hearts and bring people together. Our mission is to cultivate a newspaper that encourages, inspires, and connects Christians all across Kansas.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to you—our readers, supporters, churches, and communities—who have welcomed us so warmly as the

new stewards of this publication. Your excitement, prayers, and encouragement fuel our passion to grow *Kansas Faith and Family* into something even more impactful.

This is just the beginning. Together, we will build a newspaper filled with hope, truth, and stories that uplift the name of Jesus throughout our state. We invite you to journey with us as we expand, evolve, and continue celebrating the faith and families that make Kansas such a special place.

Thank you for your continued support—

and welcome to the exciting future of *Kansas Faith and Family*.



Misunderstood Scriptures: What Romans 8:26 Really Means

By Faith BroKar

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

— Romans 8:26 (KJV)

Among the most frequently quoted—and just as frequently misunderstood—verses in the New Testament is Romans 8:26. Many Christians reference this passage when speaking about prayer, suffering, or the Holy Spirit’s work in the believer’s life. But while the verse offers deep encouragement, it is often interpreted in ways that miss the richness of what Paul was truly saying.

Common Misunderstanding: “Groanings” as Vocal Prayer Sounds

A popular interpretation suggests that “groanings which cannot be uttered” refers to audible noises made during prayer—sighs, moans, or even heavenly prayer languages or “tongues”. While Paul does speak elsewhere about praying “in the Spirit,” Romans 8:26 is not describing a sound believers make, but rather the silent, interceding work of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Paul says these groanings cannot be uttered—meaning they are not vocalized by the person praying. They are the Spirit’s own intercessory communication with the Father, deep within the believer’s spiritual life, even when the believer has no words at all.

The Real Meaning: The Spirit Prays When We Can’t

Paul’s message is profoundly comforting:

There are moments when our weakness, confusion, grief, or exhaustion leaves us unsure of how to pray. Yet prayer continues—not because we find the right words, but because the Holy Spirit steps in.

The word translated helpeth carries the idea of someone coming alongside to lift a burden with you. In other words:

- When you don’t know what to ask for
- When you don’t understand God’s will
- When your heart is too overwhelmed to form a prayer

The Holy Spirit Himself prays on your behalf.

This is not a correction of our prayers but a completion of them. He takes our wordless longing, our con-

fusion, our tears, and translates them into perfect intercession aligned with the will of God.

The Context: Creation Groans, Believers Groan, and the Spirit Groans

Romans 8 is filled with the language of “groaning”:

1. Creation groans (v. 22)
2. Believers groan (v. 23)
3. The Spirit groans (v. 26)

This threefold groaning reflects the tension between the brokenness of the present world and the hope of future glory. Creation groans for redemption. Believers groan for resurrection and wholeness. And the Spirit groans as He intercedes for us in the gap between our weakness and God’s perfect will.

Far from being a negative image, this groaning is about divine compassion

and partnership. God not only hears our pain—He participates in it.

What This Means for Everyday Faith

Romans 8:26 teaches believers three life-changing truths:

1. You don’t need the “right words” for God to hear you.

Prayer is not measured by eloquence but by honesty and surrender.

2. God understands your heart better than you do.

Even when your thoughts are tangled or heavy, the Spirit interprets them perfectly.

3. You never pray alone. Your prayers are strength-

ened, completed, and carried by the Spirit into the will of God.

For Christians who struggle with prayer—especially in seasons of confusion, grief, or weakness—Romans 8:26 is one of the most comforting promises in Scripture.

A Verse of Reassurance

In a world full of noise, turmoil, and unanswered questions, Romans 8:26 offers a quiet but powerful assurance:

When you cannot speak, God still hears you.

Because the Spirit who dwells within you prays for you with perfect clarity, compassion, and power.



KANSAS FAITH AND FAMILY

PUBLISHED THE LAST THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH
WWW.KANSASFAITHANDFAMILY.ORG



221 E 6th Street

Faith BroKar, Owner and Publisher

Jason BroKar, Owner and Marketing Director

Kinsley, Kansas 67547

Cell 620-659-2434

Email: editor@kansasfaithandfamily.org

MISSION STATEMENT

Kansas Faith and Family is a monthly newspaper dedicated to sharing the Word of God and news and information that honors Christian beliefs and family traditions and values that are the cornerstone of our nation. The Publisher will not knowingly endorse nor condemn any individual denominational beliefs.

CONTENT

Press releases are welcome and encouraged from all local, regional and national Christian organizations as well as non-Christian organizations with founding beliefs in the value of the family. The Publisher reserves the right to edit or reject any submitted item that is questionable when viewed from the Christian/family perspective.

DISTRIBUTION

The publication will be distributed freely to any Christian Church in the trade area. The publication date is the last Thursday of the month (holidays may require exceptions). Free copies are also available various outlets with public access. Paid annual subscriptions by mail are available for \$25 for 12 months.

ENDORSEMENT/ADVERTISING

Kansas Faith and Family receives no financial support from any individual or denominational sources. The only income comes from paid subscribers and advertising. The Publisher reserves the right to refuse or edit any advertising that is questionable when viewed from the Christian/family perspective.

A Word
From
The
Publisher



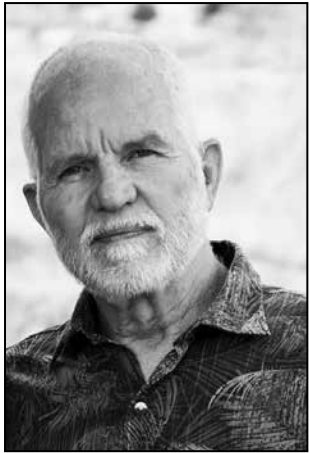
Thank you for welcoming us as the new owners of *Southwest Kansas Faith and Family*. We are honored to step into this role and excited to continue the publication’s tradition of uplifting stories rooted in faith and community. With this transition, we’ve also embraced a new name—*Kansas Faith and Family*—reflecting our commitment to serving readers across the entire state.

This new season brings fresh opportunities, expanded coverage, and a renewed mission to highlight the people, ministries, and testimonies that inspire us all. We cannot thank you enough for your support, prayers, and encouragement as we begin this journey. We look forward to growing with you and bringing meaningful, faith-filled content to Kansas for years to come.

Faith BroKar

KANSAS FAITH AND FAMILY

Catch The Foxes That Spoil the Vineyard



By Carl D. Everhart

“Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that spoil and ruin the vineyards [of love] ...” (Song of Solomon 2:15 AMP). The “little foxes” are not just strangers who intentionally interfere with marriages, often they include family and friends who mean well. When anyone bombards a newlywed couple with unsolicited advice, it may not always be wise council. Keeping that thought in mind, the focus here’s not just about the notorious in-laws, because the foxes can even include the others’ new spouse.

The foxes are not always people, sometimes they come as strongholds from inside the marriage. This may include negative influences like pornography, gambling, alcohol, drugs, imbalanced work priorities, fruitless busyness, and even excessive sports. The distraction of excessive sports may exist with either watching or playing any of the many sports options. Football, golf, and tennis, are some of the most common culprits. Don’t misunderstand, if the entire family participates in any sports event, on any level, then it may not be a problem ... not unless it interferes with the family growing closer to the Lord.

The foxes do not always arrive with the hounds bark-

ing; usually they sneak up quietly, sometimes totally undetected. The most common example of this fox answers the question: “Where is the grass greener?” All too frequently, the couple learns too late that the grass will always be greener where it’s watered and cared for. They must learn the importance of never watering the weeds and applying effective weedkiller. This kind of weedkiller costs nothing and is safe to use. It can be applied with a premeditated pledge, by both spouses, to keep the grass greener in their own yard by watering it nowhere else. Among other things ... that means a pledge to conduct absolutely no flirting outside of the marriage, not at the office, or down the street - not even once. Satan thrives on temptation. If you think the grass in your yard is shriveling up, it’s probably because someone stopped caring for it. Both pornography and outside flirting are playing with fire, and it’s extremely difficult to extinguish. Staying away from flirting and pornography are great weedkillers.

Marital interference may be significantly reduced when a new husband functions as a loving buffer between his new wife and his family. The same is true when the new wife serves as a loving buffer between her new husband and her family. That does NOT

mean the newlyweds should withhold information from their spouse, it means each spouse must be intentional in not letting the foxes (regardless of where they come from) ruin their marriage.

The concept of watering and feeding the marriage can also be applied to all other relationship, especially with Jesus. Every single action you take, inside or outside of your relationships, will either strengthen or weaken them; you must choose carefully! Many marriages fail because temptation routinely arrives at the office water fountain, or down the street, and you can’t make up your mind as to what to do with it.

When foxes come in the form of abuse, be it physical, emotional, financial, unhealthy controlling behavior, isolation, or even spiritual, this creates serious concerns, and professional Christian counseling must be considered.

What’s the solution for meddling foxes? First, pray for all elements involved. Second, God’s children were NOT given a spirit of timidity (see 2 Timothy 1:7). If even one spouse is not courageous enough and mature enough to stand up to the foxes, maybe they shouldn’t get married until they are. While the genesis of this problem may be generational, when a child’s not “trained up” in the way

they should go, there are consequences (see Proverbs 22:6). As adults, we are free to make our choices. We are not, however, free from the consequences of our choices.

Within any new marriage, because the husband is the Spiritual leader of the family (see Ephesians 5:22-33), the root of this problem falls directly on his shoulders. He must learn the Word of God in order to lead his family in the Will of God. When newlyweds go forth to seek their combined identity, sometimes they create that identity not knowing that it is where they look that determines the quality and nature of what they create. When they seek God’s Truth together, they’ll usually keep the foxes away.

Dear Heavenly Father, may these words find the heart of a true believer so that they may encourage others; the heart of a make-believer so that they may wake up; and the heart of a never-believer so that they may come to know Your Truth. Amen.

To read more from this Prodigal son, lay pastor, apologist, and sinner (saved by grace), search: everhartandsoul.com (then select “Blog”).



FAITH AND FAMILY

IS MADE POSSIBLE
BY THE ADVERTISERS
AND DISTRIBUTORS

PLEASE SUPPORT THEM
AND LET THEM KNOW THAT
YOU APPRECIATE THEIR
SUPPORT

Add Elegance to Your Table
When You Entertain This
Christmas!

FLOWERS
by Irene

Open 8-5 Mon.-Fri 9-Noon Sat.
620-227-2451 509 N. 2nd, Ste. 4
(Old Eckles Dept. Store) Dodge City
www.dodgecityflorist.com

JOHN'S
BODY SHOP INC.

- TOWING SERVICE -
DAMAGE FREE WHEEL LIFT

KCC AUTHORITIES
FOR 24-HR SERVICE:
620-225-5731

110 W. BEESON DODGE CITY

VISA MasterCard

NMCC

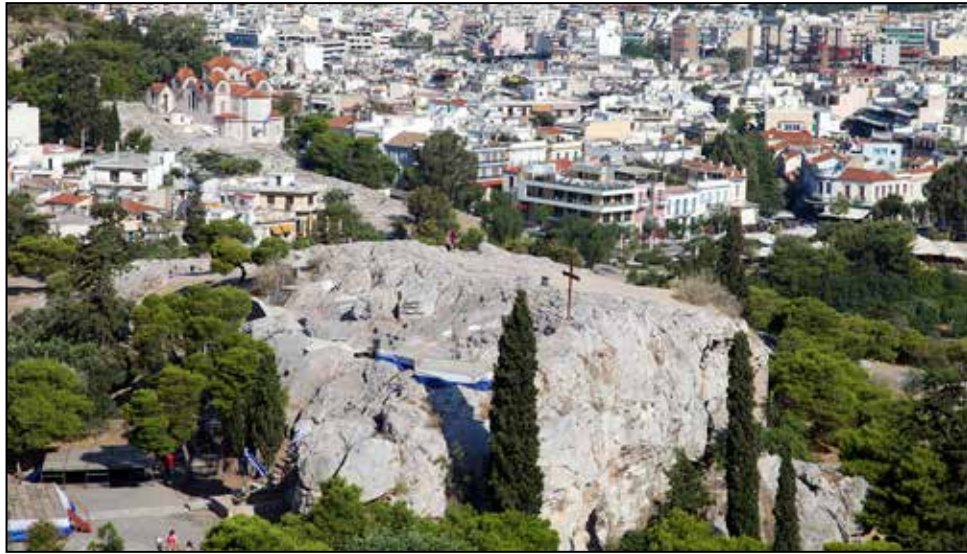
PARKER · HASKINS
Insurance Incorporated

Central & Comanche
Dodge City, KS 67801

620-225-2888 800 779-0753
www.parkerhaskins.com

Trusted Choice
We serve you first.

4 lessons from Paul's Athens encounter



Mars Hill is still a prominent site in Athens.

By W. Darrell Curtis

In a time when even small talk can spark tension, sharing our faith feels risky. One wrong word and the conversation shuts down. Yet the Bible calls us to be witnesses in every season (Acts 1:8). My own walk with Jesus pushes me to find better ways to talk with people who see things differently. How can we speak truth with kindness instead of frustration? Paul's visit to Athens in Acts 17 shows us how.

Athens was full of ideas. Poets spoke on street corners. Philosophers argued in public. Idols stood everywhere. Luke says Paul was deeply troubled by what he saw (Acts 17:16).

When thinkers invited him to speak at the Areopagus on Mars Hill, he could have attacked their beliefs. Instead, he started with respect.

"Men of Athens," he said, "I see you are very religious in every way" (Acts 17:22). He had walked their streets. He had listened. He even quoted their own poets: "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Then he pointed to an altar marked "To an Unknown God" and said, "What you worship without knowing, I now proclaim to you. This is the God who made the world. He gives life to all. He does not live in temples made by hands" (Acts 17:23-24).

Paul spoke of sin, judgment and the risen Jesus (Acts 17:30-31). Some laughed. Others wanted to hear more. A few believed, including a man named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris (Acts 17:32-34). Paul did not force or shame. He met curiosity with truth. In our divided world, this shows Southern Baptists that sharing faith works best through relationship, not argument.

Paul's example gives us four simple steps. They are rooted in humility and the Holy Spirit.

1. Observe their world before speaking yours

Paul listened first. James tells us, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak" (James 1:19). Too often

we rush to give answers and miss the real need.

In my neighborhood, a dad put up a basketball goal for his girls. He left it open for any child to use. One day I stopped to shoot hoops with him. Small talk turned into real talk. He shared the weight of raising kids alone. That moment opened the door for later faith conversations. Paying attention builds trust. It shows we see people as made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), not as projects.

2. Seek common ground in shared humanity

Paul used words from their poets to point to truth. We can do the same with everyday life. Talk about family, work or hard times. These are not compromises. They are signs of God's kindness to all (Matthew 5:45).

At the store or a community event, a comment about the weather or a book can uncover a shared hope. Common

ground reminds us everyone needs grace (Romans 3:23). It is not about acting like them. It is about seeing Jesus in every neighbor.

3. Acknowledge barriers with empathy

Many pull back from faith talk. They have been hurt by harsh words or fake religion. Paul did not mock the Athenians. He gently called their worship "ignorance" and urged them to turn to God (Acts 17:30). We do the same. Conviction is the Spirit's job (John 16:8).

I know the fear. I worry my words will sound preachy. But even clumsy efforts can plant seeds.

4. Proclaim gently, trust boldly

Paul spoke plainly about the resurrection. Some mocked him. He did not back down (Acts 17:32). Proverbs says, "A gentle answer turns away an-

ger" (Proverbs 15:1). Sincerity matters more than clever words.

When friends grieve a broken world, I say, "That is why Jesus means so much to me. He is my anchor." That is not pressure. It is invitation. Some friends have walked away from faith because of hypocrisy or pain. That hurts. But I remember the Jesus I know may not be the one they met. Rejection often comes from wounds, not rebellion. Sharing costs little. Eternity is worth it.

Talking across divides takes courage. But it follows Jesus' example. He stepped into our world to bring us to Him. Like Paul on Mars Hill, we stand in coffee shops, workplaces and online spaces as His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). May we listen well, connect honestly and speak boldly. God will bring the harvest.

(For the full account, see Acts 17:16-34.)



The holidays are about spending time with your loved ones and having meaningful conversations with them. That's why we're excited to offer you great discounts on Miracle-Ear® hearing aids during our **Year-End Sales Event!**



Miracle-Ear®

Call us today to schedule your FREE Hearing Test!

Garden City	Dodge City	Liberal
620-271-0013	620-225-0522	620-604-9377

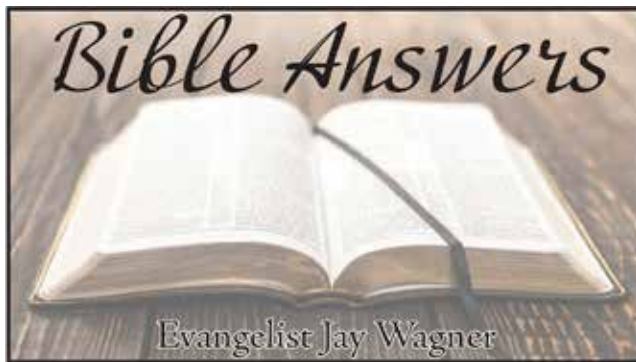
ONE STOP to handle your insurance...
auto, home, life, farm, business

Troy McCain
106 W. Frontview
Ste. 6
Dodge City, Ks. 67801
620-371-6646
TMcCain@
shelterinsurance.com

KEEP IT SIMPLE

SHELTER INSURANCE

We're your Shield. We're your Shelter.
ShelterInsurance.com



Q: In Matthew 26:50, Jesus calls Judas "friend" while Judas is betraying Him. Why did He do that?

A: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15). As one of the twelve, Judas was included in this statement. He was privy to all that Jesus had heard from the Father and disclosed to the disciples.

Since Jesus had already made this statement, as the unchanging God He would not have suddenly changed from it even though Judas had, in his God given free will, chosen to betray Him.

We also need to remember that God, in His perfect foreknowledge, knew long before Judas was born and even before Adam was created that Judas would betray Christ, but this also served God's purpose. For God to be able to provide humanity with the opportunity to be reconciled to Him it was essential for Jesus to go to the cross. Hebrews 9:22 reminds us, "... without the shedding of blood is no remission." While we often think of the twelve disciples as being Jesus' only followers, remember the times He fed thousands of people who had come to hear Him speak or to seek Him out for some miracle. Jesus was very popular, and no matter how badly the Sanhedrin and even the Romans might have wanted to see Him dead, they knew that they would need accusers who weren't part of their inner circles. When they got one who was a member of Jesus' inner circle it was worth good money to them. At that time, thirty pieces of silver would have been about 120 days wages for a skilled laborer. Based on the average wage today, Judas was paid about \$14,500 in today's money, so the Sanhedrin obviously wanted Jesus very, very badly.

Early in my walk with Christ I wondered how Judas could end up in Hell when his betrayal of Jesus was part of God's plan. I brought that question to my pastor and mentor (who, incidentally, is 96 years old and still preaching the gospel), and he pointed out, as I tried to in the last paragraph, that the betrayal was Judas' choice, not God's will, but it was an event that God could use to carry out His plan. This shows that God can (and does) use our poor choices to bring about His ends whenever they fit in. We know from the Bible that Judas returned the money to the Sanhedrin (they used it to buy land for a cemetery) and then committed suicide. This may be the saddest part of the entire story, because the same blood that Judas helped to shed by his betrayal could have also covered his sins, even the betrayal itself, and reconciled him to the Lord. I sometimes imagine the power of the testimony of a man who betrayed Jesus, leading to His death, and was then completely forgiven and restored by the risen Savior.

I welcome reader questions. E-mail your question to answer67547@gmail.com.

Angels

Continued from page 1

acceptance of His will over what seemed right to her. Consider for a moment what events in your life feel confusing during this holiday season and what you might gain or lose by accepting the difficult circumstances you are facing.

I might free up some mental space and get more sleep while losing the mental hamster wheel of worry in my life! An angel reminded Zechariah and Mary of God's grandeur. We may or may not encounter one of His heavenly messengers, but we can trust the message of His Word and respond to

our circumstances with His grace!

JOSEPH

An angel assured Joseph that Mary's child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and notified him to name the child Jesus. Perhaps because the angel came in a dream, Joseph didn't have an opportunity to ask questions. His response was simple—He did what the Lord asked of him. He was an imperfect man who reminds us to accept God's Words and act on them.

God acted decisively through sending His Son for our salvation. The appearance of angels seems fitting for this time in history when the Lord sent the promised Messiah. We all

must respond to God's offer of redemption through Christ in our own lives—either we will accept His gift or choose to chart our own course in life.

SHEPHERDS

The radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded the shepherds. These were likely the shepherds who supplied lambs for the Temple sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. As one scholar puts it, "Among the occupations, shepherding had a lowly place. Shepherds were considered untrustworthy and their work made them ceremonially unclean. Thus, the most obvious implication is that the gospel first came to the social outcasts of Jesus' day." These men lived in fields and didn't smell good, yet God surrounded them with His good news and His glory.

The first response of the shepherds at the sight of an angel was fear. Throughout Scripture we find this posture is a common response to the appearance of heav-

enly beings. Once reassured, the angels received the message of a Savior's birth and of God's glory and peace to men. The shepherds visited the child and then told people what they experienced. Good news just begs to be shared! We tell people when we find a good deal on a purchase, get a good job or hear about people in our community doing good things. In our bad news world, it is always refreshing to hear good news. And there is no better news than God sending His Son to us to secure the forgiveness of our sins.

This Christmas, when we encounter angelic representations—whether in a play at church, on a card or decoration, or even at the top of our tree—we can remember how God went above and beyond to announce His plan of salvation. In the rush of this holiday season, let's slow down and consider God's gift of Jesus in our lives and then share the good news with the people God sets in our path.

Someone has said that if Christians really understood the full extent of the power we have available through prayer, we might be speechless. Did you know that during WWII there was an adviser to Churchill who organized a group of people who dropped what they were doing every day at a prescribed hour for one minute to collectively pray for the safety of England, it's people and peace. There is now a group of people organizing the same thing here in America. If you would like to participate Stop what you are doing every evening at 9:00pm Eastern 8:00pm Central 7:00pm Mountain 6:00PM Pacific. An spend one minute praying for the safety of the United States, our troops, our citizens, and for a return to a Godly nation. (One nation under God) Our prayers are the most powerful asset we have. Please pass this on to your praying friends.

ATTEND THE CHURCH
OF YOUR CHOICE
A MESSAGE BROUGHT TO YOU BY
SOUTHWEST KANSAS
FAITH AND FAMILY

OXYGEN / RESPIRATORY SERVICES / MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
24 HOUR SERVICE / 7 DAYS A WEEK



John Martin, Owner

213 N. Main, Ulysses, Ks. 67880
620-356-1373 620-356-1474 (F)

201 W. Kansas
Garden City, Ks. 67846
620-272-2660
620-272-2659

PHONE
FAX

2130 N. Kansas Ave
Liberal Ks. 67901
620-626-7779
620-626-7728



Pate Agency LP

The Crop Insurance Specialists



Mike Horton,
Agent
Johnson, Ks
620-492-2665

"Quality Creates It's Own Demand"

Persecution refines believer's faith in Southeast Asia

By Stella McMillian

Rose waited anxiously through the night, checking for a text message from Sari, a new believer she had been discipling. The two met when Sari came to attend college on the island where Rose, an International Mission Board worker in Southeast Asia, lives.

Sari's family was not pleased when they heard she had been baptized. It went against their animistic beliefs, and according to the village witch doctor, it brought bad luck to Sari's family.

When Sari returned home to her village to help with an urgent family need, she knew she would be facing persecution. Rose was eager to hear how Sari's family had received her.

When Sari finally texted, Rose's concern only grew. Sari's family wanted to invite witch doctors to the house to help cleanse the bad luck from their family. The witch doctors wanted to complete a ritual that included restraining Sari and throwing rocks at her.

All Rose could do was pray for Sari and mobilize others to do the same. Since it was the middle of the night in Asia, Rose texted church partners in America. Many began to pray for Sari to endure.

Amid her family's anger and violence, Sari continued to share the Gospel with them.

"It's enough for me that they hear the truth about my God," she messaged Rose.

Though the ritual was supposed to last three days, the witch doctors' ceremony was interrupted on the second day by a group of Christians. The believers had no idea what was happening, but they felt led to come to the family's house and share the gospel with them.

Not only did God deliver Sari, but He also provided an-



Rose and Sari met when Sari moved to Rose's town on the coast to attend college.

other way for her family to hear the Gospel and understand His love for them.



A small group of believers in Rose and Sari's town gathers for worship together.

"We firmly believe that was only because of the prayers of God's people, and the church

crying out to the Lord [for Sari]," Rose said.

Sari's faith in God grew through this experience, and since then she has continued to grow in Christ. Recently, she began helping Rose lead Bible study groups and disciple others.

"We are family. The church is our family," Rose said. "We will weep with those who weep; we will rejoice together; we will sit with them in the hard places, and the day they stand is the day we will too."

Sari's experience is not unique. Many believers in Southeast Asia, and around the world, face persecution and rejection from their families and

KC churches join debate over faith and AI

By Russell Contreras, Isaac Avilucea, Abbey Higginbotham

Churches, including some in KC, are turning to artificial intelligence to reach worshippers and rethink faith in the digital age.

Why it matters: AI is helping some churches stay relevant in the face of shrinking staff, empty pews and growing online audiences. But the practice raises new questions about who, or what, is guiding the flock.

New AI-powered apps allow you to "text with Jesus" or "talk to the Bible," giving the impression you are communicating with a deity or angel.

Zoom in: Two local congregations, Christ Community Church and Fountain City Church, are engaging AI through educational events instead of implementation.

- Christ Community hosted "Navigating AI Through the Lens of Faith," where theologian and technologist John Dyer spoke about the ethical and cultural impacts of AI alongside Kansas City tech leaders.

- Fountain City's recent event "Discipleship in the Age of AI" invited residents to discuss what it means to follow Jesus in a world where technology is "here to stay."

Zoom out: In recent months, churches have been deploying chatbots to answer frequently asked questions such as service times and event details, and even to share scripture.

- EpiscoBot, a chatbot developed by the TryTank Research Institute for the Episcopal Church, responds to spiritual or faith-related queries, drawing on church resources.

communities when they put their faith in Christ. Pray they will endure and grow in their faith in Christ. Pray that their persecutors will become their family in Christ.

Names changed.

Have you hugged
your spouse
today?



Montezuma Lumber & Hardware



Modern Solutions - Old Fashioned Service

Building Material
Hardware
Appliances
Water Conditioners
Heating & A/C
Lawn & Garden

Eugene Koehn, Owner
206 N. Aztec, P.O. Box 218
Montezuma, KS 67867
Phone 620-846-2275
Fax 620-846-2595
montehardware@yahoo.com

GENERAL PEST CONTROL

We take care of what bugs you

RELIABLE PEST & TERMITE CONTROL

• Cimarron • Coldwater • Dodge City • Garden City
• Greensburg • Kinsley • Liberal • Meade • Sublette • Ulysses

(620) 275-9411 Toll Free

6 things pastors can learn from Lane Kiffin

By Jonathan Howe

Typically the posts on this site are evergreen in nature and rarely reference current events. But after watching the unfolding saga of Lane Kiffin moving to LSU this past weekend, I read a post that addressed a lot of the generic motivations and ideas around coaches taking new jobs mid-season and knew there was a parallel to the Church and pastors moving from church to church.

Here are six things to consider on how to transition well from one church to another.

1. BEING APPROACHED ISN'T SOMETHING TO HIDE.

When a pastor or ministry leader serves faithfully, people notice. Other churches may see that fruit and reach out. That's not a reason for pride, but it is a reminder that fruitful ministry draws attention. In a season like that, a church shouldn't shame a staff member, nor should the staff member feel awkward acknowledging that others see God at work in their life. As Paul wrote, "Each person should examine his own work" (Galatians 6:4, CSB).

2. CLARIFYING YOUR CALLING IS RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP.

Sometimes the Lord gives long-term peace in your current role. Other times, He stirs your heart toward a new assignment. Only you can prayerfully evaluate whether the opportunities in front of you fit how God has wired you. Staff members shouldn't feel guilty for discerning the Lord's leading, and churches shouldn't begrudge that process.

3. QUIET DISCERNMENT IS NOT DISHONESTY.

There are moments when

a pastor or staff member may explore another role privately so they can discern the Lord's will without creating unnecessary anxiety in the congregation. Churches do something similar when they begin thinking toward future staffing needs—they don't announce those questions on day one. Ministry is relational, but there are appropriate times for measured privacy.

4. TRANSPARENT CONVERSATIONS CAN STILL HONOR CHRIST.

In other situations, wisdom calls for open dialogue. If a staff member has deep trust with their church leadership, sharing that another ministry has reached out can build unity instead of suspicion. It gives leaders the chance to pray, speak into the discernment process, and avoid surprises. If a staff member chooses this path, they should be upfront about what they're considering and humble about the outcome.

5. WHEN THE LORD MOVES YOU ON, MOVE WITH CLARITY.

If a pastor or staff member becomes convinced that God is calling them elsewhere, the most loving thing they can do is communicate that decision cleanly and quickly. Don't linger, don't dramatize the moment, and don't try to renegotiate your influence on the way out. A healthy exit communicates gratitude, finishes well, and leaves room for the church to begin its next chapter.

6. LEAVE WITHOUT CREATING UNNECESSARY WAVES.

A staff member stepping into a new assignment shouldn't attempt to keep leadership control, delay their departure, or recruit people to follow them out the door. That behavior damages trust

and harms the witness of the church. Instead, they should remember that their final official act is simply expressing their resignation and then trusting the church's leadership to guide the transition. In almost every instance of leaving badly, it was the person's desire to control the process as they left that caused the issues. Once you decide you're leaving, you need to realize you no longer have the authority to influence the process. Leave and leave well.

At the end of the day, churches and ministry leaders navigate these transitions best when they keep their eyes on Christ and their hands open. Staff changes can feel unsettling, but they're also moments to trust the Lord's wisdom, reaffirm the mission, and show grace to one another. Whether someone stays or goes, the goal is the same: honor Jesus, love His people, and move forward with integrity as you seek to make disciples of all nations.

Saint Nicholas and the Origins of Santa Claus

By Stephen Nichols

It might surprise many today to find out that Saint Nicholas (spoiler alert) is a real person after all. Is he the white-bearded man with a red suit, a cap, and a sleigh?

Not quite, but he probably was bearded, did wear a hat, and did travel in horse-drawn, not reindeer-drawn, transportation. The legend behind Santa Claus is Saint Nicholas, the fourth-century bishop of Myra. His hat was the bishop's mitre.

Nicholas was born in modern day Turkey to a rather wealthy family. Losing his parents at a young age, Nicholas dedicated both his fortune and his life to the Christian church. Very quickly he was appointed the bishop of Myra, on the southern coast of modern day Turkey.

These were days of persecution for Christians. Roman Emperor Diocletian, who reigned from 284-305, hated Christians and stuffed Roman jails full of them. Bishop Nicholas spent the first few years of the fourth

century in jail and faced routine beatings. In the next decade, Constantine legalized Christianity and Nicholas was set free.

As the legend goes, Bishop Nicholas was present at the Church's First Ecumenical Council at Constantine's summer palace in Nicea in 325. Hundreds of Bishops gathered there to refute the false views of Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria. Arius denied Christ's deity. At one point while Arius was addressing the council, Nicholas's rage got the better of him. According to some of his biographers, Nicholas stood up, crossed the floor to Arius, and promptly punched him in the face.

For the assault, Nicholas found himself back in jail again. The bishops deliberated his fate. Nicholas was repentant and sought forgiveness. After the Council, Constantine granted clemency and restored Bishop Nicholas to his post.

And at his post Bishop Nicholas diligently served. Over the course of his entire life he

was known for being extremely generous. He was especially generous to children, regularly giving them gifts. Myra was a busy port city with ships and sailors coming and going. The ships went out of Myra's port loaded with gifts and goods for the needy, all provided and packed on by Bishop Nicholas. His gifts went all around the Mediterranean world. As sailors went around the world, they took with them the stories of the generosity of Bishop Nicholas.

Interestingly enough, Saint Nicholas and his legend began in the early church.

The year of Bishop Nicholas's death is uncertain, but the month is firmly believed to be December. As the story of his generosity spread, the stories of his life grew and grew. He was becoming legendary. In the sixth century, a church was dedicated to him and named for him in Constantinople. His image was depicted more in the Middle Ages than any

Continued on page 11

"Welcome to the Neighborhood"

Located in the Cedar Ridge Subdivision of Cimarron, The Shepherd's Center offers the same loving and attentive care which we have provided for more than 20 years.



- 2 Neighborhoods
- Private rooms with or without private showers
- Individualized dining options
- Secure patio areas with walking paths
- Homelike resident centered care
- Inviting living, dining & kitchen areas





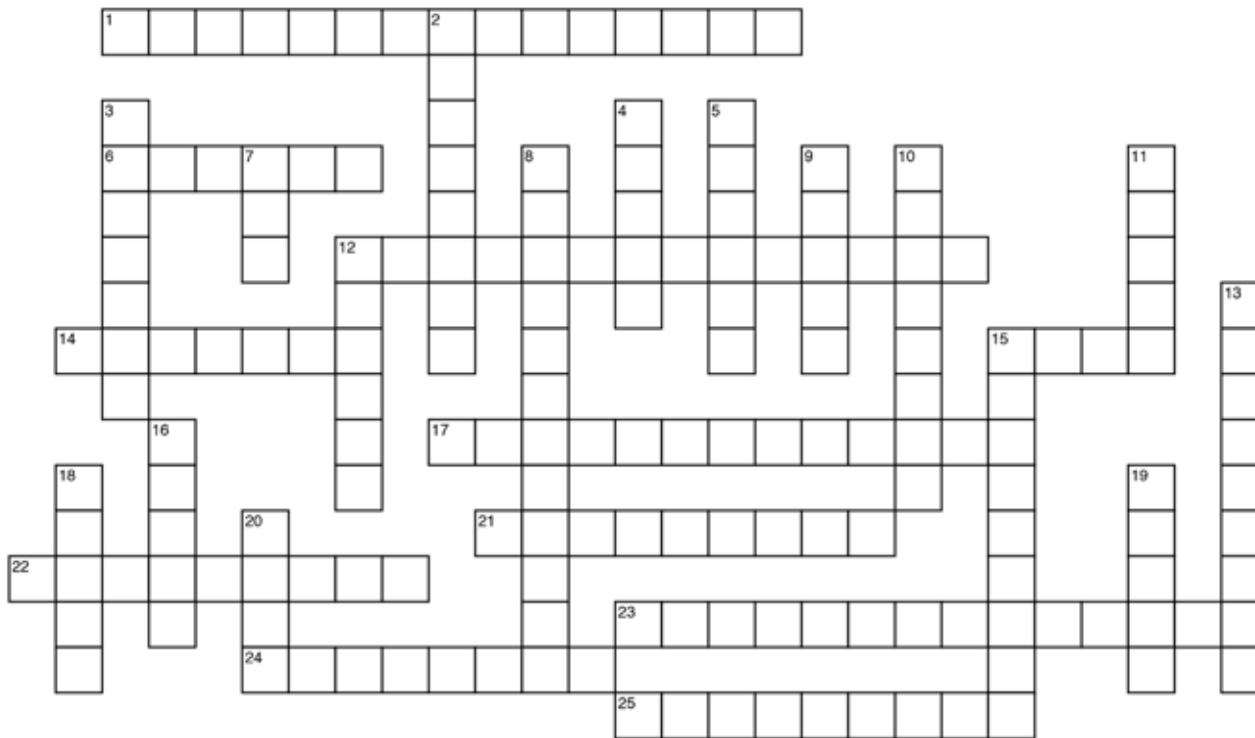


For Residential Information and Availability, Please Contact
The Shepherd's Center Nursing Home
 Phone 620-855-3498
 101 Cedar Ridge Cimarron, KS 67835

A Little Bit of Laughter and Fun

Proverbs 17:22 – “Laughter is like taking a good medicine.”

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST



<https://questionsgod.com/puzzles.htm>

ACROSS

- 1 Jesus was wrapped in them (2 wds)
- 6 The Old Testament prophet who foretold that a virgin shall be with child
- 12 He decreed that all the world should be registered (2 wds)
- 14 They came from the east (2 wds)
- 15 One of three gifts from the wise men
- 17 What the angel told Joseph (4 wds)
- 21 Where Jesus was born
- 22 The relationship of Mary and Joseph initially
- 23 Shone around the shepherds (4 wds)
- 24 What the wise men did when they saw the star
- 25 Governor of Syria at the time of the census

DOWN

- 2 Joseph and Mary traveled from here
- 3 Herod's intention toward the baby Jesus (2 wds)
- 4 The Old Testament prophet who foretold Jesus would be born in Bethlehem
- 5 Where Jesus was laid
- 7 Wasn't any room there
- 8 One of three gifts from the wise men
- 9 "And you shall call His name _____"
- 10 What Joseph was, as told in Matt. 1:19 (3 wds)
- 11 Joseph was of this house and lineage
- 12 The reason Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem
- 13 They were in the fields tending their flock
- 15 The meaning of the name "Immanuel" (3 wds)
- 16 One of three gifts from the wise men
- 18 How the wise men were warned not to return to Herod
- 19 He was king at the time of Jesus' birth
- 20 The wise men saw it in the east

**Answers in
next month's
issue**

Mikey's Funnies

John was furious when his steak arrived too rare.

"Waiter," he shouted, "Didn't you hear me say 'well done'?"

"I can't thank you enough, sir," replied the waiter. "I hardly ever get a compliment."

I should stop telling Thanksgiving jokes when the holiday is over, but ... I can't just quit cold turkey.

I applied for a job as a mirror hanger. It was something I could see myself doing.



Unpacking “New Year, New Me”

By Jen Oshman

Resolutions Gone Wrong

I like to make New Year’s resolutions as much as anyone. I declare with many Americans every January, “New year, new me.” My resolutions, like most, surround my physical and spiritual health, as well as investing more time in things that matter (like family) and avoiding spending time on things that don’t (like my iPhone screen).

Studies show that almost 40% of American adults make New Year’s resolutions. I We’re all captivated by the flip of the calendar and a fresh start. New beginnings pull like gravity.

Exercising more is the top New Year’s resolution for Americans, with 48% of resolution makers setting that as their primary goal. The next top five resolutions are eating healthier, losing weight, saving more money, pursuing a career ambition, and spending less time on social media.

While our collective declaration of “New year, new me” is powerful on January 1, it loses strength and steam quickly. The second Friday in January is known as Quitters Day because so many of us give up by then. Only 9% of us successfully carry our goals to completion.

What’s True behind “New Year, New Me”

The desire to remake ourselves is universal because, being made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), his truth resonates with us. It’s innate within us. And especially here in the US, where our culture and values have been historically shaped by Christian influences, we have a collective worldview that borrows biblical truth. Here are three examples of Biblical truth hidden inside “New year, new me.”

We understand our lives are limited. Americans declare, “YOLO!” You only live once. We know and feel the brevity of life. Whether we acknowledge it or not, that’s a biblical

truth. James puts it this way, “What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (James 4:14). Our God has impressed on each of us that this life is short, and we each only have one.

We want to spend our lives well. Living in the reality that our lives are brief, we want to make them count. While many Americans fall short of wanting to make their lives count for the sake of Jesus, most sense that they’re meant to make an impact, to help others, or to somehow leave a mark on this world. The psalmist says, “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). Whether for God’s glory or our own, we want to spend our lives well.

We understand we have a purpose. We ask even very young children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” As adults we ask one another, “What do you do?” There’s a universal awareness between us that we have a purpose, that we’re all meant to be busy about something that matters. While the non-believer may not acknowledge it, we Christians know “we are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

These truths are universal because they are from the very heart of the Creator who made us. But when we separate these truths from the foundation of our Maker, who also desires to be our Savior, it leads to destruction. Untethered from God in heaven, the drive behind “New year, new me” leads to the idolatry of self.

“New Year, New Me” in the Age of Self

In the 21st Century we claim we are self-made and self-sufficient. Everything from online college degrees to bathroom renovations is DIY—do it yourself. For most of us,

when we say, “New year, new me,” we mean that we will pursue self-improvement via self-help and self-control. Pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps is as American as apple pie. But when our New Year’s resolutions are rooted only in ourselves, we discover some tough truths about our human condition. Here are just three, which reveal the flimsiness of depending on ourselves rather than on the God who made us.

We find we are finite. Humans are limited creatures. We don’t have endless motivation, energy, and will. Everyone who has ever made a resolution has hit a limit. In our own strength, we simply cannot go on forever. It takes more than sheer force of will to make a real change.

To pursue the good life outside of Christ is futile.

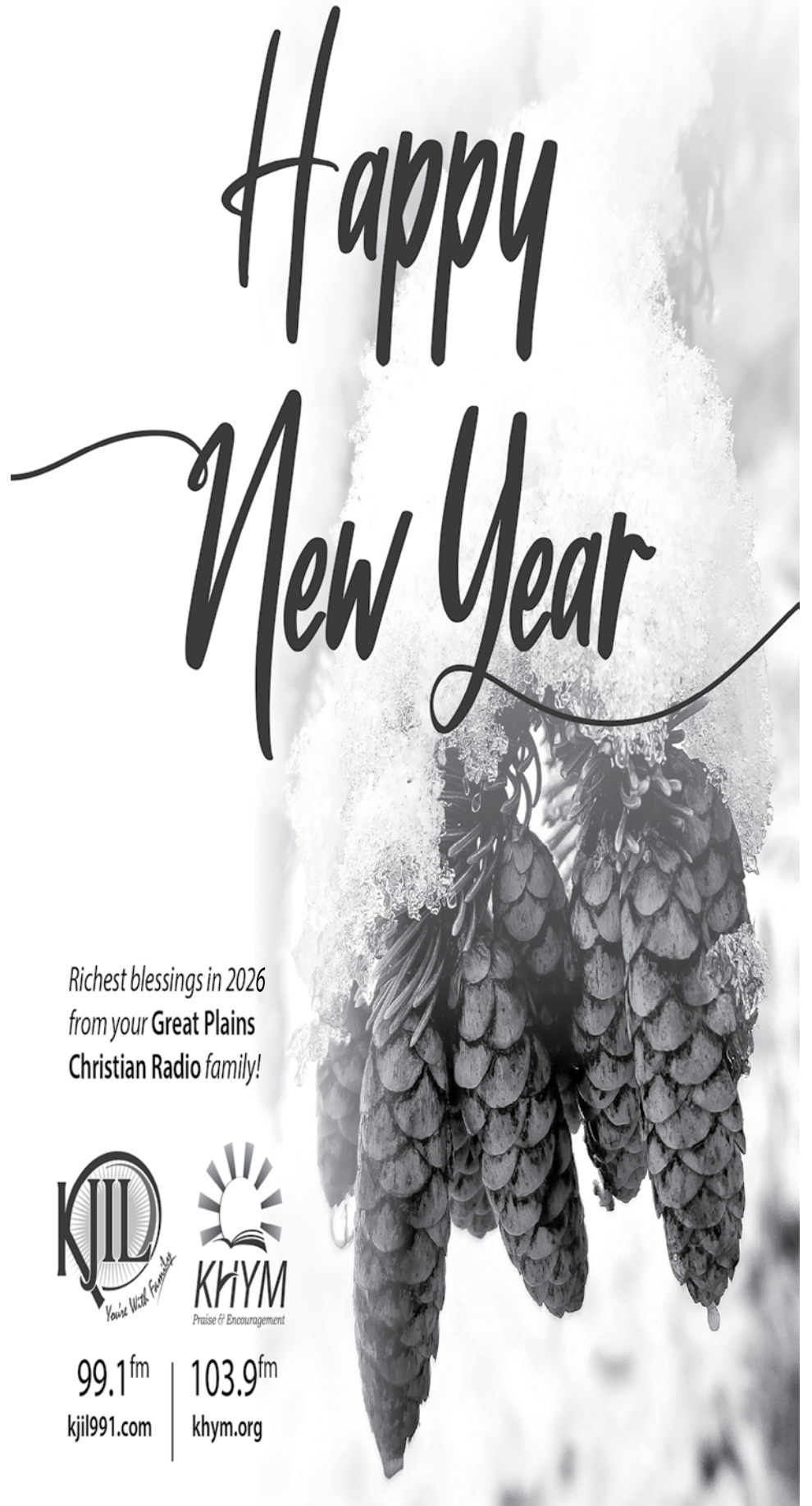
We find we need infinite affirmation. When we determine our own identity, our own goals, our own purpose—when our values are self-made and not rooted in something outside of ourselves—we must hold ourselves up and convince ourselves that we are enough. When we insist on being self-made, the source and supply of our motivation must also be self-made. We depend on endless affirmation to know we are doing it right.

We ultimately defeat ourselves. The self-help cycle of self-empowerment fueled by self-praise ultimately proves self-defeating. The primary reason people give for failing in their New Year’s resolutions is losing motivation. To be self-dependent is just too much. We are finite and fallen and fragile. While it may feel like we have what it takes on January 1st, we all know from personal experience that our own determination runs out. Self-help ultimately leads to self-defeat.

Being Made Truly New

Desiring to become a new

Continued on page 19



Possible transgenderism decline presents opportunity for ministry

By David Roach

Abel Garcia thought he finally would be happy after gender transition surgery. But the first three months of trying to live as a woman left him empty. That's when he drew a startling conclusion: he wanted to live as a man again.

"It all came crashing down like an avalanche one day," Garcia said, "and I had to ask myself, 'What am I doing?'" That launched him into a battle to fix his broken life.

"I'm just working on trying to live my life," he said in an episode of *The World and Everything in It* podcast, "and to do the best that I can to live as a man."

Garcia is not alone, according to a study by British researcher Erik Kaufmann. He concluded the percentage of American young adults identifying as transgender has decreased by nearly 50 percent since 2023.

"Trans, queer and bisexual identities are in rapid decline among young educated Americans," Kaufmann wrote.

Christian analysts have responded with cautious optimism. Some question Kaufmann's research methodology. Yet if the number of young Americans identifying as transgender is trending downward, evangelical experts on

transgenderism say it is time to ramp up ministry to those with gender confusion.

Kaufmann, professor of politics at the University of Buckingham, drew data from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's annual survey of some 60,000 undergraduate students and from a Higher Education Research Institute survey. He wrote that "the transgender share among university students peaked in 2023 and has almost halved since, from nearly 7 percent to under 4 percent."

Today's college freshmen are less likely to identify as bisexual, transgender or queer than seniors, he stated, "suggesting that the decline will continue."

The research leaves Albert Mohler hopeful. "It is a return to moral sanity?" the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president asked on his podcast *The Briefing*. "Well, that's an interesting question to ask. And I think we have hope that it is something like that, at least in part."

But some evangelical researchers are hesitant about Kaufmann's conclusions. Among them is Mark Yarhouse, director of the Wheaton College's Sexual and Gender Identity Institute.

"I'm not prepared to draw strong conclusions from this

one study," Yarhouse said. "As others have noted, there appear to be issues with unweighted survey data which, in this case, could affect whether the sample accurately represents the population. Some have reported more of a plateau or leveling off rather than a sharp drop. I think future research will help us understand what may very well be some changes in young adults' identifying as transgender."

Cultural shift

Gregg Allison, a senior fellow with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) Research Institute, said Kaufmann's research has not been peer reviewed, and it focuses narrowly on college students without asking about adolescents as well. Still, he noted evidence of a "cultural shift" on transgenderism.

There seems to be "a cultural reality of less approbation of transgenderism, certainly less approbation of men playing women's sports," said Allison, professor of theology at Southern Seminary. He noted executive orders related to transgenderism by President Donald Trump, the advocacy of former collegiate swimmer Riley Gaines against men playing women's sports and trends in Europe away from so-called gender-affirming care for minors.

If Kaufman is correct and transgenderism is waning, does that mean the Church can back away from ministry to the gender confused? Not at all, say evangelical ethicists and counselors. It is time to double down on help for those still struggling.

"We need churches that can exemplify Christ's compassion without compromising biblical truth," said Lilly Park, associate professor of biblical counseling at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

That means both explaining that sexual sins are offensive to God and taking time to understand the thoughts and feelings of people who are confused about their gender identities, Park said. Changing the behavior of transgender individuals is not the ultimate goal of ministry, she said. Rather, churches should seek to address heart problems that result in gender confusion.

Begin by asking lots of questions to people with gender confusion, Park said. Then introduce Scripture "that addresses their deeper questions and struggles." Share "Jesus' com-

passion on outcasts," including His conversation with a sinful Samaritan woman in John 4. "It's a story that we can use to show the person that Christ offers salvation to all people no matter what sin you're struggling with."

Churches also must recognize repentance can be a long process for people coming out of transgenderism.

"If we are quick to expect them to repent right there," Park said, "then we might miss opportunities to encourage them to keep meeting with us."

Opportunity for action

Liberal and conservative denominations alike apparently see a cultural moment for action related to gender identity. The ERLC announced its support this month for the Chloe Cole Act, a bill in Congress that would ban gender transitions for minors.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops voted Nov. 12 to direct America's Catholic health care institutions not to aid in chemical or surgical gender transitions.

The same day, a group of nine liberal religious groups

issued a statement affirming "the holiness of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people, as well as the recognition of the entire spectrum of gender identity and expression." Signatories included leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Episcopal Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

The SBC opposed "gender transition" interventions" in a 2023 resolution "as a futile quest to change one's sex and as a direct assault on God's created order."

Allison said biblical churches must minister to individuals repenting of transgenderism with sensitivity and patience. In some cases, that may mean encouraging them to reverse surgical alterations of their bodies. In other cases, that may mean encouraging them to live out the gender God assigned them without insisting on painful and costly surgical reversals.

A growing community of Christian mental health care professionals, Allison said, is well equipped to guide formerly transgender individuals in living out the gender God assigned them.

"These are not well known or very public ministries," he said. "They are local biblical counseling practices, Christian psychologists and Christian psychiatrists who are doing a very good job dealing with this issue. But they don't get very much press."

Though the conservative media flurry about the decline of transgenderism can be exciting, Park said, scoring cultural victories must not be believers' priority.


"I welcome research that supports a decline in transgenderism," she said. "Coming from a counseling background, I also recognize that there are a lot of opportunities for Christians in the Church to positively influence people who are struggling with their gender identity. That's my priority."

**Serving Southwest Kansas
For 40 Years**

Palace
COMPUTER CENTER

1816 Palace Drive
Garden City, Ks. 67846

620-275-7154
www.palacecomputers.com

 **The Bank
of Ashland**
A Branch of Bank of Protection

Member F.D.I.C.
722 Main P.O. Box 157
Ashland, Kansas 67831
Phone 620-635-2218
www.bankofprotection.com

The Little Lamp in the Window

In the small town of Willowbrook stood a cozy blue house with a tiny round window facing the street. In that window lived a little lamp named Luma. She wasn't fancy—just a small wooden base with a soft white shade—but every evening she glowed with all her heart.

Luma belonged to Miss Annie, an elderly woman who loved Jesus and baked cinnamon bread for her neighbors. Each night, before bedtime, Miss Annie would pat the lamp gently and say, "Shine bright, little one. Someone out there might need a little light tonight."

So Luma did.

One chilly evening, as snowflakes drifted across the sidewalk, a boy named Caleb trudged home from school. He had forgotten his science project, slipped on the ice, and lost his mittens. His heart felt as cold as his fingers.

As he walked past Miss Annie's house, he noticed the warm glow in her window. It wasn't a big light—just a small, gentle one—but it felt like a soft whisper in the dark: You're not alone.

Caleb stopped and stared at it. Somehow, looking at that tiny lamp made his shoulders relax. He breathed in, and for the first time all day, he didn't feel so overwhelmed.

Inside, Luma shined a little brighter. She couldn't speak, but she hoped her glow traveled all the way to Caleb's heart.

The next day, Caleb knocked on Miss Annie's door.

"I like your lamp," he said shyly.

"Oh, Luma?" Miss Annie laughed. "She's my reminder that even the smallest light matters. Jesus said we're supposed to shine like that, you know."

Caleb smiled. He liked that idea.

Weeks passed, and every time Caleb walked home, he looked for Luma's light. And every time, it made his day a little kinder and a little warmer. Before long, other neighbors began to mention "the little lamp in the window," too. Some said it gave them hope. Others said it reminded them to pray. A few simply liked how cozy it looked.

One evening, Miss Annie heard a knock. It was Caleb again, holding a tiny lantern he had made in art class.

"I want to shine too," he said.

Miss Annie placed it beside Luma, and the two lights glowed together, warm and cheerful in the dark.

"That's exactly what Jesus meant," she said with a wink. "One little light encourages another."

And from that day forward, everyone walking through Willowbrook knew exactly where to look when the world felt heavy:

The house with the tiny round window

and two little lights that never stopped shining.

Claus

Continued from page 7

other except those of Christ and of Mary. No longer Bishop Nicholas, now he became Saint Nicholas, and his Feast Day would be December 6.

One of the legends around Nicholas concerned his giving dowries to young poor girls so they would be able to marry. To reflect that legend, images of him carrying bags bulging with gold coins began to appear.

As his legend moved northward, the story takes an even

more interesting turn. In Germany, the tradition arose of giving gifts to each other in the name of Saint Nicholas. So, too, in the Netherlands. The Dutch word for him became Sinterklaas. The German word eventually became Santa Claus. These celebrations of gift-giving occurred on December 6, the anniversary of his death. The gift of a gold coin was highly prized and showed great favor.

Even Martin Luther would come to play a role in the legend. Luther wanted a Protestant alternative to the Roman Cath-

olic practice of celebrating the Feast of Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus). Instead of giving gifts in the name of Santa Claus on December 6, Luther started the tradition of giving gifts in the name of the Christ child, Christkindl, on Christmas Eve. Perhaps in this we have an argument for Protestant kids everywhere as to why they should be allowed to open at least one present on Christmas Eve.

Luther loved Christmas. He wanted it to be a celebration of giving around the supreme gift of the babe born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. As he preached in 1530, "He who lies in the virgin's lap is our Savior . . . give thanks to God, who so loved you that he gave you a Savior."

Christmas evolved from the word Christ Mass, the celebration of the incarnation of Christ, fixed by tradition as being on December 25. The word Luther coined, Christkindl, also evolved over the centuries. It would become Santa Claus's other name, Kris Kringle. This effort of Luther's to move away from the Santa Claus tradition inadvertently veered right toward it.

So, we have the story of Santa Claus. Interestingly enough, Saint Nicholas and his legend began in the early church. The stories wove their way through the Middle Ages, and they even made an appearance at the Reformation. Those stories still live with us today.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 John 3:16
 (King James Version)

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
 John 3:16
 (The Living Bible Paraphrased)


Phone: (620) 624-3859

*Scantlin's
Furniture & Carpet Inc.*

MATT GRAHAM
KURT SALLEY
MIKE BECKETT
scantlinsfurniture@gmail.com


211 S. Washington Liberal, Kansas 67901

(620)-624-1683
(800)-886-1683
F(620)-620-9510

CHRYSLER

CORNER
Liberal, KS

406 E. PANCAKE
P.O. BOX 1295
LIBERAL, KS 67901

PARTS@CHRYSLERCORNER.NET
WWW.CHRYSLERCORNERCHRYSLERDODGEJEEP.COM

 MOPAR

 **MYRIAD**
Machine Company
Inc.

Offering Quality Repair & Production Services:

- ✓ Farm & Ranch
- ✓ Oilfield
- ✓ Meat Processing
- CNC Mill & Lathe Production
- Drivelines Built & Repaired
- Gear Box & Pump Repair
- Hydraulic Cylinder Repair
- Line Boring Work - Metalizing

5 S. Country Estates Road at 6-Points, Liberal, KS

620-624-2962 or 1-800-446-2962

Large Variety of

*Chocolates *Snack Baskets *Candy Bouquets
*Vera Bradley *Tyler Candles *Wax Melts
*Laundry Detergent

Spend \$125 on flowers or home decor and get a Vera Bradley plush thro for \$20

 **Flower BASKET**

13 E. 2nd Liberal, Ks.
620-624-7049
www.flowerbasketliberal.com

Deanne Smith, LNHA
Administrator

2160 Zinnia Ln.
Liberal, Ks. 67901
Phone (620)624-3831
Fax (620)624-2429
dsmith74@good-sam.com
good-sam.com

 **Good Samaritan Society**
LIBERAL

In Christ's Love, Everyone Is Someone

AMERICAN TITLE & ABSTRACT SPECIALISTS

217 N. Kansas Ave. Liberal, Ks. 67901
*CLOSINGS *TITLE INSURANCE *DOCUMENT FILING
*DEED PREPARATION *CERTIFICATES OF TITLE
Bonded & Licensed

Renee' Haralson
President
620.624.9111
888.310.9111
620.624.6610 (fax)
AmTitles.com
renee@AmTitles.com



Pastors promote Lottie Moon offering with original ‘Lotta Lottie’ jingle and cardinal prints

By Diana Chandler

FARMERSVILLE, Texas (BP) – Lottie Moon, pastor Bart Barber’s choice red Santa Gertrudis cow, stars in the music video “Lotta Lottie,” an original jingle by Barber and James Cheesman promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO).

Lottie Moon doesn’t utter a moo, but stands in all her glory eating grass with special tidbits of corn and such as Barber, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Farmersville, and the church’s Worship Pastor Cheesman sing and literally kick up their heels on Barber’s cattle ranch.

In Brandenburg, Ky., New Brandenburg Southern Baptist Church Pastor Tim Harris is selling prints of his original drawing of a female cardinal for the LMCO, leveraging for missions a talent he revived as an empty nester. Harris drew the cardinal in pencil and pastels.

“It’s something that I really enjoy personally,” Harris told Baptist Press, “and the idea that I can take a talent and a hobby that I enjoy and do something to advance the kingdom to support missions and evangelism is just a huge bonus.”

Back on the farm, some of Barber’s friends requested such a feature with Lottie Moon, Barber told Baptist Press, before he even considered the project. Student Pastor Cameron Crow served as videographer.

“Some of my friends have met Lottie on the farm. They were reaching out to me and saying can you make some kind of a cow video with Lottie that we can show at our church to promote the offering,” Barber told Baptist Press. “And I was just replying and saying just be patient.”

International Mission Board President Paul Chitwood appreciates the enthusiastic support for missions.

“From overseas mission-

ary auctions where a can of Dr. Pepper goes for hundreds of dollars, to bake sales and Christmas card mailboxes at church,” Chitwood told Baptist Press, “the enthusiasm that Southern Baptists have for supporting Gospel work around the world through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is incredible.”

adopted the Bayot people of Senegal for international outreach, evidenced in a T-shirt Cheesman dons among many clothing changes in the Lotta Lottie video.

Churches will support this offering if they want to reach the harvest for Christ, Barber said.

“That’s what motivates us

Chili, through an outreach of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Harris and his wife Becky plan to make their third trip to Los Andes in 2026.

“At New Brandenburg, we’re strongly mission-focused,” Harris said.

Harris enjoyed drawing in his pre-teen years, but only revived the pastime in recent

school I remember my math teacher coming along and rebuking me because I was doodling and drawing instead of paying attention to math,” Harris told Baptist Press. “You know, I’ll be honest with you. I haven’t used algebra in years, but now my drawing is helping missions. So who’s the winner here?”

Prints of Harris’ sketch of the female cardinal are \$20 each, 8-by-10 inches mounted on 9-by-12-inch paper, with all proceeds benefitting the LMCO. Also available are prints of a 2024 drawing of a male cardinal, also in pencil and pastels. Order prints through the church’s Facebook page or on the church’s website.

Free downloads of Lotta Lottie are available on YouTube.

“We’ve publicly made that video available,” Barber said.



James Cheesman (left) and Bart Barber (right) flank Barber’s cow Lottie Moon in their music video for the original song “Lotta Lottie,” written and recorded to promote the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

The 2024-2025 LMCO campaign drew \$207.2 million, surpassing the \$205 million goal, IMB announced at the end of the fiscal year. The 2025-2026 campaign runs through Oct. 31, 2026.

First Baptist Farmersville and New Brandenburg both are active in international missions. First Farmersville has

here at FBC Farmersville,” Barber said, “and I don’t know how you could care about that and not care about this offering if you’re a Southern Baptist church.”

New Brandenburg established a partnership in 2024 with Iglesia Evangelica Bautista Los Andes, or Los Andes Baptist Church, in Los Andes,

years. “I did a lot of drawing and sketching when I was very young. When I was in middle

Coming
Home
Really
Isn’t
So
Tough

Jose Lara - Agent

1014 N Kansas Ave
Liberal, KS 67901-2645
JLara@ShelterInsurance.com
ShelterInsurance.com/JLara
P 620-624-6011
F 620-624-2240



AUTO • HOME • LIFE



Heritage
Real Estate Group, Inc.

Ph. 620-626-6100
www.hregliberal.com
2 South Kansas Ave.
Liberal, KS



**RMLLO
FARM**

26947 ROAD F
SATANTA, KS 67870
620.649.2318

RON OLIVER
620.649.1957
4rmllo8@pld.com

BRENT HOWIE
620.544.6426
brent67h@hotmail.com

Mississippi church reaches 150 countries for Christ through tract ministry



Martin Busby, Ken Walters, Wayne Hollifield, and Mark May

“The printing team works very diligently in getting these tracts out,” said Boutwell. “It’s something we felt led by the Lord to be a part of.”

Publish or Perish Printing Ministry

The ministry began with just one missionary to Mexico and Central America, Bill Vaughn. When Vaughn and his wife resigned for health reasons and moved to Brooksville, he felt the Lord call him to print Gospel tracts in English as well as Spanish, in which he was fluent. Vaughn wrote the tracts and began printing and folding them himself.

Friends from Biloxi River Church would drive six hours to Brooksville and back to help Vaughn on weekends, until one day, when someone thought: “Why not print the tracts here at our church?”

In 1997, Biloxi River refurbished an old pavilion into a print shop and started out with printing between 100,000 – 200,000 tracts a year.

This year alone, Publish or Perish has printed 16 million Gospel tracts so far.

“Our tracts have gone all over the world,” said Jim Mitchell, director of Publish or Perish. “The Lord has just opened doors for us to partner with global missionaries. We print multiple languages, now

including three different dialects of the Philippines.”

The tracts are not sold; they are free. The ministry raises their own support and finds creative ways to ship the Gospel overseas as cost-effectively as possible, including partnering with BEAMS Bible Ministry, which supplies hardback Bibles to missionaries and national pastors around the world without charge. Instead of expensive

Continued on page 18

By Lindsey Williams

Down a winding country road on the border of the national forest in Wayne County, Miss., sits little Strengthford Church. Every Sunday, the brothers and sisters in Christ pour generously into their missional offering, set aside to aid those in the community. They give toward MS Baptist Relief, their local food pantry, and the nearby Baptist Children’s Village home.

“We’re just a very small church,” said Robert Boutwell, lead pastor, “and we don’t have a lot of people. But David was just a small boy against a big giant.”

Little Strengthford also reaches around 150 countries for Christ.

On Oct. 19, the church not only celebrated 155 years with an exciting homecoming, but they also remembered a modest yet remarkable ministry started nine years ago: folding Gospel tracts.

When Ken Walters, associate pastor, and Martin Busby approached Boutwell with this idea nearly a decade ago, the church had no folding machine, no people to fold, no

plan for the road ahead — but they knew if they stepped out in faith, the Lord would lead. Strengthford began part-

nering with Publish or Perish Printing Ministry, whose print shop operates out of Biloxi River Church in Gulfport.

As Pastors Visit, Pray at Western Wall, Site's Rabbi Offers Gratitude to Clergy, Thanks to American People

By Julie Stahl

JERUSALEM, Israel – More than one thousand pastors from the U.S. and other countries, the largest delegation to visit in modern Israel's history, continued their journey through the land. They visited the iconic Western Wall and heard from the chief rabbi about the importance of their visit.

They began with prayer and worship on the ancient Southern Steps that led to the Temple Mount in Jesus' day, then toured and prayed at the Wall, one of the holiest sites in Judaism.

Referring to the visit, Mike Evans, founder of the Friends of Zion, one of the tour's co-sponsors, told CBN News, "It's going to have an incred-

ible impact. The president of the United States is going to see this. He's going to be aware of this. Virtually everyone of significance is going to see this, and they're already aware."

Evans added, "There are many people from the White House here on our team. And there are over 200 pastors connected to Donald Trump here."

Some 16 million people pray at the Western Wall each year, but this is the first time such a large group has come to offer a unique blessing and prayer.

Evans explained that each of the pastors and influencers was given a prayer slip. "I have Uri Arad – and this is a person who was massacred on October 7th. Every one of

them, they'll hold (a paper with a prayer) in their hands. They'll take it, put it in the cracks of the Wall, and they'll pray for their families."

Evans worked with the Israeli Foreign Ministry to bring the group to Israel. He emphasized the importance of prayer.

"The Bible says this. 'We pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper, who love thee,'" Evans noted. "And we need to pray for these precious (Israeli) people. They've suffered such unspeakable pain, and we're here to show compassion and love and solidarity with them."

The pastors met with Western Wall Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovich, who began by reading Psalm 121, about how God keeps Israel. He commended the group for their support.

"They are a group that came to confirm the friendship between America and Israel," Rabbi Rabinovich stated. "The group that came says, 'We are searching for the good, we want to fix the world and the Kingdom of God, to confirm that this world is a world that the Holy One created for good, to reject the evil, to be against those who want to do evil and not good.' And what we share between us is much bigger than what separates us."

Rabinovich told us Israel wants to convey the message to the U.S. that Israel and the Jewish people cherish and appreciate them.

"We want to say to them, thank you for everything that they support us, especially in this very hard time, a period when so many people wanted to hurt us, to kill us. On seven fronts, we are fighting, and America stands at our side. We want to say, thank you. These thousand leaders will bring this message of thank you – thank you to the American people," he declared.



Multi-Peril Crop Insurance
Hail Insurance
Livestock Insurance
Farm and Ranch Insurance
GPS Mapping

Call Today!
1-877-299-MAPS

www.midwestagprofessionals.com
 Jetmore, Kansas

The Rabbi defines Israel as a people that knows how to "rise from the ashes" and rebuild, even though its enemies still want to hurt Israel.

His prayer is this: "That we will have peace, that we will have a thriving economy, that we will have good, and that our bitter enemies will stop trying to hurt us. We don't want to kill them. We only want them to stop hurting us."

"We Pledge to You...Service & Fair Prices"

NORRIS
 Burdett, Ks

620-804-0387
Propane Gas Co.

*Residential
 *Commercial
 *Farm/
 Irrigation
 *Oil Lease

Proudly Serving: *Pawnee *Edwards *Hodgeman
 *Finney *Ford *Gray *Kearny *Stevens Counties



**THE CARE YOU NEED,
 THE RESPECT YOU DESERVE**

At Homestead, our team helps seniors remain independent while providing quality care in a friendly environment.

CALL 620-647-4296 TO SCHEDULE A TOUR

HomesteadofGardenCity.com
 2414 N Henderson Dr. Garden City, KS 67846



Kansas Ranked as 10th Most Religious State

Kansas continues to stand out nationally for its strong faith identity, according to a recent multi-state comparison of religious engagement. The report places Kansas as the 10th most religious state in the nation, with Christian belief and church involvement remaining central parts of community life.

High Levels of Christian Affiliation

Most adults in Kansas identify with Christianity, led by two major traditions:

Protestant Majority

Kansas has a historically strong Protestant presence, especially:

- Evangelical denominations
- Mainline Protestant congregations
- Methodist, Baptist, and Lutheran churches
- Non-denominational Christian churches, which continue to grow

Many rural communities — including Meade, Haskell, Gray, and Edwards counties — still center much of their civic life around local Protestant churches, which often function as both religious and social hubs.

Strong Catholic Population

Kansas also has a considerable Catholic community, particularly in:

- Dodge City Diocese (Ford, Hodgeman, Gray, Meade counties)
- Wichita Diocese
- Kansas City in Kansas Archdiocese
- Salina Diocese

Catholic parishes in rural areas continue to hold strong attendance, with many churches maintaining active youth programs, holiday traditions, and parish outreach.

Why Kansas Ranks Highly

The ranking comes from combined measures such as:

- Church attendance
- Importance of religion in daily life
- Frequency of prayer and Bible reading

- Community participation in church-run events

- Religiosity of younger generations compared to national trends

Kansas remains unique because, while secularism is rising nationally, many Kansas communities — particularly in western and south-central Kansas — retain high levels of church loyalty and participation.

Faith as a Cultural Backbone

In small Kansas towns, churches are:

- Anchors for community identity
- Providers of social services (food assistance, clothing, utility help)
- Gathering places for school events, fundraisers, and heritage celebrations
- Safe spaces during crises (storms, economic strain)
- Key leaders in holiday traditions such as Christmas Eve services, nativity programs, and community dinners

This aligns with your own coverage area, where churches regularly appear in:

- Local holiday calendars
- Community service stories
- School partnerships
- Historical features and centennial events

A gift subscription to
FAITH AND FAMILY
keeps on giving and giving and giving.

MID-AMERICA MILLWRIGHT SERVICE, INC.

Grain Handling Facilities Are Our Business

Design and Installation of New Grain Handling Facilities and Expansions, Service & Repair For Existing On-The-Farm, Commercial Elevators & Feedmills, Turn-Key Construction on Metal Buildings and Grain Tanks.

620-275-6796

Metal Fabrication Shop
24 HOUR SERVICE
Complete Parts Department

2720 N. 11th • P.O. Box 2243 • Garden City, KS 67846

1983-2012
29
YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

THE TUNNEL

ULTIMATE WASH **FREE VACUUMS**

1314 EAST KANSAS AVENUE
(NEXT TO WALGREENS)
GARDEN CITY, KANSAS 67846

THE CAR WASH

ATTENDANTS GIVE YOUR VEHICLE SPECIAL ATTENTION

3202 EAST KANSAS AVENUE
(IN FRONT OF HOME DEPOT)
GARDEN CITY, KANSAS 67846

CLOSED EASTER, THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS **PHONE 620-805-6997**

How Should Christians Approach the New Year?

By Candice Lucey

New Year's Day is a day of resetting hearts, which have wandered, and of restoring the habit of turning to Christ every day for a fresh start, not in a new relationship, but in a relationship with Jesus, which is always growing.

While many people are deciding how to celebrate on December 31 and figuring out their New Year's resolutions, what should Christians be doing? There might not be one "right" way to observe the transition from 2025 to 2026, but here are some thoughts to help believers stay Christ-focused.

A Fresh Start for the New Year

Many people, no matter what they believe, look at January 1 as a chance for a new beginning. If the previous year was disappointing or they made significant mistakes, they imagine wiping the slate clean and starting over.

Christians know that new starts are available any time, they are not dictated by the calendar. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they

are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

All those who confess and repent their sin can enjoy freedom from regret and shame. They can find courage to endure through trials. Joy and mercy are available for every believer, all the time. A new year, however, inspires this kind of thought process.

1. New Resolution: Confession

Starting over often turns into making resolutions, but quitting smoking, starting a diet, or purchasing a gym membership is only the beginning of a "fresh start." If there is a sin issue in any person's life, he or she can address it right now.

While many people are deciding how to celebrate on December 31 and figuring out their New Year's resolutions, what should Christians be doing? There might not be one "right" way to observe the transition from 2021 to 2022, but here are some thoughts to help believers stay Christ-focused.

A Fresh Start for the New Year

Many people, no matter what they believe, look at January 1

as a chance for a new beginning. If the previous year was disappointing or they made significant mistakes, they imagine wiping the slate clean and starting over.

Christians know that new starts are available any time, they are not dictated by the calendar. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

All those who confess and repent their sin can enjoy freedom from regret and shame. They can find courage to endure through trials. Joy and mercy are available for every believer, all the time. A new year, however, inspires this kind of thought process.

1. New Resolution: Confession

Starting over often turns into making resolutions, but quitting smoking, starting a diet, or purchasing a gym membership is

only the beginning of a "fresh start." If there is a sin issue in any person's life, he or she can address it right now.

In fact, peace awaits the one who is quick to confess and repent of sin. "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD" (Psalm

32:10).

Bad habits and addictions are symptomatic of deeper issues. Rather than making a resolution to quit doing something or start doing something else, take advantage of this renewed impetus to face sin in your life and find freedom from its effects through the Father's loving di-

rection.

For example, you might be the kind of person who seeks attention by causing drama. You might run from conflict by exercising too much and trying to control a painful situation by regulating calories carefully.

Continued on page 17

Mishler's

Service Center, Inc.

Serving The Ashland Area Since 1964

PLUMBING

AIR CONDITIONING

620-635-2529

118 E. 8th Ashland, Ks.



ELECTRIC

HEATING

T-N-T Designs

*Digital Printing/
Screen printing
on T-Shirts*

*Machine Embroidery
Personalized Gifts!*

*We can help you...
Whatever your design needs!*

Troy & Tammie Winfrey

(620) 563-6106

NEW Address
409 Grand Ave., Plains, Ks.
www.tntstitch.com
tammie@tntstitch.com



RICHARDS

FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.

Investment Management

- IRA
- Trust
- 529
- Personal
- Roth IRA
- Joint
- UTMA
- Corporate

Small Business Retirement Plans

- Sep
- 403(b) Plans
- Individual 401(k)
- Simple Plans
- 401(k) Plans



Craig Richards



Grant Huck

(620) 872-5949

106 E. 6th Street, Scott City, KS 67871

www.richards-financial.com



This week's Torah reading is Parashat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43). Read on Shabbat, December 6, 2025 / 14 Kislev 5786. The following is a special devotional drawn from this week's reading.

He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes'" (Genesis 32:4-5).

Jacob stands at a moment of great tension. He approaches the brother he wronged years earlier, uncertain of how he will be received. Fear presses in from every side, yet Jacob still takes steps toward reconciliation. He sends messengers, prepares his household, and turns to God in prayer. He refuses to hide from the past. Instead, he walks toward it with humility, aware that only God can shape the outcome.

This portion reveals the depth of Jacob's inner struggle. That night he wrestles until daybreak and receives a blessing that changes his identity. His name becomes Israel, a reminder that he has contended with God and endured. When Jacob finally meets Esau, he expects hostility but receives compassion. Esau runs to him, embraces him, and weeps. What Jacob feared would destroy him becomes a moment of healing. God transforms the encounter into grace.

Vayishlach speaks to the places in our lives where fear, regret, or old wounds still linger. We often anticipate the worst, imagining rejection or judgment. Yet God can prepare hearts in ways we cannot see. He works behind the scenes, softening what has hardened and healing what seemed beyond repair. Jacob reminds us that courage and repentance open doors for God to act with mercy.

Some may be carrying memories that still hurt or relationships strained by misunderstanding. Let this portion invite you to bring those burdens before God. He meets us in the struggle just as He met Jacob in the night. Others may find themselves in a season of calm or blessing. For you, this story becomes a call to extend compassion to those who approach with fear or pain.

Set aside a moment this Shabbat to consider where God may be inviting you into reconciliation or inner renewal. Ask Him for courage to take the first step and for faith to trust His work in the hearts of others. Let your actions reflect the hope that God can turn even the most fearful meeting into a moment of grace.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for meeting me in my struggles and fears. Give me courage to seek reconciliation where it is needed and humility to trust Your work in every situation. May Your mercy guide my steps and shape my heart. Amen.

New Year

Continued from page 16

Fear could be driving you to drink or abuse drugs. These habits or addictions enslave a person; they rob peace because alcohol or exercise or drama becomes a focus of worship; an idol.

The New Year is a perfect time to dig up the roots of trouble by the power of the Holy Spirit, under the assurance that honest and whole-hearted repentance leads to life and peace (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Remember these words from the Apostle John: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Jesus does not want his people to be burdened by their sin. He wants them to experience freedom.

Just remember that, although God's Word contains all the answers one needs to overcome addictions and work through conflict, gospel counselors provide direction and support, helping to connect the Lord's promises to one's unique emotional needs.

A responsible and discerning counselor will also suggest medical attention where necessary: certain habits and behaviors can be the result of a clinical issue or trauma and could require medication, at least for a time.

When one faces the turmoil of personal sin in response to sins committed against him or her, the New Year could be a time when both parties reflect and make changes.

But the work of the Spirit in each person's life is between him or her and God. Part of learning to overcome addictive behaviors is, potentially, finding the courage to walk away from an abusive marriage, friendship, or job. A counselor can help.

2. Remember All the Lord Has Done

"Take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of

the house of slavery" (Deuteronomy 6:12). Christians are enjoined to never forget what their Lord has done for them.

A Christian who obtains his greatest joy from the Lord sees January 1 as a time to remember the goodness of God as it has unfolded across the past year. Sometimes the details of God's intervention are only obvious when one surveys his goodness over time.

We can never remember the Lord's grace and mercy and love towards us too often. Remembering Christ is essential; the more one does this the better.

But at the start of a New Year, one might reassess which direction to go with regard to career or a relationship, what his or her cross might be, and to either change course or stick with the established One.

If this is a difficult season, go back to Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Recall that Christ knows the temptations you face, the suffering you endure. He is able to sympathize, so turn to him without fear.

3. Celebrate the New Year

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). This is the Psalmist's exhortation for every day, not just New Year's Day; not only on good days,

when we anticipate the company of friends and a great meal, perhaps music and dancing. Every day is the Lord's Day and every day we are his.

Christians do not need to avoid "fun" as though Christ was averse to it. God does not demand that we be serious all the time.

Adrian Rogers explains, "Jesus was not a recluse. He performed His first miracle at a wedding, when He changed water into wine. He was so full of life that His enemies called Him a wine bibber and a glutton. He was not, but there was in Him a genuine joy, and if you don't have that joy, you're not like Jesus, for He is literally leaping with joy."

We are not called into debauchery, that is not joy; but we are encouraged by Christ's example to be filled with the exuberance for life, which is living inside of us by the Holy Spirit.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:14-15). We have so much reason to celebrate.

4. Christ Coming Closer

Every year, someone predicts the end of the world. This so-called prophet names a year and tells the world not only when but how the world will end. With each new catastrophe and major conflict be-

tween world powers, Armageddon seems nigh, but only God knows when the end will come (Matthew 24:36).

Yet, every January 1, Christians wonder "will this be the year Jesus returns?" One thing is for sure: Jesus' return is sooner today than it was yesterday. With that in mind, we prepare.

We are God's children now, and [...] we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3).

John Piper explains what it means to be in Christ: "if you really want to be like him by seeing him when he comes, you'll pursue being like him now. You will." In other words, the New Year is a reminder to keep Jesus ever in the forefront of our minds.

Why Does This Matter?

New Year's Day is no different from any other day as far as Christ is concerned. For the believer, however, the very idea of throwing out an old calendar and starting with 12 clean pages is a poignant reminder that the pages, like our lives, quickly become messy.

New Year's Day is a day of resetting hearts, which have wandered, and of restoring the habit of turning to Christ every day for a fresh start, not in a new relationship, but in a relationship with Jesus, which is always growing.

D & B Pharmacy & Gifts

Open 9 to 5 Monday thru Friday

Prescriptions filled while you wait

*Gifts For All Ages *Digital Photo Kiosk

*Russell Stover Candies *Holiday Decorations

*Watches *Pharmacy *Photo Frames

*Hallmark and Leanin' Tree Cards

620-635-2322 721 Main Ashland, KS

Ministry

Continued from page 13

packing peanuts, the Bibles are secured with 40,000 Publish or Perish tracts.

Mitchell recalled receiving a phone call from a missionary in Poland who received the English tracts through the Bible shipment. Knowing many students were interested in learning English, he passed them around a university in Warsaw. The missionary then worked with Mitchell in translating and proofing tracts into Polish, which the ministry published and sent a million tracts his way.

But the work could not be complete without the five local churches who prayerfully fold each printed tract that makes it to their door. “We couldn’t do what we do without these churches who help us,” Mitchell affirmed. “There’s no telling how many hands touch these before they get sent out.”

Strengthford Folding Team

Nine years ago, the folding team at Strengthford started with seven members. Since then, one member has moved out of state, while another has passed away. With five members remaining, and one being on sick leave, the team continues to rise early four days a week to dutifully fold tens of thousands of tracts, all before the workday begins at 8:00 a.m.

The team consists of team leader, Martin Busby, as well as Ken Walters, Wayne Hollifield, Mark May, and Andy Karnes. Working out of a renovated garage in the back of the church, one man feeds the machine, another catches the folded tracts, and others box up and place the tracts on a pallet, ready to send back to headquarters.

The men don’t just show up to pass the time. They each come with a mission-driven

purpose to pray over the tracts before they make their journey around the world.

Busby, the team leader and a country farmer, felt this calling on his life decades ago. In 1975, he had a terrifying vision of a portal to hell. As he described it, “I was on my knees cleaning up a paint spill, and I sensed a shadow in the room with me and heard something like thunder. Then just like that, I was on a rope. I never left the building, but I was a mile high. I had never felt such hot heat. I looked at my arms and thought my skin would fall right off me. I saw artesian water I had seen in a river years before, a rock formation coming up out of the ground, and in it I saw this portal to hell. Little fireflies that looked like sparks of fire were going down into that portal. For a long time after, I couldn’t figure out what it meant or even talk about what I had seen. The Lord put it on my heart and wanted me to do something with tracts.”

The vision motivated Busby to be a part of God’s mission — to offer redemption to every soul on its way

to an excruciating eternity without Him. For years, he asked around at churches and revivals for connections to a tract ministry. But it was not until Walters began serving at Strengthford a decade ago that he and Busby began to work together. Walters had come from a church which folded tracts and could help Busby learn more about the process.

When Walters’ previous church prepared to close their doors, arrangements were made for Strengthford to receive their folding machine, but the plans fell through, and Busby was heartbroken. Busby remembers how his friend and a director at Publish or Perish, Bob Tapper, encouraged him to keep going.

“I really love that old dude. He was something else,” said Busby as he thought about Tapper, who passed away due to COVID. “He wanted to load up an RV with these tracts and go up the east coast as far as he could, handing out tracts, but he didn’t get the chance to do that. Right after things fell through for that machine,” Busby recalled, “he called me

one day and said, ‘Don’t worry about it. The Lord’s got one set up for you.’”

Tapper called another day with the news that they not only had a machine, but one that was functional and cost only \$101, where most would have been over \$1,500. Busby’s next hurdle was to build a team of reliable folders. Tapper counseled him to pray for laborers.

“I came in here one day,” said Busby, “running 18,000 tracts by myself, and I sat right here and I cried a bunch. And it wasn’t very long after that that the Lord brought people in here with me every day. The Lord hears a cry, and He will hear you cry.”

Soon, the team began to

hear testimony after testimony about how these tracts came to people all around the world — how one person read, believed, and brought the news to their entire family. Busby began to specifically pray that these “paper missionaries” would open hearts to let the Lord reign in their whole family, because “one by himself might not make it, but the whole family would help one another.”

“Now I know I’m a pot calling the kettle black, but all of the folding teams we work with are made up of old people,” laughed Mitchell. “Most of them are retired. Most of them are not in good health. But God uses broken vessels, doesn’t He?”

“We work 2 or 3 hours per day for four days a week,” Walters shared, “so we’re not overworked, yet we have 61 million tracts with our fingerprints on them. We joke and have fun while we work. We let the lost people do the arguing.”

“I myself have gained boldness in handing someone a Gospel tract. It’s a great way to witness for the Lord. I have known people that carried a Gospel tract in their billfold for years. One was an escaped prisoner walking down a highway where he found a folded tract stuck on a road sign.

“Even a small church can be used in some way. Even one person can be used.”

Pet Haven Crematory

Helping ease the pain after the loss of a pet.



Cremation prices range from \$75-\$175

Including a complimentary urn

Pickup service available in most areas

620-338-1103

www.pethavencrematory.com

SOUTHWEST TOWING

1309 S. 2nd Ave
*Dodge City *620-225-3105

625 N. Industrial Dr.
*Garden City *620-275-6828

SERVING WESTERN KANSAS WITH 2 LOCATIONS

Your #1 Source For All Towing & Recovery Needs
1-800-476-8163



*Light Duty *Medium Duty *Heavy Duty
*Air Cushion Recovery *Local and Long Distance Towing *Equipment Hauling
*Motor Homes and Motor Coach Transporting
*Jump Starts *Winch Outs *Unlocks

*Dealer Wholesale Accounts
*24 Hour Emergency Service
*Most Roadside Assistance Programs
*Clean, Professional, Trained Drivers



CELEBRATING 31 YEARS SERVICE IN 2025



24 HOUR SERVICE

Dodge City Garden City
620-225-3105 620-275-6828
1-800-476-8163



Creation Story vs Periodic Table

By Alexis Vanasse

The evidence is here. A look into the discoveries of science shows us what God told us we would uncover. I have researched this topic for nearly 14 years and have corresponded with scientists from many fields - from biologists to astrophysicists. This is what I found.

Our universe is a product of seven periods of time. All that exists in the universe is laid out in a table known to scientists as the table of elements (the Periodic Table). This table lays out each step of universal creation in order. It is known that this table shows how the universe came to exist through a series of elements that progressively combined to create the next in the series, but this table also tells the same story we know from Genesis Chapter 1 of the Bible.

A comparison of the two shows similarities that cannot be ignored.

• God created light in day one, with an evening and then a morning. Period 1 contains the products of a

great bang in which light was created. The light was initially trapped in a plasma, unable to shine but was released when the temperature cooled enough for sub-atomic particles to combine and create the first elements.

• In day two God created the waters and separated them. Period 2 contains oxygen, the second of two elements in water.

• Day three details how God gathered the earth and the waters to create land on which plants grew. Period 3 contains the final elements necessary for amino acids, carbohydrates, lipids and chlorophyll- all of the basic building blocks of plants.

• In day four God positions stars, planets and moons to rotate around each other to give days, nights and seasons. Period 4 introduces the elements Iron and Nickel, whose existence allow for magnetic effects that have been found to be vital in the formation of galaxies, the existence of stars and the protection of planets.

• God creates animals in

day five. Animal cells require Bromine, an element that does not arise until the end of Period 4, allowing for animals to come into existence in Period 5. Additionally, in Period 5 we find Strontium, which assists in the creation of bone tissue.

• Day six details God creating mammals. Mammals have a unique section of the brain called the neocortex. This portion of the brain requires Iodine, which is found at the end of Period 5 of the table of elements. This would allow for the creation of mammals in Period 6.

• The final day created by God was a day of rest. The day exists with no work done. This is reflected in the final Period of the table of elements, which contains a full row of elements, yet none of them exist in a stable form.

These parallels are too specific to deny. Humanity's discoveries have brought us full circle to the truth we always held. He told us what we would find before we ever started looking.

New Me

Continued from page 9

version of ourselves is not a twenty-first century idea but a biblical idea. It's precisely what happens when we embrace the gospel. The apostle Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus loves us and gave himself for us so that we might become new creations, reconciled to our Father in heaven. Created by God and for God, it is his kindness and mercy alone that make us new from the inside out. "For by grace [we] have

been saved through faith. And this is not [our] own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

The process of being made new is initiated and completed by our Maker and Savior—not you or me. Our God is at work within us, "for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:28-29). The Lord is growing us and changing us, making us more like Jesus every single day.

This New Year's Day, let's not settle for "New year, new me." Let's not settle for self-will and self-help and self-control. Let's not settle for quick fixes and superficial changes

because New Year's resolutions will not satisfy or sustain if they are rooted in ourselves. Rather, Christ in us is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

Here's what's true this New Year's Day and every other day: you and I and all humans were made by God and for God (Col. 1:17). Therefore, we will not find purpose, peace, or satisfying soul-deep change outside of God. He is the source of our lives, the goal of our lives, and the substance of our lives. To pursue the good life outside of Christ is futile.

By all means, "New year, new me" this year and every year. But may the new versions of you and me be truly new. Together let's pray, God in heaven, make us new, day by day, more and more in your image, for your glory. Help us to settle for nothing less.



Wilson
TRAILER SALES

1-800-279-9875

SINCE 1890...A GOOD NAME TO HAVE BEHIND YOU!

2730 East Trail Street 22080 Hwy. 34
DODGE CITY, KS FORT MORGAN, CO

Rx Minneola Pharmacy
Your Professional Partner in Wellness. A division of Coast Health Services

Delivery - Mail Out - Gift Items

620-885-4544

Monday - Friday: 9:00 - 5:30 PM Saturday: 9:00 - 2:00 PM
131 S. Main Minneola, KS 678

*Hot Spring

Spas

*Artesian

Spas

*Custom

Pools

AUSTIN
POOLS

*BioGuard
Chemicals

*Pentair
Pool
Products



Dodge City
1601 W. Frontview 620-227-6867
Garden City

940 Stonecreek Dr. 620-275-0707
OPEN 9 A.M. - 5:30 P.M. Mon. - Sat.
www.austinpoolskansas.com



When Seasons Remind Us of Loss

By Marissa Henley

I remember many holidays with my grandmother, but I also remember the first one after she went to be with the Lord. The Christmas joy felt muted, like I was wearing ear plugs that quieted the happy sounds of the season. I wanted to celebrate Christ's birth, but I also wanted to cry. I struggled to figure out how to do both.

Navigating the holidays is a challenge after we lose someone we love. Maybe you've suffered a recent loss, and this holiday season feels more sorrowful than joyful. The overarching storyline of redemptive history that helps us understand the Bible—creation, fall, redemption, and consummation—can also help us understand the struggles of the Christian life. Let's consider how these truths can comfort our grieving hearts this holiday season.

The storyline of redemption starts with creation. Genesis 1:27 teaches us that God made us in His image. He created us to be in relationship with Him and with others (Gen. 2:18). He created Adam and Eve to be

holy and to dwell forever in a perfect relationship with Him. Because of the creation narrative, we know our longing to be with our loved ones is a good desire given to us by God. Our love for others reflects His image. If we were still in Eden, we would enjoy perfect relationships with God and others.

But as we know, we are not in that perfect garden. When Adam and Eve sinned, death entered the world (Gen. 3). The fall devastated our relationship with God and our relationships with others. Now our good desire to be with our loved ones has been thwarted by death.

As the holidays approach, you grieve and lament. You see the twinkling lights and shiny gifts under the tree, and you remember a time when those sights filled you with joy. But now, you're filled with sorrow and dread. You want to look forward to holiday events and family gatherings, but you can't see anything except the hole left by your loved one's absence. The effects of the fall loom large.

But God's Word tells us that immediately follow-

ing the fall, God promised redemption. The seed of the woman would bruise the head of the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). The rest of the Old Testament looks ahead to the promised Messiah who would rescue His people from the devastation of the fall.

As the New Testament opens, we learn how God kept that promise by send-

ing His Son to take on flesh (John 1:14). Through the life, death, and resurrection of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we have been reconciled to God and set free from sin and death (Rom. 5).

In this life, our tears may never dry. But on that day, our God will wipe every tear from our eyes forever.

This is where we live: in the already and not yet of

God's redemption. Christ has conquered sin and death, and we are freed from condemnation and the sting of death (Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 15:54-57). But this victory has not yet been consummated, so we still suffer the effects of the fall. We struggle with temptation, sin, weakness, and doubt. We watch evil seemingly triumph over good in our families, our communi-

ties, and our world. We weep at the gravesites of the ones we love.

Maybe today you're so weighed down by the "not yet" that you've lost sight of the "already." This holiday season, remember God's redemption. How does your salvation give you hope? What difference does your

Continued on page 21



Phillips Chiropractic
Physical Therapy Center

Non-Surgical

Back Pain Relief

DRX⁹⁰⁰⁰™
True Spinal Decompression™

Jammie D. Phillips, DC

Angela D. Harp, DC

2015 READERS CHOICE Awards

Clinically proven to be effective in treating many disabling back pain conditions including:

- Herniated/Bulging Discs
- Facet Syndrome
- Degenerative Discs
- Sciatica

Appointments Limited! Call Today & Schedule Your Consultation

2200 Summerlon Circle Ste. D, Dodge City, KS 67801

620.225.4139
www.phillipstherapy.net

Housing Authority of Dodge City

Elderly & Family Housing

1 to 4 Bedroom & Studio Apartments

Scheduled Transportation
Rent Based on Your Income
Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8 am - 5pm



NORTH OFFICE **SOUTH OFFICE**
407 E. Bend St. 401 Longbranch Rd
Dodge City Dodge City
620-225-1965 620-225-1584



MEDICAL HEIGHTS DENTAL CENTER

KELLY S. HENRICHS, DDS

*** Maria Ocon, RDH * Rebecca Ballard, RDH**
*** Kaycie Bogner, RDH * Deena Hamilton, RDH**

620-225-6555

"Comprehensive Family Dentistry from Infants to Adults"

We Accept Mastercard, Visa and Discover

*100 W. Ross Blvd. *Building 2 *Suite C *Dodge City, Ks.

WEEK OF PRAYER: 40-year ministry in Japan comes full circle

By IMB Staff

"It's going to be one amazing journey."

Carlton Walker's words to his wife more than 40 years ago ring true. "It has been."

When Cornelia Walker was in elementary school, her Girl's Auxiliary group gave an assignment to pick a country and draw its flag and then learn about it.

Cornelia wasn't a great artist, but there was one flag she thought she could manage. Japan's flag was just a red circle on a white background. So, she picked it for her project.

At the time, she never imagined she'd pour over 40 years of her life into loving and serving the people she first learned about for that project.

After she met and married her husband, Carlton, they both felt God's call to serve overseas. They learned there was a need for new missionaries in Japan, as many of the IMB workers who moved there after World War II were retiring.

"I think we both looked at each other and said 'What about us? We can go,'" Cornelia said.

The seeds of that initial willingness to serve have blossomed into decades of fruitful ministry. In a country that is known to be resistant to the gospel and discouraging for many missionaries, Carlton and Cornelia have persevered faithfully.

Will you stop and thank God for the Walkers' obedience to serve overseas and their steadfast presence for four decades? Ask God to send more workers to the fields of Japan.

They arrived in Japan on a

spring evening in 1982 at the peak of cherry blossom season. As they turned into their neighborhood after a long drive from the airport, the street was carpeted in beautiful blossoms, and a crowd of other missionaries had gathered to welcome them.

After they completed language study in Tokyo, they moved to Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost province. Over two decades, they saw Japanese people come to faith in Christ, planted a new church, and trained young pastors who went on to serve faithfully in churches all over Japan.

Ask God for more Japanese churches to have a strong desire to spread the gospel.

After 21 years in Hokkaido, the Walkers moved

to Tokyo. A few years ago, their story in Japan came full circle when they were asked to move back to Hokkaido to mentor a new team of missionaries.

"I am so excited that God has opened doors for new young families and singles to come into the country at a time when it's so needed," Cornelia said.

Just as when they first arrived more than 40 years ago, they are confident God is still at work in Japan.

"We have a tendency to look at those that have served for a while, and we focus on their faithfulness," Carlton said. "But my goodness, the bigger story is God's faithfulness. He's the one that gets the praise, the honor, and the glory."



IMB missionaries Carlton and Cornelia Walker have lived and served in Japan since 1982.

Fleener Funeral Home

Greensburg, Ks. 67054

620-723-2612

www.fleenerfuneralhome.com

email: j.wynn@fleenerfuneralhome.com

J. Wynn Fleener, Funeral Director

Certified Pre-Planning Consultation

Personalized Monument Design

Loss

Continued from page 20

union with Christ make as you grieve? How can His future promises change the way you live today?

When we feel the sting of death, we remember that death has been conquered decisively and eternally by our Savior. When we suffer the pain of grief, we can bring our sorrow to the throne of grace and find God's grace, mercy, and help in our times of trouble (Heb. 4:16). When we struggle to put one foot in front of the other each day,

we find hope and strength as we consider the glory that awaits us with the Lord (1 Peter 1:3-5).

One day, Christ will return, and His victorious kingdom will be consummated in the new heavens and new earth. Looking forward to this consummation reminds us that this pain will not last forever. Christ's return is certain. His victory is complete. In this life, our tears may never dry. But on that day, our God will wipe every tear from our eyes forever. The new heavens and new earth will be even better than Adam and Eve's blissful gar-

den because the threat of sin, evil, sickness, and death will be gone (Rev. 21:1-5).

If our loved one belonged to Christ, we can look forward to being reunited with that loved one someday. But the best reunion of all will be the marriage feast of Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, and His bride, the church. We will be perfectly holy, perfectly joyful, and perfectly satisfied in Him for all eternity. This is our hope this holiday season: because of the redemption accomplished by the incarnate Son of God, we look forward to a glorious end to all our sorrow.

New Hispanic churches find success, Lifeway Research shows

By Aaron Earls

Despite potential barriers within the congregation, the community and the broader culture, new Hispanic churches in the U.S. are reaching new people and welcoming new faces.

Working with 16 denominations or similar groups, Lifeway Research surveyed leaders at almost 300 new Protestant Hispanic church works to gain an understanding of the current landscape. The study, sponsored by Exponential and the Church Planting Leadership Fellowship, follows up on a similar 2019 study.

“A large number of new church works today are Hispanic congregations,” said Jason Stewart, executive director of mobilization at Exponential. “It is important to have an accurate understanding of these congregations and the approaches they are using to allow denominations, church planting networks and sponsor churches to better support these ventures.”

The average new Hispanic church work starts with 31 people in attendance in the first year but grows consistently. By the eighth year, the church sees an average of 85 people at the weekly worship service.

Additionally, new church works are reaching new people. In their first year, the average congregation sees 10 people make a first-time commitment to Jesus. Over the next six years, the average fluctuates between 12 and 14 before reaching 15 in year eight.

“The immediate evangelistic impact of new Hispanic congregations is remarkable,” said Stewart. “As the congregation grows, the number of new commitments to Jesus Christ per attendee begins to decline, but the overall evangelistic effectiveness is consistently strong.”

tently strong.”

Congregational snapshot

Nine in 10 congregants (90 percent) in these churches are Hispanic or Latino. Two in three (65 percent) are first-generation Americans, having been born outside of the United States; a quarter (24 percent) are second-generation, meaning they were born in the United States to at least one parent born elsewhere, and 11 percent are third-generation, having been born in the United States to parents who were also born in the U.S.

Of their pastors, 91 percent are Hispanic or Latino. More than 3 in 4 (77 percent) are first-generation, 12 percent are second-generation and 11 percent are third-generation.

A third (36 percent) of new church works say the largest number of attendees have Mexican origins, 27 percent say more people in their churches identify equally with multiple countries and 11 percent say the plurality of their attendees are from Puerto Rico, while far fewer point to other Latin American nations.

Most pastors of these churches say they are attempting to reach all Hispanic people (63 percent). Around 3 in 10 (29 percent) are aiming for a cross-cultural or multi-ethnic group. Few say they're trying to reach a specific Hispanic group like Mexicans or Cubans (6 percent) or none of these (2 percent).

Half (50 percent) of the new church works are in the three U.S. states with the most Hispanic and Latino people: Texas (25 percent), Florida (15 percent) and California (10 percent).

More than a third of attendees in these congregations (35 percent) are under 30, including 17 percent who are under 18. Another 39 percent are between 30 and 49, while 26 percent are 50 or older. These age demographics are statistically

the same as all U.S. Hispanic Protestant churches, according to a 2022 Lifeway Research survey, and much younger than the average Protestant church in America.

“There is much diversity in Hispanic congregations in the U.S. among both the people and their churches’ ministries,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. “While Latino churchgoer stories vary, they reflect the reach of the Gospel today as they gather in new churches across the country.”

Additionally, most of the attendees are relatively new to Protestant churches. Around 1 in 5 say they previously attended Catholic churches (21 percent). Few attended groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1 percent). Another 1 in 5 never attended church at all (19 percent),

while 16 percent had not attended church for many years before coming to their current church.

Around a third (32 percent) previously attended other Protestant or non-denominational churches, and 10 percent are children born to people who attend the church.

“New Hispanic congregations have many current stories of changed lives, as more than 1 in 3 attendees were not attending church at all before this new church work began. These are exciting ministries,” said McConnell. “It is not surprising that despite many challenges, Hispanic church planters are quick to say, ‘It’s worth it!’”

Cultural complicators

Increased deportations and other cultural changes in the past year have caused some issues for new Hispanic church works.

Half (50 percent) say they have had to address pain and fear in the congregation from changes in government practices. More than a third say in-person attendance declined when undocumented members were afraid to leave home (35 percent) and church finances have suffered when undocumented workers have been unable to work (34 percent).

A third of new Hispanic church works (32 percent) have seen more members of the congregation needing tangible help. More than a quarter say members have moved away (29 percent) and the congregation has been discour-


aged by the disrespectful tone of our culture toward Hispanics (27 percent).

Amid these issues, 38 percent say there has been greater interest among unchurched Hispanics looking for hope, while 16 percent say they haven’t seen any of these changes in their congregation.

“Rapid changes to government practices related to immigration have caused both challenges and opportunities for new Hispanic congregations,” McConnell said. “These churches continue to respond biblically with care,

Continued on page 23

Grace Community Church



**500 W. Ross Blvd.
Dodge City, KS**


(620) 225-5033
Pastor Kirk Larson
Associate Nathan Davis
www.graceccdodge.org
graceccdodge@gmail.com

**We welcome you
to come and
discover God's
Grace.**

SUNDAY
9:30 a.m. Biblical Training for all ages
10:30 a.m. Morning Worship
(Nursery and Children's Church available)
5:00-6:30 p.m. High School Youth

WEDNESDAY
6:30 p.m. Prayer meeting
6:30-8:00 p.m. Middle School Youth group
7:00 p.m. Bible Study

He who has
the Son, has life.
1 John 5:12





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
of Dodge City

SUNDAY SERVICES

8:15 AM 9:30 AM 11:00 AM
Nursery and childcare available during
9:30 and 11 services

**Or Join us ONLINE Every Sunday
anytime after 8:15 a.m.**

For UP TO DATE Changes
check our Website
www.fccdc.com
or our Facebook page

LIFE GROUPS

ADULTS | MEET WEEKLY
Contact the office for more information

**LOVE GOD. LOVE OTHERS.
SERVE THE WORLD.**

711 5th Ave • Dodge City • KS 67801
620.227.8686 • fccdc.com

Continued from page 22

hospitality and practical help for these neighbors and members.”

Effective outreach

Despite potential complications, new Hispanic church works are reaching new people, averaging at least 12 new commitments to Jesus after their first year. These could be attributed to an evangelistic emphasis by the congregations.

When pastors at these congregations are asked what they want their church to emphasize the most, 68 percent say equipping the congregation to share the Gospel with those they talk to. Fewer say inviting people to church to hear the Gospel (13 percent), meeting practical needs in their community (7 percent), being a church for Christians in the community without a church home (6 percent), conducting evangelistic events (3 percent) or none of these (3 percent).

This evangelistic focus is common across all U.S. Protestant Hispanic churches. The 2022 Lifeway Research study found 47 percent saw 10 or more new commitments to Christ in the past year, while fewer than 1 in 10 (9 percent) reported no new commitments.

“It is common for church plants to be highly motivated to reach new people, but new Hispanic congregations are particularly evangelistic in their approach, and they continue this as the congregation matures,” said McConnell.

As part of their outreach, new Hispanic church works turn to a variety of activities. Most say they have continued to use outreach Bible studies (69 percent), fun social events (56 percent), ministry evangelism (54 percent), children’s special events (52 percent) and service projects (51 percent) after the launch of their churches.

Many have also continued to use door-to-door evangelism (41 percent), prayer

walking (33 percent), social or affinity group meetings (33 percent), block parties (30 percent), mail invitations (29 percent) and revival meetings (29 percent).

Worship services

Most (61 percent) new Hispanic church works hold their primary worship service on Sunday mornings, but many offer services on other days and times.

Around 2 in 5 (41 percent) meet on weeknights, and 28 percent meet on Sunday afternoons. Fewer say they hold primary worship services on weekdays (6 percent), Sunday evenings (5 percent), Saturday evenings (4 percent) or Saturday mornings or afternoons (2 percent). Just 1 percent say their primary worship service time varies week to week.

When these congregations gather, 2 in 3 conduct their services entirely in Spanish (65 percent), and 4 percent are all in English. One in 5 (20 percent) are bilingual, while 12 percent have separate services for Spanish, English and/or bilingual.

Most new Hispanic church works (72 percent) plan to keep the language used the same for at least the next year. Almost 1 in 5 (18 percent) plan to move from all Spanish to bilingual or add English translation. Fewer say they are adding other languages (4 percent), moving from bilin-

gual to mostly English (4 percent), moving from bilingual to mostly Spanish (2 percent) or moving from all in English to bilingual or adding Spanish translation (1 percent).

Among those that are not currently bilingual, around 3 in 4 (72 percent) do not offer translation to Spanish or English. Almost a quarter (23 percent) provide translation into English via a headset or in part of the room, while 4 percent offer similar translation into Spanish.

“As they seek to reach people in their community, each new Hispanic congregation determines what languages are needed. This flexibility is also exercised as they find locations to meet that may require them to gather for worship services at times other than preferred times,” said McConnell.

Sources of support

When the new church work first began, 79 percent were receiving funding from church attendees, 63 percent from an affiliated denomination, 43 percent from the church’s lead pastor or staff, 41 percent from a sponsoring or mother church and 25 percent from a group of individual financial supporters recruited by the staff.

On average, the total dollars received from outside sources generally decrease over the first six years of the church’s existence, while contributions from the congregation gener-

ally increase. By the second year, the average church is receiving more from congregants than from those outside the church (\$32,698 internal v. \$15,333 external).

Currently, almost half of new Hispanic church works (47 percent) are financially self-sufficient, including 24 percent that either started that way or became so during their first year. Slightly fewer (45 percent) are not self-sufficient, and 8 percent aren’t sure.

“Average outside financial support totals are relatively small for new Hispanic congregations, making the early work hard and often forcing leaders to have jobs outside the church as well,” said McConnell. “While the typical new Hispanic congregation sees steady growth in attendance, it can be a slower journey to financial self-sufficiency.”

More than a quarter of pastors (29 percent) did not receive financial compensation for their work with the church in the first five years, while 65 percent did receive it. Even among those who received pay, 62 percent say it was not adequate to meet all their and their families’ basic needs.

Four in 5 (79 percent) have worked an outside job at some point since the church started, including 59 percent who have done so the entire time. Most of those (54 percent) say they worked 40 hours or more at

their job away from the church.

More than 4 in 5 pastors at new Hispanic church works with an outside job (84 percent) say it is a financial necessity for their family.

For more information, view the primary report in English or Spanish, the significant factors report, the 2019 v. 2025 comparison report and visit LifewayResearch.com.

Methodology

Lifeway Research conducted the online survey of 292 Hispanic new church works from Sept. 3-Nov. 5, 2025. The study was sponsored by Exponential and the following members of the Church Planting Leadership Fellowship: SEND Network, Evangelical Free Church of America, Church Multiplication Network, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Baptist Missionary Association of America, The Wesleyan Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, Resonate Global Mission, Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, and Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. New church work starters were individually invited by email to participate in either Spanish or English. The invitation and survey

defined “new church works” to include church starts, church mergers, revitalizations, re-starts, Spanish-language congregations within a non-Hispanic church, and new sites for an existing congregation. Most (63 percent) of the new church works are completely new church starts, but others are Spanish-language congregations within a non-Hispanic church (17 percent), a new campus or site of an existing church (6 percent), a re-start of a church (5 percent), a revitalization of an existing church (4 percent) a merger with one or more congregations (1 percent) or something else (4 percent). Up to 4 reminder emails were sent to all who did not respond to the initial invitation, and phone calls were made to five smaller denominations. All survey respondents were either the founding pastor or the current lead pastor of the new church work. Responses were weighted by denomination to more accurately reflect the population. The participating sample is 292 surveys (all in the U.S.), with the number answering varying by question.

HILL TOP HOUSE

Excellent Healthcare...Nutritious Meals
Variety of Activities...Caring Staff


•Long & Short Term Skilled Nursing Facility
•Assisted Living Apartments
Not-For-Profit Organization

Medicare and Medicaid approved



620-826-3202
505 W. Elm Bucklin, KS

Bucklin Bible Fellowship Church
204 South Main St. Bucklin, KS
620-826-3564



Reaching People with God's love through His word

Sunday School (adults & children).....9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service.....10:45 a.m.

For Jason and Ty Simpson, trusting God became the real game plan



Alabama quarterback Ty Simpson led the Crimson Tide to a 37-20 victory over Tennessee Oct. 18.

By Scott Barkley

Jason Simpson remembers the “aha” moment for his son, Ty.

It was three springs ago, in '23. Jason had driven down from Martin, Tenn., where he is in his 20th season coaching UT Martin, to Tuscaloosa, Ala. Ty had signed to play for Alabama after a 5-Star high school career and, with the Heisman winner Bryce Young now in the NFL, felt it had become his time to start under center for the Crimson Tide.

Ty was tested in this practice, though. He made a mistake. Offensive coordinator Tommy Rees made his displeasure loud and obvious for all.

Young Ty was an ever-present shadow of his dad while growing up around the UT Martin football program. Photo courtesy of Simpson family.

“I could see the frustration on his face,” Jason remembers. “He was down and didn’t have a whole lot to say. God put it on my heart that this wasn’t a time to talk about football.”

At Ty’s apartment, father turned to son and asked a question.

“Hey, how is your walk with Christ right now?”

Youth, and success

Simpson is a coach not shy to talk about his faith. A member of First Baptist Church in Martin, he has served as a deacon, taught college ministry classes and spoken at church organiza-

tions.

He also isn’t unfamiliar with the pressures of being a quarterback. Jason went to Mississippi State as one during the Rocky Felker and Jackie Sherril years (yes, he was there for Sherril’s team lesson involving livestock – IYKYK). He ended up transferring to Southern Miss, where he played baseball for the Golden Eagles.

Simpson was an assistant coach at Jacksonville State, Texas State and UT Chattanooga before getting the head coaching nod at UT Martin in 2006. All he did that first season was go 9-3, win the Ohio Valley Conference title, qualify for the FCS playoffs for the first time in school history, be named OVC Coach of the Year and become a finalist for Eddie Robinson FCS Coach of the Year.

“I’m 34 years old and thinking I’ve got this thing figured out,” he said. “I’ll be the head coach at Notre Dame in a couple of years.”

But that didn’t happen. There were options here and there, but they didn’t feel right. Still, the plan wasn’t to be in the same place for 20 years. Like it would for his son years later, anxiety would set in because the big step never materialized.

But other things took shape. He put down roots. Ty, his sister Emma (a UTM sophomore) and little brother Graham (a high school sophomore quarterback with offers from Bama, Ole

Miss, Oregon and Miami) grew up in the same house. Simpson got to coach Little League. He missed only two of Ty’s high school games.

“The anxiety left me when God put something in my heart,” Simpson remembered. “He said, ‘You may only coach in front of 2,000 people sometimes in Martin, Tennessee, but I’m giving you 100 kids in the building you’ll see every day. You get to have a spiritual influence on them.”

“This is your path.”

High school success

Ty was athletic and a stand-out in whatever sport he tried.

By the time he was in eighth grade, offers came. Jeremy Pruitt wanted Jason and Ty in Knoxville. Jim Harbaugh wanted Ty to suit up for Michigan.

The offers kept piling up during his junior season. Ty asked Jason why he didn’t have an offer from UTM yet to go with those from all the big-time schools.

“I would joke with him and say, ‘You’re not coachable,’” laughed Jason. ““You couldn’t play for me.””

Ty eventually finagled a deal – if he threw for 300 yards and ran for 200 in the same game, would that make him Skyhawk

material?

Jason agreed, and of course, Ty did just that to earn his UT Martin offer.

Ty led Westview High in Martin to the 2A state championship his senior year while being named the Tennessee Gatorade Player of the Year. On signing day, a UTM hat joined those from Alabama, Clemson, Ole Miss and Tennessee. During his announcement, Ty took a brief glance in the direction of the Martin cap before reaching to other side for the crimson one.

Learning to trust

“How is your walk with Christ right now?”

In that moment, Ty told The Walk Podcast, he didn’t know what to do.

“[This was] the game that I love [and] I wasn’t playing very good,” Ty said.

Jason’s question caught him off guard, but it made him think. He hadn’t been trusting God. Talking with him and understanding that there was a plan. This was the plan.

Ty prayed that night for the anxiety to go. Let him play the game he loved to honor the

Lord.

This summer, Ty was named QB1 for the Tide in a stick-it-out story one sees less and less in the portal era. After an opening-game loss to Florida State, Bama reeled off eight wins in a row, including four straight weeks against ranked opponents, to rise to No. 4 in the rankings. He had an off day on Nov. 5 against Oklahoma, as three turnovers led to 17 points in the 23-21 loss to the Sooners.

Ty has thrown for 2,934 yards this season, with 22 touchdowns to only four interceptions. Projections say he could be a top 5 draft pick in next spring’s NFL draft.

God gave Jason Simpson a platform in Martin, Tenn. Ty’s became somewhere else.

“I told Ty that if he ever became the starter at Alabama, he was going to be in front of a hundred thousand people. When a microphone got in his face, he would be speaking to millions. I told him that if he didn’t take that opportunity to honor God, he’d be missing out. God wants to honor you with those blessings.”



Ty Simpson offers a prayer on the field Oct. 18.

Where do you wanna eat?

I DON'T CARE

FAMILY RESTAURANT AND SPORTS BAR

NOW OPEN...Serving Full Menu!

We are a family restaurant and sports bar. We offer daily specials. We have the NFL ticket for all games. We have a friendly, hometown atmosphere, awesome staff & cold, cold beer. One of our specialties is Chicken Fried Steak.

1510 W. Spruce, Dodge City, Ks. Ph. 620-371-6061