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ISSUE EIGHTY-FOUR

MAKE YOUR

# MOVE

MOVE

MOVE

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NOVEMBER 2020-JANUARY 2021

WORD ON THE STREET  
Street Level Ministries' Magazine

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# Word on the Street

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As a publication of Street Level Ministries, check out how you can become a part of it by visiting [streetlevelministries.com](http://streetlevelministries.com).

Word on the Street (WOTS) Magazine is written, laid out, and printed by young adults who love Jesus and want to write about God, life, and college. We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking as it encourages you to pursue a strong relationship with Jesus.

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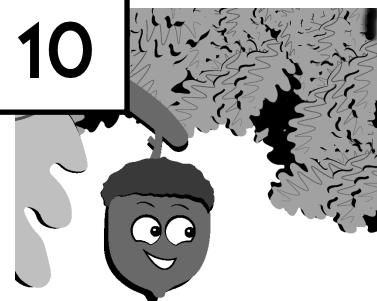
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# WINTER DORM Refresh

## QUICK & CHEAP IDEAS TO ORGANIZE YOUR DORM SPACE

Congratulations! You've survived your first few months of dorm living, but with winter around the corner and the dread of the cold upon us, it might be time to spruce things up in that dorm room of yours. Here are a couple penny-pinching space-saver and decor ideas to get your mind off the snow.

**BASKET CENTRAL** - Goodwill is always full of cheap baskets of different shapes and sizes. Use them for storage or turn them on their side and hang on the wall with Command strips to hold decor, books, or your phone while charging. Pick up some S-hooks at Ace Hardware to hang your keys from the bottom to make use of vertical space!

**DIY DRY ERASE BOARD** - Pick up a frame from the Dollar Store or Goodwill and put blank or patterned paper in it. Write on the glass with a dry erase marker for a simple dry erase board.

**SODA CAN TOP HANGERS** - Make use of your minimal closet space by saving your pop tabs and putting them on your hangers for more hooks to hang from. Nothing needed but a trip to the vending machine.

**EMPTY CAN & CONTACT PAPER** - Finished with those Spaghetti-o's? Rip off the label, wash the thing, and cover with contact paper for a quick and easy pencil cup. Sure, we did this in second grade and gave it to Mom for Mother's Day...but she's still using it, isn't she? Clean out empty salsa jars and use them for storage, too.

**BINDER CLIP CORD ORGANIZING** - Secure binder clips to your desk and feed your charging cords through the handle. You can also wrap your headphones around the handle once it's closed so they don't tangle.

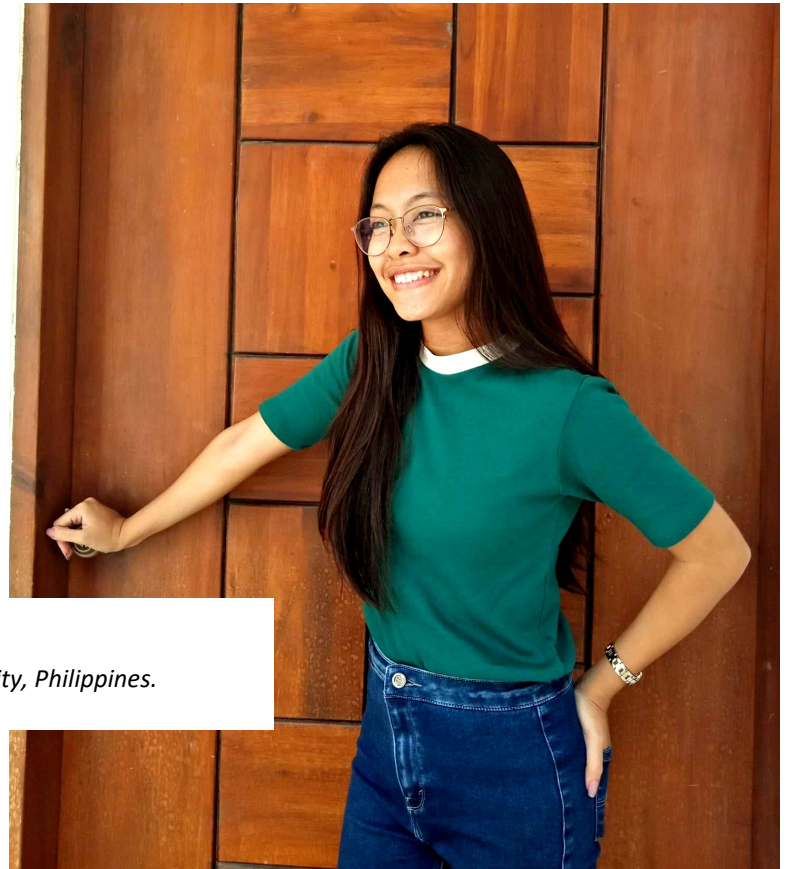
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# One girl's TRUE STORY

## DISCOVERING THAT EVEN SICKNESS CAN BE USED BY GOD

*This testimony is from Atheena, a member of  
Street Level Ministries in Cebu City, Philippines.*



**W**hen I was younger, I was always afraid that at any moment I would end up lying in a hospital bed again. I have a low immune system, so I easily got coughs and colds. I also have asthma, and it triggered my gastritis to the point that my parents would bring me to the hospital maybe two or three times a year. It caused me to question why I had to go through this pain all the time.

As a child, my mother always reminded me to have time with God and pray, and my father would drag me out of bed to go to church. In grade school I was taught Christian values, and I kept being reminded that God plays a big part in our lives. However, my relationship with Him was so unsteady. I knew God existed, but that was it. I did not truly believe in Him. God always reached out to me, extending His help, but I did not respond because I doubted Him a lot and kept complaining about the state of my life.

When I was 15, I was really sick and in deep pain, and the doctor told my parents that I should just stay at home. When I got back from the doctor's office, I found myself crying aloud to God because I was at the lowest point I had ever been. Then suddenly I heard my mother sing like she always does whenever I am sick, singing her heart out praising God. I had a different feeling this time, as if God was talking to me through those songs. She sang, "God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way for me..." and "Heal me, oh Lord, and I will be healed. Save me, and I will be saved..." Those lines hit me deeply. It was very comforting and overwhelming. I stopped whining and started talking; I opened up to Him and described how I felt. I continued crying that night and felt something was holding me tight. It was so amazingly indescribable.

All this time I thought I was just physically ill and didn't realize that I was also spiritually ill. The moment I let God into my life

and accepted Him as my Lord and Savior, everything went upside down. My ailing soul was longing for Him, and I found that in Christ Jesus I am healed. He might do things in a painful way from the human perspective, but it is one of the ways He shows me that I need Him and should rely on Him. And when I did, I was finally assured that I am not forsaken; He always has my back.

It's amazing how things changed from the moment I put my faith in Him. Since then, I am healthier physically and spiritually, and I no longer need to go the hospital routinely. Though I still get sick easily, I am not the same, frail person anymore. I used to get anxious easily whenever I faced problems, mainly when things wouldn't turn out the way I expected them to. For example, during my third year of college studying architecture, things were getting out of hand. Even though I worked hard to finish my schoolwork before the deadlines, my grades were still not good, and I received discouraging comments from my instructors. God's word in Philippians 4:6 helped me through this time: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (NIV). Instead of being crushed by it, I asked for God's help and leaned on Him to guide me through it.

Today I am 21 years old preparing for an apprenticeship after graduation. I am so grateful for everything that has happened, including the trials, because I worry less now that I have witnessed how God works through things when you just ask Him and let Him be in control of your life. I am still working on my relationship with God and praying that I will always consistently seek Him.

- Atheena



# INSTAGRAM-ABLE

*on campus*

## STUCK ON CAMPUS? DISCOVER ITS HIDDEN CHARMS WITH A DIY PHOTO TOUR

**T**here are many Instagram-able spots on the UW-Stout campus if you frame it right. With a bit of style and creativity, campus can be your studio space. Here is a short list of places on campus for a mini photoshoot. For the best results, take a friend, wear something colorful or bold, think outside of the box for posing and angles, and make sure to pay attention to what is inside of your frame (and what you can exclude). The possibilities are endless!

### **PINK STAIRWELL** (Jarvis)

A pop of color is everything. Pose on the stairs and play around with angles for the best outcomes.

### **WINDOW EXPOSURE** (Jarvis)

Walls of windows can be tricky, but if you can manage your exposure there is sure to be a good shot.

### **BALCONY ANGLES** (Micheels)

Get creative with the number of angles you can catch from the balcony. Above or below.

### **FURLONG GALLERY** (Micheels)

### **& GALLERY 209** (Applied Arts)

If that doesn't work out, try one of these galleries; the shows are always changing, which means more opportunity for something fresh.

### **CLOCK TOWER VIEWS** (Fryklund Hall)

UW-Stout is known for its famous clock tower. Every student will take a picture of this tower at some point, so why not get it from the best angles? From the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, there are giant windows with seat-like ledges, perfect for striking a pose.

### **OLD ARCHITECTURE** (Harvey Hall)

Take a walk-through Harvey. There are plenty of photo ops on your way to class.



# LIVING IN FREEDOM

## Bursting Out of the Darkness of Spiritual Isolation

The pandemic brings us all back to our box. It makes us think more about ourselves—our safety, our survival, and our plans. Though it helps us contemplate our past actions and our deepest regrets, it also pulls us away from communicating with others.

### Fading into Darkness

There are moments in life when it's hard to open up and say what's on our minds and in our hearts. It can be difficult to embrace what's outside our comfort zone. Courage fades into the shadows and fear takes center stage. When we give in to fear, we embrace what goes with it: isolation.

Isolation can be merely physical, but it can also be something much deeper, something spiritual. When we give in to fear, lies, shame, and guilt, we are on the fast track to spiritual isolation. To protect ourselves, we settle into our selfish ways and embrace the false security of our fragile shells. We reject God's calling on our lives and His command to live out a dynamic faith with other people. The less of ourselves that we share with other people, the darker our lives become.

### Embracing the Light

The Bible commands us to meet regularly with other Christians.<sup>1</sup> If we obey this command, we can overcome challenges and help each other out of the dark. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken" (NLT). If wrapped up in ourselves, we start to think we're better than others because the more we insist on our independence, the lonelier and weaker we become. But if we have someone to grab our hands when we fall,



we can keep each other steady. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."<sup>2</sup> In Ephesians 5:8, the Apostle Paul reminded the believers, "At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." How can we walk together as children of light if we're isolated from each other? When we reject our selfish and petty fears, we can embrace the light...together.

**"THE MORE WE INSIST ON OUR INDEPENDENCE, THE LONELIER AND WEAKER WE BECOME."**

### Living in Freedom

When we're spiritually isolated, we get weighed down with guilt, but the Bible tells us that fight is over. The battle was won when Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Grace wins... every time. God's mercy is new every morning.<sup>3</sup> Those things in the past that keep us from living as free can't hold us down when we walk in the light. Nothing can separate us from God's love, not even our guilt.<sup>4</sup>

What will you do with the freedom that is found in walking in the light? Will you embrace the Bible's command to carry your brother's burdens? It may sound heroic, but that's what Jesus did, and Christians are called to be like Jesus. He didn't isolate Himself while He was here on earth. He was with people of different personalities and attitudes. If we strive to be like Him, the one who "eats with tax collectors and sinners," God will break your fragile shell, bring you out of the darkness, and into His light.<sup>5</sup> Let Him set you free from the prison of your spiritual isolation.

*"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1*

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:25 <sup>2</sup> John 8:12 <sup>3</sup> Lamentations 3:23 <sup>4</sup> Romans 8:39  
<sup>5</sup> Mark 2:16



# As A Matter Of Fact **WHAT IS PRAYER?**



**A**t times Christianity can be confusing. When you start to read the Bible there can be names of people and places you have never heard before. There will be words that have little to no meaning outside of the world of faith. And even more confusing, there are words that you do know, but when they are carried over to Christianity they have an even greater depth of meaning than you ever realized before. Knowing that navigating concepts within Christianity can at times be overwhelming, *Word on the Street* is going back to the basics to tackle common questions. These are questions that are not only integral for the new believer, but also for the seasoned Christian and anyone who is skeptical about the Christian faith. They are truths that you never graduate from. In this issue, we are going to discuss prayer.

**“WE WERE DESIGNED FOR A DEEP  
DEPENDENCE UPON GOD, AND  
PRAYER IS PART OF THAT INTIMACY.”**

## **MISCONCEPTIONS OF PRAYER**

Everyone has heard of it. Most have practiced some form of it. However, there is a lot of confusion surrounding prayer. Is it like a lucky rabbit's foot, an ultimate genie, a ritual item we check off our "Get Into Heaven" list, or is it just reciting some words we learned in confirmation class? And who do we even pray to? Is it Mary, one of the saints, or is it talking to an imaginary friend? The truth is, these perceptions obscure the fact that it is a lot simpler than we might believe. It is simply talking with and hearing from, God.

## **REAL DEPTH**

We were designed for a deep dependence upon God (John 15:4), and prayer is part of that intimacy. You can go to Him at any time, just like you might call one of your parents to tell them about your day. Have you ever noticed that sometimes in the Bible God refers to Himself as Father (Matthew 6:9)? Or refers to us as sons (Ephesians 1:5)? Prayer is an aspect of a relationship between a perfect Father (God) and an imperfect, sometimes rebellious, adopted kid (Christians). It's exclusive to those who have been, and continue to be, honest with God in confessing our wrongs (sin) and reaching out Him as the only One who can transform and redeem us. But it doesn't stop there. Prayer is like a phone call with God where the minutes never run out. It's not like we redial only when there is an emergency. God invites us to go throughout our day with Him (1 Thessalonians 5:17); thanking Him, worshipping Him, talking through life situations, asking of needs, etc. A lot of times we overcomplicate it, though. In simple terms, prayer is just part of the relationship; it's talking to God. Now the question is, are we willing to listen?

## **GOOD CONNECTION**

Prayer is not a means to a smooth, comfortable life. Admittedly, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:14) does have that ultimate genie vibe at first glance. But, the key point of that verse is "in my name," meaning in His will. The truth is, God's will isn't always smooth or comfortable (Jeremiah 7:27, Luke 9:58). But keep in mind, for Christians, God is both the King and Lord of our lives, as well as a close and personal Father who invites His kids into His presence. The thing is, real prayer doesn't mean we can't be honest with Him, nor does it mean we can't ask Him for our wants. The beauty of prayer is that we get to work through those life situations with God (Luke 22:41-44). We can go to Him trusting that He knows what is best, He takes care of his own (Romans 8:28), and He can do the impossible (Matthew 17:20). Prayer expresses not only our desperate need of God, but that we actually want God actively involved in our lives and in the lives of those around us. That's true prayer. It's a part of the deep and real relationship with the One who we were created for.

# the “YOU DO YOU” mentality



## THE SELF-DECEPTION OF HUMAN NATURE

Imagine this: you have been offered a ticket to board a plane that is going on a one-way trip to paradise. There is no financial cost to go on the trip, and you actually didn't even do anything to earn your invitation. But when you arrive at the airport and are mere seconds away from boarding the plane, you read a sign that says something unappealing enough to make you turn around and go home: "PRICE OF ADMISSION: DEATH TO SELF."

This plane ticket example is a very rudimentary analogy of what we are all offered by God through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ: a free invitation to salvation and an eternity spent with Him in heaven. This is possible because Jesus lived a sinless life and died in order to purchase us to be His own people.<sup>1</sup> That's right—you were intentionally purchased by Jesus.

That all sounds great, but what's the catch?

There isn't a "catch" on God's end, but for us, it's this: our sinful human nature makes us self-driven, self-worshipping, and self-centered. This is why a "You do you" mindset is so appealing to us. The cousins of the phrase "You do you" are expressions like "Follow your heart," "Be true to yourself," and "Love yourself." Adopting these mentalities is tricky business for Christians. Listening to our hearts and following our self-motivated desires is deeply rooted within us because it is part of our old, original nature.

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked" (NLT). This verse warns us

that putting our personal desires and plans for our lives above God's plans is a futile effort because we will always choose selfishly. Instead, we are called to adopt the mindset presented in Philippians 3:8 that counts everything as worthless garbage when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus.

**“LISTENING TO YOUR OWN HEART AND FOLLOWING YOUR OWN SELF-MOTIVATED DESIRES ARE SOME OF THE MOST UNWISE THINGS A CHRISTIAN CAN DO.”**

This is an incredibly intimidating concept for our minds to understand, but there is hope for the Christian. We are told that, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there" (Galatians 5:24, NLT). We don't follow a God who will leave us for dead; we follow a God that is constantly working in us and giving us the desire to obey Him.<sup>2</sup>

Waiting in line only to read the dreaded "price of admission" sign is scary until you hear what is waiting for you at the plane's destination. Jesus says that, "If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life" (Matthew 16:25, NLT). When we are able to trade our self-serving mindsets for one that strives to follow Jesus and put Him first, it's only the beginning of what promises to be an amazing journey.

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 1:14 <sup>2</sup> Philippians 2:13





## THE GIGANTIC ADVENTURE OF A TINY ACORN

Once upon a time, there was a tiny green acorn growing on the smallest branch of Mighty Mother Oak. As he bobbed in the wind and danced among her leaves, he admired his beautiful mother. She was enormous, sturdy, and useful. Her noble presence attracted folk from across the countryside. Children would come play on her branches, travelers would lean against her trunk, and happy families would rest in her shade. She was greatly loved, and hardly ever alone. The tiny acorn dreamed of the day when he'd be a significant giant, just like her.

Then, that day seemed to arrive. It was autumn and his mother's leaves had all blushed scarlet. A stiff wind blew and the acorn, who had grown robust and brown after a summer's sunshine, was released from his home among her branches. He soared through the air triumphantly, barely able to contain his excitement of what was to come. What would it be like to sprout roots? How many branches would he have? Would he even possibly become a mightier oak than his great mother?

The sharp pain of impact quickly interrupted his thoughts. He bounced and spun in a flurry down from his mother's hill, smacking his cap on rocks and scuffing his shell over cracked ground. Finally, he rolled to a stop. On top of aching all over, he suddenly realized that he was also completely alone. The little acorn was shocked. In his dreams of becoming great, pain certainly hadn't been part of the plan.

The following days were hot, and the sun baked down on him. All he could see was bugs and dirt and stiff blades of boring grass. He grew impatient. He was lonely. He wondered how long this all was going to take.

One day, he heard shuffling in the grass. Abruptly, the sniffing snout of a squirrel was upon him. Startled, he tried to shoo the squirrel, but squirrels are quite hard to shoo when you're only an acorn. Paws clutched at his sides, and before he knew it, he was rocketing through the grass.

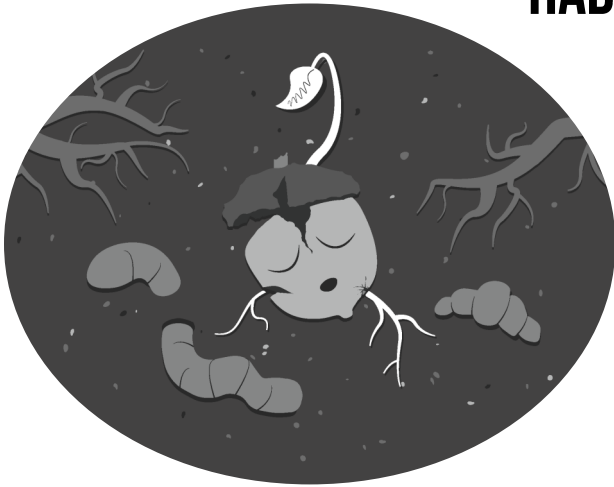
Irritation melted into excitement as a thought blossomed in the acorn's mind. He wondered if this furry fellow had been sent to help him along in his quest of becoming mighty. The more he considered it, the more he became certain. The acorn felt more hopeful about his future than ever, and he was confident that nothing could spoil his mood.

Coming to an abrupt stop, the squirrel chucked him to the ground, turned its rump to his face and began digging in a frenzy. The acorn nearly started to laugh at how silly squirrels can be. He tried to move away from the bushy, swishing tail, but before he could manage the animal spun around again, apprehended him and shoved him deep into the black earth. Paw-fuls of soil started to spray into the hole and the acorn panicked as he realized that he was being buried alive. He tried to scream for help, but it's quite hard to scream when you're only an acorn.

The squirrel's chittery chirps and labored puffs became more and more muffled as the hole was filled up. Finally, the horrified oak nut was entirely entombed in dirt and all was frightfully quiet. His hopes were completely shattered. If acorns could cry he would have unleashed a flood. But they can't. So, he mourned in silence as worms slithered around him, burrowing deep to escape the coming cold of winter.



# “IN HIS DREAMS OF BECOMING GREAT, PAIN CERTAINLY HADN’T BEEN PART OF THE PLAN.”



After indulging in a long spell of self-pity, he tried his best to accept his own death with some nobility. He resigned himself to be forever tiny, unuseful, and forgotten. He hardened into a gray husk, and for the first time in his life he felt nothing.

Up above, a thick blanket of snow soon covered his unmarked grave. The ground froze around him. For months he only existed, not fully asleep or awake, mummified deep in the icy mud.

Until one day, a warm wind was sent to melt the world once again. Frigid water trickled down, thawing his cap and shell. Before he could get around to ignoring the sensation, something inside him stirred. His mind cleared for a moment to take note of this unusual feeling. Then, something inside him twisted horribly. Now he was fully awake. His insides started to wriggle and writhe about with an ever-increasing intensity. Soon, he was in the worst agony of his life.

The little Acorn wanted to wail. He wanted to be back with his mother, bobbing in her branches. He wanted the sunshine back. He wanted his dreams back. He would have even gone back to be with the stupid squirrel, anything but suffering this horrible pain all alone in the dark.

Pressure built up inside him. He felt like he was going to burst. Fresh alarm overtook him as his sides finally split open with a singular sharp crack. The torment was nearly unbearable as alien arms and legs twisted out in all directions, tearing through the dirt.

Suddenly, his grave was much too small. He felt stooped over and cramped up. He shifted, shrugging new shoulders and raising what seemed to be a head, up, up, until his crown was just beneath the surface of the ground. One final stretch, and he broke through.

He could see the sun again. He could hear birds. He smelled fresh spring air. The worst of his discomfort melted away, leaving only new sore limbs rooted in dirt. The little acorn was stunned. Much to his own surprise, it seemed as if his season of horror had finally passed. A new chapter was beginning. He had come back from the dead.

Over the coming weeks, he came to understand everything more fully. He truly was no longer an acorn. Buds started to unfold, his slender stem grew strong, and he could barely believe that he had actually become the tiniest of trees. He was well on his way to becoming mighty. His transformation had just been much different than what he had expected. Eventually, he was able to accept that every ounce of his pain was very necessary. By the time he had become big enough to offer shade to a squirrel, he was even thankful for it.

*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!*

2 Corinthians 4:16-17





**MAKE YOUR**

**MOVE**

MOVE

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**LEARNING OBEDIENCE STARTS NOW AND PAVES  
THE WAY FOR A LIFE LIVED WITH PURPOSE**

I remember having a conversation with a group of friends in college about what life would be like after graduation when one friend asked the group, "Who among us do you guys think would be first to become rich?" Another friend pointed her finger at me, and they all exclaimed my name simultaneously. Looking back on this now, I can see why they all thought that. Because at first, college was all about getting my degree to get a high paying job. Little did I realize that college isn't just a financial stepping stone or a life upgrade. Rather, it should be an incredibly formative time to dig into God's specific mission for your life, and it starts now, not after college.

#### **DISCOVERING PURPOSE**

What is your purpose? If you don't know, how do you find out? Is it possible to know what you were created for even as a young adult? It is easy to go along with what everyone else is busying themselves with instead of going against the flow to find the bigger picture. We try to fit in because we are afraid of what people will think of us. We excuse ourselves from big responsibilities, especially while in college, because we think we're too young. But in truth, this weakens our ability to face all the challenges that will inevitably come our way. In the end, we lose the drive to find the real meaning of our existence because of too many excuses and reasons not to. We've taken the bait.

To be honest with you, I was in that same mindset the first couple of years in college even though, to my friends, I was going places. But that's because I was going in the direction where I thought life was found. I thought that it would be meaningful if I did it my way while disregarding obvious issues that stole my attention from what truly mattered. There came a time when I doubted the purpose of life – whether it was truly a gift from God. It is clear now, however, that God was watching over my brokenness and knew every pain I was experiencing. In my first few years of college, God was preparing me for a whole new way of experiencing college. Eventually I crossed paths with an international Christian organization, Street Level Ministries, which paved the way for my

# “ENDURANCE IS SHOWING UP DESPITE THE HARDSHIPS.”

knowledge of God. It was then that I discovered that I can be who God wants me to be and let Him use me in any way, even as a student. Life is not waiting for the good stuff that supposedly follows college: a career, house, family. God has a plan for what I'm doing right now.

## THE BEGINNING OF SAYING YES

Life began to start making more sense once I slowly allowed God to enter into it. I experienced a turnaround where my sole drive wasn't just academic anymore. Instead, I was getting excited about what the day held in the hands of God.

Having a busy schedule, living with different people in our first apartment, or being too inexperienced is not a hindrance to serving God as a young adult. Though we often hide behind those excuses. Every 24 hours, our actions portray what our priority was that particular day. I remember one time when I had to choose between saying no to traveling back home for the weekend or saying yes to a Friday night Bible discussion. Saying no to say yes to other things can be hard sometimes, but God is going to use what might seem like a roadblock so we can learn to choose Him over our own desires.

Being faithful in the small things today is how a person shows their willingness to surrender himself to an authority, which is what it means to obey God. Every university or workplace has a list of rules and regulations for everyone to follow, like encouraging everyone to show up on time and meet deadlines. Obeying one simple rule develops our perseverance and gets us ready for the “bigger stuff” God might have for us down the road.

These crossroads show up in small ways. One time I had to firmly decide whether I would complete a school project or procrastinate for the rest of the weekend. It was so easy to daydream about avoiding the project, but in the end, it came down to asking myself whether I would simply do what I knew to do. I thought, “Am I going to meet the deadline for this submission or am I going to ignore it?” It is tempting to separate ourselves from tasks like classwork or work deadlines and think it has nothing to do with our walk with God, but that is a lie. Everything we do affects our walk with God, and it affects those around us too.

Even procrastination is disobedience. James 4:17 says, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” We are all guilty of it, and the truth is we are not perfect like God is. But God weighs the heart, and He

knows who is willing to obey Him. Fortunately, He's patient when we fail in this area because He desires to grow us so that we become more like Him.

Being obedient to God is part of surrendering to God, something the prophets, apostles, and disciples all had to experience. Abraham left his homeland in obedience to God's command; David became a great king after his obedience to God's calling; Ruth showed incredible faith in obedience to God's promise; and Mary, the mother of Jesus, humbled herself in obedience to God's great message. We should sit up and take note of these biblical characters, especially considering that they weren't ancient superheroes. They were everyday men and women that, through their obedience, God used greatly. This same condition applies today. He uses every weak person, poor or rich, young or old, who takes a small step of obedience to Him.

## THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

One way of telling if a person is obedient is if he consistently shows up. No matter how hard the things that life may throw at him, he still shows up. Endurance is showing up despite the hardship. Facing project deadlines, exams, report presentations, being a student leader, and combating personal and financial problems aren't easy, but that is how you deal with responsibilities as a student.

The organization I mentioned earlier, Street Level Ministries, encourages its members to follow Jesus in simple ways while in college. Serving in this ministry while pursuing my architecture degree was such a beautiful adventure to me, and I enjoyed it, but it was *hard*. Every event that I was a part of was an open door to step out and see how God might work through it. In these situations, I faced nerve-racking decision to start, or not start, a conversation with someone, or hand out a copy of this magazine to a group of college students, or just keep it to myself.

As I was learning architecture, God put me in a position where I could be creative in both designing buildings and impacting the world around me. Every step we take in obedience to God often has a dual purpose because He's not just looking out for our interests now, but also for our future, and for that matter, the interests of everyone around us. Most of the time when we can't see past an inch in front of us, God is working in us an outcome that we often may never understand fully on this side of heaven.



# “ONE SIMPLE ACT OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD, THAT BUILDS ON ANOTHER, REVEALS THE PURPOSE HE HAS FOR YOU.”

When I handed out a magazine, or took the time to listen to a fellow student rather than rushing on with my own studies, I didn't know what the outcome was, but God did. Every difficult decision-making situation is a learning experience from God, calling us to a deeper dependence on Him. Rather than asking why all the time, He wants us to obey and trust Him because He alone has our best interests in mind. We simply don't have His foresight and knowledge, or for that matter, His same love for others.

Some people ask me, "Why does it seem like you have so much time for everything you do?" If we let God handle our lives, He will ultimately put everything into order. The power of showing up to do what God has called you to that day, that hour, that year, despite how uncomfortable it is, will result in experiencing true inner joy. The weight of figuring it all out on your own vanishes when you're free to simply follow Him.

Experiencing radical changes in our lives comes through total surrender to God. As Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). The true meaning of life is unfolded by the One who created us. He made each of us on purpose for a specific mission. Every piece of blessing or skill that we receive are gifts to be used for the mission we are created for.

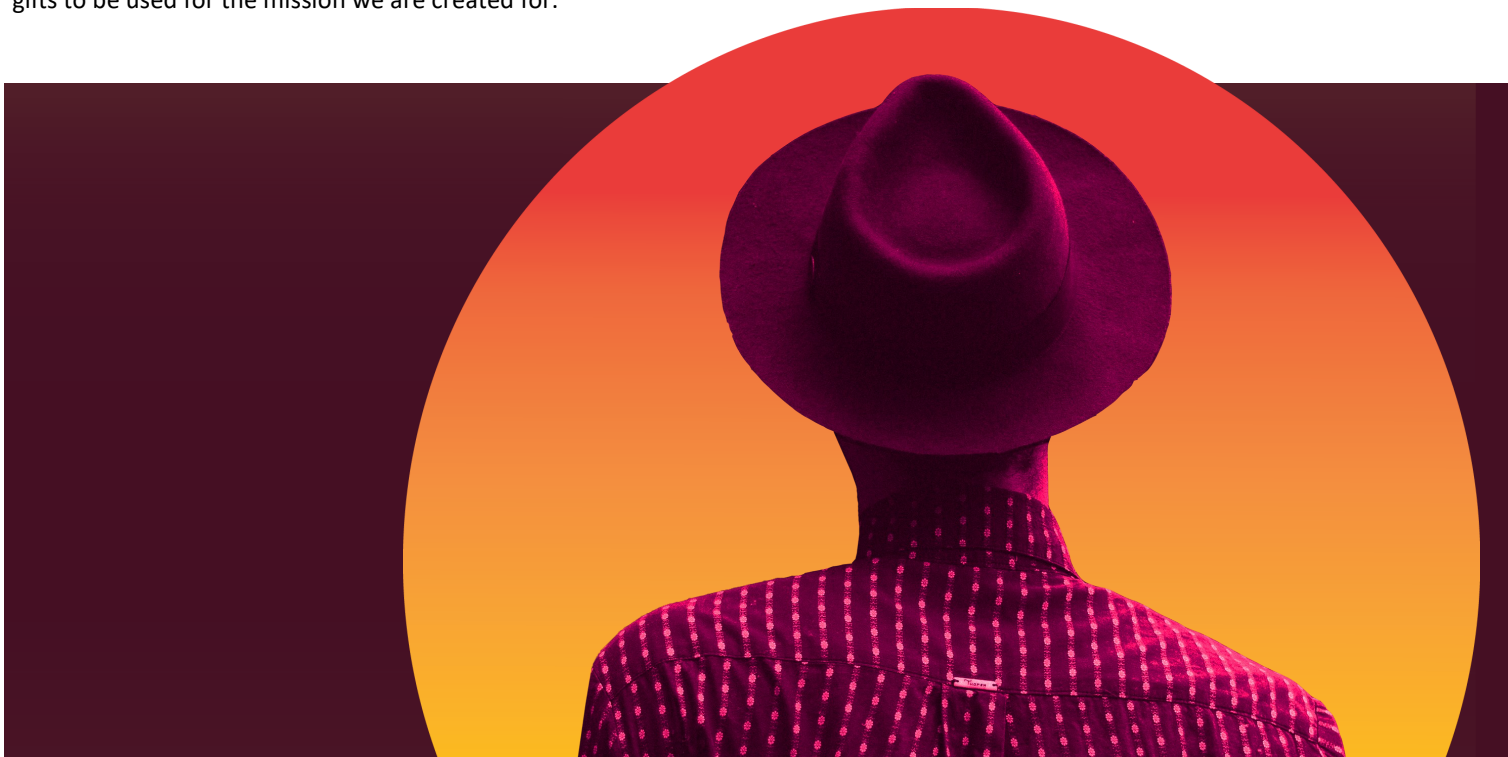
## MAKING A MOVE FOR JESUS

Being a young adult doesn't have to simply be a spin cycle of attending class, working long hours, taking exams, joining clubs, checking off experiences like trips to the lake, and then graduating on to a career, family, and house. Without God at the center of all of it, it's safe to say that your life will be wasted, no matter what age you are. However, one simple act of obedience to God that builds on another reveals the purpose He has for you. It's crazy amazing how being a part of a Christian community, even as a college student, encouraged me to step beyond what I thought was normal because it wasn't something obvious or glamorous. It was simply showing up every week and to every event with a group of Christians to see what God would do. Every opportunity forged by the commitment I had with God strengthened my relationship with Him and those around me.

Before I started writing this, I asked God with hope and trust that whoever reads this would discover that we are all created for a specific mission and purpose, but it doesn't just fall from the sky. It starts in shaky obedience, in simple trust, and making a move to go out and do something. No matter what you have done, where you came from, or how young or old you are, God has already something prepared for you. Will you make your move?

*"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Ephesians 2:10



# GOD WANTS YOU TO THINK

## NAVIGATING DECISIONS IN A HOSTILE WORLD



**C**hristians need to be on guard. How are we to navigate the digital age of abundant information we live in where the click-bait culture of shocking headlines shapes us more than we realize? Every ad on Instagram and Facebook, every influencer, celebrity, teacher, and peer group, and every company and politician is subtly nudging us to “buy-in”. How are we to sift through the misinformation we’re bombarded with daily? How are we to think for ourselves instead of letting others do our thinking for us?

One way you can do this is to disengage entirely. Throw away your technology, and don’t get informed about any world topics or news. Isolate your brain from all information for fear of choosing the wrong side. Block every ad, and don’t read into the history of any product, person, or ideal. But this isn’t recommended, of course, and it’s quite close to impossible anyway.

Another option is to swing to the other extreme. Read everything about everything. Analytically read all the information that comes your way, and then be informed on

**“GOD HAS GIVEN THE CHRISTIAN THE LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, TO THINK THROUGH BOTH SIDES OF AN ISSUE.”**

who wrote it, who published it, who paid for it, and then study every angle of all other opposing and aligning viewpoints before concluding for yourself. It’d be exhausting to do this, and again, close to impossible.

For the Christian, the answer is somewhere in the middle. It’s good to limit the amount of information you consume, but it’s good to have an idea of where it came from. To think for yourself does not mean to chase extremes unnecessarily, but to look at what’s presented to you and stop and think. When you think through the implications of both sides and follow that line of thinking beyond where you typically might, your response will be informed not by your feelings, but by the truth. Like chess, thinking a few moves ahead and weighing consequences will aid you greatly. The Holy Spirit gives us clarity when we ask Him: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:15, NKJV). Pray for discernment in all matters.

God has given the Christian the liberty of conscience, to think through both sides of an issue. The mark of a Christian isn’t impulsivity; it’s acting on what aligns best with His biblical, scriptural principles, and moving forward with a decision. You can also ask people you trust what their thoughts are on an issue, which is part of the reason God commands us to meet regularly with other Christians (Hebrew 10:25). By being part of a biblical community, we can grow in biblical knowledge and experience rather than riding along on the changing tides of culture.

God wants you to think, to use your brain, and make decisions that represent Him and His kingdom well, not blindly follow rules to fit in with our cultures. The biggest challenge with that is recognizing it’s happening in the first place. Don’t let your traditions, your parents, or social media solely inform your views. Being a thinking individual will open up your life to the reality of the world we live in, and not the cocoon we tend to live in.





# CHRISTIANITY & creativity

An Interview with Roger Lowther, – Director of  
the MAKE Collective & Community Arts Tokyo

## First of all, can you introduce yourself? How did you end up in Tokyo?

My wife and I went on a two-week mission trip to Japan as musicians playing concerts, leading worship, and hosting many evangelical events. About a month later, we received the “call”—an actual call—on a telephone direct from Japan! The missionary team leader asked us to consider moving to Japan and working with them for the rest of our lives. They told us they had been praying for years for artists to join their team and establish permanent ministries like we experienced on our short trip. I was pretty surprised! I didn’t know that artists could be missionaries!

## What have been some of the challenges you faced while serving cross-culturally?

I miss being able to eat cereal in the morning! Okay, that’s not much of a challenge, but it did take me a while to get used to the Japanese diet full of fermented vegetables. I didn’t even know what fermented vegetables were! More seriously, I missed being able to communicate clearly. Even now [15 years later], I sometimes don’t know the right word to use and have to quickly run through an inventory of words in my

head. Then I switch directions and say what I know how to say, rather than what I was planning to say. I suppose that is one of the tricks to appearing fluent!

”  
**I DID NOT KNOW THAT ART  
AND BEAUTY WAS ESSENTIAL  
IN AN EMERGENCY WHERE  
PEOPLE DIDN’T KNOW WHERE  
THEIR NEXT MEAL WOULD  
COME FROM.**

## What is the MAKE Collective and how did it begin?

When we became missionaries with Mission to the World, it raised a lot of questions specific to artists. Was it okay to reimburse art supplies—violin strings, paint brushes, dance shoes—like pastors reimburse books? Was it okay to spend time practicing during “work hours” or was that considered a day-off activity? Was it okay to do ministry outside the

church? Can artists receive money for performing and teaching? The MAKE Collective formed to attempt to answer some of these questions as a community. More importantly, we wanted to encourage one another and share ideas of how to use the arts in church planting. We now have about 50 artist “career” missionaries serving with Mission to the World all over the world, and this number is growing fast! You can learn more about us at [themakecollective.org](http://themakecollective.org).

## What is Community Arts Tokyo and how did it begin?

In 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck Japan followed by a giant tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear disaster. I entered the relief movement as a truck driver, carrying food, water, and supplies to the disaster area, but soon found myself giving concerts in shelters along the coast. Many other artists joined me on these trips. The community and momentum grew into what we now know as Community Arts Tokyo. I started the organization to use the power of the arts to build community in Tokyo like I had seen in the disaster area. It provides an umbrella under which we can do ministry without looking “churchy.”





**How have you seen art bring hope and transformation to communities?**

The time after the 2011 earthquake really impacted me. While playing music in shelters, sometimes everyone burst into tears. Other times, people laughed, sang, and danced. Music had a power in the devastation in ways I never dreamed possible, bringing hope into the despair. I did not know that art and beauty was essential in an emergency where people didn't know where their next meal would come from. I tell many stories about this in my book *Aroma of Beauty* coming out this fall. ([rogerwlowther.com/aroma-of-beauty/](http://rogerwlowther.com/aroma-of-beauty/))

**How is the Japanese culture especially open to hearing the gospel through art?**

Japanese culture is indirect and a group culture. Discussing the Bible and Christian themes in groups is much more effective than one-on-one evangelism. Art provides a reason both to gather and then to discuss these themes. It provides a way to build relationships, the foundation of evangelism and discipleship, in a way that is very attractive in Japan.

**You have written and spoken about how brokenness is an important part of Japanese culture. How does this influence your art and how you communicate the gospel?**

I learned pretty quickly that I need to talk about the gospel differently in Japan. Americans tend to embrace the resurrected Jesus while remembering

the cross, and Japanese tend to embrace the broken Jesus on the cross while remembering the resurrection. Whereas Americans love Jesus as the conquering hero who fights the battle no one else could fight and wins, Japanese love Jesus as the sacrificial hero who gives everything and dies in order that his people may be saved. Whereas Americans love Jesus as the ultimate "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" who will never leave us, Japanese love Jesus as the ultimate lover who was betrayed, died, and forsaken for our sake. Both sides of the gospel are true. Both cultures emphasize an important aspect of the gospel.

**Can you share a story of someone who was brought to faith in Jesus through the work of Community Arts Tokyo?**

We met a fashion designer at one of Community Arts Tokyo's first events, where each artist shared a bit about upcoming performances or exhibits and the thought process behind their art. After his presentation, I commissioned him to make performing clothes for my concerts, both because I needed it and as a way to build our relationship. (The quickest way to an artist's heart is to pay them to make art!) Our relationship grew, and I watched as he was baptized at our church, married another artist, started his own fashion design company, and became a leader in the church. I think of a *koto* (Japanese traditional harp) player who learned how to be both a Christian and a musician. She had never met one before! That's how few Christians there are in Japan! We hired her to play for worship, and recently she started writing music for worship. There are many more examples I could give!

**Does the MAKE Collective or Community Arts Tokyo offer internships or ways for students to get involved?**

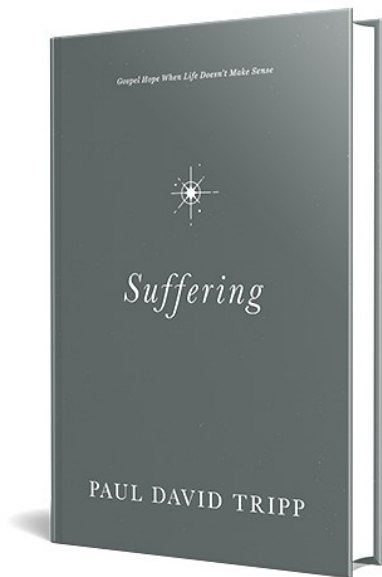
Yes! If you are an artist and interested in an internship with Community Arts Tokyo or any of our other artist missionaries around the globe, please contact me at [roger@communityarts.jp](mailto:roger@communityarts.jp). Interns typically stay anywhere from 1-6 months. Many people also come on short two-week trips.

**Roger W. Lowther** is the founder and director of *Community Arts Tokyo*, assisting church planting through the arts. Roger is also the director of Faith & Art at Grace City Church Tokyo and the International Coordinator of the MAKE Collective, a global network of missionary artists. He has been serving in Japan with Mission to the World since 2005. His first book *The Broken Leaf* was published by Wipf and Stock in 2019. [rogerwlowther.com](http://rogerwlowther.com)



## ***Suffering*** ***Gospel Hope When Life*** ***Doesn't Make Sense***

By Paul David Tripp



When was the last time you were in pain? Last week when you burned your mouth eating pizza? No, that was me. What about after the loss of a loved one? Ever had a broken bone? Bad break-up? Been lied to? Gotten a papercut? Experienced migraines? Been in a car accident? Felt cheated? Physically, mentally, spiritually, and/or emotionally struggled through a global pandemic? Suffering goes far beyond just physical pain and can leave us devastated, paralyzed, and downright hopeless. It might start when we're kids with a scraped knee, but sooner or later, deeper suffering comes along and we're left tempted to question whether God is with us at all in this messed-up world.

In his book *Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense*, Paul David Tripp, American pastor, author and speaker, shares his personal journey with kidney failure. Through the lens of his own suffering, Tripp suggests there are six traps that we are tempted to fall into

as we face life's hardships, such as envy, doubt, and denial. The author in no way undermines the physical or emotional pain we feel in suffering, admitting that he knows firsthand how unbearable it can seem. He believes that honesty with God throughout our suffering is the first step toward lasting peace, and he pleads with the reader to look to the Bible for a right perspective: "Not only does Scripture record the history of sufferers, but a large portion of Scripture is dedicated to giving voice to their cries...there are about sixty-seven lament psalms. That means roughly 44 percent of the content of the psalms are given over to psalms of suffering and sorrow."<sup>1</sup>

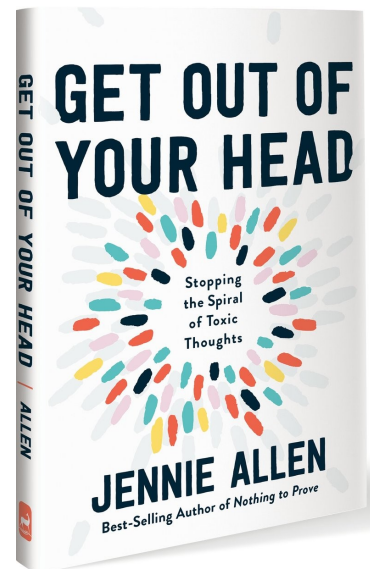
Tripp points the reader to God, who promises help, comfort, and hope to His people. Tripp's personal experience trusting the Lord through incredibly painful circumstances is a testimony of the hope we can have when we keep an eternal perspective. He ends with six comforts God offers to those who have put their trust in Jesus, including the comfort of God's purpose in our suffering: "Suffering has the power to destroy our self-reliance...expose our self-righteousness...to lay waste to our idols. Suffering exposes the inadequacy of hooking our hope to the temporary treasures of the created world and positions our heart to hook our hope to the Creator in ways we've never done before."<sup>2</sup>

If you're struggling to see how God relates to your suffering, or the unavoidable pain we all see in the world around us, this book is sure to give you a new perspective.

To learn more about this book or purchase it, visit [www.paultripp.com/suffering](http://www.paultripp.com/suffering). You can also watch teaching clips of Tripp speaking on suffering and other topics on his YouTube channel: Paul David Tripp.

## ***Get Out of Your Head*** ***Stopping the Spiral of*** ***Toxic Thoughts***

By Jennie Allen



*What will happen in the future? Are they gossiping about me? What if someone I love gets sick? I'm not enough. Everyone hates me. I can't do anything right. I'm not appreciated.*

Sound familiar?

*Get Out of Your Head* is written by Jennie Allen, the founder of the IF: Gathering, an author, and *New York Times* bestseller. In it she shares how to stop your thoughts from spiraling out of control and gives some practical tools to take them captive to God. Allen explains how every lie which comes into our heads can be stopped with truth found only in scripture, remembering God's promises, and choosing to believe them. She gently reminds us that we have the ability to change the way we think through the power of the Holy Spirit. In her book, Allen explains the power of finding the deeper issues in our thinking

<sup>1</sup>*Suffering*, Chapter 3: The Awareness Trap

<sup>2</sup>*Suffering*, Chapter 12: The Comfort of God's Purpose

# WOTS WONDERED:

## *What are you filling your head with these days?*

*With so much content out there, we put together this handy-dandy reading (and listening) guide so you can take a break from the endless scrolling and set your mind on something better. This winter, fill your head with the good stuff.*

and how to shift our minds to whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. Allen answers questions concerning how we view God and in turn how we view ourselves, how we can choose to stop the spiral, how science can tell us about the way we think, and how God gave us the best tool of all.

Allen writes, “Taking every thought captive is not about what happens to us. It’s about choosing to believe that God is with us, is for us, and loves us even when all hell comes against us.”

Allen experienced a mind-altering truth which pushed her to dig deeper into the way she thought. Too many times she had succumbed to the lies in her head, choosing to believe them over the Spirit and Word of God: “The danger of toxic thinking is it produces an alternate reality, one in which distorted reasoning actually seems to make sense.” By His grace, Allen was able to give up her wrong beliefs and thoughts and change the way she lived.

### 1. THE BIBLE—

If you have never read the Bible, or if you’re someone looking to jump back in, we recommend starting in the gospels somewhere (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and also flipping through the Psalms and Proverbs. If you don’t have a paper copy, visit [www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com) or [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) to get started. Try looking into a study Bible for a more in-depth look and commentary.

### 2. BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS—

There’s nothing quite like cracking open a brand new book in a cozy chair on a winter day. Besides the two books we just reviewed on this page, there are a world of good reads by Christian authors that will help encourage you to become the person God designed you to be. Recommended authors in no certain order include Matt Chandler, David Platt, Elisabeth Elliot, C.S. Lewis, A.W. Tozer, John Piper, Francis Chan, Timothy Keller, and so many more. Read up.

### 3. PODCASTS—

We get it, you’re busy these days. Pop in a podcast the next time you’re on the go instead of the usual tunes.

- This daily podcast by Pastor Tim Dodson will encourage you on a disciplined walk with Jesus: [jfbelievers.com/daily-devotions](http://jfbelievers.com/daily-devotions)

- [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org) is an awesome resource filled with great podcasts, and they also have tons of articles about every day Christian life.

- [Sheoligans.com](http://Sheoligans.com) has a podcasts articles by women teachers for women



For more information or to purchase a copy, check out [www.jennieallen.com](http://www.jennieallen.com). Also, take a look at Jennie’s 5 day devotional plan called “Get Out of Your Head” in the YouVersion Bible app.





# A WORLD DIVIDED

WHY DO WE LIKE TO FIGHT SO MUCH?

**Our world is divided more than ever. This race hates that race, political parties are at war, the genders rage against each other, vegetarians separate from the meat-eaters, and Coke-drinkers keep their distance from Pepsi-lovers. Everywhere you look disunity runs rampant, and it doesn't seem to be getting any better. If you take a moment to collectively think about all the tension, it can make you start to wonder: What's going on here? The human race is suspiciously segregated.**

It's not to say that having an opinion is a bad thing. The world would be pretty boring if everyone just liked and disliked the same things. We're all wired differently and see things from unique perspectives. We have different tastes and styles. So, why can't we all just be different and learn to get along?

Imagine you have a friend who is an adamant Coke-fanatic. All conversations with them seem to end back at why they think Coke is so great. Their social media feed revolves around Coke. They wear Coke t-shirts. They're just all about Coke. Good for them, right? Sure, but let's say their love for Coke doesn't just stop there. This friend is also constantly trying to get you to love Coke as much as they do. One day, they find out (much to your horror) that you actually prefer Pepsi, and it nearly starts a fist fight. There's no intelligent conversation, just loud insults and mocking jeers before your friend stomps away and starts posting rude things about you on social media. You're nearly certain you've lost the friendship for good. And at this point, you're pretty okay with that.

Now, no one's probably getting this hot and bothered over soda. However, this scenario isn't too far off when it comes to gender issues, politics, or race. The

problem comes when an opinion, preference, or belief takes on more weight than it's supposed to, and we build our lives around that one thing. When it gets threatened or isn't cherished by another person, we feel personally insulted. Since our identity has become embedded in it, we demonize the people who think differently than us. We post and like propaganda online that supports our views and tears down the opposition. We lash out at anyone who goes against us or doesn't think the same way. We will do anything to protect our identity.

The truth is, we're all looking for evidence that we're okay, and adamantly liking or disliking something does the trick for awhile. Everybody feels insecure whether they admit it or not, and we're constantly grasping for something we can do to give us a bit of stability.

The Bible can explain why we all feel so wobbly. It frankly says that "No one is righteous," (Romans 3:11, ESV) and that we "all have sinned and fall short" (Romans 3:23). Basically, the Bible is throwing all our little segregations out the window. It's making us focus on the fact that there are really only two groups: the righteous

and the unrighteous; the good and the bad. Unfortunately for us, every single human falls into the unrighteous category.

To make things worse, our problem is much bigger than our badness only making us unacceptable to other people or to ourselves. Our biggest issue is that we're unacceptable to God. Bad people have no business being anywhere near Him because He is good, righteous, and perfect. We belong in Hell, far away from Him, and we can never be good enough to change that.

The great news is that Jesus can change that. He "justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5, ESV). He offers the wobbly human race a chance to finally be okay. He takes hopelessly bad people and makes them perfect in God's eyes. He lived a righteous life for us and then took the penalty of our bad lives on Himself. Our world may still be crazy and divided, but the reality of Jesus simplifies things.

Because of Him, we now each have one main choice that we have to make. Will we accept what He's done to make us righteous, or will we continue trying to prove ourselves? It's up to you. Which group will you belong to?



# Giant Dome Blocks Out Snow

*One square mile structure keeps winter socially distant in one small town*

Chillfield, MI—After taking a cue from the health benefits of social distancing during a global pandemic, one small community in Michigan is distancing itself from another health hazard in an extreme way. A one square mile, clear dome has been erected overtop the tiny town of Chillfield to protect its citizens from the negative effects of winter, like having icy feet despite three layers of socks.

“We decided as a community that since no one was leaving anymore, we might as well make it nicer by socially distancing from winter permanently. We ordered a 3-D printer, popped in a snow globe model, and after that the project just really took off,” said Mayor Elsa Rudolph.

It took less than three months to assemble and erect and would have been completed sooner had there not been as much debate regarding the ideal temperature to heat the dome. It has been settled at 72 degrees.

Currently, the dome is restricted to residents only, but tourism dollars have already been rolling in thanks to virtual zoom tours where outsiders can take a peak inside for a small sum. Community



members host online workshops including “How to Transform Winter Gear into Wall Art” and “Replace Your Fireplace With a Waterslide”.

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For everyone's safety, those attending in person will practice social distancing and wear masks.





# Sweet Dreams

## DO COME TRUE AT C&J'S CANDY STORE

### A CANDY STORE REVIEW

**D**id you know that Menomonie has a candy store? They are family owned and operated. You can find Barbara and her daughter Sara, a UW-Stout student, behind the counter or putting away the newly arrived items. Located only a couple blocks from the UW-Stout campus, C&J's stocks candy from many countries including Italy, the Philippines, Ireland, and up to 39 more, but that number is never static. Their selection and great prices are surprising. *Word on the Street* had the opportunity to interview one of the owners, Barbara Bauer-Chen, who provided us with some sweet insight.

**WORD ON THE STREET (WOTS):** Where did the idea to start a candy store come from?

**BARBARA:** We know people all over the place and sometimes you want to send them a package of little things, but there is not a lot out there of little candy type items or souvenirs to send. So noticing this was something needed and having the open building space, we thought we would do it ourselves. Our friend Mary, who is the owner of Collective Souls, a store located on Main Street, also thought it was something needed in Menomonie. She provided help in starting the store since she has an understanding of retail.

**WOTS:** What is the story behind your name?

**BARBARA:** C&J comes from the names of my two sons, Cody and Jamison.

**JAMISON:** Well, I have no part in that.

**WOTS:** Do you have a certain candy you feature more of? What's your main focus?

**BARBARA:** Nostalgic and international is the only way I can answer that. We have both. Ever since we started, the international section has taken off. It has been fun seeing that.

**WOTS:** Will your selections change based on holidays?

**BARBARA:** A little. We will offer some custom things like little gift bundles and baskets.

**WOTS:** Name at least one thing a new shopper may not know about when they first visit your store.

**BARBARA:** The custom bundles where you can choose what candy to mix in together is popular. We are also constantly getting in different items, so even if people come to the store often they are typically surprised by something new. We also do custom orders and always try to get things that people request.

**WOTS:** Do you offer any specials for college students?

**BARBARA:** We do have a lot of inexpensive things. We also do our best to keep prices low across the board. For example, you can buy Pixy Stix for \$.10 each or individually wrapped Twizzlers for \$.15 each.

**WOTS:** What is the most random fact about candy you know?

**BARBARA:** For me, it would be spicy candy. I didn't really know it was a thing until I got into this business. You can find all that is offered for sour candy but in spicy form.

So, make a trip to them and satisfy your sweet (or spicy) tooth.

**PRO TIP:** Week days and Sundays are better to visit since Saturdays are busier. Happy hunting!



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# Break free from Ordinary

THINK FOR YOURSELF.



## STREET LEVEL MINISTRIES

MONDAYS // PRAYER & DISCUSSION // 5PM  
@ Elk Creek Room in Price Commons //  
Contact us for info about other happenings

An Official UW-Stout Student Org // [streetlevel@uwstout.edu](mailto:streetlevel@uwstout.edu) // [streetlevelministries.com](http://streetlevelministries.com)