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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.

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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Mission: Group Project

Each member plays a part...we think

Whether brought together by choice, destiny, or your professor, every group project is comprised of a few characters we think you will recognize. These are the people you laugh and commiserate with. Some groups are more demanding than others, but you are all brought together for one purpose and mission. I think we all know which ones are in your group, but which one are you?



The Chatterer *"Oh, me too, one time..." (goes into a lengthy story that is only loosely related)*

With good intentions and a lot of opinions, you are never without words to say. You thrive when working with others. You have a variety of interests and enjoy sharing your stories and experiences with others.

Strengths Group secretary +3, Knowledge +2

Weakness Speaks without thinking



The Freeloader

"You got this, right?"

Although you tend to get sick before the presentations, you always remind your project mates how willing you are to help. Often, you volunteer to help with the layout, organization, or research but forget until the last minute. You want to be efficient and put forth as little effort as possible.

Strengths

Invisibility +2

Weakness

Overpromising

Persuasion +3



The Distractor

"Have you all seen the new movie that came out last week?"

Generally disinterested in what's on the agenda, you are here to fulfill your commitments and move on. However, you are full of quippy remarks and fun facts to entertain or frustrate your audience. There are no lengths you won't go to show off and redirect the conversation or project.

Strengths

Evasion +3

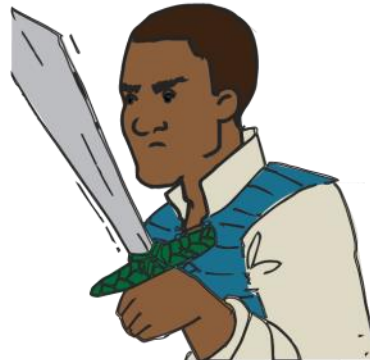
Weakness

Will disagree with everything

The Manager

"Alright, I have a great idea."

Every group needs a fearless leader to step up and take control of the situation. You aren't afraid to take charge whether you were or weren't picked for the position. You feel like you are the only one who wants to do well on the assignment. You pay attention to details, deadlines, and those on your team.



Strengths

Delegation +2

Weakness

Micromanages



The Mediator

"That's a great point! Let's see what everyone else thinks."

Friends with most and the teacher's pet, you are always there to help the team succeed. Efficient in asking questions, you gently direct the group in the right direction. Your partners always turn to you for help and advice. You are more interested in everyone getting along than having the best results as a team.

Strengths

Encouragement +2

Weakness

Agreeable to a fault, indecisive

Knowing your group dynamic can make all the difference between surviving and thriving in a group project. Now that you have the inside information on your group mates, you will be able to play to their strengths and avoid some of the drama in your next team mission.

ONE GUY'S

TRUE STORY



THIS TESTIMONY IS FROM FRED, A MEMBER OF STREET LEVEL MINISTRIES ON CEBU ISLAND, PHILIPPINES

Two years ago, during the pandemic, my journey of walking toward Jesus began. One of my old elementary classmates messaged that Street Level Ministries Cebu wanted to meet up with me. I was nervous because I didn't know what would happen, but it turned into the beginning of my connection with real Christians doing life together, which was exactly what I had always been itching for. It was light and easy accepting God's promises for the first time, but then the challenges came. I was asked to facilitate the ministry meeting in Toledo City, Philippines, and I had to grapple with the fear of failing and disappointing everyone I was working with. I put really high standards on myself, but God calmed me down and reminded me that He walked the humble road first, and I could do the same. It was challenging and tough, but I had joy in my heart whenever I got to share my experiences of how great He is with others at the meetings.

*"Long ago and far away in a different age
When I was a dumb young guy
Fossilized photos of my life then
Illustrate what an easy prey I must
have been."*

I remember my father always playing the song "Dinosaur" by King Crimson every morning to wake me up. I was three years old and couldn't understand the song's meaning, but the lyrics stayed in my head as years passed. Music is always part of my daily routine. I can't imagine myself living in the world without it, from the noise of the birds and the loudness of the streets to the peaceful province and the busy city.

The Bible was just another storybook for me growing up. Though my parents didn't read it, they raised me to choose my own beliefs and let me learn about other religions. I remember being in awe and curious about how powerful all these different gods could be, but it caused me to be full of doubts and questions.

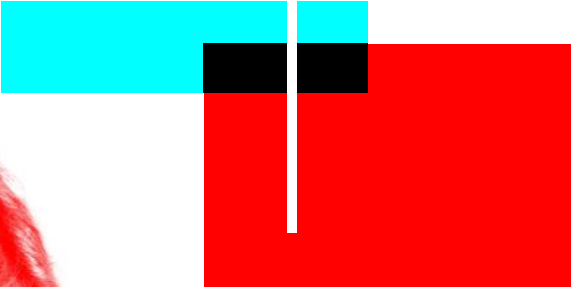
"Jesus saves you!" That sentence did not make sense to me until I became a college student. I had been reading, studying, and watching documentaries about the Bible for years. I had even attended a school that taught it, but I never understood its application to real life because no one could satisfy how all the other religions fit in. They all claimed to be truthful and righteous, and it caused me so many doubts that I decided to forget about Christianity. However, I was restless because Jesus was still working on me. He was slowly waking up the sleeping soul inside me.

||
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I still get tempted, and there are times when I cry because of it. Sometimes I kneel and let my tears flow because I feel crushed and discouraged. Plenty of times, I've wanted to quit and walk away, but He keeps pulling me back again and again. In those moments I feel so vulnerable, but they are also when I feel Him most.

A pastor once said, "Be grateful and celebrate that you encounter problems because, in those times, you will also encounter the blessings and power of God." That's something I hang onto all the time, and I can now say that "Jesus saved me" because I am growing and learning even when troubles come. Whenever I look in the mirror, I know that what I see is a better man. That old self has been crucified because He died for that old me.

- Fred



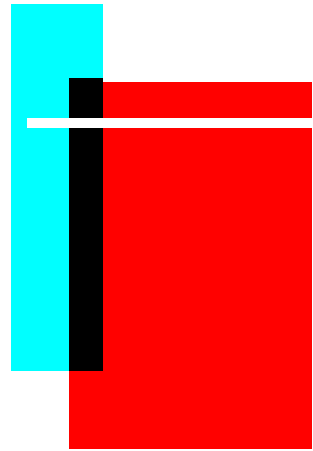
I remember the first time I got lost in a department store. You know the feeling: one minute you're looking at something you hope your parent will buy for you, and the next you're looking around wondering where that parent went. It's an awful feeling because your kid brain starts panicking. Worry turns to pure dread as you wonder whether you'll ever see them again. You can't even think straight enough to find someone to ask for help, so you just hide away in a clothing rack.

Little did we know that getting lost in a store is a minor anxiety compared to what life could offer. Anxiety is considered a mental health crisis plaguing the world at large. It doesn't matter where you live or whether you're a Christian. All human minds are prone to worry. I know I'm no stranger to it. Some days it feels like all I'm doing is worrying about conversations I haven't had yet or thinking of how to fix something I worry I did wrong. There's no quick fix for panic, but when I'm anxious, I have a good friend that asks, "Well, what do you know is true?" Here are three things I know for sure:

God is not indifferent to how we feel and wants us to bring all our anxieties to Him because He cares about us (1 Peter 5:7).

If you want to address your anxiety, you should consider your view of God. Do you believe that when you trust in Jesus' sacrifice, you can come to God with confidence? He says that He will hear you and wants to give you the peace you're looking for. Hebrews 4:16 says, "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we

“JESUS DOESN'T TELL US HOW TO MANAGE OUR ANXIETY; HE TELLS US TO REPENT OF IT.”



will find grace to help us when we need it most” (NLT). In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul tells the readers that they should bring their worries to God in prayer and ask for what they need. He says that by doing this, God’s peace, which is above their understanding, will guard their hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6-7). If you’re battling anxiety and fear, according to the Bible, you’re in a great position to experience the love and care of God. He invites you to go to Him with it.

Jesus says not to worry about our lives (Matthew 6:25), and when we come to Him, we’ll be given true rest (Matthew 11:28-30).

365 times the Bible states, “Do not fear.” Both Paul and Jesus command this. It is true, then, that persistent worry and anxiety are sinful. Ultimately, they expose a lack of trust in God and a desire to control our own lives. Jesus doesn’t tell us how to *manage* our anxiety; He tells us to *repent* of it. Romans 6:14 says, “Do not let sin have dominion over you.” Worry and anxiety shouldn’t control you. Being in bondage to them is a miserable way to live. The world defines anxiety as a disorder, which makes those who experience it a victim, and there is little hope besides trying to think positive and self-soothe. If worry is a sin as the Bible says it is, then I am not a victim of it. I can confess my worry before God. I can repent of believing God won’t take care of me and that I have to handle things myself. A Christian giving up their worries to trust God’s plan will, in the end, experience the peace that comes only from Him. In Christ, we have the power to conquer our anxious thoughts through the Spirit we are given: “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV).

We can take things day-by-day (Matthew 6:34).

Matthew 6:34 says, “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today” (NLT). Each day you choose to follow God, you have the mission of loving others and telling others about Him. This requires us to be present

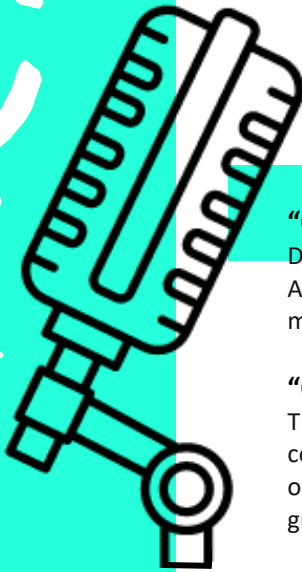
where we are and attentive to those around us. Anxiety, on the contrary, is a response to the uncontrollable and the impending. It robs us of the ability to live a life attentive to the needs of others. Living in the moment allows us to put our faith into action. It simplifies the focus of our lives and helps us to fulfill Jesus’ first and second greatest commandments: love God and love others (Matthew 22:37-38).

It seems easier to find our own ways to deal with anxiety. We try to numb it, distract ourselves from it, or embrace it, and accept that it’s just who you are, but these solutions never work long-term. God knows best and wants to give you an abundant life. He has the solution to our anxiety. It is our dependence on Jesus, both for the forgiveness of our sin and to take care of our needs, that brings rest, not our striving to coordinate everything. True rest comes from trusting that Jesus is a better Lord of your life than you are. Surrendering control to Him brings relief from you having to make all the right choices.

The simple gospel of Jesus shows us the big picture: we’re screw-ups, we can be saved and made whole, and we know what the future holds for those who trust Him. A life surrendered to God brings Him glory and brings us peace. God cares deeply about the health of our minds and His answer to stress and worry is to rely on Him. He is the Father that will search every clothing rack until He finds you. And if that doesn’t work, He’ll run to the customer service desk and have you paged over the intercom. The Bible records an intimate moment between Christ and His Father just before Jesus’ death. It says in Luke 22:44, “Being in agony, He [Jesus] prayed more earnestly” (NKJV). Let your agony bring you close to Him, too. Because we live in a broken world, there will always be something to worry about. For that reason, it is all the more beautiful that Christians, because of Jesus, can be a picture of joy and peace in the middle of mental chaos.

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” Isaiah 26:3, ESV

street level radio MUSIC BEAT

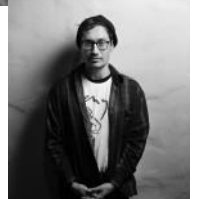


Street Level Radio
WRJF-LP 101.7FM in Menomonie, Wisconsin
Streaming online at streetlevelradio.com

When we say the word "radio," ideas that pop into your mind may include songs on repeat, commercial breaks that last five minutes, and made obsolete by music videos. You may be right. However, we're not here to focus on the negative but on the good. Street Level Radio's purpose is to share the good news of the Gospel...and good music, of course!

We are a small college station broadcasting out of Menomonie, Wisconsin. Anyone can listen to our station online at streetlevelradio.com. Our station is made up of people who volunteer by researching, writing and producing news segments, producing promotions for local ministries, hosting weekly radio shows, and more. We serve through a college group called Street Level Ministries at UW-Stout, River Falls, Superior, and on Cebu Island in the Philippines.

Our music ranges from hip hop to indie/alternative to ambient/experimental. There is truly something for everyone to enjoy. If you're looking for Bible-based teachings, you'll find those too. Here we have put together a little "mixtape" for you to listen to based on our station's current playlist:



"Grim Reaper" by Dawson Hollow

DH is a five member band of siblings creating Americana pop music with five part harmonies that might just make your head explode in a good way.

"Conversation" by Soulsician

This song is exactly what the title states: It's a conversation between God and His kid. Soulsician only has a few songs released, but his sound seems grounded in that dreamy indie music space.

"Closer Than a Brother" by Josh Garrels

Garrels' indie folk hip-hop music shares deep and introspective thoughts and ideas that we just can't get enough of. His vocal tenor and rhythms are completely unique. Sooner or later, you'll be trying to keep up with his spitting rap lyrics.

"Fly Away to Hell" by John Van Deusen

This song by Van Deusen is about the heavy struggle of not having the strength to make it another day. Still, he poetically reminds us of the beauty that exists to encourage us to "stay another day." His alt-rock music is full of raw emotion and a hopeful ending: Jesus.

"Lovely" by TOLEDO

This Brooklyn, NY-based indie-duo says this piece is their attempt at a "happy" song because they're singing about someone who helps you see the world differently. We like love songs, but not the ooey-goey ones. This is a good compromise.


"Creature Comforts" by TRELLA

Looking for a simple, upbeat, indie-pop artist? TRELLA is it! You'll be humming this song all day once you hear it because it's the good kind of catchy.



We hope you enjoy our recommendations and find yourself tuning into 101.7FM in Menomonie, Wisconsin, or on streetlevelradio.com.

Streaming online 24/7 at streetlevelradio.com

Also on Spotify  Search streetlevelradio.com

DON'T GIVE UP

Written by KYLE IDLEMAN



With one glance at the title, you might think that *Don't Give Up* is just another self-help book. However, Kyle Idleman, the author and an American pastor, does an excellent job striking the balance between encouraging hope in your walk with God and challenging you to consider your part in persevering. All the while, he does this within a biblical framework. His conversational style and lighthearted comments throughout the book make it an easy read without losing the depth and meaning of the message. Read this book if you are a Christian looking for a quick read and who needs encouragement to keep fighting “the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12, NKJV).

Journeying through life, you need encouragement and a push to persevere as a believer in Jesus. As you make your way through sections of Hebrews 11 and 12, *Don't Give Up* gives you just that. Living life with faith in God can play out in different ways, both expected and unexpected. In Hebrews 11, readers dig into the lives of Abraham and Jacob who will inspire you by their walk of faith with God. These men are included in the “cloud of witnesses” of Hebrews 12:1, given as examples for us to follow. Their lives went in directions that they probably didn't expect. As you are encouraged by these fellow saints, you begin to see the importance of gaining proper perspective in life so that you don't lose heart as a Christian. Living in self-pity is one major

way Christians lose perspective. Idleman offers some practical ways to fight against this all-too-natural tendency of self-focus.

Continuing into Hebrews 12, you are challenged to “throw off the weights” that keep you from walking out your Christian life. It is vital to face these hindrances with the truth of God's Word. By applying what the Bible says to your life and reading the inspiring stories of current and past people of faith, you come face-to-face with the truth of the gospel. This truth confronts those roadblocks along your Christian “race” (Hebrews 12:2).

These hindrances in your walk of faith can take other forms as well. No doubt you will come up against things like indifference, insufficiency, opposition, or discouragement by what appears to be slow progress. Another bit of perspective is this: take one step at a time. It is essential to move past intention, which in and of itself gets you nowhere, and learn to take action. However, as you do so you must have confidence. Self-confidence will fail you. Your assurance must be placed

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CONFIDENCE TO KEEP BELIEVING
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IS NOT FAITH IN LIFE'S
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in something greater than yourself – in Jesus. Idleman summed it up nicely when he said, “Faith that gives you the confidence to keep believing and the courage to keep going is not faith in life's circumstances; it's faith in God's character.” Let's finish the race of this life with confidence in God and endure until the end.

Kyle Idleman is a senior pastor at Southeast Christian Church in Kentucky. He is a husband and father, believes in the importance of the local church, and is the author of multiple Christian books. With a passion for storytelling and known for his conviction and humor, Idleman helps believers see the world around them as an opportunity to love God and others.





WHEN GOD BECOMES REAL



MOVING FROM THEORETICAL TO NECESSARY

I remember a friend inviting me to a week-long Christian camp the summer after eighth grade. We spent those hot summer days by the lake, making bead bracelets and performing skits around a fire as the sun set. Don't roll your eyes; I loved every second of it. I'd never been to camp before. After all our fun and games, we filed into the chapel each night to pray together and worship. One night, my eyes wandered around the room while we sang a song I'd sung since childhood. My gaze became fixed on my cabin counselor Emily who was down the row from me. Her eyes were closed, and she stretched out her hands before her. She seemed to be smiling at something I couldn't see. I'd been active in the church all my life and called myself

a Christian, but I felt like an outsider at that moment. It took me by surprise.

In a rush of emotion, I slipped away from the crowd to get some air. Emily noticed and followed me out. I don't remember everything we said, but I remember being angry. After seeing her, it was as if I understood that worshiping God should be done out of love for Him, but I felt very little. Looking back on that moment, I can see the wheels spinning in my mind. After all the "good things" I'd done in church, I questioned why I lacked passion in worship and in my spiritual life. I remember Emily telling me to hold out my hand and study it, to think about all the things that have to take place for my brain to tell my hand to form a shape and move. That was the first time I thought of God as the One to create not just the ocean and the stars but me individually. I remember leaving camp that week wishing someday I'd know God the way Emily did. To her, God wasn't just a name thrown around at church. He was actually real.

MORE THAN COINCIDENCE

Fast forward four years, and through a series of very fortunate events, I found myself one Sunday morning in a church where some worshiped with hands raised, just like I'd seen at camp. It still felt foreign to me, and I certainly wasn't about to join in, but I knew deep down that these people were like Emily. God was real to them. The first sermon I heard preached there was by a guest speaker who "coincidentally" addressed what was going on in my life almost perfectly. The pastor posed the question of why we keep getting burned by sin, and the first reason he gave was that we attach ourselves to people we shouldn't. That described my relationship with the guy I was seeing at the time. It freaked me out. It's like the pastor knew precisely what I was going through, but how? Years later, I can confidently say that it was God, by His grace, shouting to get my attention. That was the start of God becoming real to me. Although not audible, I heard Him speaking.

Over the next few months, I saw the reality of God's presence in the lives of these Christians. When they were hurting, they didn't crumble or complain all too much. Their joy seemed unmatched. They didn't recite prayers from a binder or a screen; they prayed with their own words, with honesty, and in confidence that God would hear and answer them. They showed an interest not just in showing up to church on Sundays but in making sure I knew I could know God too. They came after me, time after time, with dinner invitations, walks, and conversations. It was through the love of these people that God, and His love for me, became real.



“THAT WAS THE
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LOVE BRINGS CHANGE

The more I saw God through the people at my new church, and by reading the Bible, the more I knew I couldn't measure up to His standard of perfection. I saw how unworthy I was of His love as my sin unfolded before me. I couldn't seem to stop doing the things I didn't want to do. Before I knew it, “accepting Jesus into my heart” wasn't just a cool catchphrase from camp anymore but a necessity. Back in high school, I wanted the passion I saw in Emily but didn't know how to get there. I was self-righteous and didn't see my sin. I was rigid, controlling, and sure I knew the right way to live. I wanted to know God on a superficial level but didn't realize how desperately I needed Him. When I finally saw my need, the news of the gospel was a cool drink of water. I saw that Jesus is a real person and I trusted that His death and resurrection opened the way for me to know God. No more need to strive for perfection, no need to fear rejection or making mistakes. I was free. Even still, the reality of God demanded a change in my life. I couldn't keep living thinking I was right. And so my ongoing, very ongoing, journey of humility and life with God began.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

In the Bible, people change after meeting Jesus and accepting His mission. Consider Peter, who gave up his livelihood as a fisherman to follow Christ, became one of the first disciples, and started building the first church. Peter wasn't content with just knowing Jesus for himself. He wanted to tell other people about Him. He made his fair share of mistakes, like denying Jesus not once but three times, but if you study his life, you'll see God still used him. God has given me purpose and a job to do, too, and I'm here for it.

Now it's been ten years since I stepped into my church for the first time. In preparing to write this, I went back to listen to that first Sunday sermon I ever heard. I hadn't remembered this from the first time around, but in that message from 2012, the pastor referenced going back to listen to *his* first Sunday sermon ten years prior. He shared his experience of hearing God's voice and knowing the direction of his life was about to change forever because of it. Coincidence? I think not. I couldn't help but laugh and thank God for yet another display of His reality, love, and guidance in my life.

There's a big difference between going to church a couple of Sundays and knowing from experience that God is real. After camp, I didn't do anything to get to know God better. I just kept going to church mindlessly. A miracle in my life was God's providence (His protective care) to bring me to a church where He is working and where I would see and hear Him. God's reality means that He doesn't just get my attention on Sundays but every day of the week. He is as real as any human sitting next to me. The reality of God leaves me worshiping. His reality brings my sin to the surface. He's faithful to show me when I'm falling back into religious motions and where I need to keep changing. God's given me a fuller, more purposeful life than I could have made for myself, and I can't imagine spending my life any other way. The reality of God came to me slowly, person by person, weird circumstance by weird circumstance, until one day, all by His mercy, I found Him undeniable.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. John 15:16 ESV



Spiritual SNACKING

ENDLESS OPTIONS ARE A RECIPE
FOR GOING NOWHERE

I went into my first year of college wide-eyed at the glorious new liberties that lay before me: no curfew, the ability to make my own schedule, and, perhaps most exhilarating of all, the à la carte line in the cafeteria. Delight welled up inside as I discovered that multiple flavors of ice cream were available for me every single night. Taking full advantage of my new freedoms, I indulged without care for several weeks. Unfortunately, I quickly discovered that I do not have the ability to consume copious amounts of ice cream and remain physically unaffected. Weight gain and lethargy promptly followed. Suddenly, the thrill of choice became a barrier to staying healthy and balanced. I was faced with the dilemma of how to pick and choose wisely in a world full of buffets.

ENDLESS CHOICES

Our lives are inundated with choices from the moment we wake up to when we try to shut our eyes at night. It's estimated that the average adult makes an exhausting 35,000 decisions every single day.¹ Do I push the snooze button or just get up? Which outfit should I wear? Should I check my email or texts first? I often lay down at night and struggle to fall asleep as my brain buzzes from all this frantic choice-making. I wish I could just shut out all the noise in my mind and have a genuinely quiet minute.

The word "distraction" is derived from an old French term for a method of torture used to punish the most grievous offenders. The criminal had each of his arms and legs attached to a separate horse, and then they were released in four different directions.² As gruesome as that is, I can't help but relate: my mind often feels yanked in just as many different directions. I'm starting to find that the à la carte line is no longer solely a cafeteria feature – it characterizes my entire

existence. The problem is, I still love ice cream. But when my choices are only what is sweet, effortless, and comfortable, my appetite for healthy food diminishes, and I just want to cram in more junk food to fill the void. I endlessly scroll on my phone instead of having a meaningful conversation with my neighbors because it's just plain easier to zone out than risk an awkward social encounter. Instead of reading the whole book, I read the Cliffs notes. But what kind of person am I becoming when I constantly push aside the difficult and only do what's comfortable? We all know what happens if you do that in the cafeteria.

DRIFTING AND DISTRACTED

As Christians, we can't ignore the effect this buffet world has on our relationship with God. Ultimately, our attention shifts to what's important to us, becoming a barometer of our deepest affections and desires. That's a scary thought because when I think about where my attention goes most frequently, I'm ashamed to admit it's not very holy. Jesus explains the result of misplaced attention when He shares "The Parable of the Sower" in the Bible. He was talking to a large crowd about how different people will respond to His words. There are three bad examples and one good example of potential reactions. One of those bad examples hits uncomfortably close to home, and that's the seed that fell among the thorns. Jesus elaborates on what He means by this in Mark 4:18-19, "And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke out the word, and it proves unfruitful" (ESV).

Jesus is telling us clearly that everything in the world around us has the potential to distract us from our goal, which is remaining connected with Him and pursuing His priorities. If we drift along the soothing current of distraction, making no effort to swim upstream, we will be swept away into ineffectiveness. In the book of Hebrews, we are warned: "Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" (Hebrews 2:1, ESV). Drifting is easy, but I don't want my Christianity to look just as numb and preoccupied as everyone else's life. We're called to represent Jesus Christ, who remained focused and single-minded in all His pursuits. When distractions relentlessly pull my focus away from God, I'm creating ruts in my mind and heart that will deepen over time. It will become habitual to travel that road, resulting in a slow loss of my affection for Jesus. A drifting, distracted Christian no longer stands in awe of a majestic God. But what does that say to others about the worth and power of the world's Savior?

STAYING FOCUSED

I'm going to tell you the secret of how to live faithfully for God in a highly distracting world. I will warn you outright that you will not find it on Google or with a few quick phone swipes. The Bible says, "... let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder, and perfecter of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1-2). The secret is found in this verse. If you look closely, there is something to set aside, something to develop, and something to maintain. Let's break this down so we know exactly what it means for our day-to-day life.

...CONTINUED

“...WHAT KIND OF PERSON AM I BECOMING WHEN I CONSTANTLY PUSH ASIDE THE DIFFICULT AND ONLY DO WHAT'S COMFORTABLE? WE ALL KNOW WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO THAT IN THE CAFETERIA.”



¹Graff, Frank. "How Many Daily Decisions do we Make?" *UNC-TV Science*, 7 Feb. 2018



“
AS CHRISTIANS, WE
HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT,
AND WE CAN LIVE LIVES
THAT ARE MARKED WITH
SELF-CONTROL.
”

Set Aside

Distraction is never going away. We all face the same temptation to be distracted, but God knows this and has not left us helpless (1 Corinthians 10:13). As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit and can live lives marked with self-control. You will need to say "no" to things that aren't inherently bad but aren't helpful (weights). We set aside weights and sins by consciously deciding to get rid of them. You will need to stop indulging in sins you know to be wrong. Make a choice and ask for God's help as you do it. In any relationship, cooperation is necessary to accomplish a goal.

Develop

I used to rock climb at our university recreation center. My best friend and I would go together every week. One of us would hold the rope, and the other would climb the wall. I would stretch and grab each rock while she held my line in case I fell. Rock climbing is strenuous, sweaty work. Sometimes the next hold was just out of reach, and I would need to push myself off the rock I was standing on to jump to the next one. About half the time, I didn't make it, but thankfully the rope caught me safely, and I could try again. Sometimes I would reach that next hold, and then I could climb even higher. But my friend would never pull me up to it; I had to make that jump. Running our Christian life race with endurance is similar because we need to develop the type of character that will not give up when faced with a challenge. The goal is to finish well, knowing we gave our full effort to live our life for God. Our focus is there, and when we fall, we are held up by our lifeline, *but then we keep climbing*. Both our effort and reliance on God, working in harmony, are required to propel us forward.

Maintain

All this is useless if we do not have and maintain affection for Jesus as the motivation behind our effort. Have you ever been in a dating relationship? I have. The first few weeks are magical. All I wanted to do was spend time with him, think about him, and tell others about him. I chose not to browse the internet at night because we talked on the phone. I set aside Saturdays for all-day excursions in the city where we met up. I spent my lunch break texting him. Sound familiar? Anyone who has gone through this will understand that love prioritizes the object of its affection.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus means spending time with Him by reading the Bible and praying daily. It looks like thanking Him, worshiping Him, and enjoying Him. It's rejecting things that pull our attention away and intentionally counteracting our natural tendencies by choosing to obey His words instead of our impulses. Distractions will lose their appeal if we fall in love with Jesus Christ and keep nurturing that love. Relationships require work, but if we truly love someone, we will do whatever it takes to keep the connection strong.

In the long run, your most important life decisions happen through the culmination of numerous small choices made each day. Will you live an à la carte life, picking and choosing only the tastiest bits? Or will you get to work cultivating a strong relationship with Jesus despite the risk of being uncomfortable along the way? There is no quick-and-easy road to the goal, but you can get started in the right direction with choice number 35,001.





LEARNING THE ART OF TIME MANAGEMENT FROM JESUS

At this very moment, you might be in the middle of group projects and assignments, but the procrastination zone is swallowing your time, and the deadline is looming before you. Here's the way out: time management. This article isn't just another list of productivity hacks, however. You might be surprised to learn that Jesus had plenty to say about the subject.

1 Keep God first. Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33, NIV). When you worship, trust, pray, and depend on God rather than on yourself, you are putting God first. Your dependence on Him rewires your minds to accomplish things not for the world but for Him, to Him, and through Him.

2 Let your yes be yes, and your no be no. We find this in Matthew 5:37. Be firm with what you commit to doing and execute your plans accordingly. When your yes really means yes, you will undoubtedly commit to that, so there'll be less chance of being swayed by distractions. Your "yes" and "no" determine your conviction and direction. Single-mindedness is important.

3 Stay focused on what you can do today, but always know your end goal. Each day has enough trouble on its own, as it says in Matthew 6:34, so don't put yourself in a position where you have to be in a hurry to finish your work all at once. It will only exhaust and deprive you of joy while doing it. Working on that first step while remembering why you're doing it all in the first place will help carry you through to the last step.

4 Work hard when you're working and rest well when you're resting. When you work, do your best. The consequence of unfinished work will only leave you with an incomplete day and fuel your restlessness. If you stop once you get tired instead of when the work is done, you won't experience the real rest that comes from real work. Work hard. Rest hard. Repeat. When resting, thank Jesus, who implored us to enjoy and not neglect it. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

**"WORK HARD. REST HARD.
REPEAT."**

5 Be accountable. Let your friends help you. Sometimes, you want to be alone and disconnected from everything else, but remember that you are a part of the whole—the church, the body of Christ. The next time you're tempted to procrastinate or stay up all night again, remember you have a role to play as part of the body. Get connected to your local church, be part of a small group, submit to your leader, and go along, not alone.

"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" Ephesians 5:15-17, NIV



GOD loves LIARS

HOW WE FIND RESPITE IN A RAGING FIRE

The charred smell of smoke spreads for miles under the burnt, hazy sky—unusual for midafternoon. Reports of uncontrollable flames flicker on the evening news through apathetic TV screens. Residents of California, especially, know that wildfires are an ever-present threat to their backyards because the threat keeps growing yearly. It's now a fact of life that more people are dying even though billions of dollars are spent fighting the flames. All this from raging fires that only ever begin as a single flame in the right conditions.¹

Wildfires are truly powerful, proven by the physical and economic destruction left behind. That's why God compares them to the act of lying: "See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (James 3:5-6, NKJV). The little white lies, the fibs, the exaggerations, and the half-truths we think we get away with do more damage than we realize, and we are all spiritual arsonists poised to strike the next match.



WE ARE ALL SPIRITUAL ARSONISTS POISED TO STRIKE THE NEXT MATCH.

MORE DANGEROUS THAN WE THINK

Lying comes in many forms, and we all know that hurtful, compulsive lying is wrong. We easily let ourselves off the hook because we don't lie *like that*. But, who hasn't put a lower weight on their driver's license, told someone they looked nice when their clothes were hideous, or perpetuated that Santa is real to keep up the Christmas tradition? The more we tell seemingly innocuous tales like these, the more our brains get used to it, and we feel less guilty.²

What we see as harmless, God sees as destructive. To Him, there are no categories of better or worse lies. Apart from being one of the ten commandments ("Thou shalt not lie"), the Bible also makes this description: "The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell... but no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."³

Furthermore, while it would be a good thing to stop lying, it would also be a fool's errand to think the problem is with our words alone. Our words only give away what is in our hearts, which is much harder to change.⁴ Our heart, the epicenter of thoughts, emotions, motives, and desire, is described as "desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9, NKJV). Even if we fake morality on the outside, we are still sinful at the core. And, just because lying is often culturally acceptable doesn't excuse us from the inevitable consequences. Opportunities, relationships, our reputation, and our joy will

smolder and suffer if we turn our backs and ignore the impending blaze.

MORE HOPE THAN WE KNOW

Despite how much we offend God with our lying (and many other sins), we are not without hope. God, at the expense of His own Son, allows us to be made right with Him: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness...And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation [appeasement] for our sins, and not for ours only but for the whole world" (1 John 1:9-2:2, NKJV). If we confess our lying with a humble heart and seek forgiveness, Jesus is faithful to wipe it from our record.

Moreover, loving Jesus should compel us to action. We'll *want to* stop lying because we don't want sin to interfere with our relationship. Does that mean we'll never lie again? Nope. We will continue to battle sin until we're dead, but God promises that it won't have victory over us.

Everyone's past is a forest fire of words we wish we hadn't said, lies we deliberately told, and slander, cursing, and backbiting peppered throughout our conversations. If only we'd known the damage done before the flames got out of control. Nevertheless, ashes fall where they may, but lucky for us, God can make a holy and righteous life grow even in a place like that.

¹ucdavis.edu/climate/news/californias-2020-wildfire-season-numbers

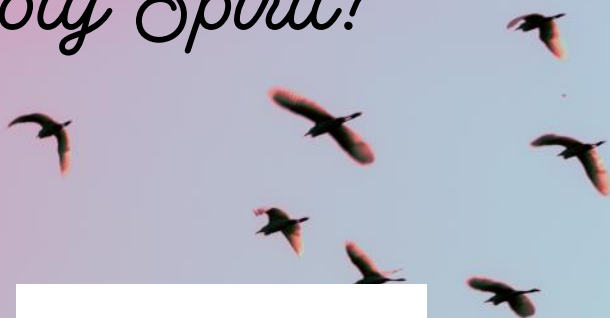
²iheart.com/podcast/11119-deeply-human-77473739/episode/lying-79972896/

³James 3:5-8, NKJV

⁴Matthew 15:11

AS A MATTER OF FACT:

Who is the Holy Spirit?



At times Christianity can be confusing. When it comes to the Holy Spirit, this confusion only seems to amplify. There are misconceptions of who He is, what He does, and why it matters. But *Word on the Street* has your back, and we're tackling this common question too essential to be left unanswered: what role does the Holy Spirit play?

WHO HE IS

For starters, the Holy Spirit is not an inanimate power or an impersonal essence. The Holy Spirit is God, and He is personally and intimately involved as the One who gives new life to those who follow Jesus. Scripture speaks of Him as a person, and He is the third person of the Trinity, which means He has all the same divine attributes.¹ Scripture shows that He is eternal, has all power, and knows all things.² Furthermore, God desires to dwell inside of His children, despite Him being God and us living on this little planet in a vast universe. That's part of communion with God and what it means to have a relationship with Him.³ It's as intimate and personal as it gets. Upon salvation, this becomes a reality.

WHAT HE DOES

But this begs the question, what does He do? First, He teaches, leads, and guides us through life.⁴ Not only did He author the book that provides the truth from which we can be saved, but He also gives us the ability to understand it in the context of our own life.⁵ Like Romans 12:2 describes, it's not about a moral checklist but about aligning ourselves with how God thinks.

**“HE PROVIDES US
WITH SECURITY IN A
WORLD OF
INSECURITY, PEACE IN
A WORLD FILLED WITH
ANXIETY, AND A
SOUND MIND IN THE
CHAOS OF OUR OWN.”**

Simply, He has a plan for our lives: His will. However, He will not force any of this on us because it's a relationship. We can obey Him or resist Him.⁶ It's our choice how we treat Him. We grieve and hurt Him when we flippantly sin, and like any relationship where we hurt another, it breaks the bond.

WHY HE MATTERS

Since eternity, the Holy Spirit has been alive, working, and actively involved. Just like He was involved in the world's creation, He's in the business of giving life.⁷ The Holy Spirit provides the "how" to the Christian life.⁸ He extends His hand to us, just as we are—convicted on all counts by the truth He reveals. He invites us in. Then He begins

radically transforming us—giving us a new heart.⁹ It's not about acting like a "good Christian" in our own strength, but it is the impartation of the Holy Spirit in us. This means that through a life of increasing surrender and obedience to the Holy Spirit, we begin to experience His power in our life. He gives us everything we need to obey God and live out His will, even giving us special gifting.¹⁰

This transforming life is only found in God's will. It's where we experience the joy of the Christian life. In it, He brings comfort and warmth to our lives, that of love, grace, and purification.¹¹ He provides us with security in a world of insecurity, peace in a world filled with anxiety, and a sound mind in our own chaos.¹² He satisfies in a world that is just so unsatisfying.¹³ He truly gives us new life.¹⁴

1. Matthew 28:19 2. Hebrew 9:14, Luke 1:35, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 3. 2 Corinthians 13:14 4. John 14:26, Romans 8:14 5. Romans 10:17, Ephesians 1:17-18 6. Acts 10:19-21, Acts 7:51 7. Genesis 1:2, Psalm 103, Job 33 8. Romans 7:24 9. Ezekiel 36:26 10. 2 Peter 1:3 11. John 14:26 12. Ephesians 1:13, Philippians 4:4-9, 2 Timothy 1:7 13. John 4:14 14. John 6:63

SHEDDING THE PAST

GIVING UP YOUR OLD LIFE FOR A LIFE IN CHRIST

The fat little caterpillar inches its way over to a new leaf, weighing it down. It's on a mission. After a short lifetime of munching on the crispy green foliage, today it's going without food to shed many layers. It will then find a quiet place to hang out for a while, but it's unaware of what is truly in store. Its world as it knows it is about to end, but from its creator's perspective, a messy but necessary transformation is about to take place.

What it does next is shocking. It hangs upside down, molts its entire skin, and forms a shiny chrysalis in its place. Then, in a process still not entirely understood, it dissolves into a goo consisting of imaginal discs that survive the digestive process and serve as the building blocks for its new body. In essence, it's dead now. The promise of life as a butterfly is not yet a reality. Though humans aren't physically the same, our lives can mirror theirs. We spend hours and days—even years—crawling in the dirt. We do what we want and indulge our desires as we please. But is that all we'll ever be? Were we made to live forever in the dirt, or do we, like the caterpillar, need to die to find our new life?

You have to wonder if the caterpillar wishes it could keep slinking around and eating all day instead of shedding its skin and building its chrysalis. Does it hurt? Does it hunger? Does it try to resist? Or does it ultimately know those things don't compare to what's ahead?

It is not an easy task to abandon the dirt when it's all you have ever known. Still, the Apostle Paul urges anyone who will listen to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and

acceptable to God...Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2, ESV). To experience the transformation, you must first die to yourself, not in a weird "jump-off-the-cliff" sort of way, but rather in surrendering your life to the Creator: God. He takes care of what happens next.

If it looks like your world is ending inside your own personal chrysalis as the parts of yourself you've spent years cultivating dissolve, it isn't the end of the story. In first John it says, "This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins" (4:10, NLT). When you become a new creation in Jesus, the dirt of your old life doesn't have the same appeal that it had before. When you understand you were born to fly, your desires become more like Jesus' and less like the world's.

A caterpillar can shed its skin up to five times in a single day during its transformation. Similarly, when you begin to follow Christ, you begin to shed your old life. The person you were dies, and you are made new. If the caterpillar was never willing or too scared to become soup inside a chrysalis, it would never get to live the life it was destined to live. Like this process is for a caterpillar, there is a mystery component. You will never completely understand all that is involved or what you will ultimately become. The one constant is Jesus and His love for you and your growing love and trust in Him. It's the only sane thing that will drive you to do something the world labels somewhat insane: dying to yourself to live for Christ. To be transformed into something more beautiful than an insect, you must stop crawling in the dirt and become a new creature in Christ.

**THE DIRT IS NO
LONGER
APPEALING WHEN
YOU REALIZE YOU
CAN FLY.**



COFFEE, CONVERSATION, COMMUNITY, & COSMIC CONVERGENCE

4 TIPS ON HOW TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT JESUS

Whether you just became a Christian or were totally motivated by a message you heard at church, telling others about Christ is an exciting thing. But it can be easy to overthink. Sam Chan, author of *How to Tell People About Jesus (Without Being THAT Guy)*, gives four pieces of advice on gracefully starting a conversation about Jesus.

TIP #1 MERGE UNIVERSES (AKA COSMIC CONVERGENCE)

When we talk to others about Christ, a good place to start may be inviting a non-Christian friend to an event with other Christian friends, and vice versa. It can be easier to become comfortable with people in groups, as it can help buffer any awkwardness that may occur more during initial introductions in one-on-one settings. The event does not have to be Christian-related either; the point is to strike up a connection. This natural setting helps foster community among people with different backgrounds so that everyone has the chance to learn about each other. It opens the door to understanding, empathy, and ultimately

“YOU’RE NOT LOOKING FOR A DEBATE. YOU’RE LOOKING FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR POINT OF VIEW.”

connection, where it otherwise may not have been. Following this piece of advice first can make the transition of inviting a friend to a solo get-together less intimidating.

TIP #2 COFFEE, DINNER, GOSPEL

Chan explains that grabbing a cup of your preferred beverage with your friend is an easy way to get to know them with less distraction and more directed conversation. However, this solo endeavor can be short and sweet, so don't put too much pressure on yourself or the outcome! It's just one step towards building a better bond before introducing a more personal invitation, such as dinner at your home. As you grow in your friendship, the conversation should flow toward deeper topics, such as personal worldviews, opinions on religion, and, thus, hopefully Christ.

TIP #3 THE ART OF LISTENING

Since communication is a two-way street, let your pal talk for as long as they want, and encourage it by asking questions such as, "Why is that important to you?" or "What got you interested in that?" Be present by not letting distractions get in the way - put that cell phone away! Be open to all they have to say, including any objections they may have. You're not looking for a debate. You're looking for a better understanding of their point of view. Finally, if or when it comes time to talk about Jesus, knowing how to introduce Him can help prevent a person from tuning out since there is a lot of misinformation and bad impressions.

TIP #4 LEARNING TO TELL A BETTER STORY

The safest place to begin can be by sharing your story about how you first got to know Jesus. Since it is a personal experience, it is easier to speak about as you already know the details, and it is close to the heart. Therefore, it is not an arguable idea. Instead, it's offering your friend a lens to view Jesus through. Dr. Chan says he likes to use the story of Jesus turning water into wine because isn't it interesting that this story involves drunk people? However, that wasn't the point. The point is that Jesus was trying to show others what life could be like with Him: fun and full of joy (not necessarily with alcohol, but rather the excitement of a celebration). Hopefully, these lil nuggets of wisdom can help you share the gospel in more meaningful and impactful ways so you can go "... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

Local Fall Finds

— MAKE THE MOST OUT OF FLANNEL SEASON —

Finally, it's the season for pumpkin spice and everything nice. While fall can be dark, damp, and cold, there are still plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. The cooler weather is excellent for hiking and other fall activities like corn mazes. Are you looking for some relief from the stress of studying? Don't fall into boredom. Instead, hit the road or the trail and take in the sights with some cheese curds in hand and your favorite flannel tucked in. So, how about it? Read on for some local fall finds.

VIEWS

Hoffman Hills - Give the observation tower a try for an unbeatable view. This 60-foot wooden tower east of Menomonie places you just above the treetops, giving you an aerial view of the surrounding landscape, which is extra beautiful this time of year because of the ombre of autumn leaves. Be sure to take an obligatory selfie with friends while you're up there. Besides the tower, there's a honeycomb of trails leading up to it ranging from easy to difficult, so no matter what level of hike you're looking for, you're sure to find it at Hoffman Hills.

Bjornson Education-Recreation Center

(Menomonie Public School Environmental Site) - This park is obscurely placed in the hilly Wisconsin countryside near Knapp, just 15 minutes northwest of Menomonie. It's one of the lesser-known places to take a hike or have a picnic. There's a fire pit, but we'd recommend bringing a chair, and it's best to wear hiking shoes you don't mind getting dirty and have plenty of traction. That way, you're prepared for the hiking trails, various hills, trees, and water features. This place is pet-friendly if your four-legged friend wants to join. Also, if you run long and need a restroom, one is available, but there is no guarantee on the TP.





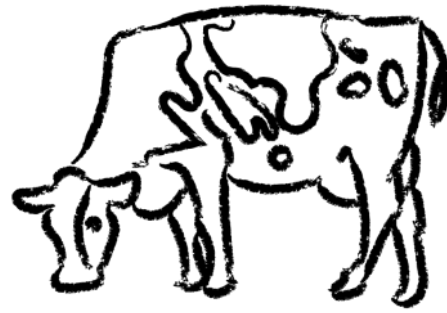
FOOD

Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Menomonie - This part cheese manufacturer, part shop, and part eatery is just as cheesy as the pizza it serves. Plus, their award-winning cheese curds appear in any cheese store worth its salt. Their original location is in Ellsworth, 50 minutes west of Menomonie, and this new creamery in Menomonie off exit 45 on County B opened just this past summer. The next time you're looking for a very Wisconsin experience, stop in on a weekday before 5 pm to view their cheese-making process. It is *why* good. Then, check out all the different flavored cheese curds for purchase since some cheeses made onsite are exclusive. Make sure to block out some time for your visit because they have lots of locally-sourced goods such as jams, jellies, meat snacks, and beverages. Secure some curds (fried or original), score some ice cream, and then hang out on the picnic tables if the weather is feeling cooperative.

DECORATIONS

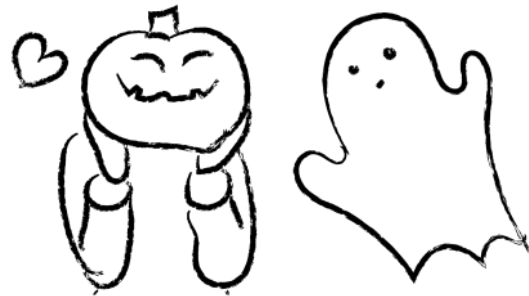
Buying the pumpkin - Sure, it might get smashed, and it's a pain to carve, but you know you want one. If you're looking for quick decor and want to skip the patch experience, try Bryan's Pumpkin Stand on Highway 29/12 across the road from the Golden Leaf Café and the Red Cedar Speedway. If that doesn't work, snag your pumpkin at most grocery and hardware stores around town.

Don't let the dark get you down. Go out and explore the local land. Whether you fill your head with cheese knowledge or want to get lost in the woods, be sure to bring your friends.



ACTIVITIES

Govin's - What about some farm fun close to Menomonie? Govin's is corn-mazing and just a few miles away from Ellsworth Creamery. Each year they have a different theme for their 11-acre corn maze, aka the redneck escape room. If the maze isn't your thing, take a shot at the Pumpkin Cannon! We hear it's a blast. Other ventures range from mini golf to a genuine tractor pull. The farm is open on weekends beginning Saturday, September 24th, and ending Saturday, October 29th. Hours are Fridays 5-10 pm, Saturdays 10 am-10 pm, and Sundays 11 am-5 pm. A bonus (additional fee required) is the Twisted Tales of Horror trail. The name says it all. This trail is open every Friday and Saturday in October from 6-10 pm.



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AND LOOKING
FOR FRIENDS?

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MONDAYS

6pm Dinner & Bible Discussion

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