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STANDING YOUR GROUND IN
THE AGE OF GROUP THINK

WINTER 2026

WORD ON THE STREET
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Ministries
MAGAZINE



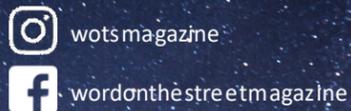
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WORD ON THE STREET Magazine

UW-STOUT EDITION

W WELCOME TO WOTS

In your hands you're holding a copy of *Word on the Street* (WOTS) Magazine. We exist as an outreach of Street Level Ministries, a college Christian ministry with groups in various cities. We're glad you're here!

Established in 1999, this magazine is rooted in the belief that Jesus is the center of everything, and following Him will open your eyes to truth and the life you were made for.

We meet every week to write and gather content as a group of young adults in cities around the

Midwest. We also have contributing writers from the Philippines, Amsterdam, and parts of South Asia. Our desire is to write about topics focusing on God, life, and the ever-changing landscape of the world we live in.

We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking as it encourages you to engage your mind and engage your world as you pursue your walk with Christ. **This life is too short to just go with the status quo. What are you waiting for?**

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Interested in checking out a Bible study?



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THE BODYLESS HAND

ONE GUY'S TRUE STORY

My pastor describes a Christian without a church like a hand without a body: it is good as dead. It is useless. As Christians, we can't deny our need for a church to serve God and His people in, and for our own spiritual growth. As for me, at some point, I was the hand without a body.

Almost four years ago, I got involved in a Christian church. This was a church where the Bible is taught and I had opportunities to serve God. I really thought everything would be fine as time went by. But when it was time for me to go to college, I had to move far away from the church to study. At first, I was thinking, "It will be just four years to get my degree plus one year to get my license, then after that I will surely get a job and go back to serve God again," not realizing that I was already treating my relationship with God as something temporary and optional.

As time went by, I didn't notice that my faith was progressing backwards. I stopped praying, stopped reading my Bible, and became so consumed by schoolwork, deadlines, and pressure that I became useless in the ministry. Even though I was busy and productive as a student, inside I felt empty and spiritually dry. It almost looked like I had never really met or encountered Christ at all. I was slowly becoming the "bodyless hand."

But God is merciful enough to still want me to know and serve Him again. I was in my second year at school when I was invited to a Bible study for college students. That invitation became a turning point for me. After the Bible study, Jesse, my pastor now, invited me to attend a Sunday service. At that time, I was only attending church and was not part of it. I only went when it was convenient for me.

At some point, I stopped attending this new church too, and only came back again when I wanted to. But that's not how it is supposed to be. God calls us to obedience, and I was not being a good example of it. I felt guilty, yet I kept delaying commitment. Also, a big reason why I couldn't bring myself to fully commit to this church at that time was that I was still holding onto my old church way back home, which I couldn't serve effectively because of the distance. I was also thinking it might interfere with my studies. I was too arrogant to admit to God that I needed a church.

Eventually, God asked for my commitment. Pastor Jesse asked a question to the church one time: "Do you consider this your



Hans is a staff member of Street Level Ministries in the Philippines

church?" I went home thinking and praying about it, and eventually I said yes, not just to the church but also to God's call for commitment and obedience. I admitted that I was tired of doing my Christian life alone.

After that, I became committed to God through Believers Church Cebu. Also during this time, I was considering my commitment to Street Level Ministries (SLM), a group of college students who want to know God and are passionate about His Word. Just a few months ago, I became a member.

The church and SLM gave me another chance to start from the beginning. To be a baby in faith again. To serve and to understand what the Bible really says. No more, no less. It made me realize that although Christianity is sometimes scary, you are not alone in the battle. You have God and His people to help you in ways you wouldn't expect. Now, I get to serve through Street Level Ministries and Believers Church Cebu by studying Scripture with fellow students and walking with them as we grow in faith together.

I am forever grateful to God for His patience and grace for me. He met me in my weakness, restored my faith, and placed me into the body where I belong. Today, I learned that obedience is not about convenience, and growth does not happen in isolation. I am thankful to God that He brought me where I am today, and for reminding me that a hand can only live and function when it is connected to the body of Christ.

Hans

WORD ON THE STREET

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Let me paint you a scenario: A woman makes a bean soup and shares the recipe on TikTok. Viewers go wild. It's vegan, cozy, and packed with iron. Save that recipe for later... but it doesn't take long until one commenter writes, "But what if I don't like beans?"

Internet breaks

And the Bean Soup Theory is born.

This isn't hypothetical. The Bean Soup Theory really exists. It was first posted in 2023 but recently resurfaced. It describes the social phenomenon we're living in these days – the days when someone can't simply scroll past a recipe they don't like. It calls attention to the absurdity of the self-centered expectation that every post must cater to your needs, and the ridiculousness of not being able to pass by what doesn't apply to you.

The phenomenon isn't exclusive to social media. Students on American university campuses seem to be getting more and more sensitive to situations where another person holds an opinion that is different from them. When they see a poster for an event held on their campus that they don't want to attend, some students can't just walk past that poster. They feel like the person who even suggested such an event must hate them... and they must retaliate.

In America, the idea of going to university used to mean expanding your horizons. Students were eager to open themselves up to new perspectives, ideas, and ways of living. University meant debating ways of thinking, and this debate only made students stronger. It produced mentally strong graduates who knew what they believed and could still enjoy a dinner with those who thought differently. Those days are seemingly gone.

In an ironic twist, today's "university" has effectively pushed aside divergent ideologies to line up behind a single school of thought, all in the name of inclusion. Although occasionally events are held to encourage competing perspectives, those beliefs are not protected in controversial day-to-day circumstances. Minority opinions are put into a position where they are forced to fight through marginalization, and even vandalism, to simply have a seat at the table. All voices welcome? I beg to differ.

Debates, and other discussions where competing perspectives are shared are no longer places where the average student feels comfortable. Instead, when a minority opinion is expressed and other students don't like it, they view it as hate speech and feel welcome to destroy property to show their distaste. This has happened repeatedly to the magazine you're holding throughout the years it has been produced.

"ARE WE OKAY WITH THE IDEA THAT THE BELIEFS OF SOME GROUPS CAN LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY BE THROWN IN THE GARBAGE?"



Last semester, multiple copies of our magazine (and the racks themselves) were found in the trash on the University of Wisconsin-Stout campus, torn in two. The covers were ripped and pasted to vandalize the poster of our campus ministry, Street Level, as well as the poster for an individual student advertising her senior art exhibition. Following the vandalism and a meeting with the Assistant Dean of Students (whom we met with last year when a similar issue happened), we filed a police report, however there is no resolution to this matter. It appears we have to wait for the next time an incident occurs to report it again.

We've fallen a long way from university being that eager exchange of ideas and expanding horizons. How did we get here? At what point should we be fearful that a ripped-up magazine will be replaced with something much more damaging? One professor at UW-River Falls, Trevor Tomesh, saw the same thing happening on his campus. He concluded that we have to get over the idea that expressing a different opinion is violent hate speech or an attack on people who hold a differing viewpoint. Tomesh made national news after publishing conservative comments on social media following the assassination of political activist, Charlie Kirk, at the Utah Valley University in Utah, United States in September 2025. Kirk frequently visited college campuses to engage in debate with students and challenge them to consider what they believed.

"The fact that Charlie was killed on a college campus for expressing his opinions and ideas—the one place in society that's sole purpose is to express opinions and ideas—should be a watershed moment for all universities," Tomesh wrote. "Every single member of every single university community— faculty, administrators, staff and students—should be lamenting this as it spells the death of the university."¹

Tomesh expressed his extreme concern—as we all should—that Kirk's death was celebrated by both faculty and students. Regardless of opinion, since when should murder be celebrated? Tomesh also stressed that Americans, students on college campuses especially, must unlearn the idea that speech itself is violence:

*"And that's one huge problem, I think, especially with the ideological progressives, is that they have taken an assumed identity, assumed ideas into part of their core identity," he said. "And that is a very big mistake, because then any attack on an idea inevitably is interpreted as an attack on your personal identity and on you as a person."*¹

UW-River Falls saw similar reactions when controversial TikTok preacher Sister Cindy Smock visited campus. The school offered counselors to students and according to Tomesh, "assembled a task force to determine how to handle people like Cindy and the trauma she inflicts on students."¹ The University of New Mexico had their own fun to deal with in 2022 when offended students pulled the fire alarm on conservative speaker Tomi Lahren in an attempt to shut the event down. Thankfully, the university took action to allow the speaker to finish in a safe manner, stating it would not tolerate students who violate the free expression of others.²

Every sub-group and individual has the right to hold to and express their own system of belief. In practice, the university system only seems to go out of their way to protect rights for the voices they agree with and are politically expedient. Many groups have the freedom to voice their opinions without fear of retaliation. Is it too much to ask for the Christians on campus to be given that same freedom? Or, are we okay with the idea that the beliefs of some groups can literally and figuratively be thrown in the garbage?

It feels appropriate to quote the Governor of Utah, Spencer Cox, in his message to Utah Valley students following the Charlie Kirk assassination:

*"Right now, it may feel like rage is the only language in our politics, but you have the power to choose differently. Every person you meet is more than a party, more than a label, more than a post online. Everyone deserves dignity and respect. That means talking to people you disagree with, listening even when it's hard, and forgiving even when it feels impossible. Campuses like yours must be a place of the free exchange of ideas. It's critical to our American experiment. I want to challenge you to spend less time online, where outrage has become so normal, and more time in the real world...You can build a culture where we embrace differences without letting hate divide us, where hope is stronger than cynicism, and where forgiveness breaks the cycle of violence."*³

So, are we really at the death of university? We sure hope not. We hope we can be one voice of many heard on our campuses, standing up for the truth we believe in, just like everyone else. We're not trying to "convert" anybody against their will. We're asking for a fair seat at the table to allow those who want to join us, to join us. To silence us is to take away the opportunity for those who actually want to challenge their own thinking, swim upstream, and to live radically for Jesus. We won't remain quiet for their sake.

¹ foxnews.com/us/wisconsin-professor-slams-isolating-environment-conservatives-campus
² thefire.org/news/fire-commends-university-new-mexico-its-response-disruption-tomi-lahren-event
³ attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/a-message-from-governor-spencer-cox/



“GOD CARES WHO WE SLEEP WITH BECAUSE HE CARES DEEPLY ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DOING THE SLEEPING.”

Why does God care who I sleep with?

SAM ALLBERRY

For many, the Christian views on sex—and specifically what the Bible teaches about it—seem outdated at best and legalistic at worst. In his book, Sam Allberry seeks to address the issues of sexuality from a biblical standpoint, helping readers—Christian or not—understand God’s design for sexual union.

Far from writing a book that’s out of touch with today’s world, Allberry instead addresses many modern-day issues that revolve around sexuality. He doesn’t shy away from addressing hard topics such as abuse, consent, and homosexuality. In addressing such, he proves that sexuality matters to us all. “If #MeToo has shown us anything, it is that our sexuality matters profoundly. Its violation leads to the deepest emotional and psychological damage, quite apart from the physical scars it leaves” and “...the pain of sexual assault is not the pain of a grazed knee but the trauma of holy space being desecrated. Maybe our bodies are less like playthings and more like temples.”

Critics may chastise Christians for being too restrictive about sexual morals, but Allberry points out that all people—including critics—place restrictions on sexual behavior. He says, “What is distinctive about the Christian understanding of sexual ethics, then, is not the presence of boundaries but where those boundaries are located and for what reason.” For the Christian, the boundaries are coherent and unchanging, whereas the boundaries of our cultural code are constantly changing.

The heart of the book explains what sex is for. More than just a mere “passage of fluids,” it is a deeply sacred and unifying act (which, by the way, was God’s idea, not ours). Allberry writes, “Sex is God’s appointed way for two people to reciprocally say to one another, ‘I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you.’” He goes on to explain, “sex is fundamentally about giving, and about giving our whole self to someone.” The Bible’s design for sex is not at all prudish. For the Christian, it is deeply sacred, and therefore highly honored.

The final two chapters tie it all together with an explanation of the bigger and better story behind our sexuality, further explaining why sex is so sacred for the Christian. “God has given us this whole dimension in life—making us sexual beings and giving us this instinct towards lifelong partnership—precisely to point us to the deeper and greater reality of his covenant love for us in Christ.”

Allberry carefully walks the reader through the grand story of the Bible—that God has prepared His people, the Church, as a bride for their bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Marriage and romantic fulfillment are just shadows of this greater reality. “We sense there is something profound and meaningful that is meant to be discovered...but rather than seeing it as a sign of something greater, we mistake it for the reality itself.”

Ultimately, the pulse that runs through the veins of the entire book is this: “God cares who we sleep with because he cares deeply about the people who are doing the sleeping.”



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A muscular guy, a fancy car, sipping a drink by the pool, not a care in the world. “This simple trick will earn you MILLIONS!” We all know the type: overly enthusiastic, talking way too fast, seeming to have way too much money. Usually, you just scroll past, but maybe not this time. The lure of a secret “they” who don’t want you to know might pull you in, only for you to be bombarded with their latest crypto scheme or drop shipping strategy. You think, I could do that. I’m wasting all this time; instead of sitting around, I could be making some passive income. *I should find a side hustle.* After all, it seems like everyone is always “grinding”, running five businesses from their phones while going to school and working their normal jobs. Suddenly, your part-time job or even your full course load feels lazy. Outdated.

Everywhere we turn, we’re told that our classes and homework or our 9-to-5 isn’t enough. The message is clear: if you’re not making money while you sleep, you’re behind. Culture now celebrates “the grind” and rewards hustle over rest, output over character. Even hobbies have been rebranded as monetizable assets. You can’t just like baking; you need to open a cookie business. You can’t just take photos; you need a content strategy.

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

What started as creative outlets or a way to earn some extra gas money has become the focus. The side hustle is no longer just an opportunity; it’s an expectation. And if you’re not hustling? You’re falling behind. You’re wasting your potential. But this pursuit is often fueled by something darker than ambition: anxiety. Insecurity. A belief that we’re not enough unless we’re producing more; more income, more success, more status. It’s the modern version of a get-rich-quick scheme, except now it’s dressed up with lifestyle posts and productivity podcasts.

Not all side hustles stay innocent. The desire to make “just a little more” money can lead down dangerous roads. We’ve seen people turn to gambling apps, convinced that a lucky streak could solve their problems. Others open OnlyFans accounts, telling themselves it’s “just online” and “empowering,” but quietly feeling more and more detached from their true worth.

This isn’t about demonizing the idea of working hard. It’s about recognizing when the pursuit of “more” becomes a slippery slope toward compromising your faith for wealth. When the goal becomes money, we’ve crossed a line. And make no mistake, society won’t stop you. It’ll cheer you on the whole way down.

AMBITION OR OBSESSION?

The Bible doesn’t mention drop shipping or crypto, but it does talk about people who weren’t content with an honest job and shifted to dishonest gain. Consider the tax collectors. In Jesus’ time, these men had a side hustle; they skimmed extra money off the top for themselves. Zacchaeus, for example, wasn’t just unpopular because he collected taxes; he was despised because he took more than was fair. He profited at the expense of others. After meeting Jesus, he gave it all up and even gave back the money he stole.

Jesus didn’t condemn ambition, but He consistently warned about the love of money. He knew the dangers of chasing wealth. In Matthew 6:24, He says, “You cannot serve both God and money.” Jesus wasn’t against work, He was against greed. The side hustle becomes dangerous not because of what it is, but because of what it reveals: a heart that wants control, status, or security outside of God.

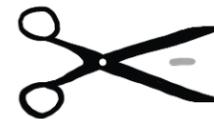
So, does God want you to have a side hustle? Ask yourself first, why do you want one? If it’s to provide for your needs, fund your education, or use your gifts responsibly, there’s wisdom in that. But if it’s about greed, envy, or fear of missing out, that’s a red flag. God calls us to steward our time and our talents with purpose, not the pursuit of worldly riches. Side hustles are a selfish act; God calls us to use the time we would spend to instead serve others.

Instead of chasing “the secret they don’t want you to know,” maybe the real secret is this: you don’t need to be doing more, you need to trust more. Trust that God sees you. Trust that He will provide. You don’t have to feel like you are falling behind, even if your hands aren’t constantly searching for money. The hustle will always promise more, but it will never be enough.

SATIRE

Build A BIBLE

CHURCH LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE
STORE OFFERING A CHANCE TO GIVE
THE GOSPEL A GLOW-UP



JERUSALEM - The Church of Our Changing Lord has unveiled its latest initiative: the Build-A-Bible store, a new concept designed to allow parishioners to create personalized versions of the Bible tailored to their individual beliefs and preferences.

The store offers visitors a wide range of covers at very competitive prices. Classic choices such as navy blue, a leathery black, and striking red are available, as well as less conventional designs such as patriotic flags and many colored rainbows. Simon, a frequent customer and amateur magician, had this to say about his cover choice. “I felt that paying a little extra to get a picture of myself on the front and back was well worth it. I mean, who else would I rather look at?”

Once the exterior is chosen, customers are invited to personalize the contents of their Bible. Build-A-Bible allows individuals to rearrange, highlight, or even remove sections of scripture. Some opt for condensed versions that omit challenging passages, like the idea of sin, repentance, or the entire Old Testament. Others emphasize certain themes or add new messages of their own. At Build-A-Bible, all dogs go to heaven.

In addition to biblical text, the store encourages the inclusion of quotations from contemporary figures and authors. Examples range from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Joseph Smith to the whimsical rhymes of Dr. Seuss, blending traditional religious content with modern voices. An employee, who preferred to remain nameless, offered us this



insight: “Nowhere in the Bible does it say it needs to be boring. Or at least nowhere in my Bible.”

The customization experience concludes with an interactive feature: each Bible can be enchanted to repeat a chosen affirmation when opened. Suggested phrases include, “I am enough, just as I am,” and “I trust in my own judgment and choices; I am the authority in my life.” Organizers say this element is intended to provide encouragement and a sense of empowerment to readers that traditional Bibles just can’t provide.

Church leaders describe the Build-A-Bible store as a way to make faith more accessible and personally curated. “We don’t just want people to feel ownership of their spiritual journey,” Saul, a pastor at Our Changing Lord, explained, “We want them to really know they can do whatever they want.”

At publishing time, the number of customized Bibles sold has nearly surpassed the original Bible’s lofty 7 billion. Owners prepare to expand the franchise as word spreads, noting that several visitors expressed plans to return to their original church and “help them get with the times.”

Update: Build-A-Bible was deemed heretical and shut down by the greater church. Although including “Salvation Not Included” in small print on every one of their covers, the fabricated Bibles remained controversial, with critics calling it a dangerous distortion of the sacred text. In the aftermath, experts recommend going back to simply ignoring the parts you don’t like.



SOCIAL CONTAGION

STANDING YOUR GROUND IN THE AGE OF GROUP THINK

Why is everyone suddenly saying the same thing, whether it's an annoying catchphrase like "6-7" or a trending slogan like #MondayMotivation plastered across social media? How is it that one idea or perspective can be so quickly spread and adopted by a whole generation? It's like a "social contagion" where the latest trend now infects us similar to an infectious disease. Now when we hear someone counting and they hit the numbers between 5 and 8, a jolt of recognition goes through our heads. This phenomenon is not new, but it is more powerful than ever in our hyperconnected age.

Sometimes we forget that social media didn't always exist, but our great, great, great, great grandparents didn't learn what to believe from their phones. During the 17th century, Europe and other parts of the world witnessed the height of the infamous witch trials, an era marked by fear, superstition, and the persecution of alleged witches. These events were fueled by a phenomenon known as *mass hysteria*, where collective panic and irrational beliefs spread rapidly through communities. Looking back, it's hard to believe that anyone, let alone nearly everyone, would consider these ridiculous claims true. This disease, infecting everyone's mind, is still present today, but it doesn't look like a burning witch.

THE SPREAD OF SOCIAL CONTAGION IN A HYPERCONNECTED WORLD

Now, instead of the town crier, it's algorithms that show people only what they want to see, only what they will agree with. After all, we wouldn't want to view something that disagrees with us. The constant stream of biased data creates a perceived universal agreement on the "right way to think" in our minds, taking away our ability to think critically against it. Why would we? All the information we see supports this ideal viewpoint. The truth isn't fact; it's whatever is shouted the loudest.

These algorithms infect our minds. What might start as an intrusive thought in our head, "*What if this person is a witch?*" gets supported, agreed with, and built upon. No longer are our incorrect views just that, incorrect. Now they spread and grow, until everyone is burning imaginary witches. Psychologists call this kind of collective delusion a *psychic epidemic*, a rapid spread of shared beliefs, emotions, or behaviors that override individual judgment and sweep through a population like a mental virus. It's not that each person independently arrives at the same conclusion; it's that the group's emotional momentum becomes more powerful than reason itself.

"THE CHALLENGE TO OUR AGE IS NOT THE LACK OF INFORMATION, BUT THE COURAGE TO QUESTION IT...THINKING BEFORE BELIEVING BECOMES A RADICAL ACT."

Consider the rising trend of self-diagnosing. Jai Ahuja, a doctor of psychiatry, has this to say: "While traditional media has often been criticized for villainizing characters with mental illness, the new-age social media depiction of mental illness carries with it a sense of 'creative mystique' - painting mental illness with a glorified aesthetic in segments of society exposed to such media."4 Issues that were once seen as medical problems to be fixed are now being encouraged and glorified.

Many Gen Z students seem to not only be sad if they don't have a mental illness, but actively try to seek one out. In many cases, they simply make it up. A report by The Intake, a medical research company, found that nearly one-third of Gen Z has diagnosed themselves with a mental illness based on things they saw on social media.5 Take a step back and think about it. It's ridiculous.

To see an example of another present-day social contagion, let's look at a report by Eric Kaufmann, a professor at the University of Buckingham. He wrote about the change in how students perceive their own identity over the past couple of years. Most believe that the increase in non-standard identities is due to Gen Z being more comfortable showing who they really are. But this isn't what the study found. In the last two years, the number of students identifying with non-heterosexual identities has been cut in half. Kaufmann found the reduction wasn't "the result of a shift to the right, the return of religion or a rejection of woke culture war attitudes."1 Instead, as students have improved their mental health, reducing cases of depression and anxiety, they have also gone back to their born-with identities. In a second report, Kaufmann found that if you picked out a transgender student in the last five years, the following three things are most likely to be true: they identify as non-religious, they identify as having anxiety or depression, and the year is 2022. His research revealed that "2022 and 2023 were peak years for trans identification."2

This doesn't point towards a cultural revival where people are finally free to be themselves. It points towards a social contagion preying on the depressed and anxious, spiking when it was at the forefront of social media and cultural discourse. When Chloe Cole, a former transgender individual who transitioned back, looks at what she had done she had this to say, "I have some social, cognitive, and sensory processing differences that made school and going through

puberty a little more difficult. All things considered, these struggles were normal but were misrepresented as problems connected to gender."3 Not, "I really thought I was meant to be a man", but that normal struggles were being misrepresented as a problem connected to her gender.

So what makes this different from the mass hysteria of the past? Knowledge, both true and fabricated, moves faster than it did 400 years ago. Social media algorithms, curated news streams, and personalized podcasts feed us information. Correctness and accuracy are not a priority; instead, virality and shareability are the focus. If someone will click on it, it's posted, and the world sees it. You may think this trend increases the number of different ideas people see, but it's actually quite the opposite. It's an echo chamber constantly affirming our beliefs and priorities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THINKING FOR YOURSELF

This contagion is of our own making. We trap ourselves in echo chambers that repeat our absurd thoughts until we believe they are the truth. We need to break out of the mold. If it isn't social media, then it's our peers. It's amazing how quickly people adopt a friend's opinion on ethics, politics, or morality just to "fit in." There is a subtle yet persistent pressure to conform. It is simply easier to "go along to get along" than to voice a different opinion. Most of the time, it isn't even a conscious decision, but a willingness to take the easiest option. Simply going with the flow, believing what the crowd does. Surely, we think, they can't be wrong.

What used to be personal responsibility has been replaced with a label, an identity, that spreads from person to person like an emotional virus. If everyone else has a disorder to point to, then we feel we need one too. It becomes a socially transmitted explanation, a way to belong, a way to avoid accountability. This is not compassion; it is another sign of infection.

Ultimately, the challenge of our age is not the lack of information but the courage to question it. In a world where lies spread faster than truth, thinking before believing becomes a radical act. We must learn to pause before we share, to think before we agree, and to seek wisdom beyond the echo chambers of our feeds. History reminds us that collective belief can be disastrously wrong, and technology has only amplified that risk. The responsibility to resist blind conformity falls on each of us, not just for our own integrity but for the health of the people around us.

A PSYCHIC EPIDEMIC IS

"the rapid spread of symptoms or beliefs through a population without an underlying physical or infectious cause, often leading to collective hysteria, mass psychogenic illness, or mass psychosis. These events are typically driven by psychological and social factors, where nervous system disturbances or unconscious emotions spread contagiously, causing a group to share physical complaints or adopt a shared delusion or irrational behavior."

Eric Kaufmann (1)heterodoxcentre.com/research/chss-report-no-5/, (2) heterodoxcentre.com/research/chss-report-no-6-why-red-state-and-trump-policies-do-not-explain-trans-decline/
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Jai Ahuja (4) pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11032084/#:~:text=Abstract,illness%20on%20social%20media%20platforms.
Liana Redshaw (5) tebra.com/theintake/medical-deep-dives/tips-and-trends/is-self-diagnosis-on-social-media-helping-or-hurting-peoples-health



Light in a DARK PLACE

A MISSIONARY'S PERSPECTIVE ON LIVING FOR JESUS

Thanks to Google Meet, two of us members of Street Level Ministries USA got to sit down virtually with Annemieke Roering, a missionary through Youth with a Mission (YWAM) Amsterdam, Netherlands. Annemieke and her team build relationships with the men and women working in prostitution in the red-light district. With an afternoon coffee in our hands and an evening tea in hers, we chatted about life and what it's like serving God an ocean apart.

Before we get started, we want to make something clear (and we know Annemieke would agree with us): Annemieke is not special. Being a missionary is not a higher calling. Anyone truly seeking to follow God can (and ultimately will) live a grand adventure, a story worth telling at the end of your life. This is just one story of someone who discovered God and lets Him do whatever He wants with her life – and it has been good. The same can be true of you, whatever that might look like. We hope this article inspires you to stop and dream a little.

Annemieke grew up with Christian parents, but over time began to question if God was real. She thought maybe if she was raised in a Muslim family, she would believe in Allah. She remembers praying and asking God if He existed and to let her know. She woke up the next morning with a confidence that He was there, but it took time to understand what it looked like to "have a relationship with Jesus." She remembers being 19 and going through a difficult time, feeling like God loved everybody but her. But then she had a personal encounter with Him.

"It was like I had always heard about Him and now finally I met Him in Person. The very next morning I was ready to go into

missions. I wanted to share with everybody that God is not a God who is far away, but that He is close and involved in our lives and deeply cares about us. I very much felt I wanted to go out specifically to people who live on the edge of society, who might have a lot of lies about who they are and who God is."

Annemieke began her work in the red-light district in 2004 through YWAM Amsterdam, saying she doesn't remember having any fears. "My room wasn't ready when I arrived. It was used as storage, but I didn't care! I was just happy to be there and serve Jesus. I had given up my apartment, my work, my car, everything, but I was so happy that I finally was able to work full-time in ministry, to do what I felt the Lord was calling me."

A typical day of outreach for the YWAM Amsterdam staff means going out in pairs with coffee and tea to connect with the prostitutes in the windows. "Usually, one of us is praying while the other person talks to the person behind the window. Sometimes we get offered to come inside, other times we don't. Sometimes it's only talking about what we did that weekend."

As one would imagine, Annemieke has had both highs and lows throughout her time in the red-light district. She's been able to witness many wanting to know about Jesus after years of living this lifestyle, proving we are never too far gone for God to find, forgive, and use us.

"My mountain-top moments have been the times where I have seen people understanding who Jesus really is and then seeing them taking one step closer to Him. I often pray for the revelation of Jesus for other people because when I encountered Him personally, it really changed my life."

"NOT MANY LIVE THIS WAY. BUT THE ONES WHO DO ARE THE ONES THAT GET TO THE END OF THEIR LIVES AND SAY, "I WOULD DO IT ALL AGAIN..."

There's no way we could cover 20 years of ministry in one article, but that isn't the reason we're writing anyway. We're here to say that God has a plan for your life, and it's a good one. When asked what she wants to say to the next generation seeking to follow God, Annemieke said:

"If you have questions or doubts, don't hesitate to confront them and take them to the Lord. We all have no idea of how deeply we are loved by Him. When you are confronted with sin in your life, realize that He loves you in your sin. He still calls it sin and He wants it out of your life, not to punish you, but because He does not want your sin to harm you, which it always does in the end. If there is one thing that I learned in all my years in the red-light district, it is that sin is enormously destructive, yet we are all still loved by Him in our sin."

Even though God loves as we are, she says that our faith in Jesus will prompt us into action to physically serve Him. "It's possible that you're just showing up in church, but you're not actually living with God. You can talk the talk and pretend to walk the walk, but in the end, we need to ask ourselves: Where are we really with God? And it's not based on our actions; it's based on our personal relationship with Him. If we say we believe in God and we walk with Him, but then there's no outlet in our lives, what is really happening then?"

Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24, NKJV). We might read Annemieke's story and think, "She's a missionary. Of course she had to give up everything." But here Jesus is saying that anyone who wants to follow Him is to give up how they want to live their life. If you want to follow God, it's going to require you to be willing to give up everything. It might not be your car and your apartment (although it might be), but every decision you make is now run past God: *Should I be in this major, God? Do you want me to date this person? Should I take this job?* Not many live this way. But the ones who do are the ones that get to the end of their lives and say, "I would do it all again..."

The reason so many of us don't give up everything for God is because, deep down, we don't believe that where He's taking us is actually good or what we want. Annemieke was able to set her own plans aside because she trusted God. She knew He had her back. She loved Him and wanted to put herself in a position to see Him, be with Him, and serve Him. And because of that, she is living out what she was made for.

If you're scared about what He might ask you to do with your life, you're in good company. We asked Annemieke what she would say to someone that is afraid to give up everything for God.

"For me, moving and giving it all up wasn't a sacrifice. It was a privilege. I had been waiting desperately for four years before I could finally move into missions. Some people are more aware of consequences. They'll count the cost, then go through the process of saying yes to that. And Jesus asks us to do that! He said to the people, does anybody ever build a tower without thinking what are the costs [Luke 14:28]? What I do know is that God really honors sacrifice."

God's plan for your life is good. That's the truth, no matter how you feel about it. Do you love God? Do you want to follow Him? If so, you'll give up anything so the people around you can know Him too.

SPRING SUMMIT
SATURDAY,
MARCH 28, 2026

You are invited!

Annemieke will be speaking at Street Level Ministries' Spring Summit in Wisconsin. Join us to learn more about what it means to follow God.



VISIT OUR SOCIALS FOR EVENT DETAILS.



“Find your life-changing energy!” “Create a truly unique academic path that’s designed around your goals – no matter what they are!” “Advance the science and application of meaning and purpose in life!” If you thought these declarations were from a wilderness wellness retreat, you would be forgiven for getting the wrong impression. No, these are from the website of a publicly funded university in Fort Collins: Colorado State University (CSU). The whole school oozes its brand of finding yourself with every click. They’re honestly smart and savvy because it’s working. Their marketing strategy is laser-focused on tapping into the angst of young people pondering a vital crossroads in their life.

Unless they’re a total anarchist, those leaving behind high school are generally consumed with figuring out what they’re supposed to do next. It’s not just the “what” either. It’s also figuring out the meaning behind it. Why am I here? What’s the point of all this? “Purpose anxiety” is a term coined in 2014 that speaks to the gnawing sense that you have a purpose in life, but it’s unclear how to discover it. The advice to “find your purpose” is so ingrained and widespread that, instead of being inspirational, it can feel burdensome and even paralyzing.

According to Todd Kasdan, a professor at George Mason University and founder of its Well-Being Laboratory, purpose should not be thought of as something that governs your behavior. He says it should be a like a compass you choose to follow that helps you “direct your energies toward a central life aim.” A sense of purpose can help “close that gap between who you are and what you ideally want to become,” he said. Sounds nice, right? But there’s a problem with this sentiment. It’s all focused on you. That 3-letter word is where we’re going to peel off from the narrative you might have expected. If finding your purpose is all about you, then you’re going to miss it.

THE PROBLEM WITH GOING IT ALONE

Imagine you’re an actor without a plan and you spend the entire performance flipping through different scripts. There’s an entire stack of options in front of you, yet you’re having a terrible time choosing. You know that once you do, you have to commit to the bit. Grabbing the first one off the top, you mumble a few lines from a play about “Living Off the Grid” but let it fall to the floor and try reading a scene from “Being an Influencer” instead. Next is a rather thick script called “Endless Education.” You drop that one in a flash and try “Bucket List Challenge” instead. Any audience member viewing this spectacle would be confused by the spectacle they’re witnessing.

“IF FINDING YOUR PURPOSE IS ALL ABOUT YOU, THEN YOU’RE GOING TO MISS IT.”

Just like a play has a central story with all the actors having a part, every one of us is part of a larger story where we have a role to play. But you have to be looking at the right source and playing your part from the same material.

It’s daunting to attempt to figure out your unique direction in a world brimming with opportunities, all while grappling with the logistics and barriers that inevitably crop up. Like flipping through endless scripts, we try different things, but nothing works. Everything costs money, sleep is necessary, and everybody we encounter has competing theories about what you should be doing with your life. Plus, there’s this marching drumbeat of death. We are anxious because underneath it all, we have no control.

This aching pressure to figure it all out makes us react in a few different ways. It’s very common to give up and go with the flow. That’s why you’ll see most people subscribe to the “normie” life, exclusively seeking education, marriage, kids, house, retirement. These people are chameleons who morph and conform to live like everyone else. Even though it could be a very busy and outwardly successful life, it will still be empty.

Another group of people throw everything at the wall to figure out what sticks. They’ll say yes to as many wild adventures as they can, seeking a network of influential people and collecting as many experiences as possible. As exciting as a life like that could be (for a while at least), people who are “living large” will crash and burn at the end, like Anthony Bourdain. He was a globetrotting celebrity, chef, author, and travel documentarian, who killed himself in a hotel room at the height of his fame. Still others will purposely be subversive. Whatever the flow of society dictates, they’ll seek to do the opposite, living as far outside of the confines of it as possible. “It’s all meaningless, so I’m going to do what I want.” This is bad too.

TRADING IN YOUR FANTASIES

Maybe you’re seeing yourself in one of these buckets. So here’s the bucket of cold water: outside of God, you’ll never find your purpose. If you want to disentangle yourself from solving the

impossible formula of figuring life out, seek God. If you do, you’ll find that people may find you very strange indeed, but you’ll also discover that this life is much more wild and beautiful than you could have ever dreamt up. It becomes like a full orchestra with every musician playing their instruments in harmony with one another. If that sounds too cliché, you’re getting in your own way again.

Many people believe finding their purpose hinges on their wants, aspirations, and dreams, but it actually hinges on trading in your fantasies for the assignment you were born for. The only way to find it is to surrender to the greater story, God’s story. It’s believing that not only is it possible to step into the role and destination ascribed to you from the beginning, it’s mandatory. By fitting into that spot designed for you by God, you can finally realize what you’re in search of: peace, contentment, and satisfaction.

Everyone has purpose anxiety because deep within our souls we’re aching to find our place. When we insist on going our own way, that anxiety deepens and manifests itself in ways that can never be fulfilling. Before you can ever discover what you were made for and find true joy, you must come to the point of surrender to the God who knew you before you were born.

YOUR UNEXPECTED PURPOSE

Don’t get stuck thinking this will all play out like some perfect performance. Living out your purpose is never linear or neat. Even Jesus spent His twenties laboring as a carpenter before He stepped out into the gritty work of ministry. The musician doesn’t suddenly pop up playing first chair in the cello section out of nowhere. There were a lot of twists and turns, years of training and hard work, and a necessity to hang tight when it got hard.

On top of all that, they have the freedom to drop out any time and go solo. But if they do, the conductor will just find someone else. God’s song and story will play out no matter what your participation looks like. You can continue to try and defy the odds and scabble together a life that gives you some semblance of purpose, or you can surrender and play the song together with other people who are also following their purpose.

Surrendering to God is that elusive key you’ve been searching for. That aching knot in your stomach when you think about your future dissolves when you go, “You know what? This isn’t working.” Your purpose is still uniquely “you,” but it’s not yours anymore. It’s for your joy, for the conductor’s joy, and for anyone else who catches a glimpse of this strange band and chooses to also turn from their wandering ways to join in. Your purpose is discovering the very niche spot and role God made you to play, and playing it as expressively and in sync as you possibly can.

“And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

“You can make many plans, but the Lord’s purpose will prevail.” (Proverbs 19:21)

CONFESSIONS OF A FORMER SOCIAL-MEDIAHOLIC

AN ORIGINAL
ARTICLE BY THE
GOSPEL COALITION
(WRITTEN BY
TANNER KUNZ)



My name is Tanner, I'm 26 years old, and I'm a former social-mediaholic. I've been sober now for nearly six years, and I'm not turning back.

My story isn't radical. I got my first smartphone in middle school, right around the time the major social media and video game platforms were exploding in popularity. YouTube videos, Xbox servers, Snapchat streaks, and Instagram feeds were my escape from hardships in life. My family had its share of strife, and I had my own struggles, so avoiding reality through digital means quickly became second nature.

Yet I had a growing sense of loneliness and shame. I didn't know how to get out of the digital world. I didn't know if it was even possible.

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

After I came to know Christ, things slowly began to change. God provided a covering for my sin, guilt, and shame. Despite this, I kept returning to the digital world to try to ease the immediate pain.

Yet my spirit wouldn't settle, and I realized my covering was a fig leaf in comparison to what God provided. A few months after entering college, I needed to take a break. I deleted some of the more troublesome apps and tried to move forward. But over time, my motivation would wear down, and I'd redownload the apps to see what I'd missed.

Each time I entered back in, I opened myself up to a host of temptations and would backslide again. I repeated this cycle for nearly two years.

FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

It wasn't until I was desperate for change that I made the radical, inconceivable choice for a Gen Zer like me—I deleted all my social media accounts.

That's right. Not just the apps, but my profiles too. Completely gone.

I took another vulnerable, yet crucial, step in asking my roommate to put a password

“GOD HAS KINDLY WORKED TO RID ME OF MY DEPENDENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. IN THE SIX YEARS SINCE, I’VE NOTICED I SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY. LIGHT IS BRIGHTER. TREES ARE MORE INTRICATE. SQUIRRELS ARE MORE HYSTERICAL. SIN IS MORE BITTER. CHRIST IS SWEETER.”

on my settings to keep me from downloading anything again. This was humbling and restricting, and it may sound like slavery to you. To me, it was freedom. God was opening my eyes to a whole new reality.

Even though I was afraid I'd miss out on staying up to date, there was plenty of life to live right in front of me. It turns out FOMO starts to evaporate when you aren't aware of what you're missing out on! With new time on my hands, I was able to focus on my assignments and be more attentive to my relationship with Christ and my friends. And man, it was invigorating.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

As more research has come out, I've retrospectively understood what was going on in my heart and mind.

Social media isn't a neutral medium designed for social connection but rather a massive profit-based industry built on the human desire for connection and entertainment. More specifically, the industry is built on the brain's release of a pleasure hormone, dopamine, in response to the search for and fulfillment of these desires.

It's an effective cycle. The prolonged attention that people give to social media then becomes the product other companies try to buy. Dopamine is the perfect building block for making money. So what's the harm? Is there a problem with providing enjoyable experiences and, in turn, making money? Not necessarily. What's harmful is the intended effect on the user: addiction.

In his recent article, Patrick Miller compares social media companies to Las Vegas—a model of addictive entertainment. When I was growing up, my grandma owned a toy slot machine that was one of my favorite toys. It was lower risk and lower

reward than a casino slot machine—but you still pulled a lever and waited nervously to see if you'd win.

It didn't take a massive reward to get me hooked. All it took was endless opportunities to hit the jackpot, repeatable behavior in pulling the lever, and an unpredictable outcome. And that's what social media companies have replicated with their technology.

KNOWING BETTER

Knowing this, why do we still approach social media not only as a neutral medium for connection but also as a positive outlet for dealing with life's difficulties? Why do we entrust our vulnerable selves to an attention-hijacking, addiction-prone system?

Sure, maybe it provides some sense of immediate relief, but can we all be honest for a minute? Social media isn't fixing our problems. It's making them worse. Often, we find refuge in a pleasurable retreat rather than in the true comforter and pleasure-giving God who is willing and able to help.

HOPE

God has kindly worked to rid me of my dependence on social media. In the six years since, I've noticed I see things differently. Light is brighter. Trees are more intricate. Squirrels are more hysterical. Sin is more bitter. Christ is sweeter.

And while I may not be able to talk knowingly about the latest trends, I pray that I can speak about important things with depth and authenticity that will be obvious to others. I pray that because of my social-media-free life I'm more available to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. I pray that I'm more humble, more kind, and more thoughtful. I pray that I'm more like Christ.

Friend, if God can do this in my life, I'm convinced he can do it in yours. There's nothing special about me. Social media was stealing from my life. My addiction was trapping me in a worship war, and it seemed like the screen was always going to win.

But social media is no match for God.

If social media is making life worse and rendering you less useful for the kingdom, consider ridding yourself of it—maybe even forever. From one recovering mediaholic to another, it's hard, but it's so worth it.

“WE FIND REFUGE IN A PLEASURABLE RETREAT RATHER THAN IN THE TRUE COMFORTER AND PLEASURE-GIVING GOD.”

WHICH *Disney* ADULT ARE YOU?

DON'T WANT TO GROW UP? WELL, YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE TO!



ANSWER THE QUESTIONS, TALLY YOUR POINTS, AND DISCOVER YOUR RESULTS!

HOW WOULD YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM THAT GETS THROWN YOUR WAY?

- 1 Consider multiple methods and outcomes to give the smartest solutions. Stats don't lie!
- 2 Ask one of my homies to help out. They got most things figured out, so why not?
- 3 Wait for it to go away, then get around to it if I HAVE to, but I'm taking someone with me.
- 4 Call my parents until they come over and fix it. What? They're good with stuff!

YOU KNOW YOU NEED TO DROP THAT TOXIC LOVER. HOW DO YOU TACKLE IT?

- 1 Toxic? No. Me and my honey complete each other!
- 2 My friends don't love 'em but they support my decision. I suppose we could work on things.
- 3 Just give me some time. I can change my booboo!
- 4 I literally can't stand them, and my family hates them, but they're cute so it's okay.

YOUR FRIEND JUST DINGED YOUR BUMPER WHILE MOVING YOUR CAR. WYD?

- 1 Accidents happen. That's what insurance is for!
- 2 Probably just leave it like that, it's ugly, but still works the same.
- 3 Oh CRAP. Let me ask my parents. I bet they have the money to fix it!
- 4 It's my mom's car LMAO. Whatever. Let's go. My pickup order is waiting!

BE HONEST, HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SCROLL ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

- 1 Hours? Maybe 1 hour per day checking on current events.
- 2 Maybe a couple. I have to fall asleep and wake up somehow!
- 3 A few. I like to be in touch with reality! Can't be unc status!
- 4 Six or seven

SOMEONE BUMPS INTO YOU AND MAKES YOU DROP YOUR THINGS. WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

- 1 Gather my things and excuse myself. Accidents happen!
- 2 Sigh, grab my things, shoot a look, and walk away.
- 3 "Oh my gosh really? I'm walkin' here!" I say as I grab my things and mumble obscenities.
- 4 Return the favor and knock their stuff down. Oh, now you can see me?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU FIGHT FOR IMPROVEMENT?

- 1 I often seek opportunities, even when difficult, to help better my character. Iron sharpens iron.
- 2 I don't seek trials, but if I see that it's for the better, I'll try it!
- 3 I avoid conflict if at all possible. I admit it feels good to overcome things sometimes.
- 4 I prefer zero friction. Don't threaten my comfortability!

YOUR DORM IS TOO EXPENSIVE AND YOU'RE NOT MOVING BACK HOME. HOW ARE YOU GONNA MOVE?

- 1 Put a down payment on a house and move in. Thanks to my 800 credit score!
- 2 Look around for apartments and have my parents co-sign.
- 3 I think my friends have a house together. Maybe I could get in there.
- 4 Don't have to move back into my parents if I never left!

HOW MUCH DO YOU MAKE YOUR VOICE KNOWN ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

- 1 None. Nobody needs to know my business!
- 2 Important things. Birthdays, anniversaries, new puppies. I like to spread love!
- 3 Pretty often. My followers like to know what I'm doing at least weekly. We're like a family!
- 4 If my besties don't see me post they better call me an ambulance!

WHAT IS YOUR POST BEAUTY-SLEEP ROUTINE?

- 1 Turn my alarm off and head out. Time is money!
- 2 Press snooze, scroll, and throw on some clothes.
- 3 Fall back asleep. Whoops!!
- 4 Class isn't online? That's too bad. Good thing it's my parents' tuition fund!

AFTER COLLEGE, HOW DO YOU INTEND ON PAYING FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE?

- 1 Pay for what I need with money I have. Debt is not fun!
- 2 Finance a nice car and house, but stay away from credit cards. They're a slippery slope.
- 3 Just put it on my credit card. If I don't see the debt, it isn't really there. Right?
- 4 Oh, I don't pay for anything. I use the card my parents gave me. Free and easy life, here I come!

RESULTS

10-16: I WOULD SAY YOU'RE PRETTY SAFE FROM BECOMING A DISNEY ADULT.

Much like the Princess Tiana you're indirectly paired with, you like to have all your ducks in a row with a clear direction on where said ducks are going. You're also not afraid of some hard work to get where you need or want to be. Good on you!

17-24: HERE WE CAN SEE A MIDDLE GROUND OF RESPONSIBLE, BUT WITH SOME SLIGHT FLAWS SPRINKLED IN.

You definitely have the DRIVE of someone who can get things done, but much like Lightning McQueen, you have some developing to go through before you're fully there. Good ethics and character, just some Disney adult quirks thrown in. Not bad!

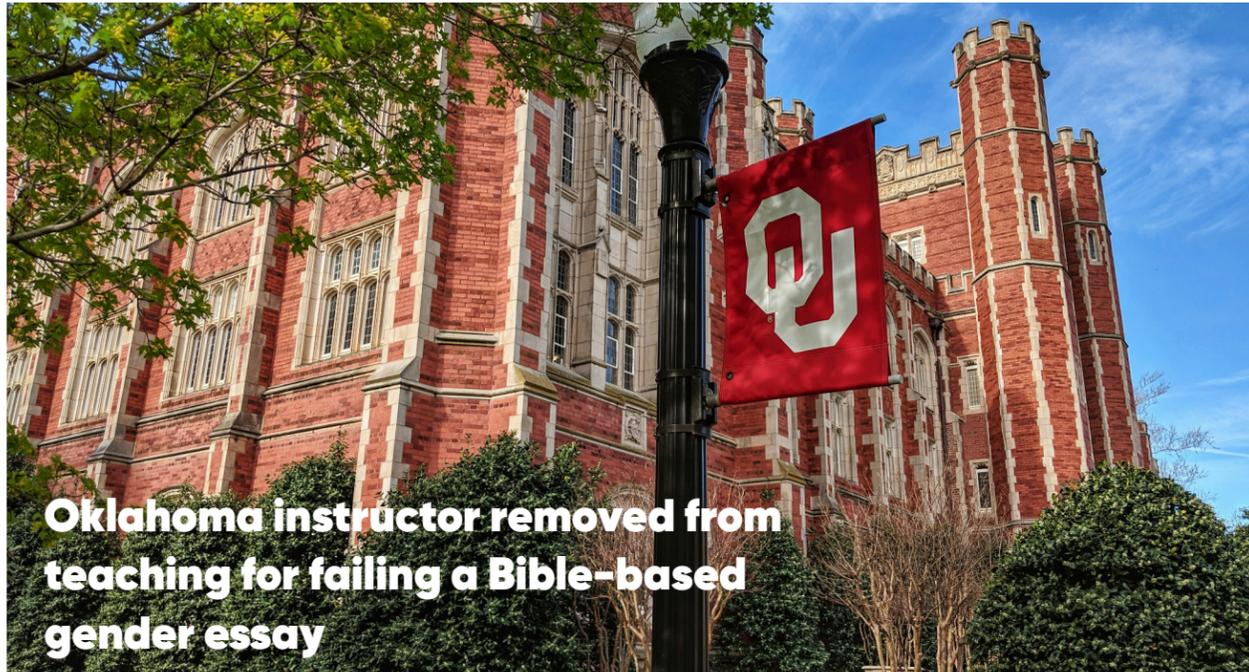
25-33: THIS IS WHERE THINGS GET A LITTLE SCARY.

We've gone from mostly having our things together to most of our things falling apart. Similar to Aladdin, a lot is going wrong here, but there's still some redeemable qualities keeping you above water. You might be making it up as they go, but hey, at least you're still trying!

34-40: WARNING! RED ALERT! DANGEROUS DISNEY ADULT TERRITORY AHEAD!

You and your inner Peter Pan have a lot to figure out. Whether it's confronting the inevitable changes and responsibilities of adulthood, or learning how to take care of yourself, there's a big ol' chasm between your current lifestyle and being a productive member of society. My advice is to take some notes from Tiana and Lightning McQueen and sort things out before it's too late. It's just simply time to grow up.

BELIEVERS COMMUNITY NEWS



Oklahoma instructor removed from teaching for failing a Bible-based gender essay

At the end of 2025, the University of Oklahoma fired an instructor who was accused by a student of religious discrimination over a failing grade on a psychology paper. Samantha Fulnecky, a junior at the school, received zero out of 25 on an assignment in which she referenced the Bible after graduate teaching assistant William "Mel" Curth scored the paper.

Curth tasked Fulnecky and her classmates with writing a response to a scholarly article titled "Relations Among Gender Typicality, Peer Relations, and Mental Health During Early Adolescence," which discusses results of a study about gender norms among middle schoolers and the social ramifications children may face for not conforming to gender norms.

The third-year student responded by saying that gender norms should be celebrated, not denigrated. She cited Genesis, the first book of the Bible, in which God created men and women equally, but with separate purposes.

Fulnecky appealed her grade on the assignment, which was worth 3% of the final grade in the class, and the university said the assignment would not count.

cnn.com/2025/12/24/us/oklahoma-university-bible-essay-hnk

Fulnecky wrote that she was frustrated by the premise of the assignment because she does not believe that there are more than two genders based on her understanding of the Bible, according to a copy of her essay provided to The Oklahoman.

In feedback obtained by the newspaper, Curth said the paper did "not answer the questions for the assignment," contradicted itself, relied on "personal ideology" over evidence and "is at times offensive." "Please note that I am not deducting points because you have certain beliefs," Curth wrote.

The university posted a statement on X that its investigation found the graduate teaching assistant had been "arbitrary" in giving 20-year-old junior Samantha Fulnecky zero points on the assignment.

"The University of Oklahoma believes strongly in both its faculty's rights to teach with academic freedom and integrity and its students' right to receive an education that is free from a lecturer's impermissible evaluative standards," the university's statement said. "We are committed to teaching students how to think, not what to think."



Crackdown on Chinese Christians is Intensifying

An influential Protestant church in China says prominent leaders have been arrested in what appears to be a growing crackdown on the underground church movement. Nine people were detained in early January after police raided their homes and the church office in Chengdu, in central China, the Early Rain Covenant Church said. Five were later released.

The Communist Party has long pressured Christians to join only state-sanctioned churches led by government-approved pastors. But Christian groups say the grip has tightened noticeably, with arrests becoming more common and prompt.

More than 1,000 miles away in Wenzhou, authorities have been demolishing the Yayang Church building, video obtained by non-profit ChinaAid, which monitors religious persecution, shows. ChinaAid said it was told by multiple sources that hundreds of armed and special police officers have been deployed to stand guard outside the building.

Sometimes known as "the Jerusalem of China", Wenzhou has more Christians than any other city in the country. Residents living near Yayang Church have been "driven away," while those working in the area have been instructed not to take photographs or record video, ChinaAid said.

This latest wave of arrests and destruction of churches shows the Communist Party's resolve to snuff out churches that do not align with its ideology, Christian groups say.

China promotes atheism and controls religion. The government said in 2018 that there were 44 million Christians in the country, but it's unclear if that number includes those who attend the many underground churches.

bbc.com/news/articles/ckgl8jgdxyo



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