

**COUN  
TER  
FEIT**  
CHRISTIANITY



WORD ON THE STREET MAGAZINE (WOTS) is a UW-Stout affiliated publication released twice per semester that has been around for 16 years. WOTS is written, laid out, and printed by members of Street Level Ministries on UW-Stout and UW-Superior campuses. We also print a version of the magazine on Cebu Island in the Philippines. We're Christians who love Jesus and want to write about life, God, and college.

The WOTS crew can be found on campus each Monday while school is in session at **Street Level Ministries' student organization meetings**. Visit [streetlevelministries.com](http://streetlevelministries.com) for details on how you can get involved. We hope the magazine is funny, challenging, and provocative, while encouraging you to pursue a strong relationship with Jesus.



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## MEET THE WOTS STAFF: from three cities and two countries

UW-STOUT, Menomonie, WI

UW-Superior, Superior, WI

Cebu City, Philippines



COUNTERFEIT  
CHRISTIANITY



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HE SPOKE CALMLY, **“THERE IS A WAR GOING ON. YOU ARE A PRISONER, AND YOU HAVE BEEN YOUR WHOLE LIFE. YOU’VE BEEN DRUGGED, LIED TO BY THE ENEMY, AND GIVEN JUST ENOUGH OF WHAT YOU NEED TO SURVIVE AND NOT ASK QUESTIONS. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?”**

Energy surged through the pit of my chest, sending vibrations oscillating down my limbs as the impact of the explosion sent me flying across the room. Lying with my hot, bloodied cheek on the cold floor, I desperately tried to suck air into my empty lungs as my heart slammed up against my ribs and a sharp ringing choked out all other sound. My body refused to move underneath the small, settling pile of rubble and dust. I tasted metal. I smelled gunpowder. My heart slowed as the ringing was gradually replaced with wailing and the screams of people in other apartments around me.

*Am I going to die?*

I was indifferent to that question. Various parts of me ached. I could feel warm blood pooling around my head. I closed my eyes and tried to breathe my last breath multiple times, but my stubborn heart continued to pound against my will as I slowly lost consciousness.

**The sound of movement woke me. I didn’t know how long I had been asleep.**

Despite my previous apathy to live, my body was now very much awake and ready to rip any intruder to shreds. There was the metal taste again and the rhythm of my frantic heart.

**“Are you alive?” a man’s voice asked me.**

**I didn’t respond.**

**“You’ve lost a lot of blood.”**

I stayed as still as I could.

A broad, warm hand firmly settled between my shoulder blades. I was on my feet within seconds, flinging my fists at whatever

monster was attached to the hand. Then, a rush of blood to my head and down to the cement floor my broken body collapsed, once again.

**“Try not to move so quickly,” said the monster.**

**“May I help you?”**

**I said nothing but didn’t refuse as his sure hands began to work.** I was bandaged and sewn back together within moments. He helped me sit upright and asked when I last ate. I honestly **couldn’t remember. My fists were carefully pried open by his fingers, and I was given a container of hot liquid.** I was still leery of this intruder, but I sipped. Creamy, salty broth slid over my aching teeth and poured into my stomach. As I was warmed and filled, I realized for the first time how cold and hungry I had really been. The last of the broth drained out of the container, and I handed it back to him completely empty. He chuckled quietly and told me I had some on my face. I **wiped it off quickly and didn’t smile back.**

**“Who are you?” he asked me.**

**“I’m 349980,” I responded automatically.**

**“But what’s your name?”**

I paused. No one had called me by my name in years. I almost couldn’t remember it. Then, I **heard my voice answer quietly, “My name is Lorne.”**

**“I’m Ezra,” he responded warmly. No one had ever introduced themselves to me by name before; number always came first. There were only a few people in my life who even told me their names at all.**

**“Do you know what’s going on?”**

**“I got home from work, there was an explosion, you broke into my apartment and forced me to eat whatever was in that bowl.” I had almost**

forgotten about the explosion until I spoke about it.

**“Do you know why there was an explosion?”**

**“I don’t know...there were probably renovations going on and they forgot to tell us about it again.” I felt weirdly defensive.** Something in me desperately wanted to downplay the carnage and go on with my life.

**Ezra didn’t respond right away. I could hear his calm breathing and the steady beat of his heart. His stability made me more anxious. Then he asked, “Do you want to know what’s going on?”**

I fidgeted. First his real name and now this deep, probing conversation where he knew more about the world than I did—what was this? On the defense, my heart flopped around in my ribcage, forcing blood to my clammy extremities. **I didn’t answer him.**

**He spoke calmly, “There is a war going on. You are a prisoner, and you have been your whole life. You’ve been drugged, lied to by the Enemy, and given just enough of what you need to survive and not ask questions. Do you understand?”**

I hated him. Instantly. Despite all of the help and what seemed like genuine care for me, I **now knew he had an agenda. I stood up. “Get out. I know what you’re trying to do, and I’m not falling for it. Get out of my apartment.”**

**He didn’t move right away. Then he asked me, still irritatingly calm, “How do you know I’m not right?”**

**“Because everything has been fine. I’m fine. The explosion was a mistake, and I’m sure we’ll find out what happened soon enough, and it will be fine. Besides, if there was some**

big, mystical war going on there's not much I could do about it anyway."

"What if there *was* something you could do?"

I thought for a moment. Something in my chest stirred, like an old door creaking open a crack, just big enough to let in a whisper of fresh breeze. Then, I realized the idiocy of it all. The door slammed shut once more. I told him to leave for the last time.

He stood and rummaged through his bag. He carefully placed a cool, small box into my reluctant fist.

"If you change your mind and want to be able to see, use this radio to call the Healer. He is the only one who will be able to help you. I wish you well, Lorne."

He was gone before I had a chance to deny his gift. I ran my fingers over the buttons and thought about what Ezra said to me. Then, I threw the box across the room and decided it was about time to get some well-deserved sleep.

In my dream, I was at work—damp, cold, monotonous work. My pickaxe struck the jagged rock, moving with the rhythm set by the other workers around me: *clink-clink, clink-clink, clink-clink*. We were carving tunnels into the heart of the mountain—I couldn't remember why. I thought I knew at some point, but had forgotten since. No one knew, really. Everyone was digging to find a piece of gold. If you found one, you never had to work again. No one near me had ever found any, but I'd heard plenty of rumors. It was enough to keep me digging. Suddenly, I heard Ezra's voice: "... given just enough of what you need to survive and not ask questions." I brushed it off and continued to dig.

Suddenly, it began to bother me that I couldn't remember why we were digging. Our work had always been referred to by the Superiors as "The Cause". What Cause? Shouldn't I be coming to work everyday for a purpose bigger than finding gold for myself? What would I do if I didn't have to work, anyways? I had never thought this through before. Ezra's words were audible once again, "You are a prisoner, and you have been your whole life."

Even though I was dreaming, a panic began to creep into my stomach. Why was this the first time in my life I was questioning things? Why did I know so little about the world around me and my purpose in it? Why didn't I care more? What if what Ezra said was true and I really couldn't see it?

I jolted out of the dream into the waking world, a burning anxiety pulsing furiously in my stomach. Without much thought, I shot up and began to search for the radio I had thrown. After what seemed like hours of sifting through rubble and dust on my knees, my fingers closed around a small, familiar box with a face full of buttons. A cool wave of hope swept over me. My thumb grazed the largest button, the one that would make the call. I hesitated. This is exactly what he wants: for me to make a panicked decision and join some radical, rebel cause. The anxiety in my stomach threatened to overtake me, and my heart felt like it was going to leap up into my throat. I pressed down on the button.

A low tone filled the silence around me followed by three small bursts of static. Then: nothing. I held my breath. I waited for something else. There was nothing. An anger welled up in me as I realized I had been duped. I pressed the button again. And then again. And then once more. Still, nothing. I could have broken the radio when I threw it, but more likely, Ezra had been lying to me—a sick joke played by a cruel man. The radio dropped from my fingers. I gave up on standing, and my body crumpled to the cold, cement floor. I had no desire to ever stand up again. Or to go to work. Or to think about Ezra and his deception. I could

THEN, A SEARING PAIN SURGED THROUGH MY EYE SOCKETS. I DROPPED TO HIS FEET AND STARTED TO TEAR AT MY FACE, DESPERATELY TRYING TO REMOVE THE PASTE. AS I WRITHED ON THE FLOOR IN PANIC, SOMETHING BEGAN TO WELL UP INSIDE ME.

almost feel the last bit of hope physically drain from my body.

It was quiet for a long time. Then, a low blast and the familiar marching of footsteps in the hallway. Everyone was on their way to work. I continued to lay on the floor, waiting for someone to notice I was gone; but no one came for me. The army of people outside my apartment died away, and the hurried strides of late workers echoed through empty corridors. One particular rhythm of steps was moving more slowly. They were heavier, steadier. These steps belonged to a Superior—I could tell. They neared my apartment and came to a stop. I should stand, rush, get dressed, find my pickaxe. I should think of a reason why I didn't come

to work. I should use the explosion as an excuse. I should give them all the information I had about Ezra so they could find him and punish him for his involvement in the rebellion. I should do *something*.

But, I just laid there, like an idiot.

The steps were in my apartment, advancing toward me.

My frantic heart slammed against my ribs, but I kept still.

The steps stopped.

I didn't breathe.

I waited for the jolt of a prod, the kick of a boot.

But I heard my name instead.

If it wasn't a Superior—I was certain it was Ezra; he was back to rub my desperate weakness in my face. I was furious and lunged at his jaw with a tightly clenched fist, looking to do as much damage as humanly possible, when a large hand firmly grasped my wrist, mid-swing.

He spoke, and I realized that I was right; it wasn't a Superior. But, it also wasn't Ezra.

"Why did you call for me?"

It was the Healer. The radio had worked.

"I don't know..."

I faced away from him. His fingers were firm around my wrist, but he spoke with an unmistakable gentleness.

"Do you want to be able to see?" he asked quietly.

I hesitated for a moment. What was I getting myself into? Then, I heard my own voice mutter back quietly, "Yes."

His fingers released me, and he bent down. Gathering some dust from the floor in the palm of his hand, he spat and mixed them into a paste. His face was close to mine as he spoke.


"I'm going to touch your eyes," he said.

I braced myself.

He held my chin with one hand and the other gently applied the mixture to my eyelids. I held my breath and stood as still as possible. My mind was frantically running through every way this odd encounter could go wrong, not to mention trying to understand the absurdity of his chosen "healing" method. He finished applying the paste and removed his warm fingers from my jaw. For a moment, nothing happened. The room was entirely silent besides the sound of our combined breathing.

Then, a searing pain surged through my eye sockets. I dropped to his feet and started to tear at my face, desperately trying to remove the paste. As I writhed on the floor in panic, something began to well up





THIS KING HAD TAKEN THE TIME TO COME FIND ME--TO ANSWER MY FRANTIC RADIO FREQUENCY AND HEAL ME. HE OFFERED ME A POSITION AND A PURPOSE. I KNEW I WAS INSIGNIFICANT, SMALL, SICK, AND WEAK, BUT HE WANTED ME TO FIGHT FOR HIM?

inside me. A wave began in my stomach and rose up through my throat until a massive pressure loomed behind my cheeks and forehead. I resisted for a moment, but the pain in my eyes was too great, the pressure began to spill out, and I realized that I was crying.

A fissure of brilliant light cracked across the lens of my right eye, and then my left. I lifted my hands to rub, scrape, tear at whatever was happening to my face, and my fingers began to peel off a thick, skin-like covering from my eyes. Whatever it was, it had **been hardened from the Healer's paste and loosened by my tears.** The skin seemed endless as I continued to peel. It felt horribly unnatural and grotesque, but with each sickly strip of skin, the pain in my eyes began to wane. Finally, when there was no more, my tender eyes were overcome with light. I blinked and rubbed as things around the room began to take shape.

Everything was gray. Dark, dirty, and gray. My apartment, my home—it was disgusting. Everything was caked in dust and filth. How had I not seen it before? The aftermath from the explosion was also much worse than I originally thought as a gaping hole in the wall let in the rain from a moody, darkened sky, and almost everything was cracked, wet, and falling apart.

I caught a glimpse of my scabbed, filthy feet. My eyes began to wander with disgust up bruised, wound-ridden shins to the tattered, gray tunic covering my body. Sickening scraps of gray scabs that had been ripped from my eyes were scattered over my lap and lodged underneath my already-dirty fingernails. I was filthy. I was hideous. I had never been able to see it before. A terrible wonder blossomed in my gut as I realized I had spent my entire life up until this point almost completely blind.

A warm hand cupped my shoulder, and I suddenly remembered **I wasn't alone. My still-tender eyes continued to adjust and shifted from my small, dirty body to the Healer.**

He was dirty, but by no means was he hideous in any way. He had broad shoulders and solid, thick limbs covered with skin almost glowing with vibrant, unmistakable life. Blood and dirt were caked onto the armor covering his breast, shins, arms and back; his feet and ankles were bound in heavy boots. A broad sword rested at his hip, and underneath his armor was a ripped tunic, just like mine. Despite the mental picture that his title provided for me, this man had obviously seen vicious battle. However, at the center of his intimidating, ferocious and war-hardened presence was a gentle touch, deep, brown eyes filled with care, and a clear smile. Then, with my eyes still straining to focus and soak up every detail, I noticed a thin, golden band encircling the top of his head. My stomach sank. In my hideous filth and the hopeless wreckage of my apartment, I was in the presence of a King.

In a fit of panic, I threw my body down on the ground—forehead in the dust, finger tips at his feet—too ashamed to look

him in the eyes anymore. His broad hand once again settled on my shoulder as he spoke to me quietly.

**“Lorne, you have a decision to make. Now that you are able to see, you can go only one of two ways. You may continue to live here and work in the mines as you always have. It will be difficult at first, but your eyes will slowly dim once more, and you will again become blind. Nothing will change besides the nagging memory of our meeting, and soon enough you will find a way to forget even that. Or, you may choose to come with me.”**

For the first time, a distinct twinge of excitement began to flutter around inside me. I steadied my breathing and strained my ears to hear his every word.

**“Ezra was correct,” the King continued. “There is a war going on, and you are a prisoner. However, I have come to offer you your freedom. I want you to fight for me, Lorne, and I have a specific place set aside that only you can fill. If you choose to do this, it will be the most difficult thing you have ever done. You will be met with fierce opposition that will only increase until the War is finally finished. There will be pain, blood, and moments where you would give anything to be blind and back in the mines once again. But I will never leave you. This is not a war you will be able to fight by yourself. If you choose to come with me, you will need to learn to take orders, follow closely, and fight alongside the other soldiers in my army. Their welfare will be of utmost importance to you as you continue to come back to this place and seek to free prisoners just as Ezra sought you.”**

He lifted my face from the dust and spoke plainly to me once more, **“My army will win this war; I will reclaim my throne, and I will restore order to my Kingdom. To fight for me is to choose excruciating hardship, but you will be free, and I will take care of you to the very end. Which will you choose, Lorne: to fight or forget?”**

Hot tears rolled down my cheeks and stung my new eyes as I thought about the implications. Ezra risked his life only to be rudely handled and seemingly rejected by me. This King had taken the time to come find me—to answer my frantic radio frequency and heal me. He offered me a position and a purpose. I knew I was insignificant, small, sick, and weak; but he wanted me to fight for him? I was not a warrior in any way! I was not someone to be recruited for anything outside of a good washing and possibly a change of clothes. But he wanted *me*.

I wanted to laugh. I wanted to run. I wanted to scream. I wanted to dance. I wanted to leap.

I wanted to explain to him why he was making a huge mistake—why I was not fit for the task he had in mind.

I wanted to ask him a million questions—details, directions, plans, and what my specific role would be.

**But I didn't do any of those things. I looked at him—at his warm, brown eyes that saw all my festering scabs and dirty disgraces.**

**“I want in.”**

## ANOTHER REDNECK RANT FROM YOUR FAVORITE GUY...



# NICK THE HICK

Im a bigger fella, I don't have a stealth mode. Even on a good day I wouldn't consider

putting myself in a situation where I would try to sneak up on someone. They, A. Will see me right away and say, "What you stumblin around for foo." Or B. Throw their school lunch money at me and run like a school girl. I don't have the most tact but I am tryin. I aint very smart and am not going to win to many quick yapping debates. So needless to say political correctness is a mouth full in itself and something I don't find myself naturally thinkin about. However in my short life I can see a rise in people getting offended so easy. I even pained myself listening to a public radio segment where people could call in and inform the general

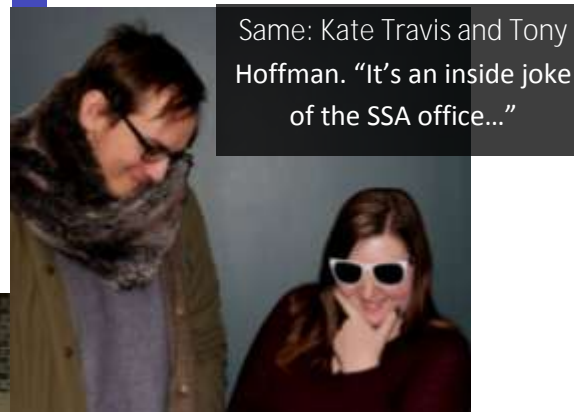
### Today's Rant: Walking on Eggshells

public of phrases that are offensive that people don't know are offensive. It took everything I had to not call in and ask them if they could hold a pledge drive so I could afford to fix my radio in my car so I could listen to something else. I am all for freedom and respect, but maybe just maybe we could set our pitchforks and knives down when someone takes a stand for what they believe in when it doesn't match up with the yuppies pushing their agenda on everyone else? Who knows, maybe we could make friends again instead of just acquaintances. Well that was a mouthful. Till next time.

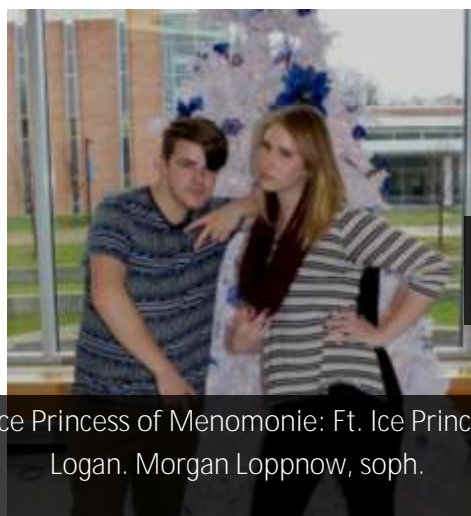
# Stout Student Poll

If you started a band, what would your band name be?

Hoping to ease some of the finals week stress, WOTS staff strolled through the MSC asking Stout students what their name would be if they ever aspired to rock star status. Some were hesitant as they racked their brains for the best title and others didn't need to blink an eye, almost like they had thought of this before. Here's what they came up with:



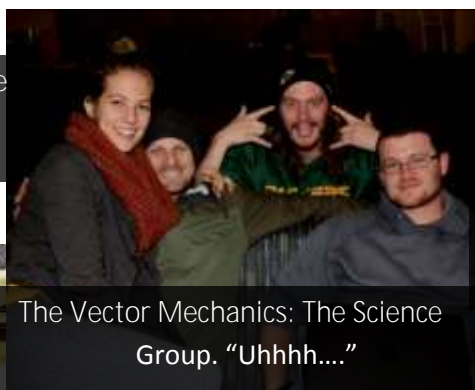
Same: Kate Travis and Tony Hoffman. "It's an inside joke of the SSA office..."



Ice Princess of Menomonie: Ft. Ice Prince Logan. Morgan Loppnow, soph.



The Weirdos: Hamoud Alshammari, fr. from Saudi Arabia. "That's a good name!"



The Vector Mechanics: The Science Group. "Uhhhh...."



The Mango Keys: Ellie Jacobson, soph. "It was the name of our sax quartet in high school. I like it."




Rock Candy: Jonah Tczap, soph. "Rock Band inspired."



Butts on a Skateboard: Gabrielle Starr, fr. "It was for an art project. We had a skateboard and decided to paint people's backsides on it. My dad walks in and says, "Oh, butts on a skateboard."





# WHO IS JESUS FELLOWSHIP?

STREET LEVEL MINISTRIES  
SUNDAY AND WEDNESDAY SERVICES  
THE BLIND MUNCHIES COFFEEHOUSE  
COMMUNAL LIVING CHURCH HOUSE  
SINGLES & COUPLES FELLOWSHIPS  
PHILIPPINES SHOFAR MISSIONS  
BURNING DOG RADIO 101.7FM  
WORD ON THE STREET MAGAZINE

## THE CAMPUS CHURCH

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JUST 5 MINUTES WALK FROM UW-STOUT



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AND HIS WIFE SHARON

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# MEET HENRY CRAFT

## STOUT HALL DIRECTOR

### INTERVIEW

Imagine never leaving college. Not the stock-piling-Easy-Mac-and-staying-up-until-2-a.m. part; **we're** talking staying permanently on campus – indefinitely. Whether that sounds like great news or impending **doom, we'll let you decide; but for the UW-Stout hall directors, this is where they find their niche.** *Word on the Street* snagged an exclusive interview with Henry Craft, the hall director in Stout's North Hall, to get an insider look at this distinguished profession.

WOTS: Tell us a little bit about yourself: your interests, personality, family, etc.

HC: My wife, Melissa, and our two children, Gideon and Phoebe, live here in North Hall. We are involved on campus and throughout the town. We are very interested in international students, international travel, and we are part of our church at Menomonie Alliance. I really like to try ethnic foods; I like fishing, playing tennis, and I just started playing racquetball **last night... I got a bit of a hip bruise from that one.**

WOTS: What led up to your decision to become a hall director in the first place?

HC: I got out of grad school with my degree in general mental health and was searching for positions in central Illinois, where we were **living. I couldn't really find anything that was going to sustain us.** I worked for two and a half years as an RA during college, and then I worked during grad school as an Academic Resource Supervisor, so I had a lot of student affairs work under my belt.

WOTS: How long have you been the hall director in North Hall?

HC: **I've been in North Hall for almost a full year, but I was a hall director for one and a half years in Tustison-Oetting as well.**

WOTS: Can you tell us how you ended up at UW-Stout in particular?

HC: I went to OPE, which is an interview fair, and I interviewed with 12 different schools. **Every school told me 'no', and Stout told me 'Let's wait and see what happens.'** I was ready to give up and had been talking with Africa Inland Mission to see if we would go into that field instead. Then, Stout called me and offered me the position.

WOTS: What are the duties of a hall director?

HC: My duties are pretty variable. One set thing in my schedule is weekly centralized staff meetings with my peers. I also have a variety of work teams I am on, and we meet each week. I supervise 14 employees in [North Hall], and we also have a weekly staff meeting. I meet with most of my staff every other week for a half hour as well. I am involved in several

other committees on campus as well. I would say probably 70% of my position is campus or student or housing related work; 20% is student interaction.

WOTS: What is one thing you wish students knew about hall directors in general?

HC: I think I wish they knew us, period! My peers, I can say, really love students – even when they hold them accountable, they really care about them. In our decisions we do think **about students and what's best for them. We work crazy hours, and we live [in the dorms]; I don't think some students know that. Students** can contact me whenever they want.

WOTS: Which part of your job is most meaningful to you?

HC: Having meaningful conversations with my students.

WOTS: **I've heard North Hall has a large international student population; what's it like** being able to interact with students from around the world?

HC: **I love it. It's who I am; I really enjoy being able to interact and share with them.** I love getting to interact with people from places I would never maybe visit – **I'm from a small town in Illinois – and even in Menomonie, if you don't get out of your bubble and interact with someone from Pakistan or India, all the different places and culture we have access to, you probably won't ever get to have a conversation about the ins-and-outs of Hinduism or know that in India you eat with your hands.**

WOTS: Have you done any international travelling?

HC: I was in Juarez, Mexico for three months building houses before my sophomore year of college. I then spent a summer in Kenya, East Africa, with the Maasai people. The year Melissa and I married we took a bit of a hiatus from travelling. After grad school I got my MA in Counselling (my BA is in intercultural studies), and we went to Rwanda in 2014 for a couple weeks. This last summer I led a trip to Chiang Mai, Thailand.

WOTS: Do you have any crazy stories from

your time in the dorms here at Stout?

HC: Somebody rubbed hot sauce and chicken wings all over my building this weekend, and I had a guy try to build his own bed once.

WOTS: If you could give one piece of advice to current Stout students, what would it be?

HC: You are smarter than you think you are.

**Just find out who you are while you're here.**

WOTS: **What's the best ice cream flavor?**

HC: **I'm a seasonal, sporadic ice cream consumer. I just don't do it often. I'm usually a vanilla-with-hot-fudge kind of guy; it's not very exotic. The worst is butter pecan.**

**Maybe this is the first time you're finding out that someone actually lives in your dorm 24/7, year after year. Introduce yourself and get to know these faithful people who are so committed to your well-being, success, and growth during the college experience.**





# Sweet Beard, Man.

RUGGED. MANLY. DISTINGUISHED.  
THESE FOUR WORDS ARE SYNONYMOUS WITH  
THE FACIAL CULTIVATION KNOWN TO THE  
CIVILIZED WORLD AS “BEARDS.”

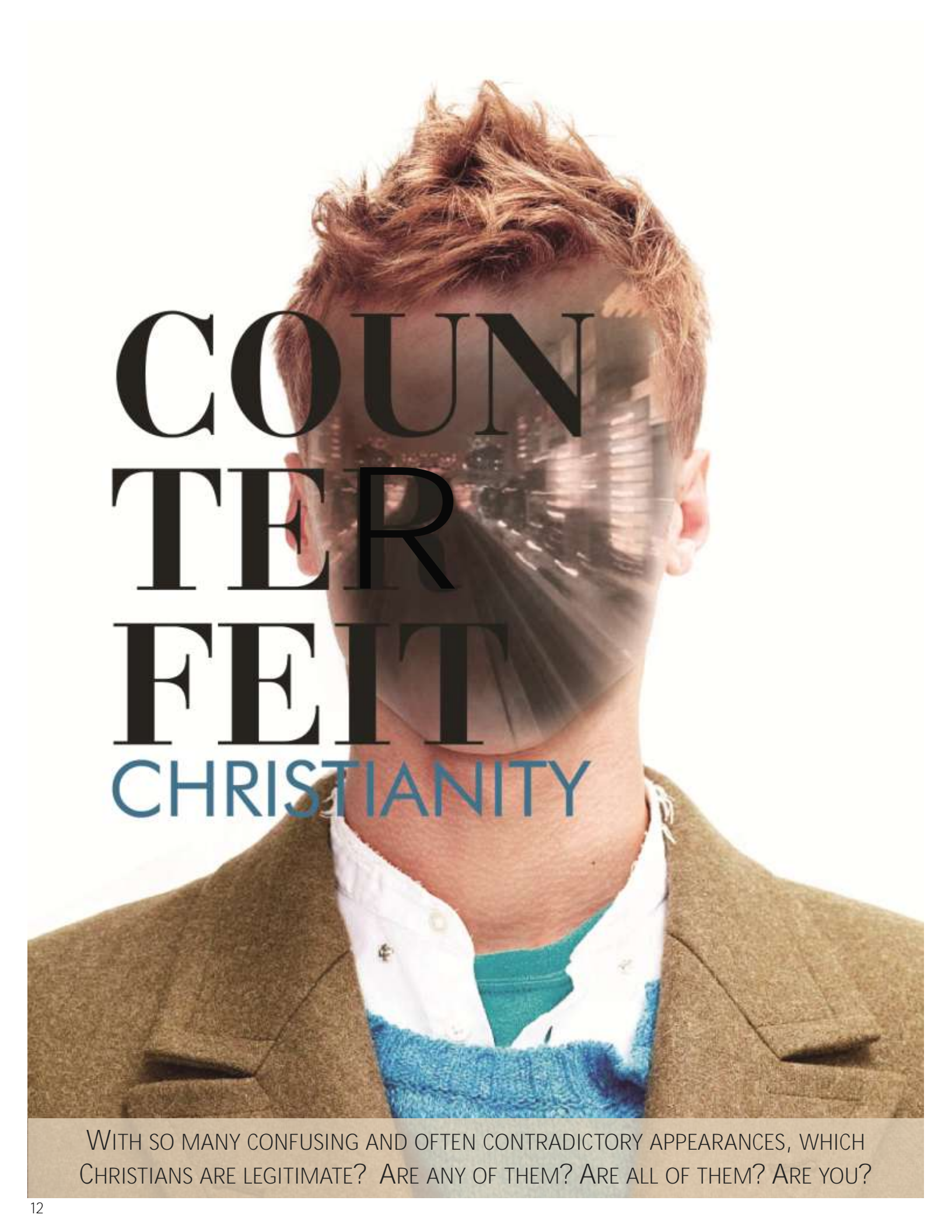
My name is Rambo, but you can just call me Lincoln. Well, the human I'm clung to is named Lincoln. He's a pretty bro guy, but I make him look awesome. I'm his beard, and we treat each other well. We've got a good exchange; he keeps me looking sleek and strong with some original 'lumberjack cedar' or authentic 'date night' beard oil. And I? Well, I keep his face warm whilst helping him exude masculine essences.

I've been with Lincoln for quite some time now, and I can assure you we've seen a lot of different beards in a lot of different places—folks sporting mutton chops, full beard, the Balbo, the Ducktail, Full Amish, the Van Dyke, the Sparrow, the neck beard, the Old Dutch, the ever-so-popular 'homeless guy look', and even a couple Fu Manchus. Portland was pretty weird. We met a couple self-proclaimed sea captains and even a fedora-toting wizard in that crazy place.

Actually, come to think of it, there may have been too many beards around; so much plaid... and hair... and everyone talking about the irony of triangles and craft brewing. Oh my. What if I'm not so special after all? Honestly, beards may not be as unique as I thought. I swear I saw a woman with one on her face not too long ago. Maybe Lincoln and I aren't the trend-setting figures I imagined. Hmm... Well, that can't be, can it? I'm a non-conforming and unique snowflake just like everybody else... right? Perhaps a change is needed. Lincoln has been complaining about how itchy I've been making him feel lately, and he doesn't seem to appreciate how often I store excess food for him when he forgets to eat it.

Well, that about settles it in my book! Viva la whiskerless! Maybe we could get a vintage, straight-edge razor; those aren't ironic yet, are they? We could pick up some fancy shave cream, classic aftershave like ol' manly Grandpa had, and a new badger hair shave brush, which is so much better than boar hair, obviously. It'll be great bonding time! What about the frigid winters you say? Hmph. That's why scarves were invented. Besides, the cold never bothered me anyway.





# COUNTER FEIT CHRISTIANITY

WITH SO MANY CONFUSING AND OFTEN CONTRADICTORY APPEARANCES, WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE LEGITIMATE? ARE ANY OF THEM? ARE ALL OF THEM? ARE YOU?

# CHRISTIANS ARE AWFUL PEOPLE.

In the name of Christ, they picket soldiers' funerals and scream out "God hates fags." In the name of Christ, they marry multiple (young) wives and have enough children to populate small towns. In the name of Christ, they yell "turn or burn" through bullhorns at students walking to class. Christians are awful people, and for that we are sincerely sorry.

These notorious extremists are only one side of the Christian spectrum. On the opposite end are those who have "Christ in their hearts" and nothing else. In between these live the Church Camp Christian, the Christmas and Easter Christian, and the I-went-on-a-mission-trip Christian. With so many confusing and often contradictory appearances, which Christians are legitimate? Are any of them? Are all of them? Are you?

The truth is some Christians are legitimate and some are counterfeit. Knowing the difference matters because without proper identification we will charge the true Christians as false and the false Christians as true. Not to mention, if your own identification is mistaken—if you think you're a real Christian when in fact you are merely a counterfeit—it will drastically affect the outcome of this life and the next. Therefore, the definition of a real Christian is not subjective, as culture claims, but rather specific and life-altering, as Jesus insists.

## COUNTERFEIT JESUS

We all know the situation well—we're at the grocery store and spot a familiar friend, relative, or coworker and approach them with an inside joke, maybe even physical contact. But, upon closer inspection that person isn't who we thought; they are simply a stranger. Mistaking someone's identity like this can be awkward, embarrassing, or even hurtful. Similarly, mistaking Jesus' identity can be just as embarrassing.

Mistaking Jesus' identity comes in a variety of forms. First, some people see Him as their "homeboy," a friend who loves them unconditionally and goes along with any and all of their plans. Jesus would never point out their faults because, after all, they were born this way. Also, some people insist that Jesus never existed, that His identity is just a myth to comfort the weak. If, by chance, these people admit the possibility of a real Jesus, it's only on the basis that He was a good teacher; He couldn't be God. Next, there are those who claim to have no opinion of Jesus. They take an apathetic approach to His identity because the busyness of classes, finding a job, or getting married takes precedence. In their minds, there is time to figure all this Jesus stuff out ... later. Finally, many people haven't heard of Jesus at all.

In order to get Jesus' identity right, it only makes sense to ask Him. In John 8 He tells us, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." This statement is extremely offensive because it goes against our ingrained belief that life is a smorgasbord of choices. Jesus shreds that idea by insisting that He is the *only* source of life for the *entire* world and anything else is pure darkness. That is a pretty radical claim because if Jesus is the only way, that means, by default, life is not found in landing our dream career, building a happy family, or by being a good person.

Needless to say, Jesus' claim is not that popular today and it wasn't then, either. Religious leaders of the time publically fought against His identity. To make His point even more clear, Jesus tells them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." Here, Jesus doesn't leave any room for open interpretation. He is matter-of-fact about His identity and will not waver. He is not just a good luck charm, a genie that gives us what we want, or a good source for coffee cup quotes. Jesus is God who became human, and then gave Himself to be killed as a sacrifice on our behalf.

Knowing Jesus' true identity is the foundation of authentic Christianity. A real Christian takes Him at His word, even if that word is offensive, disagreeable, or shocking. A counterfeit, however, picks and chooses which parts of Jesus' identity they like the best, but ignores the rest. After all, it is more comfortable to believe in a Jesus who doesn't tell us where we're wrong. By making up our own Jesus, though, we don't worship Him at all. We worship ourselves.

## COUNTERFEIT CONVERSION

Conversion—the point at which we become a Christian—is a crucial aspect of Christianity that is extremely dangerous if it's merely a counterfeit. We often get conversion wrong because we make it all about personal experience. Our culture viciously protects personal experience to the point that we are accused of being judgmental if we question it. It also doesn't help that we've turned into a YOLO (you only live once) generation that tries to accumulate as many personal experiences as possible while disregarding the potential consequences. Therefore, the danger is that Christianity becomes just another item to cross off our experience list before we move on.

Our claims of conversion come from a variety of different experiences. First, we think we are a Christian because of family tradition. Our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents have always gone to church and the same prayer is always said before every family meal. With that kind of longstanding history, it's easy to assume that we were born Christian from the beginning. Also, we claim to be a Christian because we successfully completed our church's confirmation program. If we know enough Jesus trivia, that has to make us right with God, right? Next, a popular experience is attending church camp. Many people remember crying hysterically because the acoustic guitar mixed with threats of hell got to them. Surely we became a Christian then because we promised God we'd do anything as long as we wouldn't burn forever. Finally, we think we become a Christian when we hit our own personal rock bottom. We look back at the hard times and say things like "that's when I gave my life to Christ."

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## IF OUR FAITH DOESN'T COMPEL US TO ACT, WE SHOULD SERIOUSLY ANALYZE WHETHER OR NOT IT'S COUNTERFEIT.

In actuality, these experiences can be identifiers of counterfeit conversion, especially if they are all that we have. There is no such thing as being born Christian. We don't go to heaven just because we made the right choice to come out of our mother's womb. We aren't converted because we know a lot of information about Jesus. Satan knows a lot about Him, too. Having gone to Bible camp once is not the trick either. If Jesus came to earth and rescued us through his own brutal death, don't you think He wants access to more than just one week of summer out of our whole lives? It is also incorrect to insist that "we gave our life to Him." If that were true, that means we get the credit for making the decision. We steal the glory that belongs to Him for rescuing us when we didn't even know we were drowning in the first place. If we rest in these experiences *alone*, then we may have false assurance. We may think we're saved when Jesus doesn't even know us at all.

So, what's the catch? How do we know real conversion when we see it? At the foundation, conversion is an act of God. It involves God allowing His Holy Spirit to live in us, resulting in our being born again. Jesus explains it like this, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water (physically) and of the Spirit (spiritually)." Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. Apart from God we are spiritually dead. We can't understand spiritual things and God always seems just out of reach. However, just like we had no participation in our own conception and physical birth, so it is with God. In His perfect power, He chooses us. We can only love Him in return "because He first loved us."

Having the Holy Spirit is a very important indicator of being a real Christian. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us that having the Spirit is God's promise or guarantee in this life that what He says about the future is also true." The Holy Spirit is actually an invisible person who literally possesses us. Therefore, if being a real Christian means being possessed by God Himself, one can only conclude that life will begin to change. If you could pack all of LeBron James' basketball talent into your brain, and all of his physical skill into your body, it's a sure thing your basketball-playing skills would change. That kind of power can't remain without effect. Similarly, the life of God surging through you as your life is brought under the control of the Spirit of God is sure to produce a change in your thoughts and actions, along with real love for God. Authentic change produced by the Holy Spirit starts small, in the heart, with our desires. Suddenly we want to read the Bible and, when we do, we actually understand it. We sever relationships that only lead us to sin and form the ones that lead us closer to God. So, take a look at your own heart—what do you desire?

True conversion comes down to being born again because the results of having the Holy Spirit provide tangible evidence versus relative experience. Counterfeit conversion says "I did this once so I'm good," but true conversion is a completely opposite change in life direction that recognizes "I had nothing to do with it." Counterfeit conversion makes us feel good temporarily, but real conversion, when it lines up with the Bible, gives us assurance that lasts for eternity. And, eternity with God will be an unbelievable

experience. God is waiting for us to take the first step forward to follow Him. Will you take it?

### COUNTERFEIT FAITH

If we make up our own Jesus as well as our own conversion, it only stands to reason that we make up our own faith. This may be, in part, simply because we don't know what faith is. We hear it all the time, "Just have faith." We see it printed on signs and we even name our daughters after it. Some take it as an instruction to wish really hard for what we want to come true. Or, we can take it as a suggestion to be generally optimistic, even though all practical circumstances make that nearly impossible. However, just like using a dinner fork to brush your hair is not effective, faith isn't really useful unless we know what it is and how to use it properly.

To truly understand faith, we should go to its inventor. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Sure, faith includes being hopeful and sometimes optimistic, but it is so much more than that. Certainty and hope are only as good as the person or thing you're hoping in. In this case, faith means being certain of God's character, and putting our hope in God's promises. These qualities of faith lead to action, not just "good thoughts." If one is *certain* their house is on fire, they are going to act. If one is *sure* their child is sick, they will act.

Since God gives us faith, what should we use it for? First, it can be used as a barometer of our true character. One aspect of faith is that it gets tested. When we go through breakups, devastating loss, or times of doubt, how we respond in faith is key. Often, times like these show us where we are weak and where we are strong. Like gold being refined in fire, the impurity melts away and all that is left is what's real, no matter how small it is. Also, faith is a tool used for reaching other people. As real Christians, we are certain that without Jesus, millions and millions of people will spend eternity in hell. That should cause us to act. It should lead us to love our classmates, it should lead us to be truthful with neighbors, and it should lead us to keep loving regardless of the response.

If our faith doesn't compel us to act, we should seriously analyze whether or not it's counterfeit. Sometimes we don't act on our faith because we're new at this and it takes time to develop strong faith. That's okay. However, if our faith boils down to nothing but simply believing that God is real, that doesn't count. Even demons believe that. God has a lot to say about faith if only we would seek it out.

### COUNTERFEIT LIFE

In the end, if all we know of Jesus, conversion, and faith is counterfeit, we will have nothing to show for it but a counterfeit life. We might appear to be doing the right things and saying the right things on the outside but we are inwardly rotting to the core. We play religious games called “good church attendance,” “watch me worship,” and “double-life dominoes” that will ultimately mean nothing. When we don’t truly know Him, the games we play turn serious because we misrepresent Jesus’ name. This is how we’ve ended up with so many ridiculous “Christian” activists who misrepresent Jesus as being someone who cares only about red cups, politics, picketing and America. These actions stem from hearts that think they know what God wants, while never actually knowing Jesus.

### THE REAL DEAL

A true Christian who’s connected to Jesus and in love with Him will live a life so different from the norm in this world, that it should cause us to ask, “What motivates them?” An authentic Christian life is one characterized by the qualities of Jesus himself: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”<sup>9</sup> True Christians live their lives in service to others. Those who’ve lived this way have worked to end sex trafficking, slavery, and injustice. They’ve given up their comfortable lives to meet the physical and

spiritual needs of those without education, food and clean water. They’ve opened their homes up to welcome those who society would rather ignore, and they’ve quietly gone to school and work with love for those around them in hopes that Jesus’ love would be made evident. All the while, they acknowledge that their ability to love like this isn’t because they’re naturally good, but because God’s Spirit lives in and works through them.

After holding up the fake and the real for a comparison, you might be wondering where you stand. The good news is, with God, there is always hope. If you’re not a Christian and you’re still alive, it’s not too late. Turn away from living life according to yourself, and turn towards the Inventor of life itself. There *is* a life that you were created to live, and it’s only found when you’re in intimate relationship with Jesus and other Christians. If you *are* a Christian but you’ve mistaken Jesus’ identity, had a confusing conversion, or faltered in faith, take heart. Just like there was nothing you could do to get his Spirit, there is nothing you can do to lose it. No matter where you are, abandon your counterfeit Christianity and taste the richness of life Jesus offers, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

- John 8:12
- John 8:23-24
- John 3:5-6
- 1 John 4:19
- II Corinthians 5:5
- Hebrews 11:1
- James 2:19
- Galatians 5:22-23
- John 10:10

# GROUP MEETING SPACE



### specs

Seating for 10+  
Media Ready  
Chalkboard

### availability

Upon Request  
**NO CHARGE**

### RESERVATIONS

mail@jfbelievers.com **715.235.9300**  
**621 WILSON AVE MENOMONIE, WI**



# MORE THAN A SONG

## THE TRUE STORY OF AMAZING GRACE

JOHN NEWTON (1725-1807) WAS A FORMER SLAVE TRADER turned minister. **What's crazy about his story is that he didn't set out to be a famous hymn writer or even a good churchgoer.** He came to the end of himself during a horrific storm one night in 1748 when he **cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us!"** having held no real, previous religious conviction. When his ship was eventually delivered to safety, he starkly recognized that God had saved him and his crew. That event set him on course for a 180° turn from the life he was living and in pursuit of a God who had so fearlessly pursued him. **The hymn he later wrote as a result of this "meeting" is one many of us know called, "Amazing Grace."** Read the lyrics of this powerful worship song with a fresh perspective on the man behind the words.

Amazing Grace  
Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.*

*Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.*

John Newton had experienced his strength and heart fail. He had tasted grace and seen firsthand the amazing effects of it. He knew what it was to come through danger and toil and literally be led to safety. This song, and the worship born through it, is the expression of a man who had encountered God. Worship, therefore, is not a **genre or something we do only on Sundays.** God's love for us is so strong and deep and beyond comprehension that worship is our utmost attempt at expressing the thankfulness and love we have for Him in return. Worship is not the act of singing words about our God; rather, *Amazing Grace*, and worship songs like it, are the visible tangents of lives surrendered to Him.



# LOCAL EVENTS CALENDAR

WINTER 2016

TUES. 1/26 – Involvement Fair 2016, MSC Great Hall, 11am-2pm

FRI. 1/29 – Candlelight Ski, Red Cedar Bike Trail, 6-9pm

SAT. 1/30 – The Blackshots, The Raw Deal, Menomonie, 7pm

TUES. 2/2 – **Men's Hockey vs. UW-Stevens Point**, 7:30pm

THURS. 2/4 – Hot Chocolate Thursdays, Free hot cocoa each Thursday in MSC Involvement Center, 12-1pm

FRI. 2/5 – UW-Stout Dance-A-Thon, all night dance party **fundraiser for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and the Elimination of Prejudice Foundation**, MSC Great Hall, 8pm-8am

SAT. 2/6 – Two Frets Up, Acoustic Café, Menomonie, WI, 7pm

FRI. 2/12 – Gymnastics vs. UW-Eau Claire, 6pm

SAT. 2/13 – Menomonie Polar Plunge, Elk Point Resort, Menomonie, 12-3pm

SAT. 2/13 – **Women's Basketball vs. UW-Whitewater**, 3pm

FRI. 2/26 – Author, FREE Concert at the Blind Munchies Coffeehouse, Menomonie, Doors open 6:30pm, Concert begins 7pm

THURS. 3/6 – Free trip to the Mall of America with the Involvement Center, 11am-6pm, seats limited

SAT. 3/12 – Sun. 3/20/15 Spring Break

TUES. 3/22 – Grocery Bag Bingo, win a free bag of groceries for a Bingo win, MSC Terrace, 7pm

Wed. 3/23 – Advisement Day, no classes

FRI. 4/1 – FREE Concert, Artist TBA, the Blind Munchies Coffeehouse, Menomonie, Doors open 6:30pm, Concert begins 7pm

FRI. 4/29 – FREE Concert, Artist TBA, the Blind Munchies Coffeehouse, Menomonie, Doors open 6:30pm, Concert begins 7pm

## DON'T MISS THESE

Street Level Bible Study  
Mondays 7pm  
Ballroom B, MSC  
UW-Stout | Menomonie, WI

Jesus Fellowship of Believers Church  
Sundays 10:30am  
Wednesdays 7pm  
621 Wilson Ave

Real Breakfast  
Saturday Mornings  
9am-12pm  
Lunch at 11:00am  
Blind Munchies  
Coffeehouse  
621 Wilson Ave  
(\$2 with Student ID,  
\$3 without)

## OR THIS...

FREE Live Music  
@ The Blind  
Munchies  
Coffeehouse

AUTHOR

Friday, Feb. 7th  
7 pm



# REFUGE.

He will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.

In May of 1939 the *St. Louis*, carrying 937 German refugees -- mostly Jews fleeing the Third Reich -- set sail for Cuba. Most had applied for U.S. visas. Turned away from Cuba, as the *St. Louis* sailed so close to Florida that the passengers could see the lights from Miami, they appealed to President Roosevelt to give them safe harbor. With public opinion opposed to lifting the stringent immigration quotas or to make an exception for the ship's passengers, the *St. Louis* returned to Europe. Almost a quarter of the passengers perished in the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup>

World War II was an annihilation of millions of Jews and other races. As a result, thousands of people sought refuge from the Nazi regime. In July 1938, refugees wanted to come to America to escape their impending death. At that time, two thirds of Americans were against refugee settlement because of *"Anti-Semitism, as well as fears of communist infiltration and anarchy."*<sup>1</sup> Not much has changed in our attitudes toward refugees today. Many Americans are afraid to let Syrian refugees in because terrorists might also sneak through. Should the US let Syrian refugees into the country? This is a heated question with valid arguments on both sides. This article is intended to start the conversation and bring awareness to the issue. To let strangers in is always a risk, but our ancestors were once foreigners in this country, searching for freedom, and the doors were opened for them. Why won't we do the same?

The Response AGAINST Refugees in America: There are legitimate and valid concerns when it comes to letting the Syrians in to America. At the time of this writing, 31 states are opposed to refugees residing there.<sup>2</sup> One reason is because they claim they've already let in the maximum number of refugees. In 2015, we reached the ceiling for refugees at 70,000. In 2016, the proposed ceiling is 85,000.<sup>3</sup> If we are already

housing all of these refugees, how can we let in even more? Some claim we do not have control of the illegal immigrants coming into the country, so we should not open our doors any further. According to pewresearch.org, in 2014 an estimated 11.3 million illegal immigrants lived in the US.<sup>4</sup> Others fear that terrorists will get into the US using the guise of a Syrian refugee. These are all valid arguments against Syrian refugees, but the debate doesn't end here.

The Response FOR Refugees in America:

The crisis in Syria is not merely a civil war; it is a growing entanglement of violence spurred on by the collision of multiple forces laying claim to Syria, with the most dangerous being ISIS. The fallout of this collision is not just bombed buildings, parched land, and ghostlike streets, but hundreds of thousands of human lives. Since 2011, 250,000 people

have lost their lives to ISIS. Half of the Syrian population, 11 million people, are now refugees fleeing brutality and leaving behind a homeland that is only a shell of what it once was.<sup>2</sup> Among those 11 million are mothers, brothers, husbands and daughters. Should their lives not matter? A second point for letting refugees in is that many of us come from ancestors that were once immigrants to America. Many of our ancestors got on a boat and landed here to build a new life and make this their country; some even fled their homeland to avoid adversity and persecution. Why would we strip someone else of the same opportunity that we so undeservedly acquired?

Lest we think it's "easy" to enter this country, refugees that are admitted into America have to undergo a three-year screening process.<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. State Department, only 2% of refugees admitted into the U.S. are "military age males" between 18 and 30 years old, which severely hinders the argument that some terrorists *might* get in. The rest are women, children, the sick and the elderly.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it's become clear that terrorists are coming from *within* our own country. Since 2011, 15 out of 58 people we're aware of that tried to join ISIS from the U.S. were from Minnesota.<sup>6</sup> These are some of the practical reasons for opening the borders of America to Syrian refugees, but there is another reason that goes beyond people, countries and wars. God cares for all people and, if you are a Christian, He asks you to follow in His footsteps.

God is FOR Refugees:

God isn't for violence or letting enemies in, but He *is* for helping people. He *is* for the



oppressed, those under the unjust and cruel exercise of authority and power. We do not have all the answers, much less the specifics, on how to answer the problem of the refugee crisis. But we have God and His thoughts about it:

*“The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.”* (Psalm 9:9)

*“You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so mere people can no longer terrify them.”* (Psalm 10:18)

*“He will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.”* (Psalm 72:12)

*“This is what the Lord says: Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows. Stop murdering the innocent!”* (Jeremiah 22:3)

*“Let our refugees stay among you. Hide them from our enemies until the terror is past. When oppression and destruction have ended and enemy raiders have disappeared...”* (Isaiah 16:4)

These are only a handful of the verses about the oppressed and helpless. God is for them, is with them, comforts them and wants us to do the same. However, God still wants us to be wise about it. Matthew 10:16<sup>b</sup> states, **“Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”** Jesus would not want us to make it easy for violent people to enter the country, but he also wouldn't want us to refuse those who need our help.

# The fallout of this collision is not just bombed buildings, parched land, and ghostlike streets, but hundreds of thousands of human lives.

How to Help:

If this has stirred you and you want to help, start by giving a voice for the Syrian refugees in this anti-refugee country. You can also donate to different agencies that are making a difference. Simply do an online search or go to one of these websites:

[www.unrefugees.org/donate](http://www.unrefugees.org/donate) or [www.refugees.org/Help-Refugees](http://www.refugees.org/Help-Refugees).

The real question on the table is not, **“Should we let the refugees in?”** but **“Are we living for ourselves or for other people?”** If we are living for ourselves, it won't be long until every American has an underground bomb shelter, with a year's supply of water and food, patiently preserved seeds for planting when it is finally safe to go outside, guns, ammunition, and ample entertainment for the boredom of underground seclusion. Why do we try so hard to hang on to this life that we know one day will end? Why not live for something that will never end? Why not live for God and, in the meantime, give a stranger a warm place to stay, a drink of water and something to eat?

*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’ Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’”* (Matthew 25:34-4)

- 1 [www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-greenblatt/closing-the-borders-to-re\\_b\\_8600226.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-greenblatt/closing-the-borders-to-re_b_8600226.html)
- 2 [www.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks-syrian-refugees-backlash/](http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks-syrian-refugees-backlash/)
- 3 [www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/refugees-fact-sheet](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/refugees-fact-sheet)
- 4 [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/19/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/19/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/)
- 5 [www.cnn.com/2015/11/21/opinions/bergen-syrian-refugees-not-a-threat-to-us/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/21/opinions/bergen-syrian-refugees-not-a-threat-to-us/index.html)
- 6 [www.fox9.com/news/26238851-story](http://www.fox9.com/news/26238851-story)



# One Girl's TRUE STORY

Growing up, I was not really exposed to Christianity. My dad grew up in the church, and my mom did not. We started off as Christmas-and-Easter churchgoers. As I got older and our lives became more hectic, church was simply an obligation. Because I only went occasionally, I didn't really learn that much about the Bible or about Jesus. The church I went to sometimes only taught the "fluffy side" of God. Some Sundays after church, I would feel really motivated to love God and to get serious about Him, but because I didn't really know what it was like to have a true, personal relationship with God, I was easily frustrated when He didn't magically make my life easy and wonderful. All I ever learned from my brief and sparse attendance at church was that a life with Christ was supposed to make everything magically perfect, as if Jesus was a genie in a bottle, granting wishes at my disposal.

By the time I hit my teen years, I had been struggling with bullying, loneliness, depression and anxiety for awhile. Because God hadn't fixed these things in my life when I asked Him to, I became hopeless about the idea that there was anything or anyone to have faith in. I thought God was "out to get me", as if He was intentionally trying to make my life miserable. What I didn't realize was that this was just the start of the spiritual warfare I was facing.

As I came to college, I was entirely disenchanted with any kind of faith. I was ready to make choices for myself, grab the reigns, and be in complete control of creating the life I wanted. College was going to be all about me: my life, my choices, my college experience. Thankfully, God had other plans.

My random roommate as a freshman was a Christian. At first, this led to many uncomfortable situations. One such scenario I remember was at UW-Stout's Backyard Bash, when we were looking at different booths. She excitedly told me, "I'm going to check out the religious organization booths to see if I can find a church here!" I wasn't having it. I remember telling her, "I'll be over... anywhere but there." The nights and mornings she did "church things" became my time to spend alone. I not only took advantage of her being a Christian, but I made fun of her faith and interest in God. To replace my loneliness, I looked for superficial connections and acceptance in other groups, clubs, and people, but I felt like all these were lacking and unsatisfying. I was always left with the desire for more.

Somehow, I survived freshman year in one piece. I had plenty of obstacles hit me on my way through, but I figured I learned how to swerve and was back in control. But, little did I know, sophomore year was about to kick me in the teeth. Before I was even back on campus, the opportunity to study abroad in England—something that had been a dream of mine since I was young—was crushed by lack of funds. Shortly after the year started, I got dragged through a less-than-honest "relationship" for six months. Classes were stressing me to the breaking point. There was

drama in friendships. On top of that, my depression and anxiety began to set in worse than it had in the last five years. I was hopeless, just waiting for the next failure to kick me while I was down.

The story of how God got me to actually come to church is probably both the lamest and the most interesting at the same time. My best friend (the same girl I was randomly paired with as a roommate my freshman year) and I had been going through this phase of making silly bets. For example, if I didn't wear my hair in a ponytail for a month, I avoided such-and-such consequence. As each of these silly bets came and passed, and as my life struggles felt like they were getting more and more complicated, I felt this nagging urge that there was "something else" out there. I kept feeling this unexplained desire to do something more, something better. One night as my best friend and I were planning yet another series of bets, I decided to get the "church thing" out of the way, once and for all. See, she had been nagging me for quite some time about going to church and Street Level, and I was running out of excuses not to go, aside from simply not wanting to be there. So, I instead offered that my consequence for failing whatever bet we set was that I would go to church, just once. My best friend was thrilled to say the least. Eventually, the unexplained desires I had for more continued to grow, to the point where I confronted both my feelings and my best friend with a "Fine! I'll go!" response to church.

I remember sitting in the pew that Sunday in February. I was disgruntled as I sang the songs, did the things, read the verse, and went through the motions with every intention of getting it over with as quickly as possible. Then, something happened in church that had never happened to me before: I learned. Pastor Tim got up in front of the church and became the harsh truth I needed to hear. For the first time in my life, I heard the Bible read word-for-word, and the gospel was explained to me without being watered down or easy to swallow. I remember sitting in that pew in awe, jaw possibly dropped, realizing that the things he was saying were true. For some reason, at that moment, gears started to turn that had never functioned before, and something inside me realized God was real, the sacrifice Jesus made was real, and He orchestrated me sitting in that church and that pew, because now was the time He wanted to reach me. I realized He had been there all my life, slowly nudging me and leading me to discover and embrace Him and all He had to offer for me.

The change from the person I was before to the saved Christian I identify myself as now happened so quickly it still makes my head spin. If you would have told me ten months ago that I would be passionate about Jesus and reading my Bible and hanging out with my amazing new family in Christ, I would've told you that you were certifiably nuts. As I look back, I see all the parts in God's plan for saving me and how those parts clicked into place. He exposed me to a roommate who was a Christian, and she was an important part in bringing me to my faith. He kept me from my dreams in England, because He needed me to be here to find Him. The part that amazes me most about my life as a new Christian is that God used me right away, even before I thought I had the knowledge and skills to be useful for Him. He has been active in my life ever since I gave it to Him, even giving me the opportunity to go on a missions trip, further showing me that He uses us all, especially the "underdogs". God didn't wave a magic wand and make my life perfect after I surrendered to Him, but I now realize I was getting in my own way by taking things into my own hands instead of letting go, admitting my sinful nature, and putting God in the number one position of importance. I have felt greater connections and acceptance than I could ever have asked for and better than I could have imagined through the Kingdom of God and with His people. I can't wait to see how He grows and changes me in the years to come.



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tune in saturdays at 9pm  
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# HOW TO GET A FREE BIBLE

----- Tear out this  
flyer and fill out.



Get an  
envelope.



Find a  
stamp.



Place in  
snail mail.



Retrieve your  
new Bible (baa-ya).

PLEASE MAIL HERE

Street Level Ministries  
621 Wilson Ave  
Menomonie, WI 54751

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes, send me a Bible.
- Yes, send me the online link to new "WOTS" issues when they're released.

IF I FIND IN MYSELF DESIRES WHICH  
NOTHING IN THIS WORLD CAN SATISFY,  
THE ONLY LOGICAL EXPLANATION IS THAT  
I WAS MADE FOR ANOTHER WORLD

C. S. LEWIS





Are you sick of looking at the same four walls of your dorm room? Bust out of that routine with some fresh ideas by exploring the community around you.



WATCH TIME STAND STILL

1. Russell J Rassbach Heritage Museum  
Just the facts and the strange, true history of Dunn County.

Travel Distance: Bike Ride or Car, 3.1 Miles

Hours: (October-April) Wednesday  
Sunday, Noon-4 pm

2. Wilson Place Mansion where James Huff Stout stayed along with three generations of Wilsons.

Travel Distance: Walking, 1 mile  
Hours: Check out their Facebook page for current events. They will do private tours for five or more people.

Random Fact: Tours change per season and/or holiday

EYE CANDY

3. Hoffman Hills offers walking paths up and down hills, and skiing in the snowy months.

Travel Distance: Car, 13 miles

Hours: Year-round 7 am - 9 pm

Random Fact: A 60-foot high observation tower allows you to see miles around and is touted as being one of the highest points in Dunn County.

4. Devils Punch Bowl

A Menomonie natural phenomena, complete with sandstone walls that have ice formations in the winter and drip as if they're raining in the warmer months.

Travel Distance: Bike or car, 3 miles

Hours: Sunrise to sunset every day of the year

5. Irvine Park (Chippewa Falls)

When you need a quick animal fix, check out this local zoo.

Travel Distance: Car, 32 miles

Hours: Sunrise to sunset every day of the year

Random Fact: Free zoo with cougars, tigers, bears and more

SPEEDY, CHILLY, CULTURE

6. Race at Red Cedar Speedway

Menomonie's own dirt race track featuring races WISSOTA Late

16 THINGS TO DO  
IN MENOMONIE IN  
2016

Models, Modifieds, Super Stocks, Midwest Mods, Street Stocks, Red Cedar Pure Stocks, and Hornets.

Travel Distance: Bike or walk, 1.5 miles

Hours: Racing season starts in April and ends in September. Normally, races are on Friday nights.

Random Fact: The race track was built in 1973 and is 3/8 mile clay track.

#### 7. Candlelight Ski on the Red Cedar Trail

You can walk, ski (need to bring your own skis) or snowshoe (provided for you), and there's free hot chocolate!

Travel Distance: Bike or walk, less than a mile

Date: January 29th, 6-8 pm

Random Fact: FREE

#### 8. Menomonie Polar Plunge: for the bravest of souls.

Travel Distance: Car, 12 miles

Date: February 13th, 12-3 pm

Random Fact: Canadians use a "Polar Bear Swim" as a way to bring in the new year, while also raising money for a good cause.

Website: [www.polarplungewi.org/locations/feb-13-menomonie](http://www.polarplungewi.org/locations/feb-13-menomonie)

#### 9. Go to a play or event at the Mabel Tainter Theater

Travel Distance: Walk, 1.5 miles

Dates: Check out the Mabel Tainter website for the most current list of shows to see.

#### WHERE TO FIND THE ACTION

10. Menomonie Rifle and Pistol Range: for those of you who own a gun or know someone with a gun; it is sure to be a blast.

Travel Distance: Drive, 9 miles

Hours: Vary, because it is run by volunteers. Reference the calendar on the gun range website: [www.menomonierifleandpistolclub.org/calendar.php](http://www.menomonierifleandpistolclub.org/calendar.php)

Random Fact: The gun range is donation based. They have targets for sale if you forget your own. The gun range does require the use of ear and eye protection. Check out their website if you have further questions.

#### 11. Broadway Bowl at Stout Ale House

Travel Distance: Drive or bike, 2 miles

Hours: Check out their website for the most current hours—[www.stoutalehouse.com](http://www.stoutalehouse.com)

Random Fact: You can print off a coupon from the website to buy one game and get one free.

#### BIRTHDAYS... AND FISH

#### 12. Birthday Rounds in Menomonie

Have a birthday during the school year? Take advantage of free stuff:

- Perkins- Free slice of pie
- Acoustic Café- Half a hoagie sandwich
- Culvers- Free dessert
- Raw Deal - Free drink
- **Marion's Legacy** - Free ice cream
- Applebees- Free dessert with song and laughter

#### 13. Friday Night Fish Fry at:

- Log Jam
- Great Escape
- Stout Ale House

They offer a cod dinner where you choose between lightly hand-breaded or baked cod, plus it is served with sides: 2 piece for \$7.99, 3 piece for \$8.99 or 4 piece for \$9.99.

- Waterfront

You can get your fish either deep fried or baked (baked is available in garlic parmesan, Cajun or lemon pepper) with a choice of a side, coleslaw and a cheddar biscuit.

- Silver Dollar

They have an offering of making your fish either beer-battered or lightly-breaded with coleslaw, rye bread and a choice of French fries or chips for a flat price of \$9.99.

#### DISC GOLF

#### 14. Wakanda Park, 18 Hole Course

Break up your routine and engage in the community at the same time. Don't let another year pass by, wishing you got out more often. Grab **the bull by the horns and go for it! Can't get enough? Try your luck at the Brickyard course near the Humane Society off Hwy 29.**

#### GET CHEESY

#### 15. Eat Fresh Cheese Curds

Cady Cheese is located just 20 minutes from Menomonie, and sells over 50,000 lbs of cheese per day! In the morning, they have freshly made cheese curds bagged and squeaky-delicious. **Don't miss this gem while living in Menomonie.**

- [www.cadycheese.com](http://www.cadycheese.com)
- Mon. - Fri. 8:30am - 5:30pm, Sat. & Sun. 9am - 5pm

#### 16. Tour a Cheese Factory

Located nearby in Thorp, WI, Holland Family Cheese is home of prize winning **Marieke Gouda. They'll also take you on an unforgettable tour.**

- [www.mariekegouda.com](http://www.mariekegouda.com)
- Open Mon.-Sun. 7:00am-7:00pm—Check website for details on how to book a tour of their factory.



**WHEN  
YOU  
ARE  
READY  
TO**

**JOIN THE  
RESISTANCE,  
STREET  
LEVEL  
MINISTRIES**



**STREET LEVEL  
MINISTRIES**

Mondays @ 7:00pm  
Ballroom B, MSC

Street Level is an Intentional Christian Community. We want to radically follow Jesus on a daily basis and discover the purpose that God has planned for our lives.

[streetlevelministries.com](http://streetlevelministries.com)  
[streetlevel@uwstout.edu](mailto:streetlevel@uwstout.edu)

