

LETTERS  
— to a —  
YOUNG  
CONGREGATION

*Nurturing the growth  
of a faithful church*



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# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

1. Galatians 3:1, MSG.
2. Philippians 1:3, MSG.

## 1: WHAT MY LIFE IS ABOUT

1. Psalm 24:1, KJV.
2. Thomas Moore, *Meditations: On the Monk Who Dwells in Daily Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 65.
3. John 8:32, MEV.
4. Psalm 40:3.
5. The Beach Boys, “Kokomo,” *Kokomo* © Elektra 1988.
6. Edwin Hatch, “Breathe on Me, Breath of God,” 1878.
7. Genesis 32:28, meaning of Israel (see AMPC).
8. Genesis 35:29, referring to Isaac.
9. Sam wrote this poem as a gift to me. He is now deceased, and I include the poem here in his memory.
10. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 91.
11. From the Apostles’ Creed.
12. Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).
13. Sara Groves, “Love Is Still a Worthy Cause,” *Tell Me What You Know* (INO Records, 2007).
14. Joan D. Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 59.

## 2: WHAT GOD IS ABOUT

1. James Hollis, *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life: How to Finally, Really Grow Up* (New York: Gotham, 2005), chap. 8.

2. As quoted in Ronald Rolheiser, "Our Unfinished Symphony," August 19, 2007, <https://ronrolheiser.com/our-unfinished-symphony/#.XQfoi3Myu4>.
3. For an article that discusses the species of fish that actually inhabit the Sea of Galilee, see <https://ferrelljenkins.blog/2014/12/01/fish-of-the-sea-of-galilee/>.
4. This reference is to a generalized cultural anxiety in late 2012 that because December marked the end of an ancient Mayan calendar, it might thus usher in the end of the world.
5. Y2K is shorthand for a generalized cultural anxiety that a technological glitch in how dates are recorded in software would cause widespread societal collapse as the calendar shifted from 1999 to 2000.
6. Harold Camping died in December 2013 at age ninety-two, after repeatedly predicting the end of the world.
7. Luke 2:12.
8. John 3:1-21.
9. Philippians 2:5-8.
10. Luke 2:19.
11. Charles Wesley, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," 1744. Emphasis added.
12. Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 121.
13. Hebrews 13:2.
14. Michael D. C. Drout, ed., *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 176.
15. Randy Butler and Terry Butler, "At the Cross" (Mercy/Vineyard Publishing, 1993).
16. Romans 8:1.
17. 1 Corinthians 4:10.
18. Matthew 16:25.

### 3: WHAT THE CHURCH IS ABOUT

1. Herbert Thurston, "Bells," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), accessed July 5, 2019, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02418b.htm>.
2. See Romans 10:17.
3. Exodus 20:8.
4. Thurston, "Bells," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 421.
5. Matthew 5:13, MSG.
6. See Hebrews 13:8.

7. See John 14:6.
8. Eleanor Hull, versifier, “Be Thou My Vision,” 1912.
9. See Ephesians 4:4-6.
10. See Revelation 5:9; 14:3.
11. Statistics were current as of 2012, when this newsletter was written. See “Prison Population,” OECD Library, accessed October 23, 2019, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/oecd-factbook-2010/prison-population\\_factbook-2010-95-en#page4](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/oecd-factbook-2010/prison-population_factbook-2010-95-en#page4); “Water Consumption,” OECD Library, accessed October 23, 2019, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook-2011-2012/water-consumption\\_factbook-2011-76-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook-2011-2012/water-consumption_factbook-2011-76-en#page1); “Air and GHG Emissions,” OECD.org, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://data.oecd.org/air/air-and-ghg-emissions.htm>; and “Intentional Homicides,” OECD Library, accessed October 23, 2019, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life/intentional-homicides\\_9789264121164-graph112-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life/intentional-homicides_9789264121164-graph112-en#page1).
12. “Presbyterians and the American Revolution,” Presbyterian Historical Society, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/history-online/exhibits/presbyterians-and-american-revolution-page-1>.
13. In chronological order: Andrew Jackson, James Polk, James Buchanan, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan. See <https://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/15/the-religious-affiliations-of-us-presidents/>.
14. As quoted in William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *The Essential World History*, third ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomas Wadsworth, 2008), 314.
15. Genesis 22:17.
16. Acts 15:39. The split between Paul and Barnabas had to do with whether Mark was fit to be included in their ministry.
17. 2 Timothy 4:11. Paul’s praise of Mark’s ministry is broadly understood to represent reconciliation between him and Paul (and Barnabas).
18. “‘Truthiness’: Can Something ‘Seem,’ without Being, True?” Merriam-Webster, April 18, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/truthiness-meaning-word-origin>.
19. See John 1:14.
20. John 1:3.
21. Ephesians 6:4, kjv.
22. Mark 9:42; see also Luke 17:2.
23. Luke 18:16.
24. Audrey Schulman, “How to Be a Climate Hero,” *Orion Magazine*, April 23, 2008, <https://orionmagazine.org/article/how-to-be-a-climate-hero/>.

25. “The Bystander Effect,” Economic and Social Research Council, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/50-years-of-esrc/50-achievements/the-bystander-effect/>.
26. Matthew 12:50; Mark 3:35.
27. Matthew 7:7-8.
28. Genesis 1:3; John 11:43.
29. John 1:14, MSG.
30. Hebrews 13:8.

#### 4: WHAT FOLLOWING JESUS IS ABOUT

1. Matthew 7:20.
2. John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 3.
3. From the American folk song “Pick a Bale of Cotton.” This song has racist undertones. I grew up south of the Mason-Dixon Line in the 1960s.
4. Mark 16:15.
5. I’ve here rendered in the first-person an anecdote about Louis IX. Read the anecdote in M. Cecilia Gaposchkin and Sean L. Field, *The Sanctity of Louis IX: Early Lives of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres*, trans. Larry F. Field (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 111–12.
6. Exodus 19:6.
7. John 20:21.
8. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 318.
9. Thanks to singer Sara Groves for the phrase “add to the beauty,” from her album *Add to the Beauty* (Sony, 2005).
10. Romans 8:28.
11. Psalm 90:4.
12. Cyprian, *The Good of Patience in The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyprian Treatises* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 280.
13. Galatians 5:22.
14. 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1, emphasis added.
15. Ephesians 4:13.
16. See, for example, Matthew 23:27-28; James 1:21-26; and 1 John 4:20 (hypocrisy); Proverbs 14:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; and 2 Peter 2:3 (exploitation); and Luke 13:3 (stubbornness).
17. Luke 17:2.
18. Matthew 18:3.
19. John 3:5.
20. 1 John 3:2, MSG.

## NOTES

21. Barbara Johnson, *Boomerang Joy: Joy that Goes Around, Comes Around* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 167.
22. Isaiah 6:8.
23. Luke 1:18.
24. Jerome, Letter CXXX, to Demetrias, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893), 266.
25. Quintus Tertullianus, *On Repentance* (Savage, MN: Lighthouse, 2015), 11–12.
26. Matthew 13:52.
27. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.
28. Luke 7:36-50.

## EPILOGUE

1. My wife Elizabeth and I each brought three children to our marriage.