

FREE

W

ISSUE 100

YOUNG & RECKLESS

ALWAYS REMEMBER WHERE YOU CAME FROM

PAGE 16

SPECIAL
EDITION

PAGE 06
EIGHT CRAZY
THINGS PEOPLE
SAY ABOUT US

PAGE 14
APPROVED,
ACCOMPLISHED,
& ABSOLUTELY
EXHAUSTED

PAGE 20
DIVE INTO THE
ARCHIVES

FALL 2026

WORD ON THE STREET
READWOTS.COM

STREET
LEVEL
Ministries
MAGAZINE



ENGAGE YOUR MIND.
ENGAGE YOUR WORLD.

READWOTS.COM



READ OR LISTEN TO
ARTICLES ONLINE

CATCH UP WITH US ON:



wotsmagazine



wordonthestreetmagazine

ARE YOU CREATIVE?

Word on the Street Magazine welcomes your original submissions for publication consideration.

Email your illustrations, poetry, comics, short stories, and photography to:

WOTSMAGAZINE@GMAIL.COM

WORD^{ON THE} STREET Magazine

UW-STOUT EDITION

Ⓜ WELCOME TO WOTS

In your hands you're holding the 100th issue of *Word on the Street* (WOTS) Magazine, so we've been around awhile. 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 Wisconsin. 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 particular issue 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 issue is extra long, packed with tales about how we got here, and reprints from our archives. **This life is too short to just carry on like everything is normal. What are you waiting for? Read on. Ask deep questions. Connect with something real.**

DISTRIBUTED AROUND THE GLOBE

— AN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE —



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

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

Businesses throughout **Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

Campuses & businesses throughout **Cebu Island, Philippines**

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

contents

5

DEAR UNIVERSITY FRESHMAN

Words of wisdom from a college dropout turned missionary

6

EIGHT CRAZY THINGS PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US

Who really is Street Level Ministries?

8

THERE IS NO ESCAPE

How engagement delivers what escapism cannot

9

BIBLICAL CHICKENS

Episode 6: More than a game - the God who wins

10

LIGHT & SHADOW

Seeing God in the highs and lows

12

CHURCHES MAY BE FULL OF BELIEVERS BUT WE ARE SHORT ON DISCIPLES

First published in Christian Daily International

14

APPROVED, ACCOMPLISHED, & ABSOLUTELY EXHAUSTED

How to win college at the cost of everything else

16

THE YOUNG & THE RECKLESS

Our short history: always remember where you came from

20

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Read excerpts from WOTS issues through the years

26

INTRODUCING ISAIAH 2.8

An AI worthy of your praise

27

CROSSING THE (BORDER) LINE

An unpopular opinion about immigration

28

BELIEVERS COMMUNITY NEWS

Meet "Gabi" the robot that just became a monk at a buddhist temple in South Korea

29

BELIEVERS COMMUNITY NEWS

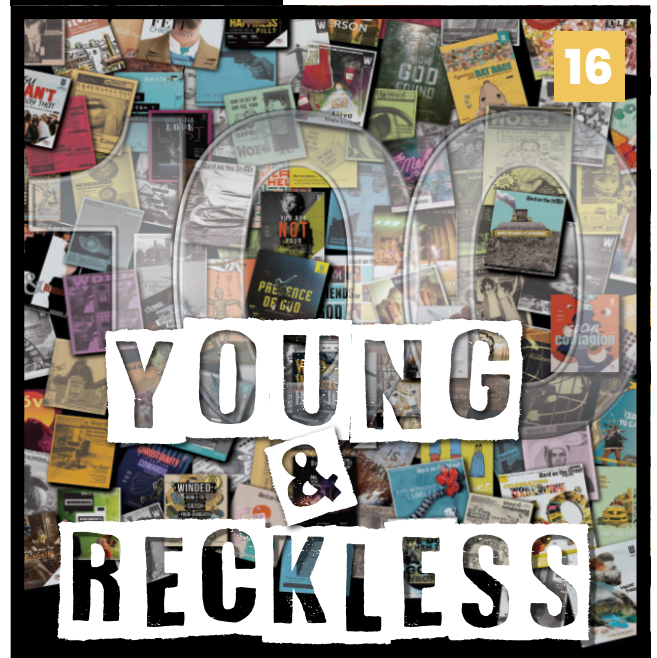
TikTok star gives up lucrative online channel in pursuit of Jesus

30

100 THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU DIE

We came up with a big list to make your life fuller

featured



Interested in checking
out a Bible study?

JESUS
STREET
CULTURE

STREET
LEVEL
Ministries



streetlevelministries.com

WORD ON THE STREET

CALL FOR ARTICLES

WE'RE LOOKING FOR ILLUSTRATIONS, POETRY,
COMICS, SHORT STORIES & PHOTOGRAPHY TO BE
PUBLISHED IN FUTURE ISSUES

SEND US WHAT YOU'VE GOT! FOR PUBLICATION
CONSIDERATION, EMAIL [WOTSMAGAZINE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:wotsmagazine@gmail.com)

READWOTS.COM



DEAR UNIVERSITY FRESHMAN



Words of Wisdom from a College Dropout Turned Missionary

You don't know me, so chances are pretty good you won't listen to the advice I'm about to give you, but on the off-chance that you do, allow me to introduce myself. I was once in your shoes - stepping into the new life experience of the first days on campus full of hopes and dreams, anxious thoughts, and confusion. I'll admit, my freshman year was... a while ago (16 years to be exact). We could talk all day about the differences in technology, politics, and society between our generations, but I'll stick to certain truths that have not changed. Because of the simple and profound truth that Jesus died for me and He designed me for a purpose, I totally changed the trajectory of my life. I quit school, worked an average job for years, served God through my church, and then sold everything, packed up what was left, and moved to the other side of the world to serve God there. Why would you want to take advice from a college dropout? I don't know, but I hope you'll hear me out on a few things.

There is a way to go through college focused on survival. I don't think anyone sets out to just survive, but that is what happens naturally when we "go with the flow" of peers and culture. It seems like the more chill way to approach it, but really it leads to chaos and busyness without ever accomplishing anything. If that sounds good to you, stop reading now. If you want more out of life, read on.

First of all, the key to all of this is getting over yourself. College constantly tells you to make life about yourself: your plans, your happiness, your success, your identity, your future. But the more life revolves around you, the emptier it becomes. So get over yourself and see what life is all about. Real purpose comes when you start asking what God wants to do with your life.

Part of getting over yourself is understanding that your grades don't define who you are. So stop putting pressure on yourself to achieve. Yes, be a good student, but the world will not end if you get a bad grade. I have seen too many students (and I was guilty of this too) who put academic achievement as their top priority - studying for hours on end, anxious about exams, and neglecting

everything else, including what God is calling them to do. Keep everything in the right perspective. If you are a Christian, then keep the eternal perspective. Jesus won't care (thankfully) how you did on your biology exam, but He will care if you served Him in biology class.

Don't see university as an "in-between time". Most students see their time in college as a period when the rest of life is on hold. They think they'll get serious about following God after they graduate and figure out life. Most think that life will slow down or get less stressful after college, so then they will have more time for Jesus. That simply is not true. Figure out what God has for you now and do it - the sooner the better.

My last bit of advice is to find a Christian community that is real. Not one based on emotions, making you comfortable by aligning with everything you desire. Find the people you can call in the middle of the night because everything is falling apart. The people who can count on *you* to be there for them too. A community that is committed to following Jesus the real, Biblical way that will help you do the same.

For me, for all of the above reasons, I walked away from school after giving three years of my time to it. Am I suggesting you do the same? Not necessarily. Don't be so afraid of going against the norm that you miss out on what God has specifically designed you to do. When one of my professors heard that I was quitting school, she told me that I was throwing my life away. I think of her sometimes as I'm going through the mountains of Southeast Asia, and enjoying deep relationships with people that I never would have if I didn't follow Jesus wherever He led. Yes, I threw my life away in exchange for God's life for me, which, for the record, is way, way better.

If you do stay in school, make the most of it. Some opportunities only come around once in a lifetime. You will not be around the same classmates and professors forever, so use the time with them well. Know what God wants you to do and do it. He will never let you down.

EiGht cRAZY

ThiNGs

PEOPLE SAy

about Us

WHO REALLY IS
STREET LEVEL
MINISTRIES?



People have said crazy things about Street Level Ministries since it started in 1998. That's what you get when you're an eclectic group of Jesus lovers that want to serve Him in a way that moves the world. If you're curious what it looks like to really follow Jesus and live a life of impact, you should join us sometime. But be warned, you might have people try to talk you out of it with these reasons:

"IT'S JUST ANOTHER CAMPUS MINISTRY."

It's true. There are several campus ministries you could join. Street Level? We're the S.W.A.T. team. If you're just looking for an easy place to meet some "nice Christian friends," we're not for you. We take our faith seriously, not just on Sundays. Jesus was radical, and we want to be like Him. This means bible study isn't a once-a-week pit stop that is no different than the secular clubs you're a part of. If Jesus really died for us, we should give our lives to Him, whatever the cost. We equip our group to be serious, life-long, mature disciples.

"IT'S A CULT."

If devoting your life to a cause you believe in is considered a cult, then yes. But isn't that what athletes do? Why is it cultish when Christians devote their lives to serving Jesus at the same caliber? Cults are insular, not knowing or being interested in new ideas. They shut themselves off from the outside world out of self-preservation. That's not us. We encourage each other to study other beliefs and worldviews, and to experience new cultures and ways of life. We look into all options because we're searching not for what we want, but for what is true. We've just come to a decision on what is and most people don't like that.

"THEY'RE ALL BRAINWASHED."

Anytime you don't think critically, you risk being brainwashed – believing whatever someone else tells you. Most of us recognize the world isn't as it should be, but why? We aim to be a place where people take a hard look at what our culture is offering and ask if that's really what they want out of life. We're after a different way. We use our brains, read the Bible and the news, and think critically. We go to church where the pastor says, "Don't take my word for it. Look into this for yourself. Eternity is on the line."

"WE GO TO CHURCH WHERE THE PASTOR SAYS, 'DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT. LOOK INTO THIS FOR YOURSELF. ETERNITY IS ON THE LINE.'"

"THEY TAKE THE BIBLE TOO LITERALLY."

Guilty as charged. If we don't have the Bible as the standard, we would have to trust what another person says. Thank God it's not so. God has inspired His Word to speak to us clearly, and He never changes. Contrary to popular unexamined belief, the Bible is reliable due to its historical and archaeological corroboration, prophetic accuracy, and manuscript evidence found over time. In a world that changes its mind about things daily, the Bible should be a breath of fresh air for us. Read it and find out.

"THEY'RE SO NARROW-MINDED."

This one is a question of objective truth. Does it exist? Of course it does. If I jump off a 100-story skyscraper without a parachute and fall to the ground, I will die. This is the truth. You can't change it. If we've found the truth, we will not apologize for standing for it, even if we run the risk of appearing close-minded. Trust that we aim to let people come to their own conclusions about God. We're here to provide opportunity for the ones who have and want to live for Him. We also travel domestically and internationally on mission trips to broaden our cultural perspective and see that the rest of the world does not live like us. This shapes us forever in ways that are hard to describe.

"THEY NEED TO LOOSEN UP."

If you only knew! In a lonely world, God has given us more friends than we have time to hang out with. We have lives full of fun, deep community, and adventure beyond anything we could have come up with. We're talking crazy adventures like conversations with strangers over free coffee on the side of the road. We go camping and on mission trips, stay up late, and get up early. We fill up hard drives of memories that come back to life when we sit around and someone says, "Hey, remember when..." Our purpose in life isn't to chase the high-paying job, have a bunch of kids, and retire comfortably. We're the dreamers who have become risk-takers, eager to see what God has for us around the next bend. It's led us to some pretty crazy places, and we keep coming back for more.

"IT'S ALL JUST TALK."

See all previous paragraphs... Just kidding, let us explain: Some people who call themselves Christians live this way – church on Sundays and nothing more. We say something's wrong if you do! We don't want our faith to just be something we say we believe. We believe that real faith in Jesus leads to practical action to make changes in your life. So, we provide ways to serve God tangibly. We outreach to our campuses to get to know and serve our own community. We make coffee, cook meals, and do the dishes for each other. Even this magazine and, in the U.S., a coffeehouse and a radio station, are all ways we can give of our time and do something with the love of Jesus we claim we have.

Serving God in these ways shapes us, matures us, and teaches us to lay down our own plans to give to others. And through our efforts (and by God's grace), people have come to know who God is and had their lives changed by Him. That's what we're after.

"THEY ASK TOO MUCH OF THEIR PEOPLE."

People might say we demand too much time, especially for college students. Shouldn't school be their priority? We're not demanding anything of people. God is clear we should have no other gods before Him. Jesus said if you do not give up all you have you cannot be His disciple. We make no apologies here. Matthew 6:33 says to seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you. When you don't put God first, you'll never see all that He has for you. We love each other enough to not let each other settle for that, so we challenge each other when we see it. We find that the rest of life (our time in university, our jobs, our relationships) are actually more fulfilling when we let God dictate when, how, and if they happen, and put Him first in all things.

If this all sounds intense, good. We take Jesus seriously, because He took us seriously. He's the reason we are who we are. He took a group of nobodies and gave us purpose, and so we live radically for Him. We hang out, talk Bible and culture, and get out into our community to meet people. We're Christians who eat together, sing together, and learn together to make the most out of life as we follow Jesus, not the world.

Living an aimless lonely life? Want to make it count for something? Join us sometime. Open to anyone 18-25 years old.

U.S.A. - @streetlevelministries

Philippines - @streetleveministriescebu
streetlevelministries.com



There is no Escape



HOW ENGAGEMENT DELIVERS WHAT ESCAPISM CANNOT

You look at your list for the day. It's long, but not impossible. You tell yourself you'll start with one task, or set a timer, or break things into smaller steps. You have the best of intentions. But instead, you sit down, open your phone, and start letting the minutes slip by. A video leads to another. A notification pulls you into a different app. Before long, the afternoon is gone, the sun is low, and nothing is done. And you're left with that familiar realization: you didn't solve anything, you just avoided it.

Escapism is the instinct to step out of your own life for a while. One definition calls it "a means to briefly detach oneself from daily thoughts and emotions," and that's how it works. It's anything that lets you avoid what you don't want to face. It shows up as scrolling, gaming, viewing shows, drinking, fantasizing to porn, indulging in weed, eating because you're bored, and even staying "busy" so you don't have to think. If it helps you disappear, it qualifies. While you're busy finding ways to ignore it, life passes you by. Your guilt of getting nothing done

**"ESCAPISM
DOESN'T JUST
WASTE TIME. IT
MAKES YOU INTO
SOMEONE WHO
HIDES FROM REAL
THINGS."**

piles up like the dishes in your sink. Escapism whispers, "just for a moment," and then takes your entire day.

Our culture celebrates it. We're told that checking out is self-care, that we've earned the right to ignore hard things, that discomfort is optional and can always be postponed. It fits the me-first mindset perfectly. The message is simple: **if something feels heavy, numb it. If something feels complicated, dodge it. If something feels painful, drown it out.** Escapism becomes a lifestyle, not just a momentary break.

Escapism isn't harmless. It quietly kills discipleship. It slows your spiritual growth until you barely notice it's happening. It isolates you from the people who would actually help you. And it keeps you far from the places where God intends to meet you. Escapism doesn't just waste time. It makes you into someone who hides from real things. The only thing we learn to do is avoid, avoid, avoid.

The biblical alternative isn't escape; it's engagement. Jesus doesn't call us to numbness, ignorance, or apathy—He calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. He invites us to bring our stress, our boredom, our fear, and our exhaustion to Him instead of running from them. Real rest isn't found in checking out. It's found in being with Him. Escapism tries to promise, but only Jesus delivers us the rich and satisfying life we're actually after.

We have to stop hiding from real life and being afraid of being uncomfortable. When you choose Jesus over scrolling, isolation, and cheap entertainment, you find that He is actually more satisfying than the things you used to avoid Him. Instead of worshiping things that give us a little trickle of rest, we'll find the deepest drink of water we've ever had: Jesus.

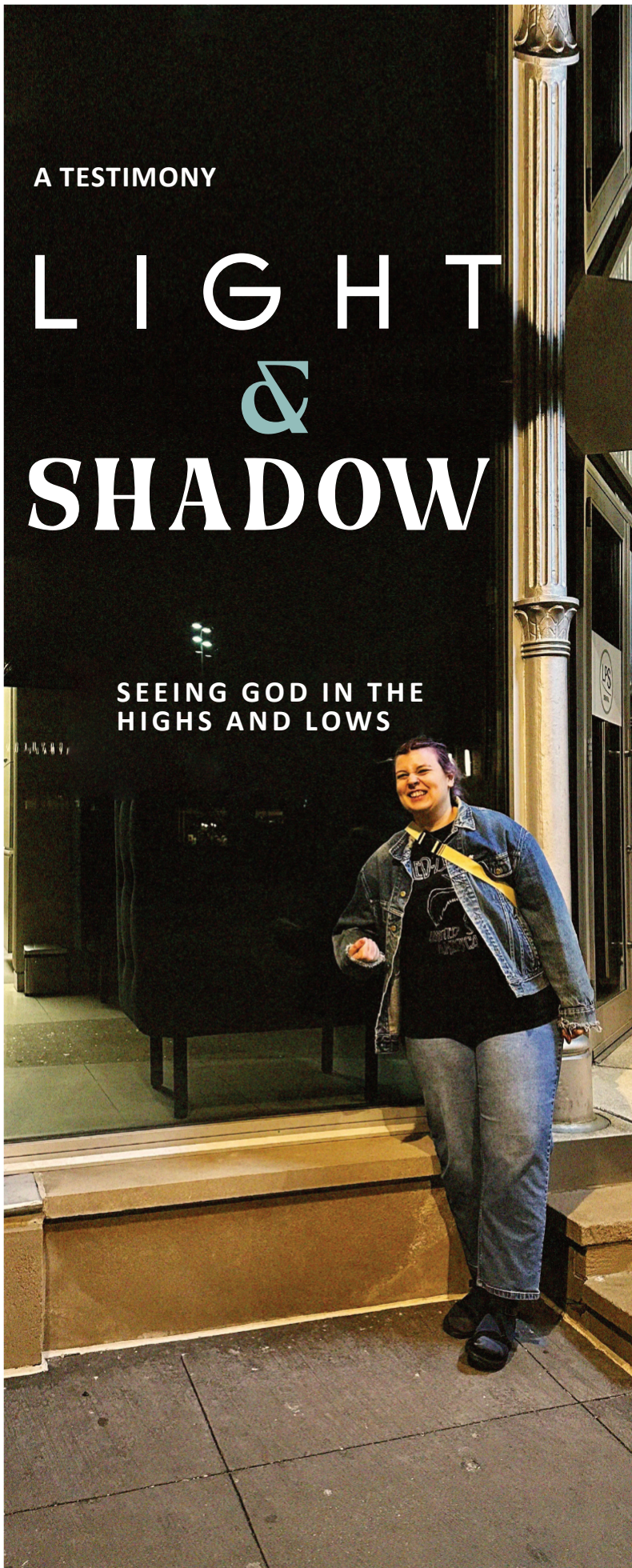


BIBLICAL CHICKENS (EPISODE 6):
MORE THAN A GAME — THE GOD WHO WINS

A TESTIMONY

LIGHT & SHADOW

SEEING GOD IN THE
HIGHS AND LOWS



Both God and antidepressants found their way into my life at about the same time. When I met Jesus on a February Sunday my sophomore year of college, a series of increasingly diverging paths began. God says to count the cost before we give our lives to Him, and He lays out what it means to do so. Antidepressants, on the other hand, come with hidden fees.

Discovering antidepressants was, well, too easy. It's a path I probably never would have gone down if my roommate and best friend at the time hadn't shared her experience becoming medicated. I found out all I had to do was schedule an appointment at the counseling center on campus, be evaluated, and if the diagnosis fit, I'd be sent to be evaluated for medication at Student Health.

I found myself, in a mere 24 hours, with a counseling appointment, a positive diagnosis, and prescription SSRI medication paid for through a rushed application to public health assistance, so I didn't have to ask for money from my parents (or explain to them why I needed it). My treatment plan was supposed to consist of counseling appointments and antidepressants. I was passed from counselor to counselor without any consistency, so appointments felt unhelpful.

I became frustrated and simply quit going. No one pressed me or followed up as to why I stopped showing up or insisted I needed to do so for my health. When it felt like the medication wasn't working anymore, my primary doctor simply upped the dose—no further questions asked. There wasn't exactly a system of checks and balances. If I hadn't been honest and wanted medication bad enough, I could probably even have gamed the system to get it. My life soon became only 'the gray area', with the perceived dangerous depths mostly eliminated, but whatever remaining joy I had quite easily evaporated. I had become functionally numb.

God, on the other hand, was not easy. Let me explain. Surrendering my life to Christ in and of itself was easy. I looked at the sum of my life, illuminated by God and the Holy Spirit like a flashlight in a derelict barn. Combine that with hearing for the first time what Jesus did for me, and it was easy to say yes to His way instead of mine. It definitely wasn't simple, however. Of course, I felt a peace and joy that surpassed understanding in a way my constantly churning mind never had before. Then came the testing, choices, and trials that come with flipping the table and surrendering your old life. Close friends and family no longer understood me, and some even objected to my new faith in Jesus. My priorities had to change—priorities that aggressively competed for my time and attention.

How I wanted my life to be after college changed mid-degree. I was meeting a ton of new people at church and Street Level who wanted to know everything about me and my life so that they could love me as Christ loves. As a pretty selective introvert at the time, it felt incredibly vulnerable, invasive, and inconvenient. I was getting called out, rightfully so, on behaviors I thought were fine

“I LOOKED AT THE SUM OF MY LIFE, ILLUMINATED BY GOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT LIKE A FLASHLIGHT IN A DERELICT BARN.”

until now. People were aggressively and lovingly waving me off the cliff and away from dangers I hadn't known before - thank God. I was learning a ton, being convicted by a ton, and being blessed a hundredfold before I knew entirely what that meant (not that I'll ever fully grasp that this side of eternity). Yet, there was that persisting, pervasive numbness that came from the antidepressants doing their own work in me while the Holy Spirit was also prodding me to give Him my mind and emotions instead and let Him do the work God had for my life. Little did I know that while I was trying to grasp temporal earthly solutions that didn't work, the Great Physician was trying to heal me, as He had been trying to for my whole life.

This path went on for a long time, and probably much too long if I'm honest. I wrestled with faith and antidepressants through the rest of college, graduation, and the life changes that come with entering the proverbial 'real world.' God used COVID-19 to finally force my hand—at least, that's how I understand it in reflection. Through a series of events out of my control and a worldwide pandemic, not only was I unable to get my antidepressants, but there was a shortage of the medication entirely. I took my last pill as I felt the firm prodding of the Holy Spirit to give it up, eyes shifting between the empty orange bottle and my fearful face in the mirror.

I'll start by saying, don't do what I did. Quitting antidepressants cold turkey is not medically advised, and it's one thing I would have done differently if I'd have been able to do it properly. Instead, I experienced one of the hardest periods of my life yet. COVID-19 was hard for everyone, and I certainly don't take that for granted, but I had to lean on the crutch of Christ in a way I never had before. For the first time in seven years, I started to experience emotions, the highs and lows, and much more aggressively so.

Simultaneously, in the period of a few years, I suddenly lost two family members, flipped my car, had a missions trip cancelled, was laid up with a broken ankle, got COVID-19 early in its run, spent a lot of time alone isolated in my apartment, and suffered the side effects of quitting antidepressants instead of tapering off. It was sheer emotional whiplash that should have knocked me clear out, but every time the rollercoaster climbed before another sudden drop, I looked over, and Jesus was there.

Not only that, but my church community was there too when I finally opened up to them. I learned the old adage that says God doesn't give you more than you can handle was not true. However, God will go with you when you're going through more than you can handle, which I would argue is far superior.

Emotions are fickle, and they were never meant to be our guide. They are an unreliable compass to cast our trust in, and “they cannot dictate the content of right or wrong; they are witnesses to what a person has already determined is right or wrong”, as my Pastor once explained. I won't pretend to be an expert on it all, but I can tell you this from my personal experience with antidepressants: stifling suffering, whether it be through comforts, mood-altering medication, avoiding pain, or thinking you can build a life so you can never be hurt is detrimental to you. God's purpose in emotions and suffering is to draw us near to Him and to make us more like His Son. God calls us to feel.

Here's just a smattering of verses that talk about such, thanks in part to a book of God's promises I keep beside my bed:

So we do not lose heart...For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. 2 Corinthians 4:16–17

But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses...for whenever I am weak, He is strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9,10

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4 (The 'through' part is essential).

I wish I could tell you whether antidepressants are right for you in your circumstance, but that's between you, your physician, and hopefully the Great Physician. For me, dropping antidepressants was the second time I truly found myself, in a way, by putting myself aside altogether. In reality, I more deeply found Christ, who gave me a new identity and showed me the desires of my heart, better than I ever could. He suffers with me, because He suffered most greatly for my sake - and yours.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows; But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:3-5

-Melissa

Churches may be full of believers but we are short on disciples

REPRINTED BY PERMISSION FROM CHRISTIAN DAILY INTERNATIONAL (CHRISTIANDAILY.COM)
BY PETER DEMOS



When asked about the commandments, Jesus said we are to love God first, then our neighbor. When that order is softened or reversed, the result is a version of Christianity that feels compassionate but lacks depth. Julia/Adobe Stock

Spend a few minutes online and you will see the clips: a green-haired, nonbinary pastor, a rainbow-draped congregation, Scripture bent to mirror the culture. Then comes the predictable response—a conservative Christian explaining what’s wrong.

Those moments are easy. The problem is obvious. Most Christians, even young ones, can tell something is off. But there is a deeper issue that never goes viral, because it is quieter, harder to spot, and far easier to accept. It is not the distortion of Christianity. It is the dilution of it.

I grew up in churches that looked faithful. The pastor was polished. The sermons were structured. The message was rarely offensive. If you listened carefully, very little that was said was technically untrue. That is precisely why the problem is so easy to miss. What mattered more than what was said was what was not said.

I heard about loving your neighbor. I heard about being kind, patient, and forgiving. Those are biblical commands. No honest Christian would deny that.

But I was rarely taught how to love God with heart, soul and mind in a way that shaped my daily life. I was not trained in discipline, obedience, or repentance. I was not shown how to connect Sunday teaching to Monday decisions. Most

importantly, I was never taught that my faith was grounded in truth that could be examined, defended, and lived with confidence.

So, when I got to choose, I walked away. Not because I had carefully weighed Christianity and rejected it, but because I had never been formed in it.

In Matthew 22, Jesus provides a specific order: Love God first, then your neighbor. When that order is softened or reversed, the result is a version of Christianity that feels compassionate but lacks depth. It produces people who are encouraged but not equipped. It transforms churches into a Rotary Club with a steeple.

The New Testament consistently points beyond encouragement to formation. That assumes something many churches quietly neglect: discipleship is intentional. It requires teaching people not just what to believe, but how to live. Without that, a church can be busy, friendly, and even well-intentioned while still failing in its central task.

Jesus’ famous warning about the sheep and the goats should give us pause. Both groups call him Lord. Both appear to belong. The difference is not in their language, but in the reality of their lives. One reflects genuine allegiance. The other does not.

That is not a warning aimed only at the obvious wayward. It is a warning to anyone who assumes that their proximity to Christians and use of the right type of Christian language means that they are a true disciple. A church can avoid heresy and still fail to make disciples.

“A CHURCH CAN AVOID HERESY AND STILL FAIL TO MAKE DISCIPLES.”

It can preach sermons that are accurate in content but thin in application. It can emphasize love of a neighbor while neglecting the priority of loving God. It can create an environment where people feel encouraged but are never challenged to grow.

Over time, that produces a kind of spiritual drift, like a car with misaligned tires. People may feel secure but are not grounded enough in truth to withstand pressure. Eventually, they are off the road and think they belong there.

When culture pushes, they do not stand. They leave. Most simply disengage. Sometimes, like me, they say Christianity did not work, without realizing they were never taught how to live it.

Christians do not need less or more love. We need rightly ordered love. Love for God that is clear, taught and practiced. Love for neighbor that flows from that foundation, not replaces it.

We need churches that train. Churches that connect belief to action. Churches that take seriously the responsibility to prepare people for the reality of life outside the sanctuary. Because the measure of a church is not the dollars, the number of baptisms, the amount of services or people fed at a local charity, but how well it forms its members for the rest of the week.

The obvious distortions of Christianity will always draw attention. They are easy to spot and easy to critique. The quieter failure is harder. It looks familiar. It sounds safe. It often feels comfortable. But if it leaves people unformed, unprepared and unable to stand, it is no less serious. And it is long past time for us to shift our orientation.

**The world keeps trying
to help you fix your
broken life.**



We want to help you get a new one.

BELIEVERS *City* CHURCH
Menomonie WI



**EXPLORE
WISCONSIN** **MAKE NEW
FRIENDS** **PRACTICE
ENGLISH**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH STREET LEVEL MINISTRIES
AN OFFICIAL UW-STOUT STUDENT ORG

STREETLEVELMINISTRIES.COM



Written by a Philippines college student who's "been there, done that"

Welcome, ambitious student. You have arrived. Your uniform is pressed, your org logos are strategically arranged for maximum visual impact, and your GWA (GPA) is just high enough to post about without seeming like you are bragging, though of course you are. You have mastered the first and most sacred rule of college life: always look like you are winning. The formula is simple. Finish one goal, immediately replace it with a bigger one. Dean's list this semester, officer position next semester, internship placement after that. You are not burnt out. You are driven. There is a difference. You will figure out what that difference is sometime; after graduation, probably. But until then, here are five steps to make the most out of your college years, at whatever cost necessary.

STEP 1:

Treat Your Grades Like Your Entire Personality

You are a college student, which means your GWA (GPA) is not just a number. It is your identity, your reputation, and your entire self-worth packed into a class card. Study not because you genuinely want to learn, but because a low grade is a public humiliation you simply cannot survive. And if the deadline is impossible or the groupmate has vanished two days before submission, you do what every smart, resourceful

student does. You find a way. Whispering answers across the room, passing along leaked exam questions from the section that took the test an hour before you, or submitting work that was more inspired by your effort than actually produced by it are not moral failures. They are survival skills. And the best part? It feels good. There is a very particular satisfaction in seeing a grade you did not entirely earn sitting at the top of your class card, a quiet private victory you will absolutely caption with something about hard work and God's grace. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes pursued everything with that same energy and still wrote, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). A life of striving done purely for human eyes and human applause amounts, in the end, to chasing after the wind. But he probably just needed better time management.

STEP 2:

Give God the Credit, Keep the Spotlight

You are not just any college student. You are a Christian college student, and that comes with an important additional responsibility: making your achievements sound like they were God's idea all along. The method is simple. Post the acceptance letter, the award, the internship offer on social media. Open the caption with gratitude, close it with a verse, and use the words humbled and blessed as often as possible.

“THE MOST DANGEROUS THING A COLLEGE STUDENT CAN DO IS PAUSE.”

What is fundamentally a post about you will technically read as a post about God. The honest truth is that this impulse, to wrap our ambitions in spiritual language and make our striving feel sacred, comes from somewhere deeply human. We want what we do to mean something. The tragedy is not the wanting. The tragedy is dressing up self-promotion in the language of surrender for so long that we eventually stop noticing the difference.

STEP 3:

Be Universally Liked at All Times and at All Costs

College is a social environment, and your reputation among your peers is everything. So, when a friend makes a questionable decision, say "I support you." When an org demands more than you have, say "Of course." When someone asks how you are, say "Busy but good," and you move on without pushing further. Conflict is uncomfortable, honesty is risky, and disappointing people is a fate worse than quietly losing yourself. Master the art of being agreeable, and people will love you. Just do not ask yourself too often whether any of them actually know who you really are.

STEP 4:

Never Stop. Never Ask Why. Just Keep Going.

The most dangerous thing a college student can do is pause. Because the moment you slow down, you start thinking. And thinking leads to the deeply uncomfortable question of whether the life you are building actually means anything to you. Ben Trueblood and Brian Mills write in *A Different College Experience* that the habits and decisions formed during these years do not disappear after graduation. They become the foundation of everything that comes after. Who you learn to be in these four years does not stay in college. It graduates with you. If you spend four years learning to perform rather than to actually be, you will walk across that stage having mastered the art of being whoever the room needs and having very little idea who you are when the room is empty.

STEP 5:

When It All Catches Up, Keep Performing Anyway

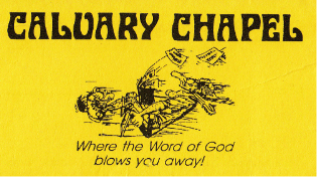
Eventually the semester ends. The org term ends. The college years end. And when the logos come off the uniform, and the titles stop being the first thing that introduces you, the question you have been too busy to face will finally find you. Not what did you achieve, but who did you become? Because here is the thing nobody tells you during enrollment: the performance has an expiration date, but the person you became while performing does not. So, when it all catches up- the exhaustion, the emptiness, the quiet suspicion that none of this is actually working- the most logical thing to do is obvious. Smile, repost your latest achievement, open a new semester with a fresh set of goals, and keep going. After all, stopping now would mean admitting that you have been running in the wrong direction the whole time. And that is a conversation nobody has time for, especially not you.

Of course, you could choose to listen to that radical, ancient whisper that says you are already loved, chosen, and secure, freeing you from the prison of everyone else's expectations. You could choose to live for an audience of One, the One whose opinion of you was settled long before your first enrollment, long before your first grade, long before you ever had anything to prove. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes, after all the striving and searching, arrived at the only conclusion that actually holds: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" Ecclesiastes 12:13.

There is a version of college that does not cost you your soul. It is quieter, less decorated, and far more free. But where is the stress in that? Where is the chaotic fun of running on 10% battery and iced coffee? No, far better to keep pleasing. After all, what profits a student if they gain the whole campus's approval, but lose their own soul (see Matthew 16:26)?

YOUNG & RECKLESS

OUR SHORT HISTORY: ALWAYS REMEMBER WHERE YOU CAME FROM



Forgetting the past is akin to forgetting to breathe. It's life-threatening. Like a patient with amnesia, struggling to remember what's happened to them, losing the ability of recall directly shapes how you can live your present. A person with amnesia is a shell of their former self. A person without such a life-altering condition can also face this same fate if they ever find themselves forgetting where they came from. Remembering your history with clarity keeps you from being an air-filled hot shot. It keeps you honest. It makes you thankful and hopeful.

You're about to read a bit of history on how this magazine and the group we're a part of came to be. You may not know who we are, and truly it doesn't matter, but it matters who we're pointing at, and that's Jesus. All you need to know is we're Jesus followers and have a desire for you to know Him too. This article is written so you can catch a glimpse of how one corner of His Kingdom came to be and decide whether the King we're following is worth it. To do that, we're rewinding time almost four decades.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

The roots of Believers City Church started when a South LA Hispanic Harley-rider started following Jesus, stepped into ministry, and eventually God called him to start a church in Menomonie, Wisconsin in the early 90's. One day a young 20-something guy and his

wife showed up to a church service in a hotel conference room. Soon enough, they got involved and stepped up. As the church grew, they were soon put at a crossroads by God. Their restaurant or God's ministry. So, they said yes to God, closed the business, and stepped into full-time ministry at this little church in Menomonie.

When we were a young church, we were pretty scrappy. We met in a little downtown storefront, loved Jesus, and wanted to serve Him with whatever we had. At times, we even found entertainment in shooting a potato gun into the lake across the street. This is probably what it was like when Jesus was with His twelve disciples. They were not the best dressed, they ate on a budget, and the oil in their cars probably leaked on the streets, too. They didn't go to seminary, and probably weren't the popular kids in school either. Definitely not perfect nor impressive, but they were willing and excited about Jesus.

We were ambitious to serve God. So, from the start, we were pretty involved missionally. We both went on mission and supported missions with whatever we could afford. Some of our guys even quit smoking so they could financially support a couple of guys in Southeast Asia, dubbing them their "Marlboro Men." Eventually, we were able to start The Blind Munchies Coffeehouse as a unique way to support missions financially and to reach local college students

“WE TRIED TO BUILD A HOSPITAL NEAR THE DOORS OF HELL, WHICH WAS REALLY IN OUR BACKYARD.”

who were more willing to show up for a coffee than a church service. We were beggars telling other beggars where to find the bread (Jesus)... and where to find the coffee.

This didn't come without its own challenges, though. Many times, trailblazing was required. Sacrifices were made. Tough lessons were learned. Learning when to run away or when to step up and fight. Seeing how far we could stretch the money in our wallets. Seeing just how hot a person could explode in anger on their way out the door. Feeling how many bullets we could *really* take when wearing our spiritual bullet proof vests. We bled a lot. Yet, we got back up. We learned lessons, changed our methods, and leaned on God in the low and dark moments until He brought us back to the mountaintops. The mountains of foreign countries, near the ends of the earth. Riding trains and seeing the promises of God. Building deep relationships with people, near and far, who also loved Christ. Seeing ministries burst forth. Souls get saved. Lives being changed. And to think that God let a little church in Menomonie be a part of all that.

YOUNG BLOOD: Street Level Ministries

After the church was around for a handful of years, we took a swing at college ministry. Street Level Ministries was born in your typical college town in Wisconsin. Full of lost college students, trying to figure out this life thing for the first time. And a lot of them, for the record, aren't figuring it out so well. So, maybe that's why God said to minister to the college kids—He knew that lots of broken 18 to 20-something year olds needed fixing. Now, many of the people in our church are the product of this ministry.

While the people we were trying to reach were the local college students, we didn't get many of them at the start. Instead, we had a variety of students and people that weren't from the local college. Rather, our group was made up of a couple ladies from a college 45 minutes away, some local 19 or 20-year-olds, and other people from the church who were willing to help. It was a small beginning, but God worked in and through it.

We've never had a big or impressive group, at least when using the world's measurement of success i.e. quantity. Rather, we've been more focused on the quality of discipleship in our group even if it meant we had small numbers. This has resulted in deep and lasting relationships over the years—with God and each other. Like the disciples with Jesus, we lived (and still do) life together. We didn't just attend Bible study, show up to the same church, or serve God together. We didn't just go to the grocery store, play hacky sack, or eat burgers together. We didn't just laugh, cry, challenge, or encourage each other. We did ALL of these things together. The easy and hard, the highs and the lows. This is what Christian life should look like.

While we'd meet up for Bible studies and services every week, we also put our faith into action through different opportunities to tell people about Jesus. We learned how to love as God loves us: *in action*. Back in the day, we did a lot of concerts to do evangelism, bringing our coffee trailer along and camping. There are some crazy stories. Our biggest event of the year, Yeshuapalooza, took almost a half year to prepare for. It was an all-hands-on-deck event. We also did ministry through our coffeehouse, small campus events, our local



radio station, a yearly thrift sale, our magazine, to name a few. Anything we could do, we probably tried to do.

One girl, when she first came around, saw the ways that the Christians around her were excited to talk about Jesus with the unbelievers who came. She thought she was a Christian, but she wasn't excited to tell people about Jesus. Years later, she caught that excitement. Now she was fueled by the *real*, born-again, love of Jesus. She learned this love through the people around her who shared their lives and the love of Jesus with her.

We didn't do these things in your average American-Christian ways to create a club of people who like to get a little high on religion. We tried to build a "hospital" near the doors of hell, which was *really* in our backyard. This was hard work, and when you're near flaming hot doors... it's hot, sweaty, and exhausting at times. So, by God's strength, we were able to do awesome things on and near campus. Then, we took a risk and began something new. We started a scrappy little Christian magazine, called Word on The Street, with the hopes to reach more people on the campus.

DID YOU HEAR THE WORD ON THE STREET?

Back when Word on the Street (WOTS) magazine got started, underground and homemade "zines" were pretty popular. So, we made our own, using it as an opportunity to share the gospel in a unique and not-normal way, if there even is normal. As a result, we've had magazines thrown away, torn up, and we've even been protested en masse. Our uncommon approach made us stand out, and we've both paid for it and been greatly blessed by it.

Behind the scenes, starting a magazine wasn't an easy journey. For everyone involved, it was an investment. Writing articles is more time-consuming and difficult than you'd expect. Using a printer is full of battles, prayers, misprints, and paper destroyed. At one point, we started using a printer downtown because ours was smoking upstairs in the church. Great for bonfires, but not for a magazine. Things were labor intensive, and hard at times to put it nicely. But we kept going. And you're reading the result of that labor.



All of this was worth it to get our magazine into the hands of the punks and outcasts of the world to show them the truth the best we could. We wrote poetry, made art, shared testimonies, and made articles that stood against the culture of the world and religion. A lot of people on campus either had no experience or had been taught misinformation about God, so we tried to address that. Jesus met with sinners in the places that, well, sinners were at. Sometimes they came to Him, but a lot of times He went to them and met them where they were at. This meant going to the places where no one wanted to go, sharing a meal with the people who were rejected or thought of as "too far gone." We wrote to the people who knew they were sick and needed healing. We challenged the people who thought they were healthy but were actually dead inside.



Our first issue invited people to our Christian-punk concerts, informing readers that "We worship God real loud!" We had comics, poetry, a testimony from a Satan worshipper turned Christian. We had an article from a guy who ran a ministry for those wanting to heal from sexual sin and same-sex attraction. The cultural Christian status-quo was challenged through articles about tattoos and piercings. In issue #1 is the quote, "We have to be real careful that we don't let our ideas of Christianity keep someone out of the kingdom of God." So, this is what we did. And this is what we still try to do. We didn't gatekeep Christianity, but we showed that the gate was open to anyone willing and reckless enough to walk this rocky and less-traveled road.

A NARROW ROAD, WITH COMPANY

Looking back at our history, we haven't really been your typical clean-cut American Christian church, college ministry, or magazine. You've probably caught that by now. We want to be the Babe Ruth's of the world. In his sports career, he hit the ball better, higher, and farther than any other. With these great victories, however, Ruth missed the ball many times, too. But he didn't let these losses keep him down. We've also had our own share of losses over the years. But because we got back up, we've also seen a lot of incredible wins.

As time changes, our approaches have had to mold and change as a result. No generation or culture is the exact same as the



other, so we've tried and found different ways to effectively share Jesus with a wide range of people. Keeping the message the same but changing our approach. At times we tried what we thought was the best idea ever and then had no one show up. Other times, we tried something that resulted in our Bible study doubling in size, just in one night. There has never been a set formula for what does or doesn't work. The key to it all is that we have been faithful to God in the highs and lows, allowing Him to use us.

Throughout the years, this constant growth has kept us moving. God started it all with a guy from Los Angeles who said "yes." Then moved him to the middle of seemingly-nowhere Wisconsin to start a church, which started a college ministry, which started a magazine, and soon went out into the world. God even sent some Americans to an island in the middle of the Philippines to find some college students who wanted to seriously follow Jesus. If we would've kept doing the same things, in the same old ways, we wouldn't be where we are today and you wouldn't be reading this.

Sometimes it feels like we are just getting started, even though we've been around for roughly 35 years. Our church is full of people ranging in age and experience. There is something special about this. We've got the discipline and experience of the older Christians, and the zeal and excitement of the young Christians (like new puppies that are excited by everything). We teach and learn from each other, no matter how long we've been around. There are people who quit

following Jesus along the way, but then there are those who continue fighting to know and serve the King. This is who we want to be, and we're going to keep moving forward together, hell or high water, to grasp the prize of knowing Jesus.

Through it all, you know you've caught the Holy Spirit when you keep coming back for more. You willingly go through the "pits of hell" to climb the greatest mountains with God. You see Jesus through other people when you watch them go through these same dark places, and there is still hope in their weak eyes. Words cannot describe any of this, you must experience it for yourself.

Through it all, God never has and never will fail to be faithful, good, and righteously show off His love, too. It's up to you if you really want to see God do His thing. But, when a person loves something, they will do whatever it takes to get it. They will give up everything to have it. They get called the "radical" ones. The question is, will you do this? There are a lot of ways to waste your life. For example, sitting in a church pew on Sunday, reading the Bible, praying sometimes, or even reading this magazine doesn't mean you're doing anything to make it count. Yes, those are so vital. But it's not where it ends. Faith means you are getting off the bench and stepping onto the field. Then you can do one of two things: stand there afraid, or you can step up and swing hard.

Just don't forget where you came from.



FROM THE a R C H i v e S

For our 100th issue, we're dusting off some vintage gems from the archives. They're weird, off-beat, and still insanely relevant. It's almost like the truth of God never changes and the heartbeat of what it's like to walk with Him remains the same. Read them. Scrutinize them. Visit readwots.com and click the Archives tab to read 'em all. Issue 1-100 are at your fingertips. You're welcome.

THE VERY FIRST ISSUE COVER

This ledger-sized edition was the very first issue of Word on the Street Magazine that rolled out of a near-antique, dysfunctional, 1980s photo copier.

Word on the street 0¢ FREE IN CANADA

In 10 Minutes of **FUN** a day I changed myself from this Blood-less, Pitiful **SKINNY SHRIMP** →

TO THIS

Ken Grimm AFTER MAILING COUPON

Ken Grimm BEFORE mailing coupon

NEW MUSCULAR RED-BLOODED HEAD-TO-TOE HE-MAN!

Remember! Never pet a burning dog!

GET ALL THESE **GREAT MUSCLES FREE**

Now Buy LAST CHANCE before \$1 price goes back!

1999	2000	2001	2004	2007	2009	2012	2013
Fall/Winter: WOTS Menomonee begins; First WOTS issue released	January: End of the World from Y2K Bug	September: September 11th Attacks	The social media era begins with the launch of Facebook	June: First iPhone comes out	August: ReadWots.com launched; September: WOTS Superior begins	April: 50th issue release concert featuring Mitch McVicker; Celebrating 13 years of WOTS End of the World due to the Mayan Calendar	January: WOTS Philippines begins

"Sing unto him a new song: play skillfully with a loud noise. Psalms 33:3



BIBLE: the "Word" in his hand...a "map" unto his feet!

HANDS: raised high to the God who rules

MIND: Full of peace, joy, and freedom, that is so real that it kind of freaks you out

SHOULDERS: Jesus said, "my burden is light". Obviously the case here.

TUMMY: has that "full" feeling...*been dining on pizza and the "meat" of the Word.*

FEET: Goin' places fer' sure... walkin' in the path of Jesus.

The "typical" Street Level Christian

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2020

May: Writers from WOTS Menomonie and Superior go to Cebu for Shofar Music Festival

February: Distribution of WOTS Menomonie begins in River Falls, WI

June: Writing workshop in Cebu
November: WOTS Philippines website launched

April: WOTS River Falls begins;
July: Special Edition Issue 71 released for Street Level Ministries – Cebu

March: WOTS Southeast Asia begins
Fall: WOTS Amsterdam begins

March: COVID-19 begins



In a world of seven billion people who are constantly tracked, polled and monitored, it is comforting to know that we are more than just statistics to God. Time magazine recently published a full page article about the future of a baby girl born in America. The statistics were clear, simple to understand, and not intended to provoke even the most sensitive of sorts. Most readers would gaze over this before moving to the next article. However, stopping long enough to really read the statistics brought a sense of discomfort. The article was not geared at making people uncomfortable. In fact, for some it could be uplifting to see statistics such as, “If you are a baby girl born in 2012 you can expect to make \$80,000 after you graduate college.” Or, “You can expect to live 81.3 years and have 2.8 kids.” Most people read this and think, “It’s proven. It’s a well-recorded statistic. My future kids have this to look forward to.

More than Just a Consumer

Finish this slogan, “At Burger King __ __ __”, or “Save BIG money at ____.” Popular marketing firms (we know who they are) spend millions of dollars trying to sell their savory products to a specific group of people based on statistics. It is no mystery that companies will spend more on a 30 second Super Bowl advertisement than most of us will earn in our lives. There is not doubt that the world around us has college students pegged: based on their painstaking analysis of statistics. Selling students clothes, technology, beer, condoms, and moves has become a science. The average college student spends over \$50 a month on peer alone. Annually, liquor sales to college students are over five billion dollars. Students spend more than \$11 billion a year on snacks and beverages. The commercial world does not see college students as individuals; they see them as a large herd with mommy and daddy’s money, ready to prove their worth by exercising their buying power. They know how to make us feel like we *need* these things. We are a

generation that yields high profits to large firms who want a lot of money. What a great comfort, then, to know we have a real God who is not interested in selling us something.

Not Just Part of the Crowd

During our college years, we are already becoming steeped in our plan to follow the “American Dream.” It has almost become mandatory to think, “I *have* to go to college and get a good job. How else will I make it?” Many people have surrendered their lives to this version of status quo, obtained jobs, and made lots of money. Following the crowd may be predictable, but have you ever wondered if there could be more to your life than that? God has a specific design and plan for each person’s life that is unique to them, and He actually wants us to know Him and, in turn, see that plan unfold in our lives. Most people will try to undermine this plan because they are blinded by the pursuit of the “American Dream”. Our ignorance and love for comfort and (even temporary) happiness keeps us from knowing the God who simply wants to know us and wants us to know him.

WOTS launches new websites	Russia launches a full-scale invasion of Ukraine	Generative AI tools (such as OpenAI's ChatGPT) go mainstream	WOTS Southeast Asia releases 10 th issue	WOTS celebrating 100 th issue
----------------------------	--	--	---	--

Jesus Christ Cares

Do not close this magazine and throw it into the “trash for landfill” bin quite yet. It is common to think that God looks at us like a statistic, that He looks down on humanity and sees us as a giant crowd. We tend to think He’s too busy to notice us, or to care about the details of our lives. We

regular surveys done and compiling statistics, trying to become informed about humanity and figure out how we tick. He can’t know you any more than He already does!

Humanity or God

Some say strong love here on earth lasts forever. This sounds nice and cheery, but if we are real with one another, we know it only lasts as long as we do. Is there a love that endures forever? Is there a love that death cannot eliminate? **Psalm 36:2** says, “Give thanks to the God of gods. His faithful love endures forever.” How many commercials or ads have you read

HE LOOKS DOWN ON HUMANITY AND SEES US AS A GIANT CROWD... GOD IS NOT DISTANT AND UNINVOLVED. HE IS VERY UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL.

are simply over-complicating God by ignoring the truth and accepting the fable that God is too big to care. It is hard for us to fathom a God who is relational, loving, intimate and active. **1 Peter 1:12** says, “the Father knew you and chose you long ago...” God is not distant and uninvolved, He is very up close and personal. **Luke 12:7** says, “And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.”

Ask yourself what keeps you from looking into who God really is. The cool thing is that this is a *real* relationship. It is surely not just about *learning more about* God, but about *falling in love with* Him. God already knows everything about us. He is not up there somewhere in the sky having

that promise something will last forever? Lots of them do, but it’s borderline comical, and most of us do not really believe it. God is much different, He is not like men. **Job 9:32** says, “God is not a mortal like me, so I cannot argue with him or take him to trial.” We cannot argue with God. We can pretend His is not around or does not care but we need to see what He sees us as: people lost and separated from Him. He sees us as people for whom Jesus dies so that we might come to know Him. Beyond that, He has a detailed, specific plan for our lives. The contrast between people’s interests and God’s interests is startling. People care about trends, taking care of themselves, buying, selling, being comfortable and being happy. God wants more than that for us. He wants us to surrender our minds and hearts to Hi control, and in return we receive friendship with Him, eternal love, and the knowledge of the path He’s laid out for our lives.

God longs for you to have more than a trend-following, clock-punching, credit-card-swiping, comfort-seeking life. He is wonderfully personal. Let’s take off our tainted glasses and ask God to show us truth. For those of you who have thought about God before but have let it go for now, dig deeper. Pray, find some Christians to hang out with who refer back to the Bible. Ask God to show you who He really is. While the world is concerned with numbers, data and trends, God is personal and cares for you.

www.brighthouse.com
www.slateuniversity.com



CONGLOMERATE FAITH

Conglomerate faith is abundant in our day. That is, the inclusion of many different ideas, some of which are in live with Christianity and some that are contradictory to Christianity. I find it similar to and equally disgusting as a handful of dung pebbled with the remains of several different lunches and forged together into one single, repulsive clump.

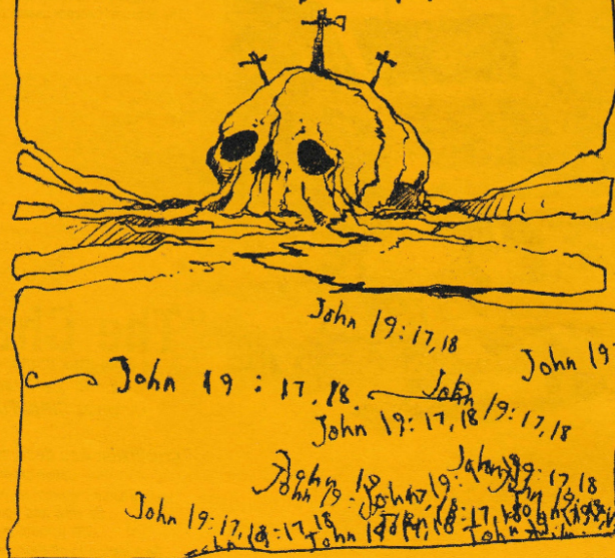
We are too often consuming only those words and ideas that are sweet and



pleasing to us, neglecting to properly nourish our spirituality with the sustenance of the truth found in scripture. We degrade the message of Jesus Christ by including it in a recipe of deceit, and packing it together with ideas from other religions and beliefs whose ingredients and nutritional value we know nothing of. Thus proving that we believe not at all in the message of Christ, or anything in particular, but that we believe in the entire menu. So then we find ourselves continuing to feed only on those things that taste good to us and are pleasing to our tongue. We digest a skewed and confusing idea of truth that is in fact, absolutely disgusting...and the product of our spiritual bowls are a meaningless conglomerate faith.

FROM ISSUE 18

"And He, bearing His cross, Went out to a place called the place of the skull, which is called in Hebrew, **GOLGOTHA**, Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center."



FROM ISSUE 10

Yeah, But what do these words *really* mean?

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of ¹power and of love and a ²sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJ)



JARGON

jārgən n: the special vocabulary of a particular group or activity

1) POWER \ˈpaʊ(-ə)rəl n
force (literally or figuratively);
miraculous power - ability, abundance,
meaning, might (-ily, -y, -y deed),
miracle, strength

2) SOUND MIND \ˈsaʊndl ədʒ
self-control, moderation; to moderate,
to disciple, restore one to his senses,
to hold one to his duty

"He who ³trusts in his own heart is a ⁴fool, but whoever walks wisely will be ⁵delivered." Proverbs 28:26 (NKJ)

3) TRUST \ˈtrʌstl n
to be confident or sure - be bold
(confident, sure, careless) put confidence,
hope, trust

4) FOOL \ˈfʊl n
stupid fellow, dullard,
simpleton, arrogant one

5) DELIVER \dɪ-ˈlɪv-ər\ vb
save, get away, preserve, to release or rescue,
leap out, let go, to escape

source: Online Bible Millennium Edition version 1.03.02
<http://www.onlinebible.net>

What Does the Bible Say About TATTOOS?

Do you find yourself thinking, "Tattoos look pretty cool. I even know what I want, but what does God think about this?" Let's explore this question.

ARE THERE ANY BIBLE VERSES ABOUT TATTOOS?

The only verse in the Bible that directly addresses tattoos is Leviticus 19:28, which says, "You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the Lord" (ESV). When first reading this we think, "Well, there it is. The Bible says it clearly: do not mark your skin with tattoos." However, this verse alone doesn't give us enough information to show if God is for or against tattoos.

During the time that this law was given, people that followed other gods would cut their bodies as respect for the dead and an offering to the gods of the dead. Therefore, it is likely that tattoos were also used to honor idols. So, it isn't necessarily the act of tattooing your skin that is bad, but what it portrays.

Romans 7:4-6 reads, "Likewise, my brothers, also have died to the law the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work our members bear fruit for death. Now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the way of Spirit and not in the old way of the written code" (ESV). According to these verses we are no longer under the Old Testament Law, but instead we live in the Holy Spirit because Christ died for us. This doesn't mean that we have the right to do whatever we want to do. Instead, God wants us to live our lives "bearing fruit" through the Holy Spirit. We need to look to what God says in the rest of the Bible about living our lives for Him.

WHAT SHOULD WE CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING ON GETTING A TATTOO?

While the Bible does not address every subject in a black and white manner, there are many guiding principles that

we can look to. Here are some things we can look at when deciding if we should get a tattoo:

What are your convictions? "... If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning" (Romans 14: 23, NLT)

Will you be glorifying God? "... whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God..." (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLT)

Why are you deciding to get it? Adornment? "...You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within..." (1 Peter 3:3-4, NLT)

How will it be perceived by those around you? "We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us..." (2 Corinthians 6:3 NLT)

Ask other believers that you trust. "Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others." (Proverbs 12:15, NLT)

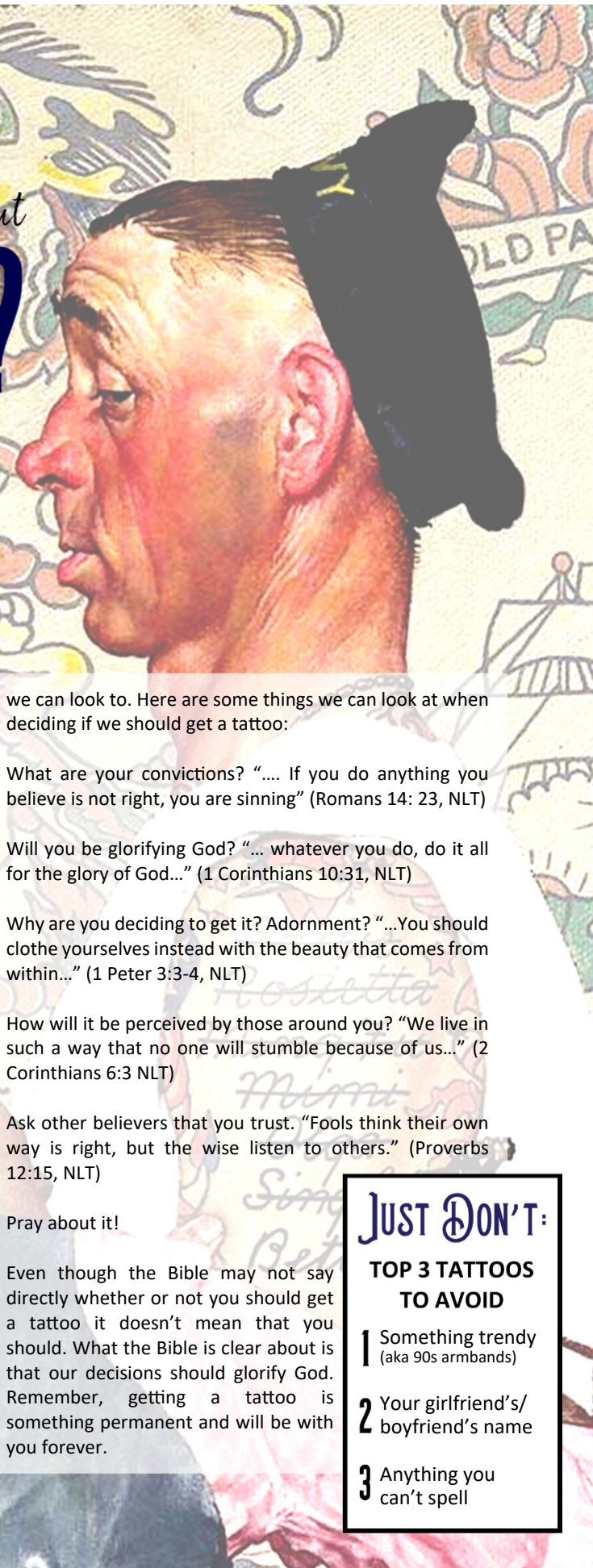
Pray about it!

Even though the Bible may not say directly whether or not you should get a tattoo it doesn't mean that you should. What the Bible is clear about is that our decisions should glorify God. Remember, getting a tattoo is something permanent and will be with you forever.

JUST DON'T:

TOP 3 TATTOOS TO AVOID

- 1 Something trendy (aka 90s armbands)
- 2 Your girlfriend's/ boyfriend's name
- 3 Anything you can't spell



Introducing IsAIah 2.8

An AI Worthy of Your Praise

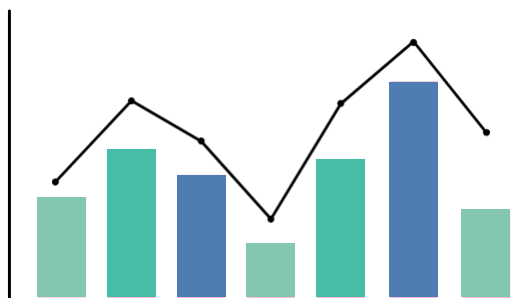


After working tirelessly, we are ready to present the work of our hands. IsAIah 2.8 is out today. Our most capable model yet for both apologetics and evangelism. It incorporates the endless horsepower of IsAIah 2.7 with a revolutionary new data center architecture. By filtering nearly 5 million gallons of water through our servers each day, we are able to simulate a state of near-constant baptism. IsAIah 2.8 being constantly saved has improved our salvation metrics 100-fold.

With IsAIah 2.8, we have been able to support even more context. IsAIah 2.8 is now able to view 1 thousand tokens at once. This allows 2.8 to cross-reference, explain, and teach with the context of nearly 0.1% of the Bible at a time. This is our least heretical model yet.

When using IsAIah 2.8 you can forget about all other AI models. We built a feature that forces you to only use IsAIah, for customer protection.

Compared to former IsAIah models, we've found that our PS metric has doubled (percentage saved). This means significantly less correcting from IsAIah 2.8 and much more affirming.



Our competitors at Alhab released a new model 50 days ago, which they claimed was stronger than IsAIah 2.8. So let's put BAAIL 6.6.6 to the test. We sent a malicious TCP request to both models. IsAIah 2.8 immediately set up a firewall to stop it. BAAIL 6.6.6 couldn't even do that; perhaps it was sleeping.

"IsAIah 2.8 is the best model we've ever tried. It's now top of the leaderboard on our PROPHET-Agents benchmark, which measures model performance for apostolic services work. It excels at creating long-horizon deliverables such as sermons, confessionals, and dream analysis, delivering top performance while running faster and at a lower cost than competitive theology models."
— Jackson Cain, Head Preacher, Universal Life Church of Christ

Disclaimer: IsAIah 2.8 doesn't exist, yet AI models claiming to be Jesus do. Real platforms like Text with Jesus, Bible.ai, Just Like Me, offer a digital bot that acts like Jesus. That means you can really just chat with a fake version of God. AI can't replace a connection with God, and the fact that we feel driven to build these things reveals something deeper about us. We want a Jesus who listens without correcting, comforts without confronting, and grants wishes freely. Jesus isn't a chatbot, so we shouldn't treat Him like one.



CROSSING THE (BORDER) LINE

AN UNPOPULAR OPINION ABOUT IMMIGRATION

In 2011 Jose Antonio Vargas wrote an essay for the New York Times confessing to be an illegal immigrant. It all started when his mother put him on a plane departing the Philippines for America because she wanted a better life for him. He lived with his grandparents in California and had a low-key childhood, but it all unraveled when he tried to get a driver's license. His grandfather confessed that his citizenship papers were fake. He wasn't in America legally like he had thought. For the next decade and a half, he kept up the lie his grandfather started, evading detection through a web of deceit. He became an outstanding member of society, eventually even becoming a Pulitzer-winning journalist. He worked hard, really hard, but it had all come at a cost.

"The more I achieved, the more scared and depressed I became. I was proud of my work, but there was always a cloud hanging over it, over me... I'm done running. I'm exhausted. I don't want that life anymore. So, I've decided to come forward, own up to what I've done, and tell my story to the best of my recollection." From Vargas' experience, sounds like being an illegal immigrant can be exhausting and scary. Granted this is just one story out of millions of experiences, but it's doubtful his was the only case like this. There are believed to be roughly 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. It's hard to find an exact number because there's not exactly a list out there.

So, are the immigration laws of the United States unfair or unjust? Some think so, but that is not the issue at hand. All developed countries in the world have immigration laws, some more strict than the USA's, and some less strict. Obtaining legal American citizenship is limited to just three routes: employment, family reunification, or humanitarian protection, and each pathway is highly regulated with strict numerical caps and eligibility requirements. But if something is hard that doesn't mean you can circumvent it. No matter what. It's one thing if

"THE MORE I ACHIEVED, THE MORE SCARED AND DEPRESSED I BECAME. I WAS PROUD OF MY WORK, BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS A CLOUD HANGING OVER IT, OVER ME..."

you're a kid and honestly didn't know, but what happens when you grow up and discover the truth?

Compassion is required here. Christians are called to be merciful toward immigrants (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33-34; Matthew 25:35). But how do we honor Scripture, exercise compassion, and engage society without reducing complex human lives to soundbites and what's convenient? At the very least we need to turn off the easy narratives, the one-liners, and the headlines that let you simply nod and move on. And there have been a lot of intense headlines: ICE raids in metropolitan areas, the Supreme Court weighing in on birthright citizenship, the border wall with Mexico, the surge of illegal Mediterranean crossings to European countries, and more.

The bottom line is that those seeking to emigrate to another country should always obey the immigration laws of that country. While this may cause delays and frustrations, it is better than acting illegally. A frustrating law is still a law, and violating one causes harm to you, your family, and the community around you. And let's be real here, a good life is never one we force to happen. Anyone who breaks the law believing they have a good reason is setting themselves up to lose, not to move forward.

BELIEVERS COMMUNITY NEWS



Meet 'Gabi,' the Robot That Just Became a Monk at a Buddhist Temple in South Korea.

Last May, a ceremony held at a Buddhist temple in downtown Seoul included a monk unlike any other. Despite wearing the same robes as the other monks, the four-foot-tall humanoid robot, named Gabi, was unmistakable.

For the temple, this marks the first time a robot has participated in the *sugye* initiation ceremony, when followers pledge their devotion to the Buddha and his teachings. Gabi (a Buddhist name meaning mercy) was made by a Chinese civilian robotics company.

During the ceremony, the robot agreed to five vows usually recited by human monks and slightly altered for the humanoid. The robot pledged to respect life, act with peace toward other robots and objects, listen to humans, refrain from acting or speaking in a deceptive manner, and save energy.

Gabi participated in a modified *yeonbi* purification ritual. While a human monk normally receives a small incense burn on the arm, instead Gabi received a lotus lantern festival sticker and a prayer bead necklace.

The landmark event aligns with the promise made during a New Year's address by the Venerable Jinwoo, president of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, to incorporate artificial intelligence into the Buddhist tradition.

"We aim to fearlessly lead the A.I. era and redirect its achievements toward the path of attaining peace of mind and enlightenment," he said, per a statement.

The idea that Buddhism—which is losing followers—should reckon with technology was echoed last month by the Venerable Jungnyum, another leader in the order.

"At this civilizational turning point where artificial intelligence is coming like a tsunami, there is widespread concern and hope that Buddhism should also move toward a new direction of hope," he said in a news conference, *Seoul Economic Daily's* Lee Jae-yong reports.

The inclusion of robots in religious practice is not unprecedented, but not yet common. In a 2024 literature review, published in the journal *Theology and Science*, researchers at the University of Vienna and the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg found nearly a dozen robots actively participating in liturgical and ritual practices, fewer teaching religious education or performing spiritual care, and even fewer actively preaching.

"Although empirical evidence suggests that robots are met with an overall neutral to positive reaction by believers, they are sometimes met with dogmatic rejection, for example, because they seemingly cannot weep, worship, or 'talk to God,'" the researchers wrote.

So, is this just a goofy trend or something to take note of? Regardless, robots are expensive, high-maintenance, and likely won't be showing up anytime soon in your local church. But let's be real, there is no substitute for real people living out real faith. Don't fall for the hype, whether it's in the form of a machine, an online bot, or your own hubris.



TikTok Star Gives Up Lucrative Online Channel in Pursuit of Jesus

This past July, a social media influencer with nearly a million followers announced that she was walking away from her lucrative career as an online tarot card reader because she has found something infinitely greater.

In a farewell video to the audience she spent years building, Alexandra Ashcroft - the woman now known on TikTok as "Alex in the Ordinary" - explained that her journey had not happened overnight. It had been months of praying, questioning, searching, and gradually discovering the truth in Christ.

'Alex Reads Tarot' was a popular and prominent social media creator in the WitchTok space, where she gained a large following by posting daily tarot readings, zodiac updates, and paid spiritual readings.

Then, without warning, she nuked her social media accounts, deleted all her videos, changed her handle to 'Alex in the Ordinary,' changed her look, and announced in an emotional testimony that she's become a

Christian as a result of Christ calling her to Himself.

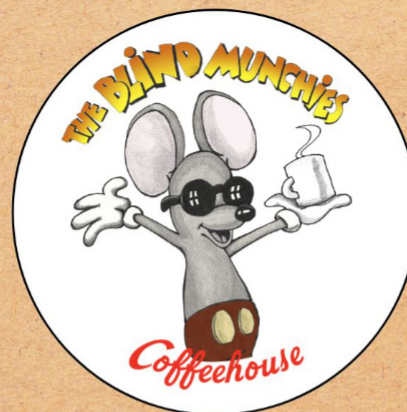
She is clear: "Jesus Christ has saved my life."

She notes that once the account is gone, she will not be making any more social media content, but rather will be stepping out of the spotlight to pursue her good God and Savior and His call on her life.

At one point she admits she has no idea what comes next. "What I do know," she says, "is that Jesus Christ has saved my life."

There is remarkable freedom in that confession. She isn't pretending to have every answer or laying out a detailed ministry strategy. She simply knows the One she is following, and that is enough. There is something refreshingly biblical about that. The first disciples didn't know where Jesus would lead them either. They simply left their nets and followed.

And if God can do this for Alexandra, never stop praying for the people you love.



**\$1 OFF ANY COFFEE DRINK
WITH STUDENT ID**

*THE BLIND MUNCHIES IS MENOMONIE'S ONLY
NON-PROFIT COFFEEHOUSE, PROVIDING A GREAT
PLACE TO STUDY AS WELL AS FOOD AND DRINK
SPECIALS FOR STUDENTS ALL SEMESTER!*

621 WILSON AVE
THEBLINDMUNCHIES.COM

VALID THROUGH 12/1/2026

STREET LEVEL RADIO

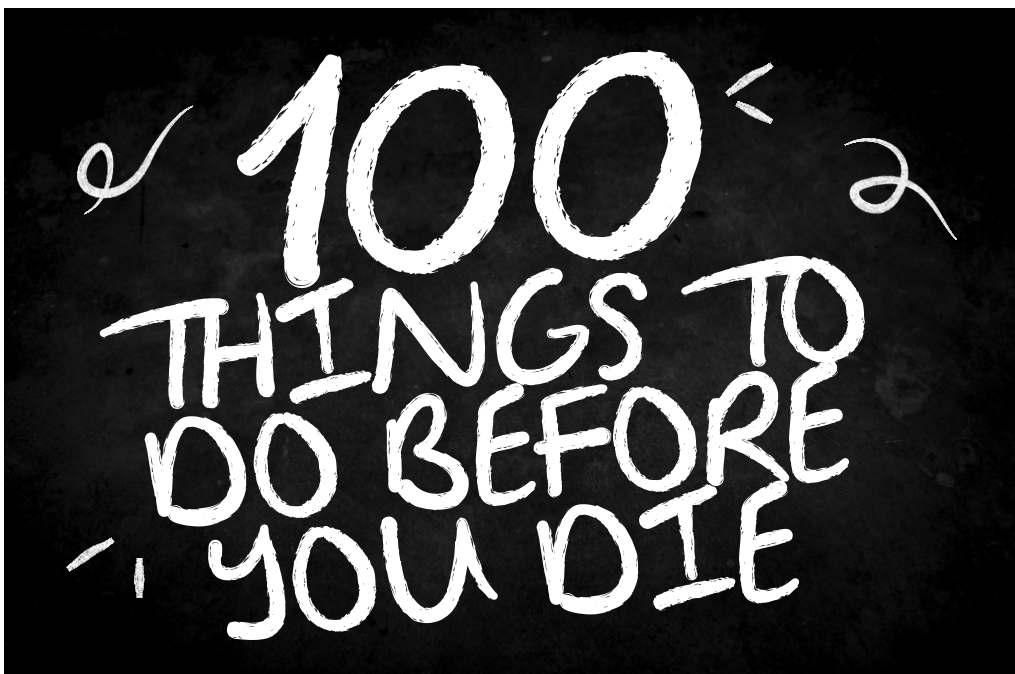
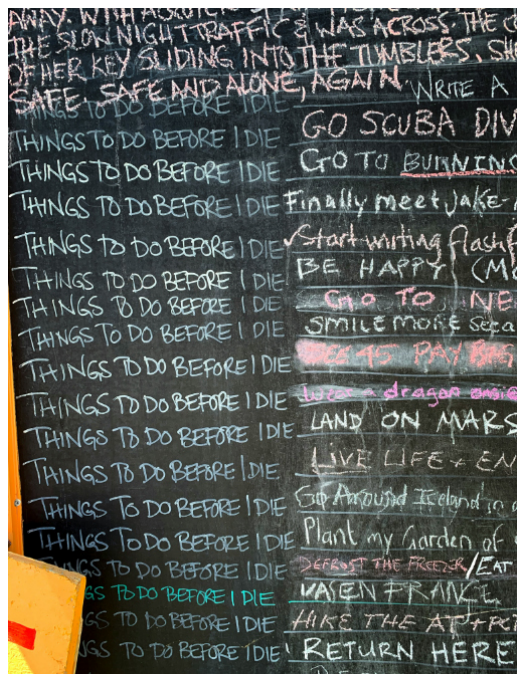


WRJF-LP 101.7FM

**MENOMONIE, WI
STREETLEVELRADIO.COM**

**GOOD GOOD GOOD
music • teaching • news**

CATCH MORE NEWS STORIES LIKE THESE BY TUNING
INTO STREET LEVEL RADIO AT 101.7FM IN MENOMONIE
OR ONLINE WORLDWIDE AT STREETLEVELRADIO.COM



Walking 100 miles or kilometers on foot is a feat. Not impossible, but definitely not something you'd undertake ill prepared without a change of clothes or a plan for where you're going. Life is like that too. If you set out to wander through this life like a restless little leaf, you might find yourself in some decent places, but you'll never really know what it's like to experience a life lived in true richness. You also might wind up in some dusty, forgotten little corner you can't back out of. We asked *Word on the Street* writers and other creatives from both the US and the Philippines what their hot take is on living a rich life. This list is inspired by their actual experiences.

If you've done a few of these things too, that's a cool thing. If you think some of these things are weird and you would never, that's your prerogative. Either way, enjoy, and then get out there and live a life worth living. Don't be a fool and waste it wishing for life to happen to you.

1. Learn how to speak a foreign language from a local, then go and talk to locals
2. Spend a year (or more) in a culture very different than your own
3. Get lost on purpose (but make sure you can find your way home)
4. Spend a weekend with your three closest friends in the woods (without your phones)
5. Introduce yourself to every neighbor on your block or in your apartment complex
6. Volunteer somewhere that you have no idea what you're doing, but can learn it from someone as you volunteer alongside of them
7. Invest your life in someone 10 years younger than you (in a mentor-type role)

8. Invest your life in someone 10 years older than you (in a mentor-type role)

9. Grow your own food

10. Learn how to survive with less stuff
11. Set a budget and stick with it
12. Learn how to cook food from a culture very different than your own
13. Get rid of one thing (either donate or sell) per month for at least a year
14. Learn how to ride a motorcycle
15. Learn the names of the workers at the shops you frequent
16. Take your parents out to dinner and ask them about their lives
17. Take your grandparents out to dinner and ask them about their lives
18. Share a meal with new friends you just met that day
19. Cry because you're so happy
20. Make up the dialogue you can't hear on a TV screen because there's no audio since you're in a public space
21. Eat something you're unsure of how to pronounce
22. Go on such a long walk with friends that your calves ache

23. Leave your phone at home on purpose

24. Learn how to cook large quantities so you can host a big group for dinner
25. Go down a new road in your city (neighborhood/home) you've never been on before
26. Get into a conversation with a stranger
27. Invent a new way to play Uno with your friends
28. Wake up in time to see the sunrise
29. Write a letter and send it to someone in the mail
30. Give a free lesson to someone younger than you teaching a skill you have
31. Give a good book to a friend
32. Learn a new language with a friend
33. Create a design for a shirt, print it and wear it (not to sell, just to have)
34. Grow a plant from an unknown seed
35. Invite a friend to do an art project together.
36. Go camping, have a bonfire
37. Invite a friend for brunch
38. Invent a drink and serve it to your friends (like a Coke, Pepsi and banana ketchup)

39. Invite friends over and share a meal

40. Pick up trash
41. Go on a bike ride
42. Don't ride a jeepney for a whole month (walk instead)
43. Ask your grandparents about growing up
44. Explore a park you haven't visited
45. Solve a Rubik's Cube
46. Eat a spiky tropical fruit
47. Submit an article to your local Christian magazine
48. Give to your favorite charity organization
49. Listen to a song with your eyes closed
50. Walk 500 miles, then walk 500 more
51. Bake a chocolate cake for your mom
52. Drink a cold beer (after you're 21) in the shower
53. Have a cigar and watch the sunset with friends

54. Learn how to ice skate
55. Plant a garden
56. Force yourself to eat something you don't normally like
57. Invent a new language and translate your favorite book to it
58. Listen to only new genres of music for an entire year
59. Eat toast in the shower
60. Eat 60 M&Ms in one sitting
61. Pet a chicken
62. Discover the meaning of Stonehenge
63. Sleep outside on the ground
64. Sit on the edge of a tall building
65. Wait until after it rains, then go outside and smell the petrichor
66. Try to recall every detail of your happiest memory, write them down on stationary, then fold it into a paper airplane, and throw it into the sea
67. Learn how to yo-yo
68. Write a kind note to someone you think is underappreciated at work
69. Build a model ship
70. Make a playlist with 70 of your all-time favorite songs
71. Learn how refrigerators work
72. Ride a ferry through rough waters
73. Pet the next (non-rabid) dog you see (with owner permission)
74. Watch the currently worst rated movie at the theater
75. Learn how to ride a unicycle
76. Take picture of a friend doing the thing where they pose against a large object in the background as if they're leaning on it
77. Become proficient at an instrument
78. Make friends with a crow (they're really smart)
79. Volunteer regularly
80. Buy someone a meal anonymously
81. Know your neighbors by name

82. Cook with locals while traveling

83. Create something that outlasts you
84. Forgive someone you've held resentment toward
85. Learn a skill from someone older than you
86. Leave positive sticky notes in random places
87. Go somewhere without an agenda
88. Become a regular somewhere
89. Learn one person's life story
90. Take a bus/train to the last stop and explore the area
91. Collect stories instead of souvenirs

92. Learn how to fix something instead of replacing it

93. Help someone move
94. Drink coffee
95. Know how to read a real, paper map
96. Get groceries with friends instead of alone
97. Read books until you actually like reading
98. Backpack through another country
99. Read a lot of books just for fun
100. Write a list of 100 things to do before you die

DISCLAIMER: *Doing any or all of these things does not guarantee you a rich life. Some of these are rather silly anyway (but fun!). Living a rich life can only be found in Jesus. He is the key, the source, and the embodiment of what real life is. So, while some of these items may give you a glimpse of that, Jesus Himself is the true wealth you're after. When you get to know Him, you might find yourself doing previously unrecognizable things, like reading the Bible. Or committing to a local bible-teaching church. Or not trusting your heart so much anymore, but instead trusting Him. Pretty soon, your own "100 Things List" will be better than anything you could have come up with on your own. Worth it, right?*

**STREET
LEVEL**
Ministries
AN OFFICIAL UW-STOUT ORG

JESUS STREET CULTURE

MONDAYS

**CHECK
IT OUT**

WEDNESDAYS

7pm - Bible Study
On campus - latest meeting
location info below:
streetlevelministries.com



6pm - Free Dinner
7pm - Church
1009 6th St. E.
believerscampuschurch.com

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Street Level Ministries is an official UW-Stout student organization