



ISSUE EIGHTY-EIGHT

# CHRISTIANITY

## IS NOT FOR COWARDS

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SUPERHERO STORIES



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

DISTRIBUTED AROUND THE GLOBE

— AN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE —



University of Wisconsin-River Falls | **River Falls, Wisconsin**

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

University of Wisconsin-Superior | **Superior, Wisconsin**

Various College Campuses in **Cebu City, Philippines**

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



## WELCOME TO WOTS

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* has been published since 1999. All credit goes to God. We're not sure how else to explain it!

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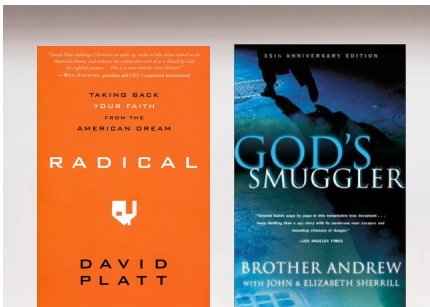
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PUT TOGETHER A STELLAR COSTUME IN MENOMONIE

**H**alloween is a great time to test your skills in assembling the best costume to impress all your friends. There are always those stores that will give you a premade costume, but they lack a certain element of spark or pizzazz which a homemade, thrifted, or inherited costume will provide. Not all costumes need to be meticulously put together. Sometimes you just need the perfect accessory for it. We hope you are inspired to go out and get creative with your costumes this year.

#### TRADITIONAL HORROR

Whether you want to be a zombie moped driver, ax murderer, or a classic vampire, specific items like fake blood and face paint, are needed to complete the look and can be found at a convenience or dollar store. However, the jean jacket, ax, or all-black outfit are probably waiting for their next owner on the rack at a local thrift store. Try looking for a fun combination of items that complement the look you are going for, whether it is a striped shirt, creepy doll, or excessive jewelry.

#### PUN AND GAMES

These costumes are for when you don't feel like putting in a lot of effort, but you want to be funny and feel smart. Popular choices might include when life gives you lemons (wear a name tag labeled "life" and carry a lemon), chip on your shoulder (put potato chips on your shoulder), or breadwinner (wear a bunch of gold medals and carry bread).

#### GROUP COSTUME

So, your friend group won't dress up unless everyone does. It's a classic case of the squad scare—the solution: a group costume. The Wiggles, the cast of the Office, and a bunch of emojis are a few good examples. Pick a category all your friends can get in on. DIY projects could include cardboard from the scraps bin in applied arts in the 3D room, matching t-shirts, or paper mâché masks.

Show off your costume by tagging us with what you come up with in your social media post. Use the #wotsacostume. Send us what you came up with/ideas.

Where to shop:

**HOPE BARGAIN CENTER IN MENOMONIE:** Make sure to pay attention to the sale of the day tag colors. If you are willing to sift through the racks, there are always goodies found here. Don't forget to show your student ID card to get 10% off your purchase.

**MENOMONIE GOODWILL:** Because this store is a little more organized, it might be easier to find a specific item you need to check off your list. Goodwill always has a large Halloween section this time of year for easy sifting. It's a great option if you are low on time.

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH THRIFT STORE:** Almost everything in this store is one dollar. It would be easy to find your whole costume for less than five dollars here. Make sure you pay attention to their hours: they are only open Friday and Saturday 9 am-4 pm.

**DOLLAR STORE:** You can find all the odds and ends you need to complete your costume here. Fake blood, face paint, name tag, and sparkles are all available for a buck.



# Stout Art Students Protest to Get Midterms Like Everyone Else

MENOMONIE, WI—Assembled outside the Furlong Gallery, a large group of art students gathered on Monday to protest the lack of midterms given for art classes. Art students are currently assigned multiple smaller projects for a useless experience to help them adjust to their future unemployment.

"We want the same tests as everyone else because students who get tests make more money post-graduation," said enthusiastic freshman Cindy Main.

Art students have long suffered segmented projects that draw out the assignment for longer than necessary but amply prepare them for a lifetime of busywork. In contrast, standardized tests help students learn how to be good at taking tests in real life.

"Who would want to work through a bunch of smaller projects when they could just take one quiz?" said sophomore Jordan Newman. "I just want to procrastinate till the last moment, then take a quiz and not think about it again till December. Plus, I want to be prepared for a future dream where I find myself in a class for a final that I never prepared for because I didn't know I had that class."

The University of Wisconsin Stout put out a statement supporting students' wishes to be given exams: "It has been proven that students work better under a mass amount of pressure instead of prolonging their education by distributing their projects equally throughout the semester. The School of Art and Design recognizes that its students want to be treated fairly and put in the same box as the rest of the university."

Senior Natasha Luis said, "I'm so excited to start taking tests about cardboard animals instead of making animals out of cardboard. I'm going to get way better grades and save so much time."

In response, art professors met together yesterday to figure out how to create a standard test. Professors forced



themselves to actually crack open the textbooks they assign to create a test from their existing material.

Now that students can conform art to true or false answers, expected enrollment for the school's art and design program is projected to increase dramatically.

\* Yes, this is satire.

# ONE GIRL'S True Story

## OVERCOMING DEPRESSION: MY FEAR OF DEATH

*This testimony is from Ruby, a member of  
Street Level Ministries Cebu*



I used to be scared of the reality of death and the fairytale of life. When I was in high school, I got scared every time I thought about death. It all started when one of my closest friends died as a teenager. I never expected something like that to happen to someone I was so close to who was my same age. Her death became an eye-opener to me that it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, young or old. Whether we like it or not, death is real, and we can't do anything to stop it.

Since losing my friend was the most challenging situation I had ever encountered, I lived in fear from that day on, and it led me down the path of depression. It felt like I was fighting demons in my mind. My greatest enemy wasn't the people around me, but my own self. I was like a fish that didn't know how to swim, and I was drowning.

This emotional cancer tortured me for almost two years, and I spent many sleepless nights crying. It wasn't easy trying to fight it on my own. Trying to fix everything and convincing my mind to stay positive was impossible. I tried to keep myself busy to avoid thinking about it, but it didn't work. I felt so hopeless and discouraged.

I tried to open up to one of my trusted friends, and I'm glad she listened, but I still couldn't get rid of the burden I was carrying. It didn't even ease the pain I

felt. One thing I have since realized about depression is that in addition to having someone to listen to me, the thing I wanted and needed was someone who understood me. Someone who had also experienced it. Someone who felt the same feelings, the same pain, and the same struggle. I couldn't find that someone at first.

But then I remembered Jesus. Thinking about Him began to give me hope again because He had experienced the pain I felt about death. He was there in Gethsemane praying before His crucifixion to Abba Father, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless not what I want but, what you want" (Matthew 26:39).

This passage reminded me of my situation. What I was feeling was not new to God. He understood the way I wanted to be heard, noticed, and seen. The comfort I wanted wasn't found in someone I knew and trusted, or even within myself. I finally found comfort in Him. Jesus also experienced sorrow when He came here to Earth to be human and allow Himself to experience what we humans went through. He gave up His throne in heaven to die for us and to feel every single pain and struggle we have.

But the thing is, before He died, His last words were, "It is finished." Jesus ended the true "death" that I was so scared about, which was the death of suffering in Hell eternally. He finished it through Himself.

By His death, I have overcome the taste of my death. By His love, I became victorious and no longer was enslaved by my fear. By His blood, I have experienced the peace of mind that I've wanted, and by His grace, I am who I am now, strong, where formerly I was so fragile and weak.

It might be strange to say, but I'm glad that the enemy attacked my mental health because God opened my eyes to Him through it. He turned my hopeless and impossible situation into living true life.

My test became my greatest testimony, and my mess became my message, and it is all because of what He has done in my life. He is able and faithful to give us breakthroughs and break every chain we have.

*-Ruby Mae*

# WHY DO WE DO THAT?



## THE PROBLEM WITH TRADITIONS

**T**he snow falls outside the frosted windowpane. Glowing lights from the Christmas tree are visible a block away. The table setting glitters, and the family gathers. Out comes the Christmas ham, split in two, resting on a silver serving tray, and smothered in pineapples. As home-cooked scents fill the air, the youngest child at the table inquisitively asks her mother, "Why is the ham cut in half like that?" Puzzled, her mother thinks to herself and responds, "We always cut the ham in half at Christmas."

As children often ask, "Why?" was the follow-up to her mother's answer. She looks to her husband for support. He shrugs his shoulders. The mother leans down at eye level with her child.

"Pumpkin, when I was your age, grandma used to cook the ham and always cut it in half. And her grandma before her, and her grandma before her. It's just tradition." Not satisfied with her mother's argument, she looked up, brown eyes wide, and responded again, "But why?"

### IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY

This scene has played out many times. The response we would hear when we were kids was often the same: "It's tradition." Have you ever stopped to wonder where these traditions come from? We do many things in our everyday decision-making without examining the reason why as well. If you're honest with yourself, many of the things you hold dear may be simply tradition at this point.

**"AFTER ALL, JESUS IS AFTER OUR HEART, OR OUR MOTIVATIONS, NOT AIMLESS ACTIONS AND EMPTY TRADITIONS."**

### TRADITIONS AND GOD

Traditions are no new thing to Scripture. The Israelites issued 613 rules regarding performing offerings, practicing ceremonies, and carrying on traditions. You name it, they had a reason for it. The problem with humans is that we tend to morph what is good, holy, and commanded by God into something heartless, dry, and routine. "Hypocrites!...These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Matthew 15:7-8 NLT).

We go through the motions in everyday living in our relationships with God, church, family, friends, and co-workers. Do you pray before meals? Or read the Bible every day? Do you tip the server after a meal, but according to their performance? When you give gifts at holidays, is it just to the people who have loved you back this year? None of these are bad things, but as humans, we are very adept at forming habits and forgetting the reason behind them.

Like a childhood game of Telephone, the practices we perform today are handed down from generation to generation, mentor to mentor, church friend to church friend, with original intentions disappearing along the way. Praying before a meal is good, but not if it's used as a way to seem holy to your family or friends. Tipping at a restaurant in America is practically non-negotiable, but we're so quick to do it on a graded scale instead of as a way of making a stranger's day regardless of credit.

Jesus is after our heart and motivations, not aimless actions and empty traditions. "What makes you think I want all your sacrifices? says the LORD. I am sick of your burnt offerings...I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats...Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts" (Isaiah 1:11-13 NLT). God wasn't changing His mind about the system of sacrifices He initiated with Moses. Instead, He was calling them to sincere faith and devotion. He takes no pleasure in outward expression if inward faith is missing.

### DO IT FOR HIM

God loves us too much to let us sit in meaningless traditions. Each of us needs to determine whether a tradition is distracting us and needs to be tossed, or is drawing us to God and is worth keeping. So, how do you know? It's all about joy. If the tradition is bringing you joy in Christ, and spreading it to others, then that's a beautiful one worth keeping. By contrast, if it's draining you because you're caught up in pleasing others, society, or even yourself, then maybe it's time to give it up. It's not always easy, especially when it's something that your family holds dear, but God promises one thing, and that's Himself. Choosing to trust Jesus instead of traditions, is true joy. Rather than being chained by customs, you can be free to love others.

Oh, and you want to know the reason the ham was cut in two? It was so it could fit in such a small oven all those years ago.

# IT'S TOO

## ANSWERS TO COMMON CRITICISMS OF CHRISTIANITY

**H**ave you ever known a professing Christian or observed Christianity in our culture and thought to yourself, “Yeah, no thanks.” Yep, me too. To be honest, there are a lot of reasons to reject Christianity. Some reasons hold more weight than others—like the ones that are filled with personal hurt and raw emotion. Other reasons, however, are tossed around as borrowed arguments. They sound catchy, insightful, and believable so we think they must be true. These arguments, though, aren’t as stable as they seem.

**1 IT’S HYPOCRITICAL.** If you think Christianity is full of hypocrites, you’re right. But, there is a difference between the Christian who uses their religion as a pious façade and the one who is humble enough to admit that they should be more like Jesus but they consistently fall short. One is

righteous, one is not. Even the apostle Paul wrestles with his own hypocrisy in Romans 7, and his despair ultimately leads him to hope in Christ. The good news is Jesus came to save hypocrites and that includes us all.

**2 IT’S JUDGMENTAL.** Out of all the borrowed arguments, this is one of our culture’s favorites simply because we bristle at being told who we are is wrong. We defend our identity and our choices at any cost even though from time to time we’re prone to making wrong decisions. We don’t always see things clearly or correctly, and Jesus is eager to help. He can’t save us if we insist that we don’t need Him and that we’ve got our lives under control. Would we risk “being judged”—that is, being told that Jesus is right and we are wrong—on this side of heaven if that “judgment” would not just correct our misbehavior but rather save our very soul?

**3 IT’S CONFUSING.** Many people don’t bother with Christianity because they don’t know where to begin. With numerous church denominations, multiple Bible translations, and the varied content of the Bible itself, it’s difficult to know where to begin. The entire Bible is one cohesive storyline written across thousands of years that explains how broken this world is and Jesus’ plans to fix it. If you need a place to start, read the book of Mark that tells about Jesus’ life on earth or the book of Romans, which describes the good news in relation to the bad news.

**“IF YOU THINK CHRISTIANITY IS FULL OF HYPOCRITES, YOU’RE RIGHT.”**



## “SCRIPTURE IS HELPFUL BECAUSE IT SHOWS HOW PREDICTABLY WICKED THE HUMAN HEART REALLY IS.”

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**4 IT'S OUTDATED.** A popular argument is that the Bible is no longer relevant because the times have changed. But they really haven't. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, documents murder, blame-shifting, shame, pride, drunkenness, and sexual perversion (to name a few), which all run rampant today. Scripture is helpful because it shows how predictably wicked the human heart really is. Therefore, if we battle lust, we can learn from King David who did too. If we are impulsive and our mouth gets us in trouble, we can read about Peter and learn from his mistakes. Thankfully, God teaches us through people's mistakes of the past, which have been documented for hundreds of generations to read.

**5 IT'S CONTROLLING.** Christianity is often accused of being a cult that robs you of your intelligence and ability to make your own decisions.

Unfortunately, it's true that not all groups labeled "Christian" are well-meaning and biblical. That's why it's up to us to be informed and to know what is actually in the Bible and what's not. If we don't let Christianity (rather, Christ Himself) control us, something else will—

something like education, a spouse, a job, family members, current trends, or social media. Even if you claim that you're in control of yourself, you make a pretty awful god, and you probably don't live up to your own rules. Letting Christ control you is actually a good thing because He is good. Everything else will lead you astray.

**6 IT'S FICTIONAL.** For those who must see it to believe it, Christianity is hard to come to terms with because of the many miracles it describes.

How can God make everything in the known universe out of nothing? How can Christ be born from a virgin? How can this same Christ be gruesomely murdered and then, three days later, come back to life? Our minds can't fathom what these events would be like so we call them fiction. They can't be true. However, we worship a God who is infinitely greater than us, who can know and do infinitely more than us, and that's a good thing. These miracles shouldn't turn us away from God but towards Him.

Plenty more could be said about these borrowed arguments, but now it's your turn. Do your due diligence. Dig deeper into what's true and what's not. "Test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21 NLT).





TUNE INTO 101.7 FM  
IN MENOMONIE

**UPBEAT AND FUN:**

- Covenant* - by Ecclesia
- Light Leaks* - by Beach Chapel
- No Limit to Your Love* - by John Van Deusen
- Welcome to Earth (Pollywog)* - by Sturgill Simpson
- What's Wrong* - by Half Alive

**ACOUSTIC:**

- Restoration Song (Hold On)* - by Son of Cloud
- Withstand* - by Much More
- You of All Friends* - by A treehouse wait
- Higher* - by Thad Cockrell and Brittany Howard
- I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)* - by Sleeping At Last

**AMBIENT:**

- Rewire the Heart* - by Ben Potter and Nik Karlin
- September 15, 2017: Cassani* - *The Grand Finale* - by Sleeping At Last
- The album Twenty Four* - by Jonathan Ogden
- Unfold* - by Ólafur Arnalds and Sohn
- Selah* - by They Dream By Day
- Patterns (cypher)* - by Max Richter
- test the spirits* - Sarah Nathaliè

# QUARTERLY MUSIC BEAT

AN UPDATE FROM OUR FRIENDS AT  
BURNING DOG RADIO

**B**urning Dog Radio broadcasts out of Menomonie, Wisconsin and streams worldwide at [burningdogradio.com](http://burningdogradio.com). We are your college radio station playing a variety of indie music, solid Bible teachings, and Believers Community News. If you're looking for a sample pack of the music we play, check out our latest playlist on Spotify.

As your college radio station, we wanted to share with you a few tunes that we think would help you in your studies this semester. But since we like music so much, we had to do a couple of categories. Enjoy your studies!



HALF ALIVE



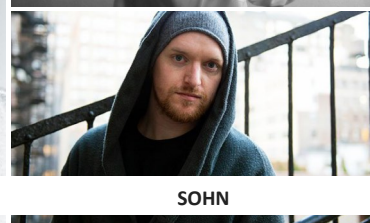
ECCLESIA



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A TREEHOUSE WAIT



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*As a Matter of Fact:*

# WHAT IS HEAVEN?



true, legitimate, and trustworthy than the source Himself - Jesus.<sup>1</sup> So, let's go to Scripture.

## HEAVEN IS REAL

In simple terms, Heaven is a real, tangible place where those who love God will go after they die and live with Him for all of eternity.<sup>2</sup> Now, you may have heard there will be streets of gold and endless beauty and joy beyond our wildest dreams. And while that is all true, it's an incomplete view of Heaven. God, who created us, intended to be with us from the get-go. In the garden of Eden, He walked with Adam and Eve. After our sin ruined everything, He dwelled in the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the Temple before He sent His Son, Jesus, to walk with us again on Earth. Today, He extends the offer of a genuine, life-giving relationship directly through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In Heaven, He intends the relationship to continue!<sup>3</sup> It's been part of God's redemption plan since the beginning. So, will Jesus kick your butt at some chess? Will you guys go for a walk and talk for hours? Maybe. Regardless, because of Jesus, in Heaven, Christians will not have to fight a sinful nature anymore but will have a perfect relationship with God.

## THE GRAND TOUR OF SORTS

While the Bible doesn't have a complete blueprint, it does give us some awesome sneak peeks that leave you excitedly wondering about the life to come. Take a look at Revelation 21, and you'll see the place will be visually stunning. Everything will display His glory and be a constant reminder of God's blessing, favor, provision, and love. It will be perfect. Now take a look at Revelation 21:4. Breathtaking. Can

you imagine a world with no death, sorrow, crying, or pain? Christians will get to run into the comfort and safety of the Father's arms. Heaven will scream with every fiber of its being that God is good. Christians will worship God for all of eternity because of an overwhelming desire from the outflow of our fully satisfied hearts.

## BRAND NEW

According to Revelation 21, God is going to "make all things new." Heaven won't just be a fixer-upper of Earth or an unrecognizable reality, but one that will somehow preserve its identity as Earth, only infinitely perfected. Now, if the most beautiful and best things on this Earth are wrecked by sin (Job 15:15), think how amazing Heaven will be. This

## "CAN YOU IMAGINE A WORLD WITH NO DEATH, SORROW, CRYING, OR PAIN?"

reality is a foreign concept to this busted and broken world we live in today. But it is a promise that God has told us all along.<sup>5</sup> It's a reality that every bit of all of God's creation eagerly waits for.<sup>6</sup>

Heaven isn't some weird, miserable get-out-of-free-Hell card. It is a kingdom that is not only yet to come, but it is here as we eagerly wait for it. It's a citizenship that's sealed upon salvation on this side of eternity for Christians who are now new creatures.<sup>7</sup> Life today is to be lived in light of this new reality: living with God now with the promise of a perfect eternity to come tomorrow.<sup>8</sup>

At 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 Heaven, what's it all about anyway?

There are many preconceived notions about Heaven, varying from an eternal entrapment of monotonous boredom, to an elusive self-grandeur of superficial appeasement. Everyone and their brother has an opinion on the place. Many think it's a catchall for moral people. Others think it's a rewards program for people who ticked off all the right boxes during their life on earth. Still, others think it's a place where everyone who dies goes. Many more think it's just an old myth. So what is true? Nothing is more reliable, tried and

<sup>1</sup>John 14:6, Ephesians 4:13-14.

<sup>2</sup>2 Corinthians 5:4, Luke 23:43

<sup>3</sup>Revelations 21:3 ESV

<sup>4</sup>1 Corinthians 15

<sup>5</sup>Isaiah 11:6-9

<sup>6</sup>Romans 8:19-23

<sup>7</sup>Philippians 3:20-21,

<sup>8</sup>2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>9</sup>Colossians 3:1-4

# CHRISTIANITY IS NOT FOR COWARDS

WHY WE'RE DRAWN TO SUPERHERO STORIES

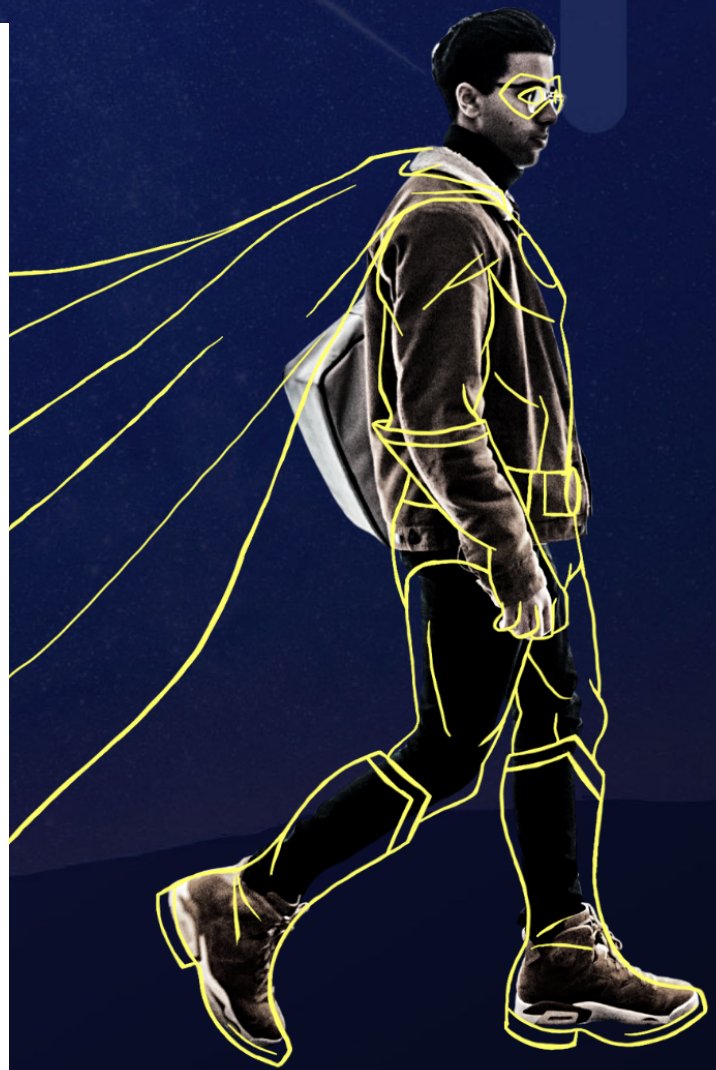
In 2019, the world witnessed the release of a record-setting amount of superhero movies. There were eleven, to be exact. Eight were released in 2020, and we should see seven by the end of 2021. Something is compelling about stories that pit hero against villain in a fight of good versus evil.

According to a study from Kyoto University in Japan, humans are drawn to heroes before they can even talk.<sup>1</sup> The study had infants watch videos in which someone acted heroically, and someone did not. The results showed that they preferred the videos when someone stepped in to save the day.

Have you ever been disappointed when a character runs away from the battle, or, even worse, betrays the hero? If babies can tell the difference between a coward and a hero, maybe that points to our innate sense of justice. Maybe, just maybe, we were created to live out the superhero story ourselves.

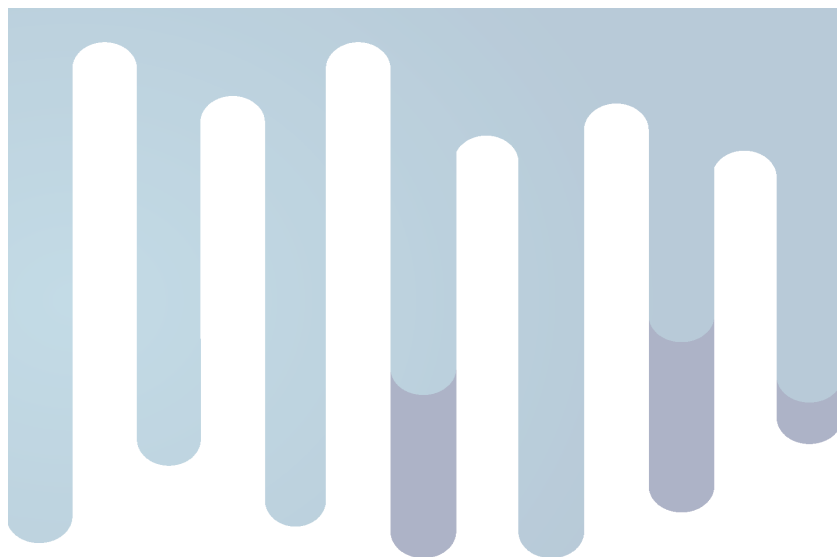
## DECEIVED INTO COWARDICE

Most people don't want to be a coward, yet many of us are living that way. The allure of the superhero story that plays out on our screens has lulled us into apathy. We've been deceived into believing these stories are the things of legends because even if they did happen in real life, only certain people could reach such high levels of virtue. At the end of each film, something inside us aches to be a part of the adventure. We walk away longing for the power of Thor, the confidence of Ironman, the beauty of Wonder Woman, or the chivalry of Captain America.



<sup>1</sup>[www.bustle.com/p/why-we-love-superheroes-according-to-psychology-49470](http://www.bustle.com/p/why-we-love-superheroes-according-to-psychology-49470)

**“GOD’S PATTERN IS TO TAKE ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN AND EQUIP THEM WITH HIS POWER TO LIVE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES. IT’S OFTEN IN SIMPLE WAYS, BUT ONE THING IS CERTAIN: THEY ARE TRANSFORMED.”**



Then a tiny whisper inside says, “I’ll never be good enough, so why even try?” We settle and become spectators. The thrill of our lives gets condensed into a few hours in which we live vicariously through our superheroes. The final credits roll, and so does the adrenaline. The wonder of it all blocks out the reality of the story that unfolds in front of us every day.

### **ORDINARY PEOPLE**

The basic narrative of hero stories is that of an average, relatable human faced with an impossible assignment who is then filled with supernatural power to accomplish it. Joseph Campbell, in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, explains the pattern:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are [then] encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow [a timely blessing] on his fellow man.<sup>2</sup>

We’re so drawn to these stories because we see ordinary and flawed characters that we can relate to. Then they’re called out of their comfort zones to a great task that they don’t feel worthy to accomplish. They are rarely self-sufficient, the tasks highlight their weaknesses, and victory comes after their failures are put on display. Most of the time the hero has at least one or two people behind the scenes supporting, helping, and assisting them. True heroes are never self-sufficient.

Heroism is the heartbeat of Christianity. Just browse the pages of the Bible. Start with the people listed in Hebrews 11. You’ll quickly discover that God’s pattern is to take ordinary men and women and equip them with His power to live extraordinary lives. They’re not special according to the world’s standards. Usually, they’re

pretty messed up people that make a lot of mistakes. But they show up and make themselves available for however God wants to use them.

### **SUPERNATURAL POWER**

In the Bible, when Jesus gave His final commandment to His disciples to, “Go and make disciples of all nations,”<sup>3</sup> He didn’t tell them to obey immediately. He told them to wait. Jesus knew His disciples were too weak, cowardly, selfish, and foolish to do it on their own. Without supernatural power, they would screw everything up. Yet, that didn’t change the command He gave them. Instead, Jesus promised to give them the power they needed to fulfill their impossible assignment: the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

The Holy Spirit is God in spirit form. He’s not an “it” or a “thing” or a “power,” but rather a Person. All Christians are given the Holy Spirit when they repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus. His presence inside a person is the spark that sets their soul on fire to live large for Jesus instead of self. His continual presence enables them to live as Jesus commanded because Jesus will never give a command that He will not enable someone to obey. That would be depressing at best and sadistic at worst.

This seems like the stuff of legends, doesn’t it? Real Christians are ordinary people who live lives of heroic bravery. They “revel in desperate ventures for Christ, expecting from God great things and attempting the same with exhilaration.”<sup>5</sup> Why else would “Do not fear” be the most repeated command throughout the Bible? Humans are wired for the superhero story, but only Christians are equipped to live it out.

You may be thinking, “But Christianity is just a social club. Why would anyone need special power to sit in a church building once a week?” You’re right. If there’s nothing to fight for, then there’s no need for power. This is where

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, 1949), 23.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 28:19

<sup>4</sup>Acts 1:4-8

<sup>5</sup>C.T. Studd, “The Chocolate Soldier”

...continued

# “JESUS KNEW HIS DISCIPLES WERE TOO WEAK, COWARDLY, SELFISH, AND FOOLISH TO DO IT ON THEIR OWN. WITHOUT SUPERNATURAL POWER, THEY WOULD SCREW EVERYTHING UP.”

we must zoom out and look at our understanding of what Christianity is. Sadly, defining “Christian” is messier than eating an ice cream cone on a hot summer day. The term has been tossed around and redefined so many times that it’s unrecognizable. Everyone wants to make their own definition of it. However, Jesus doesn’t give us that option. He’s the one in charge, and He gets to define it. You can agree or disagree, but you cannot redefine it.

To be a Christian is to be a “little Christ.” The essence of being a Christian, according to Jesus, is to give up one’s own life and follow Him. Jesus didn’t come to the earth to make peace.<sup>6</sup> He came to battle, and He expects His followers to do the same.

## THE REALITY OF THE BATTLE

God intends for every human being to have a relationship with Him. That was His plan since day one. But Satan, one of God’s created angels, in prideful rebellion, became God’s greatest enemy. He started the battle that we have inherited. Since sin caused a great separation from God, the worst thing that could happen (in Satan’s mind) is for humans to discover the truth, respond to it, and live accordingly. Satan attacks the truth – twisting it, deceiving us, and distracting us. God on the other hand, “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>7</sup> Don’t you feel the tension?


Ephesians 6:12 says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” This doesn’t sound like a social club to me.

## ENDGAME

No superhero story can end without a victor and a loser. Sometimes, it may seem like Satan is winning. A glance through the daily news reveals a world of poverty, famine, illness, murder, broken families, selfishness, confusion...it’s all *chaos!* It looks like a scene from *Avengers: Endgame*. Where is the hero that will save our world?

Colossians 2:15 says that Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” He did this on the cross when He satisfied the debt we owed to God for our sin. Don’t you see? We are the ones that need to be saved. When Jesus died on the cross, He defeated Satan and satisfied God’s wrath. He is the ultimate hero, and now He’s calling us to fight with Him so that others can be saved, too. The battle will end when He returns to the earth, defeats Satan, and reigns forever. Victory is certain.

Perhaps you have watched all the Marvel movies and felt something deep inside of you that wants to be a part of it. Don’t ignore that – God put that inside of you on purpose. You were created to participate in a story that’s so much bigger than yourself, something beyond your wildest imagination. It’s the stuff of legends, but it’s real.

You don’t need any impressive talents or special abilities to participate. The only requirement is your own weakness. Jesus can work with that. The emptier you are, the more you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. All you have to do is decide: will you be a coward or a hero? 

<sup>6</sup>Matthew 10:34  
<sup>7</sup>1 Timothy 2:4

# IN LOVING MEMORY

*of my old me*

## WRITING MY OWN EPITAPH

### WHAT IS AN EPITAPH?

An epitaph came from the Greek word "epitaphios" which means "funeral oration". "Epi" means "at over" and "taphos" means "tomb". An epitaph is one of the ways to honor a deceased person by engraving short text or messages on a tombstone or plaque. There are many ways to write an epitaph. One of the most common ways is to use quotes from the Holy Bible. It can be also written in prose or in poem verse. Others composed their own epitaph prior to their death as an expression of love, thankfulness of life they had, or as a message to their loved ones, while others expressed their grief and describe how they felt about death and aging that changed everything in their lives.

### STRUCK BY HIS LOVE

There are thousands of ways to express our gratitude for all the things God has done for us and writing a literary piece like an epitaph, is one of the unique ways of showing how grateful we are to Him. In times of hopelessness, He never fails to reach our souls to encourage us to take another step with Him. Sometimes we find ourselves in darkness when we think everyone is lifeless and our hearts are starting to get numb. But God is always present in these times of spiritual crisis, and He will touch our hearts to again feel the love He offers to everyone.



Do not mourn for the death of my flesh  
Nor destroy your peace  
Neither be sorrowful,  
For this corpse of mine had been  
deceased for a long time;

Do not cry upon my grave,  
Let that body be eaten with worms  
And my bones be destroyed by dirt,  
For it was tattooed with sin in this world;

Rejoice, my love, rejoice!  
For I was no longer imprisoned  
by the death of sin  
The old me has died yet the new one  
arose from the grave;  
So rejoice my love, for I am no longer  
bound with sin,

For He recreated me with perfection  
With an abundance of His affection  
And now, praise Him with hands raised  
and voices roaring as if they were like  
thunder;  
Singing and dancing gracefully for He  
set me free

So do not mourn for the death of my flesh,  
For He gave me life of eternity,  
We must rejoice my love, rejoice!  
And embrace the kiss of His eternal love

# The Hardest Thing

If I were to tell you about the hardest thing I've ever done, I know exactly what I'd say...

It's not the time I fought a fire with my fists to keep the flames at bay.

It's not the strenuous weight lifting and conditioning for the sports I loved to play nor is it deciding to end a valued relationship that had somehow gone astray.

It's not the projects, nor the speeches, nor the time I tried ballet...

It's the fact I'm still a Christian and I haven't walked away -

Because despite what people tell you, your wildest dreams don't all come true - and it's ironic we get called "soft" when it's too hard for most to do.

Whoever convinced you that this marathon of a journey would be a walk in the park isn't really running the race. Ask Paul - he'd tell you hardships will abound... but if we are to gain ground for the Gospel then it cannot be achieved by merely running in place.


Have you ever tried to love your enemy? Have you ever turned the other cheek? Have you ever cried out to the heavens as you wallow in defeat? Have you ever felt like your prayers have been chained to massive millstones as you try to hoist them to the sky? Only to watch them crash like shards of glass when your loved ones don't survive. Ask Job...just because you dwell in the house of the Lord does not mean heartache will stop banging its fists on your front door. You cannot always forecast inclement weather, but if I learned anything from Noah it's that people don't want to hear about rainy days while the sun is still shining. Sometimes life can be cloudy with numerous scattered showers. To be a Christian is to know that God reigns even in the midst of a storm. And what more should I say? "Some faced jeers and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword"<sup>1</sup> they appeared to be fools and yet they were commended for their faith.



I.T. is a spoken word artist from Tampa, FL who is passionate about encouraging others and giving God glory through his artwork.

<sup>1</sup>Hebrews 11:36-37





A faith that fashions forgiveness for a figurine of a father who figured deflowering his daughter's innocence fell within a "family man's" freedoms.

A faith that fixates on the promises of God when fake friends feed you lies that look like Christ but smell like Judas...will you still keep their best interests at heart?

I know the pain of being stabbed in the back... and the self control it takes when you pull that knife out to not use it as a weapon. I know the heaviness of doubt. The pressure it applies when it lays on your chest is enough to crack the ribs of your faith and make you second guess why you took up this fight in the first place.

If you've never been head locked by adversity, it will bear hug the breath from your confidence and takedown your joy while sapping all of your strength. Sometimes getting out of a round without tapping out is a reason to worship. To be a Christian is to always be wrestling...with your conviction...with doctrine...with doubt...with others.

But remember the gold lining. Jacob would tell you... when you wrestle with God all night, your walk becomes different. Remember the reward...and that these present day sufferings are no match for the oncoming joy that is peeking over the horizon. Following Christ is not easy but I'm thankful I have a pillar to lean on when my soul is weary and needs rest - so take time to sharpen your commitment...boost up your endurance...persevere despite the hardships...and love like there are lives that depend on it...because they do. Ask Jesus, some crosses are just worth carrying till the end.

Listen to this poem  
online at [readwots.com](http://readwots.com)



## FORGIVENESS IN AN OUTRAGE CULTURE

**W**inston Marshall, former banjoist for the English folk-rock band Mumford and Sons, writes fondly of the band's early days: "Hostels in Fort William, pub floors in Ipswich, even the Travelodge in Carlisle maintains a sort of charm in my mind. We saw the country and then, as things miraculously grew, the world. All the while doing what we loved."<sup>1</sup> For over ten years the band found success in the industry together. Then, one tweet in March of 2021 changed everything. Marshall tweeted American journalist Andy Ngo about his *New York Times* Best Seller, *Unmasked: Inside Antifa's Radical Plan to Destroy Democracy*. The tweet congratulated Ngo on his bravery for writing on the topic and the next 24 hours were nothing the band could have prepared for.

Tens of thousands of angry retweets and comments slayed Marshall for commenting on a book that criticizes the far-left, assuming he held allegiance to the far-right. The tweet and following backlash hit not only the

banjoist but the band as a whole. Marshall found no other option but to leave the band he loved and had played with for over a decade. He hoped that his departure would allow the band to continue despite his own impending "canceling." One tweet over a book and a previously well-respected music career came to a screeching halt. This is the world we live in. This is the cancel culture of 2021.

**"CHRISTIANITY IS THE  
COUNTERCULTURE TO THE  
CANCEL CULTURE."**

The origins of cancel culture are debatable but undeniably have been present since biblical times. Without doing anything wrong and despite living a sinless life, Jesus Himself was canceled. He was met by an angry mob as they shouted, "Crucify him!" If our Savior was no stranger to a culture like our own, how are we, as His followers, to navigate the waters of our so-called outrage culture?

Christianity is the counterculture to the cancel culture. The Bible, and therefore *God Himself*, has a lot to say about how we are to treat other people, and it couldn't be more different from what we see in our culture, our workplaces, and even our own families apart from Christ.

[CANCEL CULTURE](#) says there is no hope for you once you've acted incorrectly.

[CHRISTIANITY](#) says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23-24), and we have the opportunity for a new life in Christ. We can start over.

*"He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."* Psalm 103: 10-12, ESV

[CANCEL CULTURE](#) says you've done wrong so I will ignore you. I will no longer support you.

[CHRISTIANITY](#) says you've done wrong so I will forgive you. We will seek to move forward in unity.

*"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."* Colossians 3:12-14, ESV

[CANCEL CULTURE](#) says you've hurt me so I am entitled to hurt you.

[CHRISTIANITY](#) says God sees me so I don't need to seek revenge.

*"But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles."* Matthew 5:39-41, ESV

Side note: This doesn't mean Christians should be push-overs or let injustices go unpunished. In Matthew 10, Jesus tells His disciples to "...be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (ESV). In the verse above from Matthew 5, Jesus is talking about resisting the urge to take personal vengeance. Jesus Himself is our example in this. He was silent before His accusers and even as He was beaten He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing" Luke 23:24, NLT.<sup>2</sup>

[CANCEL CULTURE](#) says I will use what little power I have to hold accountable those who have social/political power and a far-reaching audience.

[CHRISTIANITY](#) says God has ultimate power and will bring perfect justice, not me.

*"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.'" Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* Romans 12:17-21, ESV

[CANCEL CULTURE](#) says I should fear what could happen if I say the wrong thing or am misunderstood.

[CHRISTIANITY](#) says I don't need to fear. I am secure in my place with God and His church will not leave me. God will never misunderstand me.

*"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:38-39, ESV

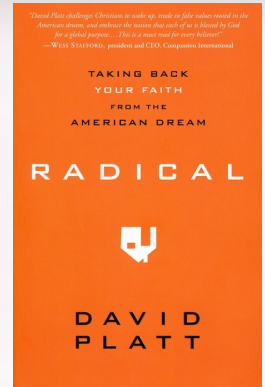
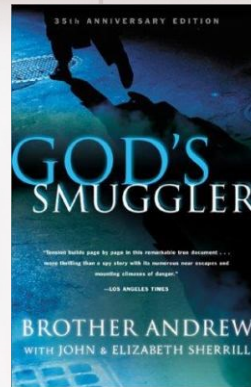
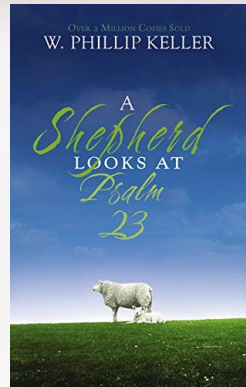
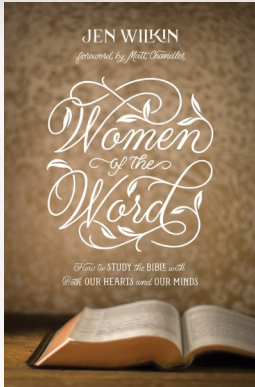
Winston Marshall has no plans to rejoin Mumford and Sons. He wants to continue writing and speaking on what he's learned through his experience, and his choice to do so could bring more harm to the band, which is something he's not willing to permit. In our cancel culture, one sentence (or tweet) can be twisted to misrepresent an entire identity, and not even an apology can guarantee things will be mended back together one day. What someone says once reflects the entirety of who they are and who they will always be. When we put our trust in Christ, the opposite happens. We aren't judged by our actions and failures anymore, but by His complete perfection. God, knowing full well our weakness, does not "cancel" us when we fall short, and He gives us the grace to try again. He hears us out when we own our mistakes and say we'd like a do-over. His people should do the same for each other and the rest of the world.



<sup>2</sup> gotquestions.org/turn-other-cheek.html

# WOTS ON YOUR BOOKSHELF?

CHECK OUT WHAT OUR WRITERS ARE READING



## ***Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds* | Jen Wilkin**

This book is by Jen Wilkin, an American author who desires to build Bible literacy among women. *Women of the Word* helped me see the connection between knowing God and loving Him. Having a solid understanding of Scripture gives us a clear picture of who God is, and when we know what God is like, we love Him even more. Wilkin walks through her 5 P's method of personal Bible study: purpose, perspective, patience, process, and prayer. She emphasizes that we must study the Word with both our heart and our mind. This book would be helpful for anyone, male or female, who recognizes a lack of biblical literacy in their life and wants to learn some practical steps towards a better understanding of the Bible as a whole.

## ***A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* | W. Phillip Keller**

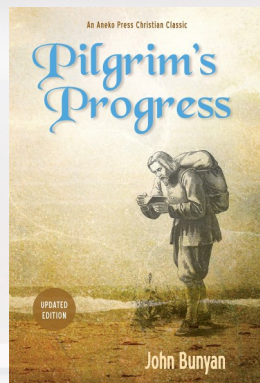
Reading this book will bring to light how God cares for His sheep (us). The author's firsthand experience brings greater understanding to Psalm 23, assuming you don't have the firsthand experience. I enjoyed how this was a short read but that he vividly brings to light how much care and sacrifice Jesus puts forth for His sheep.

## ***God's Smuggler* | John Sherrill, Elizabeth Sherrill**

Truth be told, this book came free with my audible subscription. I'd heard about it before but had never considered reading it. I wasn't sure I would be interested in reading about a missionary, Brother Andrew, who went behind the Iron Curtain into communist territory to give Bibles to people without access to them. I started listening to it, however, and didn't want to stop. The story is told simply but is infused with Brother Andrew's character. I was so inspired by his story and how God uses people who say "yes" to Him.

## ***Radical* | David Platt**

Years back, I gazed at this book on the shelf of the lending library at my church. Out of curiosity, I borrowed it, and it's left quite the impression. I grew up viewing Christianity as powerless to change anything apart from maybe one's Sunday morning plans and a few social etiquettes. But from seeing the lives of faithful Christians at the church I was attending in my college town to then opening this book, the conviction God formed in me concerning the life He was calling me to was further deepened. It stirred up passion and affection, and it played a part in the decisions that drastically changed the direction of my life.



## ***Pilgrim's Progress* | John Bunyan**

Real, life-altering Christianity is not easy, and John Bunyan should know. He was jailed numerous times, with one stint lasting 12 years simply because he preached the Bible. *Pilgrim's Progress* is his allegory about what it's like to travel the difficult journey of faith and the obstacles that come along the way. The original version is difficult to read because of the 1600's vernacular, but there is a version updated in modern English. This book is a classic and a good reminder that the journey's end is closer than we think if only we don't give up.



# 10 WAYS TO HIDE YOUR SNACKS

## DORM ROOM EDITION

Sharing space presents welcome and unwelcome circumstances. Private property is not as personal, and your food items might fall prey to a hungry roommate if left out in the open. Fear not, we have solutions for that. Protect those at-risk snacks from going missing using some of these tips listed below. Act quickly before you have casualties.

### THE DECOY

Have a bowl of okay candy mints or something sitting out in plain sight. This is to help deter further searching leading to the discovery of the good candy and/or snacks you have in your drawers.

### SLIM ROLLING CART

Not just for junk storage. Stash away those precious snacks underneath other items and roll them between your desk and the bunk bed.

### GOT A BUTTER IDEA

Paint a peanut butter jar brown and Mod Podge a peanut butter label of the brand no one likes to eat on the outside. Store your precious goodies inside.

### FALSE HOPE

Create false bottoms in your dresser drawers to store away some granola bars.



### **GET THE HANG OF IT**

Use clothespins to hang up thin packaged items from your clothes hanger under a t-shirt.

### **COOKIES OR NOT**

Take a tip from grandma and use an old metal cookie container to stash your loot. You may want to create a false top to hide the candy.

### **THE CUP**

Repurpose one of those empty paper coffee cups to store your favorite spherical candies. Grab a cup and carve out a hole, in the side, near the bottom. Slide down the insulating coffee sleeve to cover the hole. Fill it with candy and top it with a lid. Lift sleeve to dispense. Now you have a few tricks up your sleeve.

### **SHELF IT**

Buy a hardcover book from a thrift store or grab a free textbook from the library. Just remember the larger the book the more storage capacity. Cut the center out of the inner pages and input snackage. Carefully place the book on the shelf for future reference during those long study times.

### **TISSUES FOR YOUR ISSUE**

Store some candy bars underneath the remaining tissues in your Kleenex box. No one will suspect a thing, if, they don't shake the box.

### **THIS IS CEREAL**

Grab an empty cereal box or buy one of the obscure cereal brands. Covertly slide in a package of your favorite cookies.

**WARNING!** *The effectiveness of these tips may result in lost snacks if one forgets where they are hidden.  
Happy snacking.*



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