



ISSUE EIGHTY-SIX

# THE PERILOUS PURSUIT OF FINDING PURPOSE

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AND GOD'S BETTER WAY

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SUMMER 2021

WORD ON THE STREET  
Street Level Ministries' Magazine


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# Word<sup>on the</sup> Street MAGAZINE UW-STOUT EDITION

DISTRIBUTED AROUND THE GLOBE  
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University of Wisconsin-River Falls | **River Falls, Wisconsin**

University of Wisconsin-Stout | **Menomonie, Wisconsin**

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A special edition is also distributed in parts of **South Asia**

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## WELCOME TO WOTS

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

We exist as an outreach of Street Level Ministries, a college Christian ministry with groups in various cities. Check out how you can become a part of it by visiting [streetlevelministries.com](http://streetlevelministries.com).

This magazine is written, laid out, and printed by young adults

in cities around the Midwest as well as in the Philippines and parts of South Asia. What brings us together is our love for Jesus. Our desire is to write about topics focusing on God, life, and college. We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking as it encourages you to pursue a strong relationship with God.

WOTS is released four times a year and has been published since 1999. All credit goes to God. We're not sure how else to explain it!

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# IT'S A LONG WAY FROM HOME

## A COLLEGE JOURNEY FROM TURKEY TO UW-STOUT



ISTANBUL, TURKEY

MERYEIM OZDEMIR

**S**tout is one of the more backwater schools in the UW system, but despite all of that, there's still those from outside the country who find themselves in the peculiar town of Menomonie. Not quite small-town America, by no means urban, and certainly not cookie-cutter American, *WOTS* asked Meryeim Ozdemir to give her perspective on Dunn County's shining jewel.

### TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I am from Turkey. I am studying computer science at UW-Stout, focusing on cyber security. This is my second year here, and I came here because my uncle is a professor here at the university. It's easier to come when you have relatives.

### HAD YOU LEFT TURKEY BEFORE COMING TO STOUT?

No, I had not left Turkey, but I had moved from city to city quite often when I was in high school. I went to college in Turkey for one year before coming here.

### HOW DOES MENOMONIE COMPARE TO WHAT YOU HAD THOUGHT AMERICA WOULD BE LIKE?

When I think about America I think about Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans; all sorts of people. I thought that by coming here I would meet many different people groups, but that is not what it has been. I was honestly scared because I was thinking, "I'm the only one here who looks like me," but after living here for over a year, I was shocked to learn how alike we all are. We're all scared, we all love, and we're looking for connections, you know?

Back in Turkey, there is a lot of judging based on what city you're from. "Oh, you're from here, you must be like that," but I've stopped feeling that way. Coming here, I had to learn to start loving others for who they are. People here are welcoming. Back in Turkey I'd move from city to city and not be able to make friends, but we have nothing in common, yet we are sitting here having this conversation. I've been able to participate more in college, and that has helped me get to see that we're not really all that different, whereas back

home, it was harder to participate in aspects of college.

### COULD YOU COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE TWO EXPERIENCES? WHAT'S BETTER IN TURKEY? WHAT'S BETTER AT STOUT? WHAT'S WORSE?

In Turkey, class was much larger, and it was harder to communicate with professors. We didn't have homework assigned in Turkey so managing classes was all self-taught. Here, you do the work every night, but it helps you learn it much better. In Turkey, the classroom was much more social. Before class, it was hard to hear because everyone was talking before the professor showed up. College was just as much a social thing as it was education, but here, you go into a classroom and it's so weird because no one is talking. Everyone is focused on their objective. Professors here are also much better. They're always improving themselves, writing essays, and doing research. College here is crazy expensive, but back home, college was free, and the government paid me to go. My living expenses, food, clothes, and rent were all paid for. Here you are just paying so much.

# SATURDAY BREAKFAST DISCUSSION GATHERINGS SUMMER 2021

More info and registration at [Jfbelievers.com](http://Jfbelievers.com)

A CLASS FOR ALL WHO LONG TO FIND AND FULFILL THE PURPOSE OF THEIR LIVES. THIS PURPOSE CAN BE FOUND ONLY WHEN WE DISCOVER THE SPECIFIC REASON FOR WHICH WE WERE CREATED AND TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED. ANSWERING THE CALL OF OUR CREATOR IS "THE ULTIMATE WHY" FOR LIVING, THE HIGHEST SOURCE OF PURPOSE IN HUMAN EXISTENCE.

APART FROM SUCH A CALLING, ALL HOPE OF DISCOVERING PURPOSE WILL END IN DISAPPOINTMENT. TO BE SURE, CALLING IS NOT WHAT IT IS COMMONLY THOUGHT TO BE. IT HAS TO BE DUG OUT FROM UNDER THE RUBBLE OF IGNORANCE AND CONFUSION. AND, UNCOMFORTABLY, IT OFTEN FLIES DIRECTLY IN THE FACE OF OUR HUMAN INCLINATIONS. BUT NOTHING SHORT OF GOD'S CALL CAN GROUND AND FULFILL THE TRUEST HUMAN DESIRE FOR PURPOSE

# CALLING:

*A Life ~~with~~ <sup>ON</sup> Purpose*





**THIS LOCAL BOOKSTORE CARRIES A VARIETY OF BIBLES AND STUDY BIBLES**

Visit this hidden gem, located just a few blocks from campus at 621 Wilson Avenue in Menomonie.

**T**he Believers Bookstore is available to anyone 9:00 am to 4:30 pm Tuesday through Friday.

This bookstore offers books and Bibles at non-profit prices so they are available at cost for your suggested donation. You may email the bookstore with questions and inquiries about books or eBooks that are available, and

they will get back to you as soon as possible to assist you with your reading needs. You may also place special orders for books that you don't see on the shelves.

Feel free to browse the shelves during the week. Purchases may be made by bringing your book downstairs to the Blind Munchies Coffeehouse. Simply take your book downstairs and request

to purchase a book and a friendly staff member will assist you.

Any questions? Just ask the staff in the Blind Munchies Coffeehouse to find someone who manages the bookstore for immediate assistance, or email them below.

**Contact: [bookstore@jfbelievers.com](mailto:bookstore@jfbelievers.com)**



*The Believers Bookstore is stocked up on study Bibles. Find out if you should get one.*

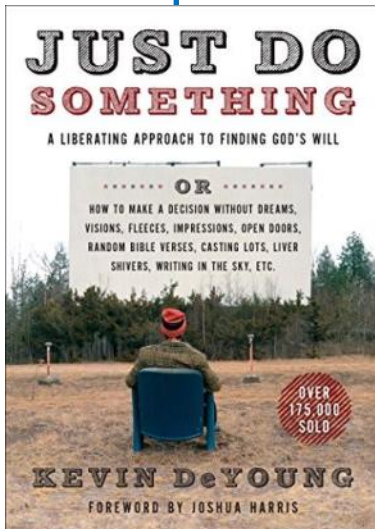
The purpose of a study Bible is to help you understand scripture more clearly as you read it. They usually contain notes for biblical interpretation, book introductions to provide context, and maps for visual pictures of locations. But there are a few things you should know before reading or purchasing a study Bible.

The resources are especially helpful for those just beginning to study the Bible for themselves. It's like having a teacher right there with you helping you understand more of the background and the context for biblical books and passages. Study Bibles can be invaluable when beginning to more deeply understand the meaning of scripture.

The notes in study Bibles can be incredibly helpful. When you're having trouble understanding what a certain passage is saying, you can turn to the corresponding note and get more insight into its meaning. Since these notes are so helpful, you can begin to automatically stop after each verse and read its note. That's not a bad thing when you're studying a certain section in depth, but you need to remember that the Bible is meant to be *read*. You're supposed to get a feel for the whole book and follow the author's flow of thought. This is really hard to do if you're getting bogged down reading each study note.

## Book Reviews

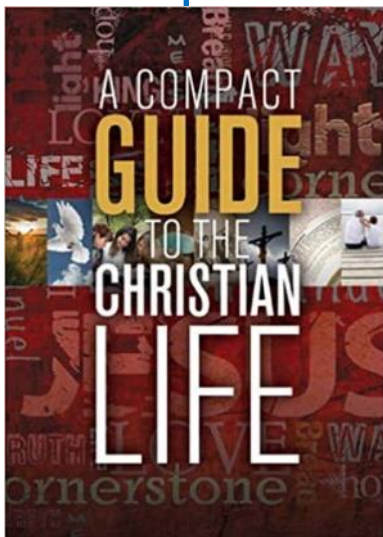
Read about the following featured books available at The Believers Bookstore today.



### **JUST DO SOMETHING BY KEVIN DEYOUNG**

The gist of the book, *Just Do Something*, is that too many of us spend too much time trying to decipher God's will and too little time striving to obey the plain commands of scripture. God's will is not a corn maze or Magic 8 Ball. His will is our sanctification. God promises to direct our steps all throughout life. He never promises to show us what each step is ahead of time. Too many of us are prone to passivity and indecision. Doing *nothing* feels more spiritual (and less risky) rather than doing *something*. We stumble around in chains of subjective impressions and wander here and there, and in and out of our parents' basement.

Pastor Kevin DeYoung counsels Christians to settle down, make choices, and do the hard work of seeing those choices through. Too often, God's people tinker around with churches, jobs, and relationships. They worry that they haven't found God's perfect will for their lives. Even worse, they do absolutely nothing. Stuck in a frustrated state of paralyzed indecision, waiting, waiting, waiting for clear, direct, unmistakable direction, nothing happens. There is no need for hocus-pocus or to persist in being directionally challenged. Instead, we are encouraged to get up and *Just Do Something*.



### **A COMPACT GUIDE TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

This guidebook is a good resource for leaders and new Christians. Its wealth of wisdom will help you live the Christian faith in our modern world.

By providing highly relevant, concise explanations of how Christianity works in practice, this compact guide will give you immediate access to information

otherwise buried in lengthy commentaries and reference books. More than 100 topics are covered, including prayer, the Bible, important doctrines, God's will, emotions, sex and dating, children, money, and work.

## Online Resources

Have you ever wondered God's opinion on certain subjects? To help you know the truth of the Bible, search for topics on the Berean Call website and read answers to certain topics listed such as: the Bible, the end times, science, atheism, psychology, and many more.

**"[The Bereans] ... searched the scriptures daily [to see] whether those things were so."**

Acts 17:11

Visit [www.thebereancall.org/topics](http://www.thebereancall.org/topics) to find answers to your questions.

# ONE GUY'S TRIP STORY

## SHEDDING MY FAKE RELIGION



*This testimony is from Thorne, a member of Street Level Ministries Twin Ports (Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin).*

**M**y parents divorced when I was five, and my father gave up custody of me and my siblings for drugs and jail sentences instead. While he was absent, my mother helped me learn more about God and invited me into adult Bible studies as I grew up. By the time I was eight years old, my dad had begun to establish a home where I could visit him on the weekends. Shortly after, I asked God into my heart, frequently thanking my heavenly Father for a chance to have my dad back.

Childlike faith is a trait God commands, but my focus on faith was tested heavily as I approached my teens. The comfort I had once experienced from God dwindled once my family broke apart again. My father chose a life of addiction, and I decided that I wasn't ready to give him up. Forsaking God at thirteen, I smoked and drank whatever would get me closer to my dad. I found momentary worth from his acceptance and dismissed my guilt by further altering my state of mind.

In a depressed, broken state, I twisted my beliefs into a self-serving spirituality that fit the life I was living. I just smiled and nodded my way through the sermons I attended. Any conviction that the Holy Spirit blessed me with was undoubtedly ignored, hardening my heart.

I believe my holy "Christian" persona fooled those around me for a long time, leaving a wake of destruction in those who were spiritually unsteady. Pastors and leaders seemingly allowed me to skate by with my religious knowledge and well-placed convictions. I knew all the right words to say until God began to show me how real faith actually changes a person.

My best friend, having never been truly convinced by my unsightly display of religion, called out to God in the midst of a much worse time than what I had ever personally

experienced. She trusted God to move her across the United States to bless her with a loving Christian community. Her health improved, and her personality changed dramatically. As I saw God heal her, my proud, religious heart began to soften. He helped me take responsibility for my actions and let go of the blame I placed on others.

**"AS I SAW GOD HEAL HER, MY PROUD, RELIGIOUS HEART BEGAN TO SOFTEN. HE HELPED ME TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS AND LET GO OF THE BLAME I PLACED ON OTHERS."**

Today I have given up drug use and much of the importance I placed on the attention of others. God is still working on my heart, destroying my pride, and refueling my desire to know Him intimately. I trust in Jesus Christ's saving grace, knowing that religious knowledge does nothing to save me or those in my life.

I still fail daily by sometimes misplacing faith in patriotism, seeking fulfillment through work accomplishments, or letting my thoughts wander outside the realm of "things above." But when I bring my failures to God instead of burying them, I permit Him to direct my life and my desires. He is making me reliant upon Him as I serve Him in my church, my friendships, and soon in my marriage.

*- Thorne*





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# GUESS WHAT'S BACK?

## SUMMER BRINGS SUNSHINE AND THE BLIND MUNCHIES COFFEEHOUSE'S VINTAGE TRAILER

**S**ummer is here bringing sunshine, warmer weather, and a tricked-out vintage camper. Having made its maiden voyage last summer, this restored 1956 Yellowstone camper trailer is back! This non-profit coffeehouse is located just a few blocks from campus, offering up fresh summer drink specials and a place to enjoy patio seating. Raining (or shining)? No

problem! Stop inside to soak in the eclectic antique atmosphere, enamel signs, and retro-nostalgic flair. The Blind Munchies is a donation-based coffeehouse operated entirely by volunteers where all proceeds fund missions' projects overseas. Stop by the Blind Munchies outdoor coffeehouse for your fix of coffee, fresh bakery, and more.



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# THE DAY I CONFRONTED A KING

## AN ALMOST TRUE STORY...

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I concentrated on the cobblestone steps that stretched out before me. I felt as though I had forgotten how to walk. So many thoughts swirled through my mind as I placed one foot in front of the other, slowly making my way up to the throne room. With each step, I rehearsed all that I planned to say. Years worth of pain, frustration, disappointment, and most of all, guilt gnawed at my gut that was twisting in fear about what lay ahead. Now that I was at the top of the stairs, I could see the door to the throne room. It wasn't too late. I could walk back down the stairs and act as if everything was fine, just like I had been doing all my life. I could avoid this painful confrontation altogether. But the hope of the new life I had recently discovered allowed me to press on. I cracked open the door. There was no going back now.

There he was, that disgusting, vile, sorry excuse for a king. He was perched upon his throne like a vulture waiting for its next victim. The image was shocking, and it was difficult for me to admit that at one time I found him attractive and looked to him for comfort. "Hello, my dear," he crooned from his perch, "It's been too long since we've spoken. I was beginning to worry. How are you?"

His words were so smooth like they always had been. It would be so easy to slip into my old habit of trusting him, but I knew differently this time.

"Don't act as if you care about me. You've promised me so many things, and I trusted you! But you are a liar!" I shouted suddenly, surprising myself.

"Don't fool yourself," he replied without expression. "You know that I always do everything I can to make you happy. We've had some very good times, you and I. Remember?"

"I remember how you ruined my life," I answered, speaking in a low tone. "You've taken everything from me. It took me a while to realize it, but now I understand very clearly. You don't even have the ability to keep the promises you make. You are not the powerful king you pretend to be. You're a fraud! I will not serve you anymore. I have found a different king."

His lips curled into a sneer, laughing, "You think a different king will make your life better? Don't you know we are all the same? Go! Serve this other king of yours! But when he takes everything from you and gives you nothing in return, you remember how good you had it with me, my dear."

"No." I stared directly into his piercing eyes as my words came rushing out of my mouth. "This King *is* different. He is unlike any other king there ever was or ever will be. He is faithful and true. The promises He makes will happen because He has the power to make it so. He is loving and just. And yes, He will get everything from me because I will willingly lay everything down before Him. He is worthy of that. He gave up his life for me."

"Oh, you fool. Do you honestly believe that a king would have given up anything for you? You're worthless! No king in this world would do that for anyone," he retorted.



**“I TURNED AND BOLTED  
OUT OF THE DARK THRONE  
ROOM, THROUGH THE  
DOOR, AND INTO A  
MARVELOUSLY BRIGHT  
DAY. FOR THE FIRST TIME  
IN MY LIFE, I FELT FREE.  
I WAS FREE!”**

"I know. My King is not of this world," I said gleefully, and with those words, I turned and bolted out of the dark throne room, through the door, and into a marvelously bright day. For the first time in my life, I felt free. I *was* free!

I'd like to tell you that this story above actually took place, that I confronted all the false kings that I had placed in charge of my life head-on and never looked back, but that isn't quite how it works. It would be nice if false kings presented themselves in such a visibly vile manner, but most often, they don't. These so-called kings sneak into power in our lives in all forms. Perhaps it is through a career, the pursuit of higher education, a specific relationship, or status. What is it for you?


Take a look at your life to find out. How do you make your decisions? How do you spend your time, money, and talents? What, or who, do you turn to for comfort, joy, and security?

If the answer is anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ, you are worshipping and serving a false king that does not care about you and will not do anything but destroy you. Sound harsh? It's true. Don't believe me? Okay, so how has your false king been treating you lately?

Jesus is the only worthy King. All other kings will ask you to lay your life down in service to them, but Jesus is the only one for which you can willingly and joyfully do so. Before you ever did anything for Him, He already died for you. What King does that? Only a loving one does. If you'd like to read more about Jesus as the perfect King, dust off your Bible. Every part of it points to Him and who He is. Get to know Him.

*“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God...He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

- Revelation 19:11-16, NKJV



# THE PERILOUS PURSUIT OF FINDING PURPOSE

WHAT THE WORLD WON'T TELL  
YOU AND GOD'S BETTER WAY

**W**e're all chasing after something. For most people, their pursuits include some combination of normal things like finding their soulmate, landing a fulfilling job, finding fun hobbies, assembling a squad of loyal friends, and maybe even building a family. We think that when we get these things, we'll finally feel happy and satisfied. We've been told that pursuing our dreams is what will give us purpose. What most people have not considered, however, is that life often does not go as planned. For some, these things just won't happen. Despite all their efforts, their love life won't pan out, their dream job will be inaccessible, and finding good friends will prove much more difficult than they had anticipated. Others may achieve some of their pursuits, but will lose them when hard times strike. In the end, no matter how successful or unsuccessful you end up being, you and everyone that matters to you will die, rendering even the most enjoyable life possible only temporary at best.

Are you feeling depressed yet? It's understandable if you are. These are all inevitabilities that we're not exactly encouraged to think about. If we consider them at all, it's typically not for long. They're quickly buried under a positive everything-will-work-out-in-the-end attitude and forgotten as we push forward towards potential disaster.

But if you're still reading this far, you probably aren't satisfied with that solution. Know that there is hope coming. But first, one more grim reality must be exhumed.

# IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU COULD GET EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER WANTED AND STILL BE UNSATISFIED.

## DEALING WITH DISILLUSIONMENT

It's possible that you could get everything you've ever wanted and still be unsatisfied. Award-winning actor and comedian Jim Carrey can attest to this. After a successful acting career involving over 58 movies and cultivating a net worth of \$180 million, you might think he would feel satisfied with everything he's accomplished. However, that's not the case. Instead of talking about how fulfilling his life has been, he advises that "...everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of, so they can see that it's not the answer."<sup>1</sup>

Jim Carrey is not alone in his disillusionment. This is a very common occurrence. In fact, British author C.S. Lewis wrote about it as well. He explains the disappointment by saying, "There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality...The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very interesting job: but something has evaded us."<sup>2</sup>

If you're honest with yourself, you know exactly what these two men are talking about. We've all set our sights on something, held it within our grasp, and then were unexpectedly left wanting. It's frustrating and unsettling. Many people come to the conclusion that they've simply chosen the wrong thing. They go looking for a new spouse, another job, a better group of friends. But what if you never find what you're looking for? Others give into cynicism and bitterness. But what if there's a better way?

## LIFE ADVICE FROM A MAN WHO HAD IT ALL

The Bible doesn't shy away from the fact that pursuing your dream life can be disappointing. In fact, the entire book of Ecclesiastes is dedicated to this uncomfortable reality. Written by an extremely wealthy and successful king towards the end of his

life, Ecclesiastes offers a cautionary tale to anyone who is brave enough and humble enough to listen.

With nearly endless resources, this king was able to craft a life for himself that should have been, by all accounts, supremely satisfying. First, he pursued a good education (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18). He observed everything and accumulated a vast amount of knowledge. But the more he learned, the more depressed he got. So, he decided to go after pleasure instead (2:1-11). He drank good wine, built a beautiful home, hired lots of employees, accumulated treasures, enjoyed the arts, and slept with lots of women. But none of those things were quite satisfying either.

Finally, he decided to invest in his career and just work hard (2:18-20). But even in that, he realized that he would die and someone else would inherit the results of all his hard work. Thirty-eight times during the book, you can almost see the king throwing up his hands in frustration as he repeats: "It is all meaningless, like chasing the wind!" Even with all his unending resources, something had evaded him.

At the end of the book, he specifically addresses those just starting out in life (12:1). Fueled by years of painful experience and disappointment, he summarizes what he's learned and implores readers to take a different path than he had. He explains that the things in this world are wonderful and should be enjoyed, but that they're not meant to be what life is all about. No amount of achievement, pleasure, possession, or relationship is ever going to be enough to satisfy you. And in the end, they will all slip through your fingers.

So, the king points us down a quite uncommon path. He implores us to look outside the walls of our world for our purpose. Instead of focusing on what we can see or feel, he begs that we focus on the God who created it all (12:13).

*...continued*

1 - "A Quote by Jim Carrey." Goodreads, Goodreads, [www.goodreads.com/quotes/1151805-i-think-everybody-should-get-rich-and-famous-and-do](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1151805-i-think-everybody-should-get-rich-and-famous-and-do).  
2 - *Mere Christianity*, by Lewis C S (Clive Staples), Simon and Schuster, 1996.



# INSTEAD OF YOUR LIFE BEING CONTROLLED BY GETTING WHAT YOU WANT OR CRUSHED BY THE THOUGHT OF LOSING IT, YOU WILL FINALLY BE FREE.

## SEEKING THE GIFT OF A BETTER WAY

If you had the chance to ask Him, Jesus would heartily agree with this king in Ecclesiastes. He also does not want you to get caught in the trap of chasing after the things you think will be fulfilling. He explains that since everything we could ever hope to get here is perishable at best, and easily taken at worst (Matthew 6:19), we'd be wise to put our efforts towards going after something more stable. Thankfully, Jesus offers this to us.

He advises that you, "Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that [I] can give you" (John 6:27, NLT). This reveals a unique aspect of the Christian life. First, that it's given. Second, that you'll have to pursue it. These two things may sound contradictory at first, but in reality they work together.

First, eternal life has to be given to you by Jesus. You can't get it on your own, and you won't be able to figure it out by just trying really hard. You're going to need to ask for and accept His help. Fortunately for us, helping people is what He's all about, and eternal life is something He is more than happy to give (Matthew 7:7, John 10:10).

So, step one, whether you've been a Christian for a long time and you desire clearer direction for moving forward, or if you don't even know if you are a Christian, but you want to be, ask for His help. Seriously. Stop reading, whoever you are, wherever you are, and ask Him for help right now.

Second, know that pursuing the eternal life that Jesus offers is going to require effort from you. Lots of effort. If you already knew that, you could always use the reminder. Becoming a Christian is 100% a free gift (Ephesians 2:8), but continuing on after that into maturity will be a challenge (Matthew 7:13-14).

Practically, this means you'll have to get your nose in a Bible, find a good church, think critically, ask good questions, humbly accept answers, and then actually apply the things you're learning. Don't you dare stop asking for His help. You'll be required to give lots of things up, take lots of other things on, and constantly be open to Jesus' plans for your life.

Finally, expect that it will be difficult. Some days you're going to want to quit. But, if you stick with Him right up to the end, you will have no regrets. This is the only pursuit that can't be taken away from you. All you have to do is not give up.

## PURSUING INDESTRUCTIBLE PURPOSE

All that said, pursuing the life Jesus has for you doesn't necessarily mean you'll be forced to work a job you hate or to stay single and celibate for the rest of your life. Marriage, work, friendships, and family are all lovely gifts from God meant to be received and enjoyed. The crucial thing is that these gifts stay in their proper place, always secondary to pursuing God. That way, if you don't get these things when or how you were hoping, you're free to trust that Jesus has better plans for you.

When this is your reality, you'll be free to marry or stay single. You'll be able to find enjoyment doing any job. You can have hobbies without them consuming your life, and a great pressure will be taken off the relationships you have with your family, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. Instead of your life being controlled by getting what you want or crushed by the thought of losing it, you will finally be free.

So, rather than focusing your efforts on gaining things in this world like everybody else, dare to consider a different way. Your purpose can be found in going after what Jesus wants for you. If you choose that, suffering will only be an opportunity to push you in deeper, and ultimately death will be the consummation of everything you've been working towards. This is what we were made for. What will you choose to pursue?

*"Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty...those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life.'" - John 6:35-40, NLT*



# Surprisingly Exhausting

## THE PROBLEM WITH CHASING OUR OWN WELL-BEING

Let's consider for a moment just how much of our day is spent thinking about ourselves. We think about the meals we're going to have for the week, whether or not we're getting enough exercise, and how our personal relationships are doing. While we're at it, we obsess over our physical appearance, the future of our education or career, and the current state of our mental health. Is all of this concern helpful, or is it exhausting?

On one hand, it's a good thing to take care of the body, mind, and soul God has given us. It would be wrong to be intentionally lazy about our health and hygiene. However, if we perpetually overindulge in ourselves, we start to give off a spiritually selfish stench. This condition is lethal because, "Self-focus," author Sharon Hodde Miller writes in her book *Free of Me*, "hurts our relationships, shrinks our faith, kills our confidence, and ultimately steals our joy."<sup>1</sup>

**"OUR OWN WELL-BEING IS MOST SATISFIED WHEN GOD CONSUMES OUR THOUGHTS, AND SINCERE JOY COMES FROM UPLIFTING OTHERS."**

Ironically, God says that the best way to take care of ourselves is to put Him first and others second. "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself,'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NKJV). Our own well-being is most satisfied when God consumes our thoughts, and sincere joy comes from uplifting *others*. But because our default setting is selfishness, it takes serious effort to reorient our thinking.

The tension between taking care of ourselves and not obsessing over it can be tricky. Hodde Miller continues, "Thankfully we don't have to choose between fulfillment and self-forgetfulness or between abundant life and the obedient

one. We can have both in Christ." We accomplish this not by carefully balancing all the cares of our life, worshipping God, and loving other people like stacking a house of cards. Rather, all we have to be concerned with is one piece: putting Jesus first. He promises that when we "seek first the kingdom of heaven of God and His righteousness all of these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NKJV).

Putting God first is not like a vending machine where we put in the right amount of devotion and in return receive perfect health, great relationships, and our dream career. Those things may happen or they may not. Rather, the well-being we'll really receive is the forgiveness of our sins and a close, incredibly real relationship with Jesus. If we don't have that, nothing else matters.

<sup>1</sup> Miller, H. S. (2017). *Free of Me: Why Life Is Better When It's Not about You*. Baker Books.

# MEN OF GOD



## THE LION & THE LAMB: JESUS' EXAMPLE TO MEN

**B**acon and beards. Aggressive conquest. Conceal your feelings. Compete. To be a man you must be “insert varying cultural standard here.” What it means to be a man changes generationally. Men have been expected to keep up with new norms or be considered an outcast. Thankfully, God doesn’t change. His roles don’t change. His idea of what it means to be a man can still be found and pursued in a climate hellbent on flipping the masculine norm on its head. So, what does it look like to be a man of God? To answer, we must look to Jesus Christ.

### THE PERFECT MAN

Jesus is our example of perfect masculinity, so to be a man of God is to know your role within His Kingdom. “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:3, NKJV). Men are to be submissive and fully surrendered to God and His perfect will. Jesus spoke this clearly while praying in the garden: “Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42, NKJV). Jesus wasn’t about seeking His desires and fortune but instead sought to help, heal, lead, teach, and protect others. Men are called today to do the same. Whether single or married, men have a responsibility to seek the good of others before themselves and to protect them from evil.

### TRUE PASSION

Toxic masculinity refers to the overly aggressive, dominant, and competitive type of guy who controls and uses intimidating brute force. This is not what Jesus calls men to be. However, men are, at times, called to be lionlike. Much like when Christ braided a whip and chased the ungodly out of the temple, men can show passion, zeal, and holy anger when God’s name has been slandered. Men should be seeking

acting too scared to make a decision are not godly. Some men fall into the camp of being too lamblike, or too lionlike, but Jesus demonstrates when to be which. The church needs both, and men can grow by making the kind of decisions that benefit others and bring glory to God.

### MEN NEED MEN

Hollywood has pedaled the illusion that men are to lead “Lone Ranger” lives. According to God though men must submit to authority and they need others. “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17, NKJV). It’s necessary to share struggles, mental battles, and sin issues together.<sup>1</sup> There is no need to pretend or put on a façade. Getting over yourself and being vulnerable is a scary thing to do, but it’s healthy. Repent, be brave, and be real with others. Besides, you can’t be brave without first being afraid.

We need each other’s help. It’s good to show emotion and passion. It’s also good to be firm, unwavering, understanding, and vulnerable with others. It all begins by looking to Jesus for your marching orders and strength.

“MEN SHOULD BE SEEKING TO BUILD AND ADVANCE GOD’S KINGDOM, NOT THEIR IDEAL WORLD.”

to build and advance God’s kingdom, not their ideal world.

Men are also called to be lamblike: gentle, warm, caring, empathetic, and emotional. Jesus was very tender, fully expressing and experiencing the whole range of human emotions including weeping, sorrow, and joy. God does not want men to be passive, however. Guys



## READ THIS BEFORE YOUR NEXT IDENTITY CRISIS

**W**ho are you? There are so many attributes, qualities, and things you probably attempt to use to identify yourself as a person and as a woman. Add being a Christian woman to the mix, and the waters unfortunately don't seem to get any less muddied. What it means to be a godly woman is a giant subject to tackle and one that will not be fully covered here. I can only hope to pass along a tidbit of wisdom that has helped me enormously as I try to make sense of what being a godly woman looks like. That is this: the only identity that matters is *whose* you are. If you are a Christian today, then you belong to Jesus. You don't have to struggle to figure out your own identity, He has taken care of that.

So if we are to let God determine our identity, it is most helpful to read what He has already said. It's no secret that Proverbs 31 is the go-to chapter for women, with good reason. It is packed with godly wisdom that we could talk about for hours on end, but for now, let's focus on the verse that sums it all up: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

### **CHARM IS DECEITFUL**

The realization that we can leverage how we act, talk, and dress to make people give us what we want, begins at a very young age. It starts innocently enough, but let it go a few years, and

this attitude can quickly take on much more sinister consequences. For example, there was a woman who used her daughter to manipulate her husband to murder John the Baptist simply because she didn't like what he said (Matthew 14). It's hard to admit our

“**THE ONLY  
IDENTITY THAT  
MATTERS IS *WHOSE*  
YOU ARE.**”

sinful nature tends towards deceit and manipulation, but it does. When we pick an identity for ourselves instead of allowing God to define it for us, charm becomes a tool to get us where we want to go. A godly woman actively fights against this tendency and instead conducts herself in an authentic, honest manner that desires good for others instead of just herself.

### **BEAUTY IS PASSING**

We all fall prey to attempting to achieve some beauty standard even though we know it is temporary. We still believe that by achieving some level of outward beauty, whether that is how we

physically look, the lifestyle we live, or the things we do, that these outward things will fix who we are on the inside. These external things are much easier to define ourselves with instead of letting anyone see who we really are. A godly woman realizes that the only thing truly beautiful in her life is Jesus, and she aims to make Him look good to others, not herself.

### **FEAR THE LORD**

Fearing the Lord is foundational. Remember when I said your identity is about *whose* you are? Jesus, God's very own Son, suffered, died, and endured God's wrath so that you (and me) could be adopted into God's family and belong to Him. If you are a part of God's family, you will begin to take on family resemblance in every aspect, like loving and obeying God because of who He is and what He has done. That's all. We overcomplicate things when we try to align our actions to some made-up version of who we think God wants us to be instead of just listening to what He is actually telling us to do.

That's where I want to leave this for now. I don't know exactly how your life should look, but godly women should all look similar since we are following the same Jesus. And *that* is beautiful.



## *As a Matter of Fact* **WHAT IS SIN?**

**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, words that have little to no meaning outside of the world of faith, and recognizable things that have a more profound meaning than you'd ever imagine. Like the word sin. Do you know what it means?

just that you make a mistake or have to say sorry from time to time. At its root, it goes past outward actions to the very root of our nature, which is that we are all born with an evil bent. Because we are naturally in rebellion to the standard of good (God), we are incapable of being good (Romans 3:10, Luke 18:19). In its essence, sin

Every human is rightfully subject to the devastation of sin and punishment of sin, and once you get to know God, you'll more clearly understand why He can't just leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7). He is a God of justice, and the end result of unchecked sin is death (Romans 6:23). So, what's the

**“IN ITS ESSENCE, SIN IS A COUP AGAINST GOD.”**

### **THE STORY OF SIN**

The first thing that stuck out to me when I started reading the Bible was story after story of people doing horrible things. It was pages of murder, rape, betrayal, and lying. Sometimes I couldn't even make out who the good guy was. But let's be real: not much has changed in today's day and age. We have all been wronged by someone and we have also all wronged others. We all have seen bad things that demand justice. It doesn't take much to prove the existence of sin. But, it still begs the question, "What is it?"

Sin is "transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4) that occurs because we know God's will (Romans 2:14-15) but reject it for our own. But it's not

is a coup against God. That is the root of all evil, and that's all of humanity's nature from birth.

### **THE STORY OF GOD**

But it wasn't always this way. In the book of Genesis in the Bible, God declared that He made humans in His own image. Everything was good, but sin defiled and corrupted everything (Romans 8). Worse yet, it destroyed our relationship with God. The hard truth is that sin does not get committed out of obligation, but rather out of desire. We want it. Sin is deceitful because it promises to give us what we think we want, but it ultimately destroys every good thing God intended. It leads us to believe that God is a liar.

answer? How do we fix it when we can't do anything good (Romans 3:10)? The good news is that although we're incapable of remedying this on our own, Jesus did. Salvation is through faith alone, through Christ alone:

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*  
- Romans 3:23-26, ESV



# LETTER TO A LONELY HEART:

*What I Learn from Getting Alone*

**“NONE OF US ARE STRANGERS TO IT, AND YET IT’S NOT EASY TO TALK ABOUT.”**

*Dear Lonely Person,*

As if humans didn’t have enough of a problem with loneliness, the social distancing of the COVID-19 pandemic succeeded at bringing already present lonely feelings to the surface. I think to experience loneliness is to be human in the rawest sense. To feel lonely is to feel unwanted, overlooked, abandoned, and unloved. It’s feeling like an outcast, with no one to turn to. None of us are strangers to it, and yet it’s not easy to talk about. Each person’s experience of loneliness is unique, and while there’s definitely no quick fix, I want to encourage you with three things that help me find peace in my loneliness.

## 1. I GET ALONE WITH GOD

When I feel forgotten and left behind, I have to get alone and tell God how I’m feeling. I go alone to be with Him, just like Jesus did in Mark 1:35. I ask for understanding about my situation, probably while wiping away tears. Since

I know He’s done it before, I ask God to teach me something in my loneliness. I pray that my situation, no matter how painful, would bring me even closer to Him because I trust that He can use my struggles for good. Anyone who’s been in a close friendship with another person knows that humans are eventually going to fail us. So, I praise God for being faithful when I, or others around me, have not been (2 Timothy 2:13). I remember that to rely on my friends, family, and relationships to fully satisfy me is to set myself up for disappointment. I ask God to remind me that Jesus alone is my answer, my peace, and my hope.

## 2. I LISTEN

God’s promises are my assurance, a solid guarantee. I read and re-read the promises written in God’s Word and hold on desperately to them. I listen to what God has told me before and is telling me again: “I’m never going to leave you” (Hebrews 13:5), “don’t fear, I’m with you, I will strengthen and help you” (Isaiah 41:10), “I will teach you which way to go” (Psalm 32:8), “come to Me when you’re weary and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28), “you’re going to have trouble in this world, but I’ve overcome it” (John 16:33), and these don’t even scratch the surface.

## 3. I DON’T STAY ALONE

I lean in close to the community God’s given to me. God’s church is so much more than a building. It’s a group of people committed to following Jesus and serving Him with their lives. When I’m losing heart and wanting to isolate, I fight the urge to stay home and wallow. I show up anyway and ask for help and encouragement from my friends who have said, “no matter what, I’m not going anywhere.” I tell them what’s *really* going on. Through thick and thin, we’re family.

Loneliness can teach us valuable lessons like dependence on and satisfaction in a God who never fails. Humans, even good-intentioned ones, will eventually let you down. But God? He never will. Through Jesus, He’s offered us eternal life. Loneliness can, if we have the right perspective, give us reason to hope because it reminds us that a sinful world is not what we were created for, and it’s not going to last forever for those who know Jesus as a friend. Steve DeWitt published an article called, “*Loneliness Has Been My Faithful Friend*,” and wrote in it, “Every loneliness on earth is an internal confirmation that our greatest relational joys lie ahead of us.”<sup>1</sup>

*With care,  
A Sometimes Lonely Christian*

<sup>1</sup> [desiringgod.org/articles/loneliness-has-been-my-faithful-friend](https://desiringgod.org/articles/loneliness-has-been-my-faithful-friend)

# “Alexa, What Does This Phrase Mean?”

WORD ON THE STREET FOUND OUT THE ORIGINS OF SOME ODD PHRASES.



## “DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY HATCH.”

**TRANSLATION:** Don't get your hopes up solely based on assumptions since that can lead to disappointment.

This saying goes back to at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The earliest known appearance in print is in the book *New Sonnets and Pretty Pamphlets* by Thomas Howell, 1570.



## “A PIECE OF CAKE.”

**TRANSLATION:** Something easily done.

There is quite a bit of controversy surrounding how the phrase came about. One side believes it comes from a dance or celebration in which slaves in the South would compete in dances that imitated and subtly mocked the gestures of the slave owners. The most elegant couple or team would be given a cake as an award.<sup>6</sup> Another take on the origin relates it to the Royal Air Force in the late 1930s in which it meant an easy mission.<sup>7</sup>



## “AN ARM AND A LEG.”

**TRANSLATION:** Used to describe something which costs an exorbitant amount or is at least perceived to.

It is thought to have origins before the 1600s. The phrase started to appear in newspapers in 1901.<sup>3</sup>

**“BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH.”** **TRANSLATION:** A situation in which one barely escapes a disaster. The phrase can be found word for word in the book of Job: “My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth” (Job 19:20, KJV).<sup>2</sup>

**“BEATING AROUND THE BUSH.”** **TRANSLATION:** Avoiding the main point in a conversation. This phrase evolved from the literal meaning. People would beat the bushes in a bird hunt to rouse the birds.<sup>4</sup> The phrase first appears in a 1440 medieval poem “Generydes—A Romance in Seven-line Stanzas.”<sup>5</sup>

**“TAKE IT WITH A GRAIN OF SALT.”** **TRANSLATION:** To accept something but still be a little skeptical about its truth. The origin is unknown but there are some hypotheses. For example, one instance can be found in writing by Pliny Elder where he translated what some suggest is an antidote to poison dating back to the Roman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

**“CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR.”** **TRANSLATION:** A person who fell short of a successful outcome and therefore receives no reward. This phrase most likely originated from the 1920s when fairs and carnivals would hand out cigars as prizes.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup>knowyourphrase.com/don't-count-your-chickens-before

<sup>2</sup>www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/83000.html

<sup>3</sup>mentalfloss.com/article/56017/10-wacky-whoppers-about-origins-popular-18th-century-phrases

<sup>4</sup>knowyourphrase.com/beat-around-the-bush

<sup>5</sup>phrases.org.uk/meanings/beat-around-the-bush.html

<sup>6</sup>english.stackexchange.com/questions/431679/the-conflicting-origin-of-a-piece-of-cake

<sup>7</sup>idioms.thefreedictionary.com/piece-of-cake

<sup>8</sup>phrases.org.uk/meanings/take-with-a-grain-of-salt.html

<sup>9</sup>rd.com/article/close-but-no-cigar-origin/



BRICKYARD DISC GOLF COURSE

# LITTLE-KNOWN MENOMONIE

## A GUIDE TO THE TOWN'S BEST KEPT SECRETS

**S**ummer is just around the corner and there are so many promising opportunities to take advantage of. Maybe you're new to Menomonie or you've been here a long time, but either way, there are always new foods to try, activities to do, and places to go. Here are a few lesser known must-tries around Menomonie.

### GET ACTIVE

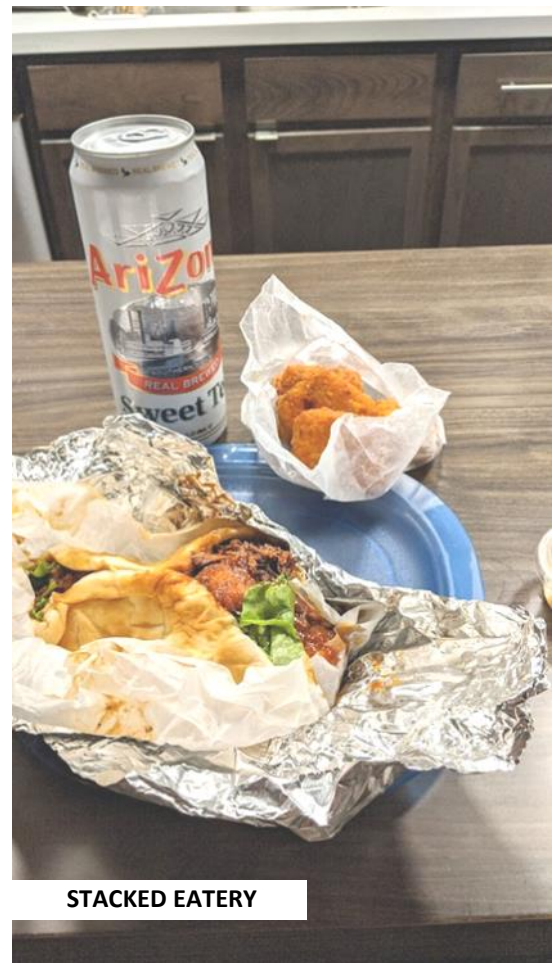
**Disc Golf** - There are a variety of disc golf courses in Menomonie, but one of the best is the Brickyard Disc Golf Course. It's less than a mile from campus, so grab a buddy and walk (or drive) to the park. You might spot some deer or other wildlife if you're quiet.

**Portage around the Dam** - Canoe or kayak from lower Tainter Lake to Lake Menomin. This trip could take around three to four hours, but it is well worth the time. Because this spot is one of the more hidden treasures, you might want

a more detailed step-by-step guide. To start your journey, travel to Kleist Boat Landing where there is parking across the street. From there you can put in on Tainter and travel down the lake and river to Cedar Falls. Once you reach the orange buoys, you will want to get out and portage around the dam about a quarter of a mile just below the bridge where you can put in again. From there, enjoy an uninterrupted path down to Lake Menomin where you can end your trip at Wakanda Park. If you don't own your own canoe or kayak, there are rentals offered at Stout Rentals to both the community and students.

### FOOD AND DRINK

**Stacked Eatery** - This local restaurant has a world-inspired menu, offering lunch, dinner, and late-night specials. Check out the Wisconsin Sandwich, which is pulled pork, cheese curds, coleslaw, and BBQ sauce. This tasty treat is a town favorite and a fun meal you



STACKED EATERY

might not find somewhere else. They are open for limited hours Thursday—Saturday. They have a shifting menu so you can always try something new.

**Hangs Cuisine** - Have you had the best Hmong food in Menomonie yet? Try out the bubble tea! It's a sweet, refreshing summer drink you might want to pick up on the go. Try their variety of flavors like mango, coconut, taro, honeydew, or lychee for only \$3. They are open Monday—Saturday, 12—6 pm.

**Blind Munchies Coffeehouse** - This local nonprofit coffeehouse specializes in affordable and delicious treats, from fresh bakery to specialty drinks! If you're not into coffee, try out the Red Bull Italian Soda in a variety of flavors. On Saturday mornings, breakfast is served to students for \$2 when they show their student ID and \$3 for the rest of the community. Once the warmer weather hits, check out their vintage trailer and patio seating which doubles as an outdoor coffee shop.

...continued →

## EXPLORE PARKS

**3M/Menomoin Park** - Have you ever wanted to be in three places at once? You might feel like that when you go for a hike, walk, or bike ride here. The trail starts out in the woods, meanders past the lake views, brushes through an open field, climbs a steep hill, treks through a marsh, and then jogs back through woods in a matter of minutes. This park has a wide variety of adventures and paths to explore if you're ready.

**Point Comfort Park** - Within walking distance from campus, Point Comfort Park is a great option for relaxing next to the lake and enjoying the giant red cedar trees. Try packing a picnic, hammock, and your favorite book for the best results. You're going to want to nestle in here, but don't worry, there are bathrooms available.

**Muddy Creek State Wildlife Area** - I spy with my little eye, something worth exploring. Take a look at all of the wildlife, nature, and water reserves this park has to offer. Only ten minutes outside of Menomonie, be prepared to go off-trail hiking or bring your binoculars for more stationary viewing. Some have found this a good spot for gathering wild edibles, such as wild parsley, if you're down for the hunt.

Whether you paddle around the dam, enjoy bubble tea, or walk through the park, we hope you take advantage of the beautiful city you are in. Menomonie may be small, but it is mighty with natural beauty and little-known treasures.

## CITY CAM

By the way, have you ever wanted to spy on your city? Check out the bigger picture of Menomonie with the City Cam! Find it at [JFBelievers.com](http://JFBelievers.com)



PORTAGE AROUND THE DAM



POINT COMFORT PARK

# PRACTICE SPEAKING ENGLISH

FOR MEETING TIMES  
TEXT 715-307-1500

IMPROVE YOUR  
VOCABULARY AND  
FLUENCY IN A CASUAL  
GROUP DISCUSSION

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MENOMONIE • DULUTH • RIVER FALLS

SERVICE TIMES: **WED // 6:30PM** **SUN // 10:30AM**

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



# Live Life on the Edge.

STREET LEVEL MINISTRIES



**MONDAYS // PRAYER & DISCUSSION 5 PM**

@ ELK CREEK ROOM in PRICE COMMONS // Contact us for more info about other happenings

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