

STILL SPEAKING

How biblical metaphors breathe through modern stories



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WE THRIVE

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WATER OF
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MEET THE EDITORS

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Our mission statement:

Explore the Bible's use of metaphors in order to connect complex ideas to everyday life, making the challenging seem more tangible, fostering a deeper understanding of walking on the narrow road.



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"MY PEOPLE HAVE COMMITTED TWO SINS: THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME, THE SPRING OF LIVING WATER, AND HAVE DUG THEIR OWN CISTERNS, BROKEN CISTERNS THAT CANNOT HOLD WATER.
(JEREMIAH 2:13)

SEVEN
PLASTIC
WATER
BOTTLES
AND A
12-MILE
LOOP

WATER OF LIFE

A SLIGHT CHILL FILLED THE NOVEMBER AIR.

BRAD PEPPA, A REGIONAL HOME MISSIONARY AND CHURCH PLANTER, FOUND HIMSELF ON A STONY PATH IN TONTO NATIONAL FOREST, NORTH OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

"I WAS MEETING WITH SOMEONE, TELLING THEM ABOUT MY PLANS, AND HE HAD WARNED ME AND SAID, 'BRAD, JUST MAKE SURE WHATEVER YOU DO OUT THERE, THAT YOU TAKE ENOUGH WATER.'" PEPPA SAID.

AT 3:30 P.M., PEPPA SET OUT FOR THE MOUNTAINOUS HIKE WITH ALMOST A GALLON OF WATER AND HIS CAMERA.

PEPPA TOOK PICTURES, SLOWLY MOVING ALONG THE PATH. HE SOON CAME TO A SPOT WHERE THE TRAIL WAS UNCLEAR. HE COULD EITHER TURN AROUND OR PUSH FORWARD.

FOOLISHLY, HE SAID, HE KEPT PUSHING FORWARD. THE DENSE SCRUB VEGETATION MADE THE PATH NEARLY INVISIBLE, PRESSING PEPPA THROUGH A BUNCH OF PLANTS. WITHOUT KNOWING HE HAD COVID-19, A SUDDEN FEVER STRUCK HIM, FORCING HIM TO LOSE WATER QUICKLY.

"I WAS LOSING WATER REALLY SIGNIFICANTLY, JUST THROUGH MY SWEAT," PEPPA SAID. "MY CLOTHES WERE SOAKING WET, JUST FROM THE ACTIVITY."

AS HE FOUND HIMSELF FARTHER FROM THE TRAIL, HE LOST INTERNET CONNECTION. COMING ACROSS FIELDS OF YUCCA AND PRICKLY PEAR, HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO WALK THROUGH. WEARING ONLY SHORTS, THE NEEDLES STABBED HIS LEGS, RESULTING IN A STREAM OF RED TRAILING BEHIND HIM.

WITH EVERY STEP, PEPPO WATCHED HIS WATER RECEDE IN HIS LAST PLASTIC BOTTLE.

"AND THEN I REALIZED I WAS IN PRETTY BIG TROUBLE ON BOTH FRONTS,"

PEPPO SAID.

WATER IS BASIC TO OUR EXISTENCE, MICHAEL BAILEY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY, SAID. WITHOUT IT, THE BODY DOES NOT FUNCTION THE WAY IT WAS DESIGNED TO — SIMILAR TO TRYING TO FUNCTION WITHOUT JESUS.

WHEN 5:30 P.M. STRUCK, THE WARMTH OF THE SUN WENT DOWN, AND THE TEMPERATURE DROPPED TO THE 20S. WITHOUT ANY WAY OF MAKING A FIRE, CHANGING CLOTHES OR CALLING FOR HELP BECAUSE OF HIS DEAD PHONE, PEPPO FEARED FOR HIS LIFE.

HE CAME TO A CROSSROADS. IF HE SAT STILL OVERNIGHT, HE WOULD DEVELOP HYPOTHERMIA, BUT IF HE CONTINUED TO MOVE, HE WOULD HAVE TO DRINK MORE WATER, WHICH WAS DWINDLING QUICKLY.

"I WAS SEVERELY COTTON-MOUTHED, SO ALMOST LIKE A VISCOSITY IN YOUR MOUTH, WHERE JUST EVERYTHING IS STICKING," PEPPO SAID. "YOUR TONGUE IS STICKING TO THE ROOF OF YOUR MOUTH, AND YOUR LIPS ARE DRY."

PEPPO STOOD IN THE WILDERNESS ALONE. EVERYTHING WAS STILL.

HE HOPED FOR THE SOUND OF A CAR OR ANOTHER LIFEFORM, BUT THERE WAS ONLY DEAFENING, FRIGHTENING SILENCE. A STILLNESS THAT WAS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES, PEPPO SAID.

TWO HOURS PASSED, AND EVERYTHING WAS DARK, EXCEPT FOR THE SMALL LIGHT GLOWING OFF HIS CAMERA'S SCREEN. WITH ARMS EXTENDED, HE MADE EVERY EFFORT NOT TO RUN INTO SOMETHING. NOT EVEN THE STARS WERE VISIBLE TO SHED SOME LIGHT.

"THE WHOLE TIME I'M JUST THINKING ABOUT DRINKING AND DRINKING AND DRINKING AND DRINKING AS MUCH AS I CAN POSSIBLY DRINK," PEPPO SAID.



THEN HIS CAMERA BATTERY DIED.

STEP BY STEP, EVERYTHING ESSENTIAL FOR PEPPO'S SURVIVAL WAS TAKEN AWAY. WATER WAS THE LAST OF THOSE THINGS.

"(WATER IS) SOMETHING THAT YOUR LIFE DEPENDS UPON," PEPPO SAID. "IT WAS GOD SHOWING ME THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSING EVERYTHING THAT WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO KEEP ME ALIVE, IN ORDER TO SHOW ME THAT HE WAS THE ONE THAT WOULD DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO KEEP ME ALIVE."

GOD'S GIFT OF WATER IS A REMINDER THAT HE PROVIDES EVERYTHING NEEDED TO BE FULLY SATISFIED, GREGORY MAGEE, PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL STUDIES, SAID. PEOPLE CAN TRUST AND RELY ON GOD'S PROVISION, RATHER THAN IN OURSELVES, AS WE ARE LIKE BROKEN CISTERNS.

THE SINFULNESS OF HUMAN NATURE OFTEN RELIES ON THEIR OWN RESERVES TO SUSTAIN THEIR SOULS, MAGEE SAID. HOWEVER, THE CISTERNS WE ARE TEMPTED TO DRAW WATER FROM LEAD TO EMPTINESS AS WE FIGHT TO STORE OUR OWN NOURISHMENT IN A PLACE THAT IS BROKEN.

A FAINT SOUND APPEARED.

PEPPO FOUND A ROAD THAT LED HIM TO HIS PARKED CAR. HIS SHREDDED LEGS SAT ON HIS LEATHER SEAT, IN A DARK PARKING LOT AS HIS FADING EYES LOOKED INTO THE BACK SEAT, REVEALING A BRICK OF WRAPPED-UP PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES.

WRITTEN BY LISA PINSENSCHAUM

Photo Credit: Brad Peppo

FROM FISHERMEN TO FISHERS OF MEN

by Karlee Johnson

Steve Haverfield is an avid fisherman from Shelby, Ohio. He owns all kinds of lures and fishing poles. He has experience fishing for crappie, blue gill and more.

Bill Heth is an adjunct Bible professor at Taylor University and an evangelist. He has been trained in approximately five different evangelism programs and has shared his faith over 1,000 times.

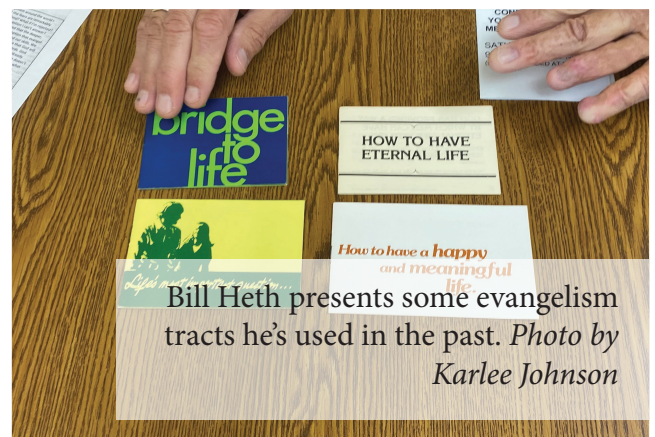
While these two may not seem to have much in common on the surface, they are both looking for a catch. In both fishing and evangelism, the person is intentionally seeking something or someone out, being mindful of their particular environment, using methods to draw the subject in and hoping they get a “keeper.”

This is the parallel Jesus may have been drawing when he looked at fishermen brothers Simon and Andrew and said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

When discussing their respective fields, Haverfield and Heth described similar approaches and emphasized similar themes.



Steve Haverfield poses with two crappie. *Photo provided by Steve Haverfield*



Bill Heth presents some evangelism tracts he's used in the past. *Photo by Karlee Johnson*

“FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL
MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN.”

EVANGELIZE WITH CRU

**Equipping students for
conversations about
Christ**

Next meeting: Nov. 20

4:45 PM - 8:30 PM

Meet at student center



In fishing, it is important to consider the type of fish you are wanting to catch. Different fish will be attracted to different things, so you have to adjust what bait you use based on the kind of fish.

For example, perch is one kind of fish Haverfield has fished. It has a specific appetite, so Haverfield adjusts accordingly.

“They don’t want worms, they don’t want wax worms, they don’t want grubs,” Haverfield said. “What they want is a minnow. They want a Lake Erie shiner ... You know why? They’re natural to the lake, that’s what they’re used to eating. So just a minnow isn’t a minnow, and a lure isn’t just a lure.”

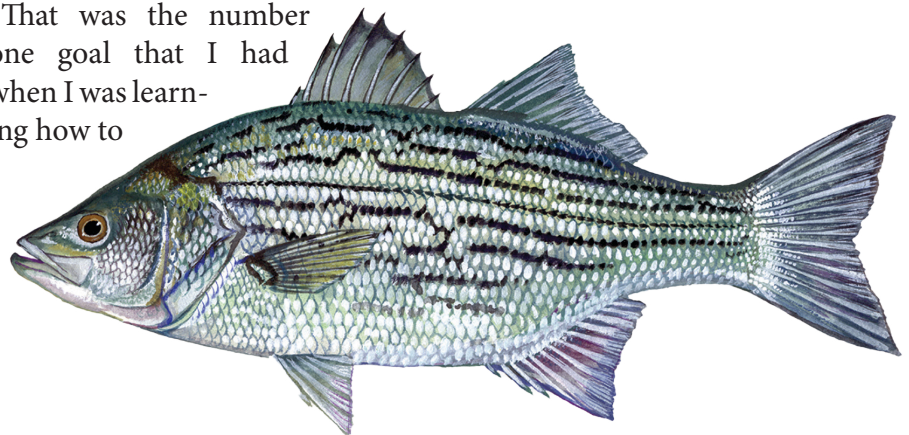
One type of lure is not going to work on all fish because each fish has unique preferences. The same principle can be applied to evangelism. There are many different ways to evangelize.

Heth described contact evangelism, where the Gospel is shared with a stranger, typically in one encounter. Or friendship evangelism, which takes place over time. A Christian gets to know a person and then witnesses them through the relationship they form with them. Finally, mass evangelism, tract evangelism and more.

Each person is unique, so it is important to be flexible with how we share our faith, Heth explained.

“That was the number one goal that I had when I was learning how to

share my faith,” he said. “I didn’t want somebody rejecting Jesus Christ for something, some of my behavior, something that I said, or something that was unbecoming, you know, of the gospel. I did everything possible to alleviate those tensions. But the fact of the matter is, that person has their own personality and their own place in their life, and they’re going to either take the next step further with me in the conversation or cut it off.”



Once the Christian has identified his or her audience and has all the relevant resources, they have to actually go and find people.

Additionally, an important aspect of fishing is locating the fish, Haverfield said. One of his friends taught him this by asking, “Steve, where do you eat?” Steve thought to himself, “We eat at the dinner table,” – not in the den or the bedroom. His friend explained that fish are the same way.

“You gotta figure out, where’s their table? Where do they eat at?” he said.

To catch fish, fishers have to go where the fish are. In the same way, to share the Gospel, believers have to go where people are — neighborhoods, schools, beaches, etc.

Finally, in both fishing and evangelism, patience is important. Sometimes, mentioning faith in a conversation will not yield immediate fruit. When that is the case, Heth says he tries again another time.

Likewise, when Haverfield goes to a specific fishing spot and the fish aren’t biting, he simply tries out a new spot. He said he may move to 10 or 12 different spots before he starts catching fish. Instead of getting frustrated, he sees these moments as learning opportunities.

In fishing, you can use the right bait, the right fishing pole and be in the right spot. However, you can’t make the fish bite. Similarly, Heth said it is not our job to convert people.

“Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share

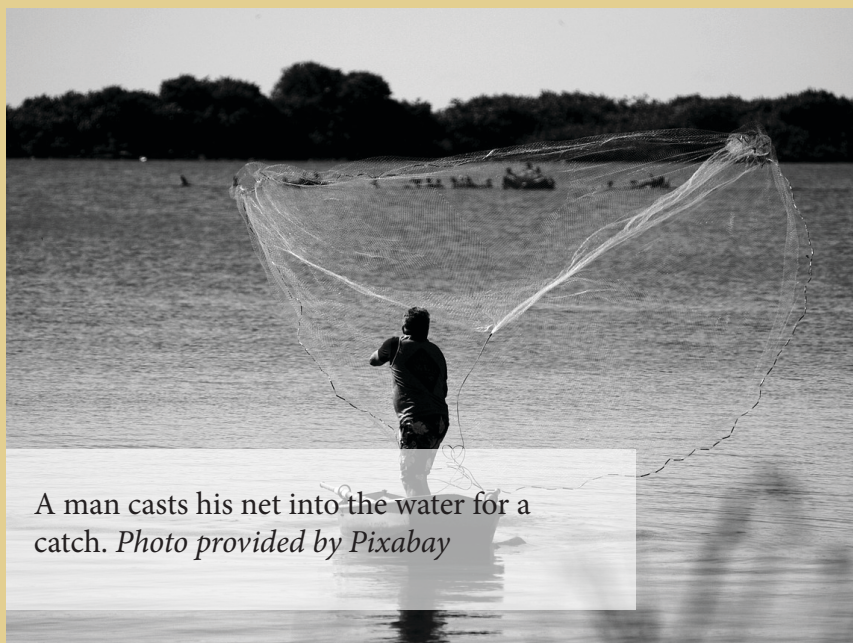
Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and leave the results to God,” he said.

As Christians, we have been entrusted with the good news. We, too, are fishers of men. And just like real fishers, we go out, taking note of our surroundings and equipping ourselves with the necessary tools. Yet, we are never in the boat alone.

After commissioning the disciples in Matthew 28, Jesus assures them of His presence. This is the same assurance believers can cling to today when witnessing to others.

**“And surely
I am with
you always,
to the very
end of the
age.”**

**(Matt.
28:20b)**



A man casts his net into the water for a catch. *Photo provided by Pixabay*

Life is a Marathon, not a Sprint

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

- Hebrews 12:1-2

By Marisa Reinhard

The sound of shoes hitting the pavement in steady rhythm reverberates through the brisk, cool air. Your heart is racing. Your breath is growing rapid. Sweat is trickling down your face.

You feel tired. Ready to give up. Your energy is dwindling.

As your mind yells for you to stop, your thoughts are suddenly consumed by a whisper.

Don't give up. I am right here with you.

Jesus spoke to you. And all at once, you are hit with determination to finish the race, and to run with endurance.

Running is no easy feat, and Jaynie Halterman, a sophomore cross-country runner at Taylor University, confirmed this.

There are times she is racing and wants to stop, trip, fall and be done. Her mind tells her she cannot finish the race because it is too hard.

“But then in those moments, I have to flip it,” Halterman said. “I have to tell myself, ‘No, I can do hard things. Christ is with me and will help me do these hard things.’”

Her favorite verse, 1 Corinthians 10:13, reminds her that the hardships God

gives His children are exactly the right amount. He never gives them something they cannot handle, but it is also never too little that they will not grow from it.

Halterman has run competitively since sixth grade, but it was in third grade that she recognized her talent.

She was playing tag with her neighbor and vividly remembers how she realized she was fast, and she liked running.

Since her freshman year of high school, Halterman knew she wanted to run in college.

Because of her gift for running, she could have gone to a bigger, more competitive school. Taylor's cross-country team recently attended a meet hosted by Florida State University, where they competed against Division I schools including FSU, Louisiana State University and the University of Georgia.

Out of over 300 runners, Halterman came in fourth place, trailing a pair of LSU runners and an FSU runner by just a few seconds.

Despite her talent, Halterman chose Taylor because she did not want to make her life revolve around athletics.

“That’s something I struggled with all through high school,” she said. “It led to a

lot of mental health struggles, and it just uprooted my life because it became an idol. So I knew I wanted a place where I could have that balance, where my faith and my community and my sport and schooling were all going to be important, and I wouldn’t be seen as just an athlete.”

Halterman said in high school, her time consisted of school then practice every day. She was busy all the time, until one or both came to an end.

There were several times school and track would end at the same time – when the summer rolled around, she had nothing to do. She said it was a struggle.

“I went kind of crazy, because I just mentally struggled so much,” she said. “It was only a two-week break from running, but I just had no idea what to do with myself. And it was horrible.”

Halterman said intentional time with the Lord, her floor and communities outside of her team help her remain rooted in her identity in Christ rather than put her worth in the sport.

Along with that, Halterman makes it a goal to leave an impression on her competitors. She recalled a recent race when somebody approached her and told her they remembered her from a past meet



Taylor sophomore Jaynie Halterman has run cross country since sixth grade.

Photo provided by Taylor Athletics.

because she radiated joy and humility.

“Just being able to inspire people in that way is super cool and encouraging,” she said.

Quinn White, head cross-country coach at Taylor, mindfully fosters a team environment centered around Christ.

Every year, the team has what they call “One Word.” The purpose of One Word is to focus on that word and apply it to running and the season.

This year, that word is love.

“So everything is literally centered around love, the way we do it,” White said. “Even in loving our competitors. For us, it’s a talent that God’s given us. We want to use that talent to glorify Him, so He has to be the center of it.”

As a team, they are leaning into running because they love it – and loving the

hard parts, too.

Throughout Halterman’s journey as a runner, she has learned how to give all the glory to God. Through the ups, downs and plateaus, White has helped her learn to embrace the good, the bad and the ugly.

“If we’re trying to walk alongside Him in life, why wouldn’t we run alongside Him when we’re racing?”

“We’re gonna have good meets and we’re gonna have bad meets,” White said. “We’re going to have injuries. We’re gonna have things that are going to test us and make us sad, and other things that

make us real happy. We’ve got to keep everything calm and continue just to endure to get to that finish line.”

Hebrews 12:1 urges us to run with endurance the race set before us, reminding us to persevere through the race of life. Our endurance comes from Jesus Christ, who faced the cross and endured it for the joy that was set before Him.

The Lord is by your side with every stride, every breath, every heartbeat.

Because Jesus endured the cross, you may run the race of life with endurance.

Because there is an eternal joy set before you, you may endure the constant trials of life.

2 Timothy 4:7 says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Fight the good fight. Further God’s kingdom. Keep the faith.

Fire in Scripture

Hebrews 12:29 -- “For our God is indeed a devouring fire.”

By Tim Przybylski

“God is not Santa Claus, and sin does have consequences in the real world,” Edward Meadors, professor of biblical studies at Taylor University, said.

In Christian thought, sin is no light matter. To illustrate this, the Bible often invokes the metaphor of fire.

Like with any metaphor, fire is used in scripture to provide substance to ideas.

Reflecting on the various applications of the fire metaphor, May Young, professor and department chair of biblical studies at Taylor University, said, “I think it gives enough of a semantic range for us to capture a little bit more about who God is instead of just a flat picture.”

Key phrases like “the fires of Hell” and the “lake of fire” depict fire as judgment. For Meadors, one doesn’t have to look far to understand why such a metaphor is used.

“Human beings would be very afraid of fire... so it’s kind of a natural metaphor to use with reference to separation from God, who’s our life source, who’s our comfort, our shelter, our trust.”

Although fire may effectively depict the judgment of God, the subject of God’s fiery judgment can be troublesome for some.

Taylor University alumnus Isaac Smith described why he feels people wrestle with the subject, saying, “If the reasoning behind God’s wrath isn’t made clear... it makes it harder to trust... That’s why they can view it as injustice or unfairness.”

Young touched on the difficulty people experience with God’s wrath. For Young, the issue comes down to the seriousness of sin and God’s holiness, which cannot tolerate that sin.

For Smith, confidence in God’s omniscience is key to accepting the wrath that the metaphor of fire depicts.

“I know God is infinitely wiser and more righteous than me, and so I trust his judgment. Even if I don’t fully understand it, I can trust his character and know that he knows what’s best.”

The metaphor of fire as judgment elicits humankind’s call for restoration and the depths of Christ’s sacrifice. For Meadors, God’s fiery wrath is fundamental to our understanding of God’s love.

As Paul says in Romans 5:8, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

In addition to wrath, the Bible uses fire as a metaphor for a variety of other contexts, several of which have positive connotations.

Young used Zechariah 2 as an example. In this passage, God’s people don’t have protection; God provides it to them by becoming a “wall of fire.”

Fire also refers to God’s guidance, the Holy Spirit, and passion.

Given all these different meanings that the metaphor of fire can convey, it is possible for one to become confused as to its meaning. Noting the contrast between God revealing himself to Moses as a burning bush and the fiery pits of Hell, Taylor University sophomore Aliya Hoelscher felt that the fire metaphor, in all its different applications, could be confusing, especially to kids.



Photo courtesy of
Aliya Hoelscher

Aliya Hoelscher at
Taylor University

Meadors conjectured a possible reason for fire's versatile use by its historical commonality.

"[Historically] they used it for cooking, they used it for light, they used it for warmth, you know. It was a metaphor that would instantly register with everybody."

Another major aspect of the metaphor of fire is purification. Verses such as Malachi 3:3 demonstrate this by comparing the process by which God makes people righteous to the process by which fire burns away the impurities of gold and silver.

In the real world, God's purifying fire, which is temporarily uncomfortable, can lead to great outcomes. Hoelscher talked about how God worked in her own life through temporal suffering.

"I've struggled with severe anxiety and depression for a long time," Hoelscher said. "And because of that, I'm able to sit with people in that... and be just a little bit of light."

Hoelscher went on to elaborate about how this difficulty worked out for a higher purpose.

"Going through these things has made me strong in who I am, stronger in the fact that I know that there's a God—and not just that but I know that there's a God who loves me... And it's made me strong enough to then be there for others in those struggles... It's truly beautiful to be able to help others and see that pain and see that heartache turned to good, because of how God uses it."



Photo by Tim Przybylski

Dr. Edward P. Meadors
in his office.

ROOTED IN HIM, WE THRIVE

By Marisa Reinhard

"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit."

The strength of a branch depends on the strength of its connection. Without the vine, it withers.

But when it stays rooted, it thrives and bears fruit.

Phil Grabowski, professor of environmental science at Taylor University, explained that the relationship between a vine and a branch is comparable to that of an arm and a body.

"Plants don't have a heart that beats, but it's roughly the same thing as cutting off your arm," he said. "It's not connected. There's no longer a flow. So with a vine, if you cut off a branch that's off the main vine, it's no longer getting water from anywhere. It falls to the ground. It shrivels up."

John 15:5 says apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. As His children, and in this metaphor, as branches of the vine, if we are cut off from Him, we can do nothing.

The passage exhorts us to abide in Him. In doing so, we will bear much fruit. We must stay connected.

"That's kind of the main idea, right?" Grabowski said. "You and I are each part of the vine. You've got to stay connected, because the leaf needs water from the ground, and that comes through the roots."

Part of keeping a tree alive and fruitful is pruning. We cut off damaged branches to help the plant focus its energy on healthy new growth.

In our own lives, God prunes us. He removes distractions and sin patterns to help foster growth. It feels painful in the moment, but we can look back on those moments and see God was cleansing us, Grabowski said.

It is an act of love – not of punishment.

"We prune it (the tree) to make the branches strong, to hold up the fruit," he said. "It can be hard to understand, but when we think about pruning a tree, I just removed things that would have produced fruit, but for the long haul, I have to prune it off so that it will be the right shape."

God gave us the gift of life, and part of abiding in the vine is leaning into relationship with God, rather than withdrawing from Him.

Life apart from God is strenu-



*branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him,
it, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*

- John 15:5

ous, Grabowski said. But staying founded in faith is what gives us the strength to persist.

“If we’re a branch and we decide, I think I could do this better on my own, without staying within Christ, we’re gonna disconnect and we dry up and shrivel,” Grabowski said. “But when we stay rooted, attached to the vine, that’s what gives us life and helps us endure the pruning.”

When we learn to trust that God’s pruning is necessary

for spiritual growth, we can learn to surrender control.

When we surrender control, that is when the most growth occurs.

When we can see the goodness of God in every circumstance, we can love Him even more. He is life-giving, so we must abide in Him.

The rest is up to Him.



Phil Grabowski, professor of environmental science, prunes a pear tree.

Photo by Marisa Reinhard

God's Handi Work

by Karlee Johnson



A potter's hands are wrapped around a spinning lump of clay. They become baked in the gray mud as he molds the vessel. He pinches the clay to thin the sides, brings his hands upward to make it narrow, cups his hands on the side to make it round. The clay keeps spinning on the wheel, and the potter keeps working it as he sees fit.

The ceramics process is something Jeremiah saw up close when God told him to go down to the potter's house in Jeremiah 18:1-2. The potter sat at his wheel, and Jeremiah watched him rework the vessel when it became spoiled in his hands. In verses 5-10, God tells Jeremiah that this process is representative of himself and his people; does God not have control over the lives of his people in the same way a potter is free to shape a piece of clay as he wishes?

The ceramics process is distinct from other art forms, Mark Masuoka, assistant professor of art and director of the Boren Art Gallery, explained.

"It seems to be a material that kind of records your interaction with the material," he said. "So whether or not you're changing the shape, or building something three dimensional out of it, or throwing on the potter's wheel, it's all affected directly to how you interact with the material."

In ceramics, the finished product captures all the ways the artist has touched, pressed or held the clay. Whereas painting is mediated by a brush and drawing is mediated by a pencil, nothing separates the hands from the artwork in the pottery-making process.

This is something senior Evie Kerr, 3D studio art major, loves about ceramics. Pottery involves getting your hands dirty, and in the end, your fingerprints are on the final product, she said. Knowing how interactive ceramics is, she is comforted by the potter and clay metaphor in the Bible.

"I just think it's so cool to think about the fact that that's how God makes us," Kerr said. "Like, he forms us with his hands. He takes

Evie Kerr, senior 3D studio art major, works at the pottery wheel.
Photos by Karlee Johnson



time to get all of the details right, and his fingerprints are on us when he's doing that."

Our lives are a product of God's handiwork. The things we've experienced—all the successes, the heartbreaks, the surprises— it all tells the story of how he's been shaping and molding us.

The potter and clay metaphor also teaches us that God is sculpting our lives with a distinct purpose in mind.

Kerr pointed out how, in ceramics, you actually use what you end up creating. This is different from a painting that simply gets hung up on a wall, she said. Whether it is a bowl or a cup, the end product actually has a function. In the same way, Masuoka said God sculpts us into the perfect object that He can actually interact with.

The way he does this is unique person-to-person.

Because pottery is being shaped directly by hand, each vessel turns out different, Masuoka explained. For example, someone might want to make a set of 10 cups. Even though the artist may attempt to make the cups identical, there will inevitably be a little variation among them because they were sculpted by hand.

Our lives are each a unique artwork made by God. Yet, these differences are not mistakes, Masuoka said. God has shaped us exactly as we need to be.

"God didn't make any mistake when he made us," he said. "It's not like, 'Oops. I should have done something else.' You know? I think that's a sort of beautiful way to think about it. He created us specifically and uniquely to be who we are, and now it's us to be able to acknowledge that and fulfill what he has planned for our life."

God is in the process of shaping us into something beautiful. We only need to be responsive to his touch.

If clay is too wet or too dry, it becomes unmoldable, Masuoka said. Therefore, if God is the potter, then let us be the soft clay in his hands. Ready to be shaped.



Marriage

Reflecting Eternity

Revelation 19:7: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”

By Tim Przybylski

Over dinner on their 39th wedding anniversary, Greg Dyson and his wife came up with a whimsical list of lessons from love:

“1. Enjoy your differences, 2. Love her family. 3. Let him pick the music on the road trips, 4. Let her cut the grass, 5. Let him manage the laundry, 6. Give foot rubs regularly, 7. Remember important dates, 8. Celebrate often, 9. Remember someone has to lose at games, 10. Thank God for bringing you both together.”

The Rev. Greg Dyson is Campus Pastor at Taylor University.

The joy in a healthy marriage isn't just significant for the well-being of the two partners; it is also significant for God's glory. In scripture, what Dyson called “the most intimate of relationships” has a higher purpose: to reflect God.

The Bible uses marriage as a metaphor to illustrate eternal union with God. Dyson said that one of the primary attributes of a good, biblical marriage here on Earth is knowing that it is a model of the oneness of Heaven.

In this life, faithfully living out this oneness in

marriage requires both partners to sacrifice for each other. While discussing the values of a good, biblical marriage, newly married couple David and Camila Worlds emphasized the significance of sacrifice. Camila highlighted an instance of this in her own life.

“David loves football and he's great at it,” Camila said of her husband. “So I know that if I... try to include myself in those football activities that he has, he's going to be... happier, right? And I love for him to be happy.”

Camila admitted that she doesn't always want to go to the games. In the end, however, the sacrifice of attending brings her great joy.

Seated next to David, she said, “The second I see this man, his face, when he tells me, ‘thank you for being there’ and stuff like that, that (makes) me happy. And then it's all worth it at the end of the day.”

In addition to bigger sacrifices, small acts of service are also important in marriage.

Speaking about the importance of sacrifice, Dyson told a story about a time he was assisted by his future wife. On their first date, Dyson discovered he would have to speak at the event they were at.

“I was really nervous,” Dyson said. “And all the sudden, my date pours me a glass of water, slides it across the table and says, ‘you need this.’ And I remember thinking—startled—thinking, ‘oh my goodness, somebody knows what I need more than I know myself? This is amazing.’”

In addition to modeling God, the metaphor of marriage demonstrates something that may not be obvious to the Western mindset.

Wedding customs in first-century Israel involved a betrothal stage before marriage. During this stage, the couple was committed to each other, but they were not allowed to live together, since the wedding hadn't occurred yet. The bride had to stay in a state of readiness, since the exact time that the groom would show up for the wedding was not known.

For Dyson, this context highlights the need to stay in a state of readiness.

Dyson gave an example for how a college student can understand this metaphor in today's cultural context: Unexpected visitors in your residence hall. "If someone told you that 'hey, the president and guest from out of state are coming in for a tour and taking pictures,' [you would respond] 'well wait a minute, we've gotta go clean this up a little bit.'"

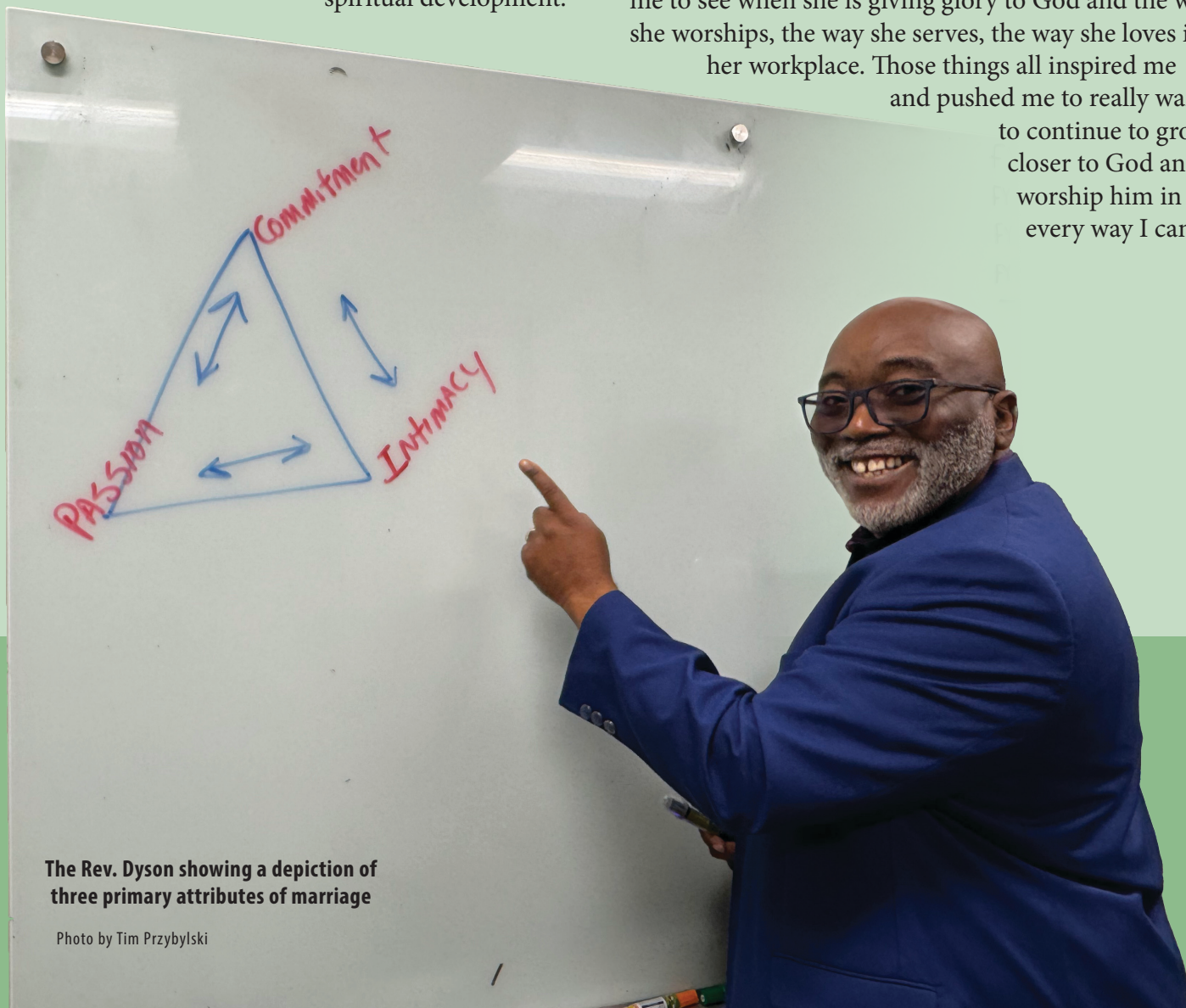
Although the hour of Christ's marriage to his bride is unknown, earthly marriage is one way to prepare for it. Marriage on this side of Heaven can bring couples closer to God. For David Worlds, having a partner on the journey of life encourages spiritual development.



David and Camila Worlds sitting in Taylor University's student center.

Photo by Tim Przybylski

"Seeing Camila's growth also inspires me. Like it inspires me to see when she is giving glory to God and the way she worships, the way she serves, the way she loves in her workplace. Those things all inspired me and pushed me to really want to continue to grow closer to God and worship him in every way I can."



The Rev. Dyson showing a depiction of three primary attributes of marriage

Photo by Tim Przybylski

"And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"

(Matthew 25:22-23)

The Steady Path of an Air Force Pilot

By Lisa Pinsenschaum

THE leg harnesses and shoulder braces strained against her frame as her right hand pulled the aircraft stick back and her left hand pushed the power forward to make the aircraft take off, soaring into the air.

Taking deep breaths through her oxygen mask, Lydia King, a pilot trainee for the United States Air Force, 23, maneuvered the machine. The musty, plastic smell infused through her skin as her eyes scanned the switches, dials and panels surrounding her harnessed body.

King is currently training to fly the T-6A Texan through a simulator in Mississippi. A small ladder leads to a box-shaped case with the top cut off, revealing a seat in the middle surrounded by cockpit switches and dials.

Covered head to toe in gear, she

viewed her simulated world through tinted, sunglass-like light. The helmet was similar to a bicycle helmet with goggles over the eyes as a shield attached to the scalp.

The oxygen mask squeezed against the bridge of her nose, wrapping to the middle of her cheek.

"It needs to be suctioned to your face so that you don't have any outside air going in," King said. "But that means your face has a line of red along where the oxygen mask goes, and its suction is pretty tight, while doing all kinds of maneuvers."

Simulators are a tool used to train for the real world.

Being accepted into military pilot training is a competitive process. If you make it in, you immediately dive into the rules and textbooks, each week introducing new topics.

King knew this was just the beginning.

"We had about a week to memorize all the different aircraft systems," King said. "Everything from how the engine operates and the hydraulics actuate to the air conditioning flows and the wheels brake."

Although there's only so much you can learn through a book, King said.

You are first entrusted with a relatively small-scale task, Alice Tsang, a professor of finance, said. When you deliver good results, He gives you more responsibility, expecting that you will do even better.

If I want to be entrusted with a lot, I have to be good at being a steward for whatever little God has given me now, Lonnie Leeper, an associate professor of finance, said. God is preparing us for tomorrow, whatever tomorrow will bring.



photo credit: Lydia King and Lorraine Pinsenschaum



Above Lydia poses with her plane after she recieved her pilots license.

The beginning of King's adventure started in high school in Dayton, Ohio.

She earned her pilot's license in a PA-28 Piper Warrior. Standing on the wing of the plane, the door would open, revealing four seats, two in the front having access to the controllers. The wings were located below the pilot's seat, allowing for visibility above the propeller spinning at the nose.

"After high school, I went to the United States Air Force Academy, and that furthered my flying career," King said. "I got to fly and teach in the TG-16 gliders and that was the next step in my love for flying."

Gliders are silent. The absence of an engine allows the pilot to notice faster when things are not going the way they should be. If you hear wind, King said, then you know you have to be going at a faster speed than what you think you are.

King said learning to fly gliders at the Air Force Academy was a stretching experience. She had the opportunity to learn how to fly the gliders, as well as teach others how to operate the plane.

"Becoming an instructor added a

whole other level of pressure with understanding the material and being excellent in what you do," King said. "There were no shortcuts as now other people's lives were on the line if you didn't do things correctly."

How else can someone be knowledgeable, Tsang asked, if they do not take intellectually directed risks, learning through exposure to something they have never seen or heard before?

We must develop that mindset of being willing to fail, Tsang said.

I am) surrounded by people who are stressed out of their minds because there's so much pressure you could get kicked out," King said. "You're studying so hard and your life's on the line in situations that you've never experienced before."

It would be so easy, King said, to sit back and choose the easy path.

King described the early foundation of her faith that her parents instilled in her as the groundwork that enabled her to be a light for people and stand strong through the trials, throughout college and especially in military school.

"Pilot training is really hard," King said. "The amount of information and speed you have to memorize stuff at

is oftentimes very daunting, especially when it comes to the fact that your life is on the line if you don't remember things while you're in the air."

One day, Samuel de Paiva Naves Mamede, a professor of management, said, when we have a chance to talk face to face with God, He will ask us what we did with our talents. Do not come to Him with empty hands, but bring him the result of your actions.

It is not the amount of a gift that matters, Mamede said, it is how well we steward and use those gifts.

"God calls us to use our talents in ways that we can pursue him best," King said. "If I can fly while serving my country in the military, and do this as a light for people, then it's worth all the hard work."

King continues to strive for excellence through her training and be faithful with each gift she is given, waiting for March 2026 when she will be covered head to toe in gear, stepping into her own plane, making the dream of becoming an Air Force Pilot come true.

photo credit: Lydia King and Lorraine Pinsenschaum

The Bread of Life, Broken for You

By Marisa Reinhard

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”
- John 6:35

A warm, inviting aroma gradually fills the air, wafting out of the kitchen and enveloping the entire house.

You cannot quite put your finger on the scent, but it conjures up nostalgic feelings of simple times. It reminds you of home.

When you catch the clean, slightly sweet scent, the realization hits you: bread. Memories from throughout childhood flood back. Pumpkin bread to mark the start of fall, banana bread when the bananas have gone bad, sourdough and the feeling of accomplishment when the batch comes out perfectly.

Bread is universal. Across the entire world, it is an essential part of culture and community. It plays an integral part in our daily lives.

With such deep roots, it may come as no surprise that bread is a prominent metaphor in the Bible.

Jesus refers to Himself as the Bread of Life. The disciples break bread and live in community with one another. At the Last Supper, Jesus gives His disciples bread, telling them it represents His body – the first communion.

Communion is a valuable time of reflection on Jesus’ sacrifice. It is a way followers of Jesus give thanks for what He has done for them.

Patricia Stan, a Taylor University chemistry professor and an avid baker, said for her, communion is a time to refocus on Jesus’ grace and how she should respond.

“It’s a remembrance of what He did for us,” Stan said. “And so if there’s sin in my life, I need to think about getting rid of that. It’s a good reminder to examine ourselves and look for that sin, but then to give it to Christ and let Him help us change that.”

Sean Wojtkowski, resident director of Taylor’s dining services, has a strong Catholic faith. In the Catholic sect,

communion is offered at each daily Mass. Wojtkowski said communion for him is a time of connection with Jesus, and a time to process His sacrifice.

Wojtkowski went to culinary school and later became a pastry chef. As a pastry chef and now as the director of food services, he has formed a deep understanding of the value of food.

He recounted a time he was excited to take a friend to a restaurant in Michigan. The excitement fell flat, not because the food was not good, but because their server did not care. The server treated them as more of a hindrance than a valued customer, he said.

“Food is very important, and people connect with food on a lot of different levels,” he said. “When you talk about food and nourishment, it goes deeper than just feeding somebody. In the business we’re in, it’s about connecting with the customer.”

Food is about community and caring for others. Stan said baking specifically



Stan prepares and bakes a loaf of bread in her kitchen.

Photos provided by Patricia Stan.



communicates that care.

"Growing up, baking was always something we did so we could have family or friends over and share that hot, fresh bread right off the oven, still warm," she said. "It's hard to beat that."

Stan said her current favorite food to bake is any type of bread. She said it forces her to slow down. Baking bread is not a quick process – it takes time and thought, she said.

In the busyness of the world and all that is going on, Stan said baking bread reminds her to slow down and contemplate.

"It's good to just stop my to-do list and do something that I have to pay attention to," she said.

Along with slowing down, bread serves Stan as a reflection of Christ.

She and her husband have formed a tradition of baking hot cross buns every Easter. She said it is a valuable time to create memories, but also the cross in the buns serves as a reminder of Christ's Crucifixion.

"When you talk about food and nourishment, it goes deeper than just feeding somebody."

Bread is essential for nutrition and energy.

In the same way, Christ is a nutrient we need. Like bread, He is enjoyable and life-giving.

"Everybody has bread, it seems like," Stan said. "So it's just kind of referring to that really basic thing that everybody has and everybody can afford. It's just that essential part of life."

In the midst of a fast-paced world, we can slow down and reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made for us. He is our daily bread –

His mercies are new every morning, and each day, we can ask for provision, guidance and grace.

Like bread, Jesus is life-giving. We can live in fellowship with one another and remember Jesus' sacrifice.

He is the Bread of Life, who was broken for you.

One Body of Many

Romans 12:5: “We who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another.”

By Tim Przybylski

“One of the most profound experiences of my life has been to experience Christian worship in other countries,” Pastor Dan Blosser of Upland Community Church said. “Sometimes they don’t even speak my language. But I can tell that they are worshipping the same God, and that they believe the same things about the gospel.”

For Blosser, the diversity of Christian churches reflects a key metaphor in the Bible: The Church being the body of Christ.

To summarize the metaphor, Blosser pointed to the diversity and unity in a human body. A body has many parts, but it is one entity. Likewise, there are differing roles people play in the Church, but the Church is one entity, all united under a common faith.

In scripture, a key aspect of the metaphor is the vitality of everyone’s role in the body of Christ. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:26, “If one part suffers,

every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

Taylor University senior Gabriel Peck talked about a time he experienced this dynamic during a ministry internship, when a worship leader didn’t show up to assist his team.

“There was discomfort in that process because someone who had a specific skillset had decided not to lead from his position,” Peck said.

In this regard, the connections between the body of Christ metaphor and the human body go further.

Jennifer Trudeau, adjunct professor of biology at Taylor University, described the interconnectedness of the human body: “Any time we move one part of the body, it affects the whole thing,” Trudeau said. “If we have pain in our lower back, it might not be that something’s wrong with the structures in our lower back. It might be that it’s our feet.”

Another important aspect of the body of Christ metaphor is Jesus’s role in it. When the



Photo by
Taylor University Marketing

Pastor Dan Blosser speaking at a Taylor University chapel service.

metaphor is invoked, Jesus is often identified as the body's "head." This is fitting, since the brain (located in the head) functions as the control center of the body.

"It sends messages all through our body," Trudeau said. "And it's controlling processes that we aren't even aware of... If we had to think 'breath, breath, breath,' it would take up all our time."

Just as the brain is uniquely essential for the human body, so too is Christ's leadership uniquely essential in the Church.

In order to reflect the mystical union that the body of Christ metaphor represents, Blosser believes that Christians should seek unity with each other, refraining from pettiness about nonessential issues, but rather, uniting under key aspects of the gospel. He gave the example of immigration policy:

"You may disagree on how the borders are policed, you may disagree on just about everything on a long list of immigration policy, and still, at the end of the day, agree that God has a wide and open and generous heart toward the alien in a strange land."

For Blosser, the body of Christ metaphor has a lot to say about envy. In his view, one of the primary goals of sanctification is to mitigate envy, learning to love the people with whom we feel competitive. Blosser used the example of soccer to illustrate this idea.

"It would be a strange soccer team where the players were so envious of one another that they hog the ball and don't pass. It's fundamentally a passing game. The team that can pass the best and share the ball the most is going to win; fact."

As a member of residence life at Taylor, Peck relied on others in situations where his knowledge was limited.

Discussing this, Peck said, "I shouldn't need to feel like I am the source of everything, or I'm the one that is able to hold all types of specific talents."

While seeking the wisdom of others, he grew his relationships with the people he consulted. Talking about his experience seeking advice from others, Peck went on to say, "I think it required me to trust them. And step outside myself, especially in a position of leadership."

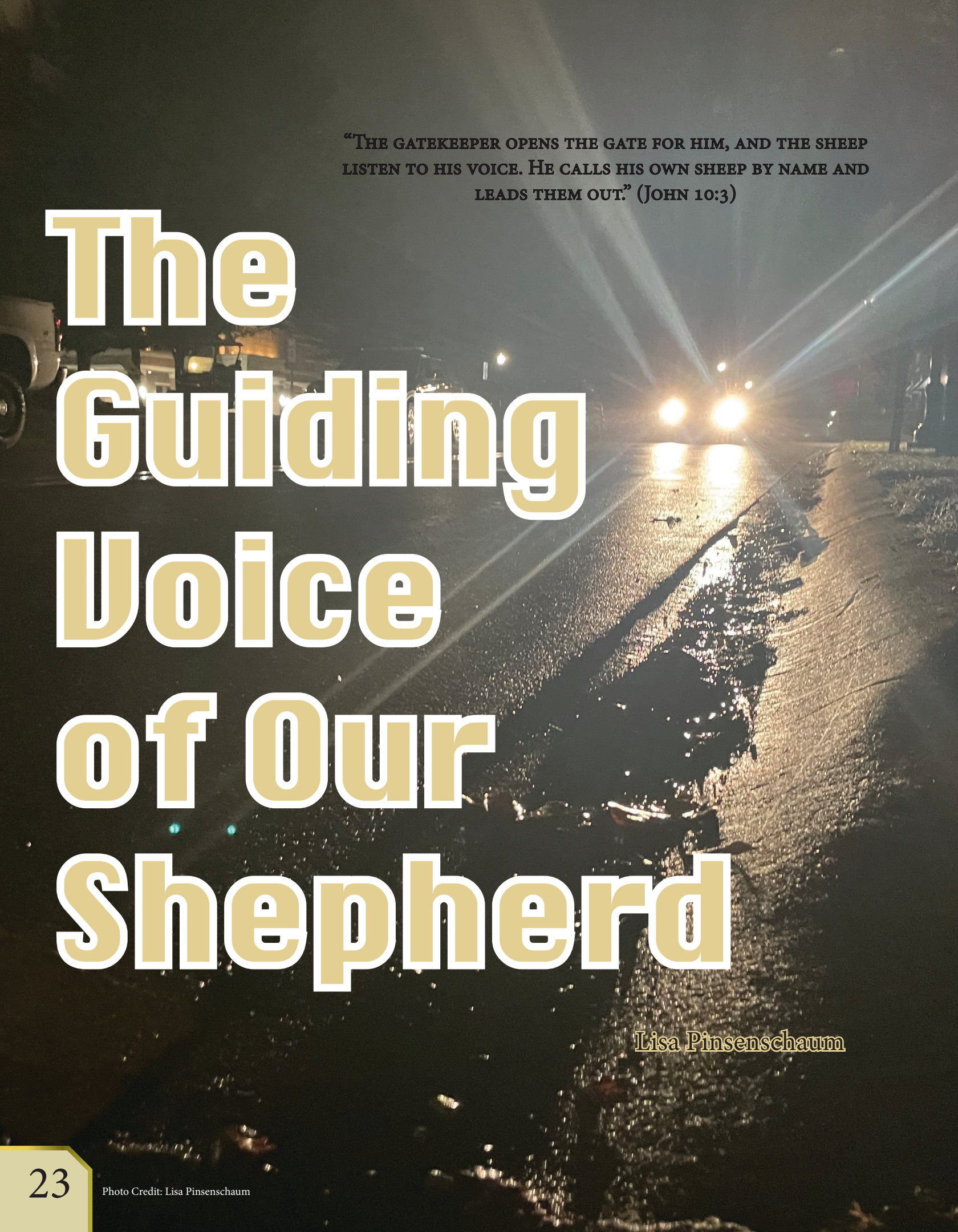
Not only is the body of Christ metaphor significant to relations within the Church, but it is also significant because it points back to the triune nature of God. Just as diversity and unity characterize the Church, so too do diversity and unity characterize God.

The body of Christ metaphor isn't just a trivial guideline for how the Church should function; rather, it is an instruction for how the Church must function to reflect God's very being.

"The Christian religion claims that God is Trinity: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit--and has always been Trinity," Blosser said. "That means that God exists in relationship. When he created human beings, he created them, the Bible says, 'in the image of God,' which means that we are not only individuals, but we are also built for and come through community."



**Hold On, 2022: Piece by Laura Stevenson,
Assistant Professor of Art at Taylor University**

A dark, wet street at night. A car's headlights are on, illuminating the wet pavement and creating a bright reflection. The street is dark, with some distant lights visible in the background. The overall mood is mysterious and guiding.

**"THE GATEKEEPER OPENS THE GATE FOR HIM, AND THE SHEEP
LISTEN TO HIS VOICE. HE CALLS HIS OWN SHEEP BY NAME AND
LEADS THEM OUT." (JOHN 10:3)**

The Guiding Voice of Our Shepherd

Lisa Pinsenschaum

Cars rushed past her on all four sides of the intersection as she gripped the steering wheel, forcing her eyes open through the traffic.

The wonky road, sunrise and fog messed with my eyes and head and suddenly I felt like I had no control over driving the car,” Diana Bowman, program assistant in the Communication Department, said. Suddenly, she saw a truck barreling towards her front bumper.

Christians need to be still and open to hearing his voice, Bowman said. In her daily one-hour commute to Taylor, she prays God would guide her to the right street to avoid construction and crazy drivers.

“THE MORE I KNOW MY FATHER’S VOICE, THE MORE I TRUST THAT,” LAURA GERIG, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY, SAID.

“I have to spend time with that voice. I’m not going to know it if I don’t spend time with that voice. And so, the reason the baby hears it and it’s so familiar is because they’re hearing it all the time.”

From the beginning of life, infants develop neural pathways as they listen to their mother’s voice outside the womb, Gerig said. Babies instinctively look to their caregiver for cues on how to react to a new situation, Gerig said.

Just like a baby grows familiar with a parent’s voice through repeated exposure, we learn to discern God’s voice through continuous time with Him, Gerig said.

“They hear the pitch and the rhythm and the tone of the voice, and that becomes very familiar to them, and familiar is generally comforting,” Gerig said. “Now they’re associating that voice that’s very familiar with comfort, and so they’re associating it with someone who cares for them and provides for them, and the emotional bond that starts to connect with the mother.”

She said, in the same way, we grip onto outside models for direction.

The shepherd in John 10 does not call to his sheep randomly; He calls them each by name. Then, they respond and follow because they know His voice.

“BE STEEPED IN SCRIPTURE, WHICH REVEALS THE WORD OF GOD AND THE VOICE OF GOD AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD,” EDWARD MEADORS, A PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL STUDIES, SAID. “SO THAT WHEN GOD’S VOICE IS SPOKEN, YOU KNOW THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HIS VOICE AND THE VOICE OF ANOTHER SHEPHERD.”

As Psalm 23 explains, without the shepherd’s rod and staff, tools of protection and guidance, the sheep would fall.

Sheep are dependent for their protection and provision on a good shepherd, just like we are dependent on a good shepherd who provides that protection and provision for us, Gerig said.

“The image just reminds us of how temporary we are,” Meadors said. “The limitations of our intelligence. Sheep are not known for tremendous intelligence, our dependence on Him for guidance, and the reality that all of this is a gift of God’s grace.”

Bowman said she sat in her car, panic shooting through her arms, dependent on the engine to move it where she needed it to go.

Rather than gripping onto the world’s idea of protection, cling to His word and voice, Meadors said, and true comfort will result from the one who calls us by name and leads us out of confusion and darkness into His presence.

LIKE THAT DAY WHEN THAT CAR WAS HEADED FOR BOWMAN’S FRONT BUMPER AND NOTHING COLLIDED.

BUILDINGS OF FAITH

by Karlee Johnson

While construction may seem like a simple, modest line of work, it played a large role in the days of Jesus. There were many workers in this career field, whether as carpenters, builders or artisans. People would have been familiar with the laying of foundations, cutting of stones or the placing of beams for the construction of a building.

The commonplace nature of the building process, however, does not make it less important. Construction language was used by Jesus and the apostles to illuminate spiritual truths in a way people could relate to and easily understand.



The cost of discipleship

When Jesus was on earth, large crowds often traveled with him from place to place. However, it was one thing to travel with Jesus; it was another to be his disciple. To be a disciple, one would have to hate everything in comparison, carry their own cross and follow him.

Jesus used a construction analogy to explain why understanding the cost of discipleship is necessary:

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to

mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’” (Luke 14:28-30).

Keith Cocking, director of construction services, affirmed the importance of the cost estimation step when starting a new project. He said planning is 80% of the construction process.

Therefore, before embarking on the journey of Christian discipleship, we must carefully calculate what it means to truly be a disciple. Jesus has said it will cost everything. Our loyalty to Jesus can not be shared with loyalties to other things in life.

Jesus also used a construction illustration in his Sermon on the Plain. In Luke 6:47-49, he emphasized the importance of hearing and obeying his words by comparing the obedient to a man who dug deep and built his house on the rock. When a big storm came, the man's house did not fall because it had a good foundation.

Cocking explained that before laying the foundation of a building, workers conduct something called

soil boring tests in order to locate solid ground.

"We'll take a core three or four feet down into the earth, pull it out and look at how the Earth is in there," he said. "And that helps us make a determination on how deep we need to go to get to 'solid material.'"

When constructing a building, it is important to ensure it can withstand the worst case scenario, he said. One way builders ensure this

is by identifying the solid material and building from there.

The same is true for us; a faith supported by obedience to Jesus will prove strong when challenges or disappointments in life come.

Building on a solid foundation

Christ the cornerstone

In Ephesians 2, Christ is described as the cornerstone:

"In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (verses 21-22).

People often think the cornerstone is what holds the whole building together, Cocking said. While Christ does hold all things together, the metaphor of the cornerstone is getting at something different.

"The purpose of it is actually the idea that it sets the direction for the entire building," Cocking said. "So if I'm going to build a building, and I'm going to use cinder blocks, the

very first one I put down is a rectangle, and all of the other ones have to be perfectly in line with the two perpendicular faces. If I set that a little bit crooked, my entire building will extend out crooked ... The idea is the cornerstone is the most important piece, because everything else depends on it for its location and its reference. It's sort of the source of the rest of the building."

For Christ to be the cornerstone in this sense is for him to be the joining piece. Believers align ourselves with Christ, and in him, we are all brought together. Furthermore, Christ determines our purpose and direction.

The construction process can remind believers of spiritual truths. *Photos provided by Pixabay*

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