



inside

The Power of Imagination
– Blair Baker **p3**

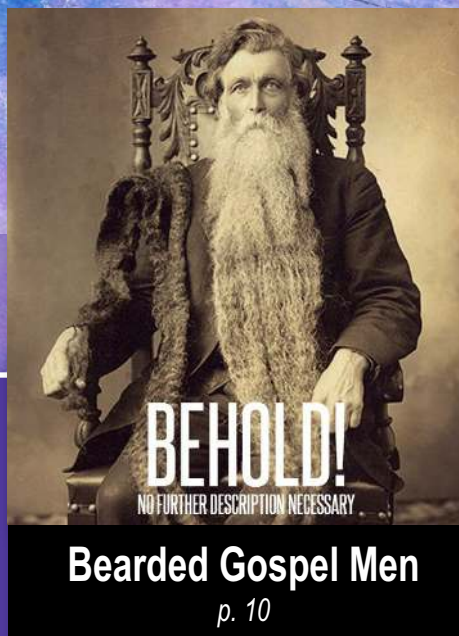
Your Imaginarium
– Richard Rohr **p6**

The End of Guilt & Shame
– Greg Albrecht **p8**

Bearded Gospel Men
– Jared Brock **p10**

Big God, Big Love, Big Cross
– Young & Jersak **p13**

Pastoral Perspective
– Brad Jersak **p15**



Blair Baker

The Power of Imagination

What Others Are Saying...

Volume 9, Number 5
October 2018
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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

Breaking News

I liked the “Breaking News” feel of the June issue of *CWRm*, with timely articles and interesting graphics. Keep up the good work!

British Columbia

Five Generations

“Five Generations: A Legacy of Love” by Laura Urista not only discusses kindness, but also exudes it. Now a grandmother herself, she quotes her Grandma: ‘It’s more important to be kind than right.’ How true. Sad indeed that many religions have this backwards. *CWR/PTM* emphasizes the kindness of God.

California

A More Christlike God

I want to thank you for your book, *A More Christlike God*. It helped change my life and my view of God. Just yesterday, I was having coffee with a pastor at my church who was defending a recent line in a sermon about God hating sinners. He was trying to convince me that Jesus had to die because God had to punish sin in him. Thanks to your

book and teachings, I don’t buy that line anymore. I believe God is primarily a rescuer and savior, not a punishing judge. I’m stepping out in faith to believe God really is loving and that the places in Scripture where he is painted as hateful or wrathful must either be metaphors or reflect the writer’s understanding, but it is not God’s heart.

Louisiana

Hope & Encouragement

Thank you so much for all the *CWR/PTM* literature. It’s very encouraging to me at this difficult time in my life. I think *CWR magazine* is the best!

Tennessee

Thank you *PTM*! It is no longer merely my “hope” that I shall be saved. Or that my loved ones will be saved. But that all—yes ALL—will eventually be redeemed! I believe this is the only hope worthy of the description, “Blessed!”

Email

Dear Readers,
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The Power of Imagination

Blair Baker

I live in England, an island subject to weather forces from the jet stream, continental Europe and the sea. It's not uncommon for these forces to compete, bringing us all four seasons in one day. It doesn't always rain, but it's good to be prepared, just in case.

One spring day, I was driving to the grocery store with the sunroof open, enjoying the warm sun on my face and pretty countryside all around.

The cover article and artwork on page 1-6 have been graciously contributed by artist & illustrator Blair Baker.

When I arrived, I was walking on air, and it seems I wasn't the only one. The grocery aisles were buzzing with chatter. On sunny days, we have more time for one another and may even acknowledge a stranger with a chat about the weather: "Isn't it lovely today?" On rainy days, inhabitants turn inward. Smiles are hidden as hunched figures, trying to keep warm, may share grumpy murmurs while passing: "Miserable!"

What we didn't realize while we were busy smiling and chatting inside was that the bright sunshine, which had been carrying us on its happy rays, was rapidly disappearing.

As I wheeled my cart to the exit, I noticed the darkness outside. When the doors opened, a cold Arctic wind slapped my face and my heart sunk. It had been such a fine day that I'd forgotten my umbrella. A mighty deluge began to fall between me and my car.

When weather hits like this, you have to watch the locals to see what they do. If they stand there for a moment, you know this is only a shower and it will pass. But no one was standing around this day—people were shooting out of the store like bullets. Shivering in my overly-optimistic summer attire, I knew I too would have to make a run for it.

But something stopped me. I sensed a sinking mood all around me in the hunched figures now wading through the car park. But I wasn't about to let a little rain ruin my day. I stood for a minute, remembering the beautiful yellow canola seed and vibrant green trees I had passed on my drive to the shop. I recognized they were only so lovely because of the rain.

"Trees like rain!" I thought. "I'll make like a tree!" So that's what I did. First, I put a smile on my face. The pelting rain

made me shudder, but I bounced back with, "Ah, this is great!" I imagined my arms were branches and my head full of leaves. I didn't feel the need to rush. The rain soaked me as I loaded my car, but I was a tree, and this was great!

It worked! I kept my happy mood, enjoyed the drive home and stayed on a positive footing all day.



Imagination: A Powerful Tool

Imagination is a powerful tool. It can be used for good, as demonstrated by the eight sports psychiatrists who accompanied the US Olympic ski team this year. They were there to help

athletes with the mental challenges associated with their physical feats. One of these tools is imagery.

Emily Cook of the US Freestyle Team visualizes each aerial as part of her training for the Olympics. She even visualizes the distractions that may come up, like difficult weather conditions or high pressure environments, such as the Olympics. She also uses visualization or imagination as a thought-stopping tool for negative or distracting thoughts so she can return to the right mental space prior to a jump. For Emily, training the mind is at least as important as training her body (“Flying High While Still on the Ground,” *NY Times*).

In contrast, the imagination can also be used negatively. Author and creativity consultant Dan Zadra suggests “worry is a misuse of imagination.” Science confirms Christ’s warning two thousand years ago: **worry is not good for us** (Matthew 6:34).

When we worry, we imagine the worst outcomes, and that’s not good for us because of the mind-body connection and how negativity can make us physically sick. According to Srini Illay, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School,

“visualization and action are intimately connected, involving the motor cortex. Thinking about our body doing something, raising an arm or walking forward, activates the motor cortex directly” (*Scientific American*).

Social scientist and human

“...because the imagination is the ability to visualise what we cannot see, it’s something we need for faith, because faith requires us to imagine a world we cannot see.”

—Brandon J. O’Brien



performance expert Frank Niles says this works “because neurons in our brain ... interpret imagery as equivalent to real life action. When we

visualize an act, the brain generates an impulse that tells our neurons to perform the movement. This creates a new neural pathway—clusters of cells in the brain that work together to create memories or learned behavior—that primes our body to act in a way

consistent to what we imagined. All of this occurs without actually performing the physical

activity but it helps achieve a similar result.” (WebMD-Physical Effects of Worrying, *Huffpost*).

When we worry, we engage our *fight or flight stress hormone cortisol*, and this can cause digestive disorders, suppression of the immune system, headaches, premature coronary artery disease, to name but a few.

Some Christians worry about the use of imagination because of visualization practices used in Eastern religions. They associate visualizing with New Age gurus and even Christian prosperity preachers who promise anything you imagine.

Dr. Brandon J. O’Brien, co-author of *Misreading Scriptures with Western Eyes* and *Paul Behaving Badly*, responds to this objection. He explains, “because

the imagination is the ability to visualize what we cannot see, it's something we need for faith, because faith requires us to imagine a world we cannot see." Imagination based on the truth of Scripture helps us look beyond our own narrow experience.

Anchoring Our Imagination

How can we foster an imagination that helps us see what God sees and guide us through this life? When we come across Bible stories or word pictures such as "We have this hope, as an anchor for our soul, firm and secure..." (Hebrews 6:19), we can dwell on that scriptural image—we focus on the anchor of hope that secures us as we read or hear disturbing news.

Isaiah 61:10 also uses imagery to help us better understand the righteousness of Christ: "He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

I used this visual tool the other day while taking my dogs for a walk. I knew I would probably bump into the same grumpy man I see regularly who ruffles my feathers with negative comments. I donned my imaginary robe of righteousness. I thought about what Jesus looked like walking down the road in his robe of righteousness. I felt the big open sleeves and the drape along my back. It worked so well that I felt transformed. And as I passed the grumpy man I only felt like greeting him.

The Apostle Paul expresses a vivid, sanctified imagination in his letter to the Philippians. He supplies the perfect remedy for anxiety: engaging our imagination,

"Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is



pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things (4:8).

Paul, whose past could have haunted him if he thought about it long enough, made a concerted effort to keep his eyes on the prize of the upward call of Christ (3:14).

Hebrews 11:13 shows the type of sanctified imagination employed by great men and women of faith who "... all died in faith, not having received the promises, **but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were**

strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

The imagery of pilgrims and strangers evokes a different set of spiritual/cultural norms that can take the sting out of spiritual culture shock.

The old adage "a picture paints a thousand words" was never truer than in the picture-story of the wise man who built his house upon the rock in Matthew 7:24-27. Here we have Jesus' answer for the unpredictability of life—hang onto his words.

Taking time to practice imagining how Scripture may apply to our own lives now and in the future gives us powerful tools to invoke when the storms of life hit so we never have to be caught out in the rain. □

Blair Baker is an author, artist and children's book illustrator, based in Marlborough, UK.



Your Imaginarium

Richard Rohr

The imagination retains a passion for freedom. There are no rules for the imagination. It never wants to stay trapped in the expected territories. The old maps never satisfy it. It wants to press ahead beyond the accepted frontiers and bring back reports of regions no mapmaker has yet visited.

—John O’Donohue¹



Being made in the image and likeness of the Creator isn’t about “getting it right” or rationally understanding God. Jesus taught us that being “perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48) is more about loving than having correct beliefs or following the rules. How do we grow into such loving likeness?

Each of us has our own unique *imaginarium*, an unconscious worldview constructed by our individual and group’s experiences, symbols, archetypes and memories. For example, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Catholics and Protestants live in quite different *imaginaria* (plural). God comes to us in images that we can trust and believe, that have the inherent power to open our hearts.

Spirituality tries to move beyond words to evoke our *imaginaria* at the unconscious level, where real change must first happen.

If your inner *imaginarium* is rich, intelligent and not overly defended, you will never stop growing spiritually. My advice? Read more poetry and literature; watch movies; listen to music; visit museums.

The artist is a prophet—someone who helps us be self-critical and creative so we don’t stay stuck in the status quo. The prophet models and embodies a new way of thinking and being that allows us to imagine a larger, more inclusive way to live.

You cannot even imagine something or do something until you first have an image of it inside you, which is surely why Einstein said, “*I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. . . . [It] encircles the world.*”² In *Art and Physics*, Leonard Shlain (1937-2009)—an author, surgeon, and inventor—made the case that images come before our capacity to verbalize or name what we see:

Whether for an infant or a society on the verge of change, a new way to think about reality begins with the assimilation of unfamiliar images. . . . Because the



erosion of images by words occurs at such an early age, we forget that in order to learn something radically new, we need first to imagine it. "Imagine" literally means to "make an image." Witness the expression we use when struggling with a new idea: "I can't picture it," "Let me make a mental model," and "I am trying to envision it."

If, as I propose, this function of imagination, so crucial to the development of an infant, is also present in the civilization at large, who then creates the new images that precede abstract ideas and descriptive language? It is the artist... Revolutionary art in all times has served this function of preparing the future.³

Perhaps the great artists of each generation can help us transcend dualism and move us beyond the exclusive frameworks that are comfortable for us ... if we have the ears to hear or the eyes to see and the willingness to engage!

If you want to go deeper with this concept, take note of what words or phrases in this article stand out to you. Come back to that word or phrase throughout the day, being present to its impact and invitation. □

Adapted from Richard Rohr, Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi (Franciscan Media: 2014).

Notes:

1. John O'Donohue, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* (HarperCollins: 2004), 145.

2. Albert Einstein, "What Life Means to Einstein," *The Saturday Evening Post* (October 26, 1929).

3. Leonard Shlain, *Art and Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time, and Light* (William Morrow Paperbacks: 2007), 17-19.

Deep Thoughts on the Imagination

"I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

— Albert Einstein

"I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge. That myth is more potent than history. That dreams are more powerful than facts. That hope always triumphs over experience. That laughter is the only cure for grief. And I believe that love is stronger than death."

— Robert Fulghum

"You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus."

— Mark Twain

"Imagination does not become great until human beings, given the courage and the strength, use it to create."

— Maria Montessori

"Vision is the art of seeing things invisible."

— Jonathan Swift

"I believe in the power of the imagination to remake the world, to release the truth within us, to hold back the night, to transcend death, to charm motorways, to ingratiate ourselves with birds, to enlist the confidences of madmen."

— J.G. Ballard



The End of Guilt & Shame

Greg Albrecht

Apart from God's forgiveness, we all feel a sense of condemnation. Shame and guilt result when we fail to measure up to societal, ethical, biblical or family standards. The fact that everyone is imperfect does not help when we experience a major failure. Shame and guilt can be a burden carried and lived with, like a recurring nightmare, for decades.

Many parents are haunted by memories of what they could or should have done when raising their children. They know they could have been better parents. I know that rabbit trail—I've lived there. It's a depressing place—*the land of would have, could have and should have is a dark hole.*

Many husbands and wives also

experience feelings of shame and guilt. I know that valley of the shadow of death as well. Marriage and family are, by nature, full of regrets over missed opportunities and what has been said and done. "If only" we could retrace our missteps.

A Spiritual Swamp

Shame and guilt comprise spiritual swamps that imprison so many. Shame relates to how we feel about ourselves—who we think we are. Guilt relates to our behavior—what we have done.

When overwhelmed by guilt, we say, "I *did* something bad." When we are ashamed, we say to ourselves, "I *am* bad." Guilt says, "I *made* a mistake." Shame believes, "I *am* a mistake."

Guilt can be a healthy reaction, alerting us to our need

to ask God to help us put the brakes on behavior that is outside of Christ. *Healthy guilt* can come by the prodding of the Holy Spirit, calling us out of unhealthy behavior.

Healthy guilt motivates us to godly sorrow that leads to repentance that, when complete, leaves no regret (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is a gift of God's grace, which empowers us to turn from wrongdoing. By grace, we are lifted out of the swamp into which we've fallen so that we may commence our walk with Christ.

Healthy guilt is normally based on criteria about behavior—it doesn't torture us, but rather motivates us to positive change and inspires us with hope.

Healthy guilt leads us to quickly rest in the forgiveness

of God. It assures us that God loves us despite what we have done and that he renews us daily.

Healthy guilt leads us to Christ, to accept his yoke and unite with him, and to find rest for our souls. A soul at rest has been released from toxic guilt.

Unhealthy guilt is guilt left unresolved. It plagues and torments us, and it is directly related to shame. *Unresolved guilt* breeds shame. Those who've not found rest in Christ continue to bear the weight of guilt for having done bad things and they feel shame that they are bad people.

There are many self-prescribed mechanisms used to treat shame and guilt. Some believe blaming an external source or person will offer relief. In their anger, some determine to scapegoat others for negative feelings. Others turn inwards, sinking deeply into self-blame and self-loathing.

Some attempt to self-medicate their depression with alcohol and drugs, but substance abuse only numbs the pain temporarily. The cycle of self-medication is a vicious and unforgiving one, ever more destructive and demanding as time goes by.

Many who flounder in these swamps think Christ-less religion will help them. Sadly, they encounter an industry that only exploits and intensifies their guilt and shame.

Captivity in the swampland of guilt and shame is a horrible

experience of muck and mire—a toxic cesspool of raw spiritual sewage. If left to fester, shame will snuff out faith and hope.

Escape from a spiritual swamp never comes by our own strength—we often convince ourselves we deserve what we're experiencing.

Continuing to live in guilt for failing to behave properly will condemn us to shame about who we are. We become convinced we're unworthy of God's love—we are trapped by our shame.



The Way Out

Amid that revolting swamp of shame comes the grace of God. Grace brings healing and cleaning, restoration and renewal. It brings rest for our souls.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

No more condemnation means the end of being ashamed of who we are.

No more condemnation is possible because we accept and are assured of God's love. And when we experience his love, our sense of self-loathing and shame is vanquished.

No more condemnation means we resign from the judgment seat—we realize it's not our place to sit in judgment of

others, and as we rest in Christ, we become confident that we are not beholden to judgment committees who undertake to shame us.

No more condemnation means we no longer allow any individual, organization or authority to disgrace us as scum of the earth.

No more condemnation means that we are free in Christ—free from self-loathing and shame—*free at last, thank God almighty, free at last.*

No more condemnation is possible because of the greatest love of all. We have been set free through Jesus Christ, who lived, died and rose again in our world of guilt and shame in order to overcome it.

Jesus carried the world's guilt and shame on his shoulders to his cross, and he has once and for all forgiven it. Now he calls each of us to receive that gift in faith, believing that he alone can do what no one else can do for us.

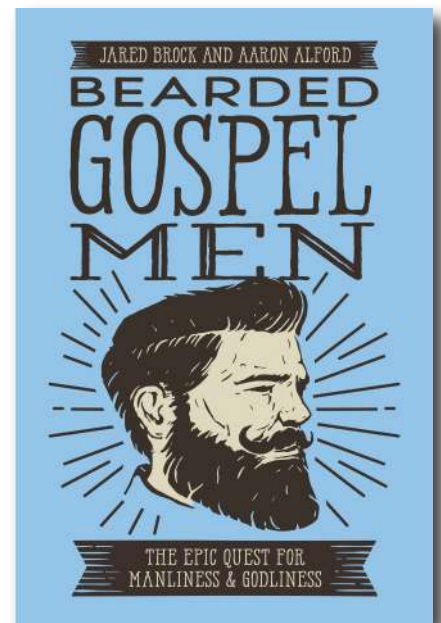
No more condemnation means we rest in Christ, because we have been rescued from judgment to grace—saved from law for mercy—delivered from condemnation to God's love.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever would believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:16-17). □

Greg Albrecht is President of Plain Truth Ministries.

Bearded Gospel Men

Interview with Jared Brock



Jared Brock recently released a fun and fascinating book about beards and some of the great Christian leaders who wore them. CWRm's Brad Jersak caught up with Jared for an interview about Bearded Gospel Men.

CWRm (Brad Jersak): *Beards. Back when I attended Bible College, beards were associated with*

hippies, rebellion and bad hygiene, so they were outlawed. But today, they are often associated with Bible characters (especially prophets), epic saints and hipsters. And now you're exposing us to a book-load of your bearded heroes of the faith. So, what is it with beards? And tell us about yours.

Jared: Perhaps men have just awakened and realized that

Gillette is playing them like a fiddle. Growing a beard saves time and money. Beards are the difference between "Mister" and "Sir." I've been blessed/cursed with male pattern magnificence, meaning I can grow a big bushy beard, even while I'm balding at a rapid rate.

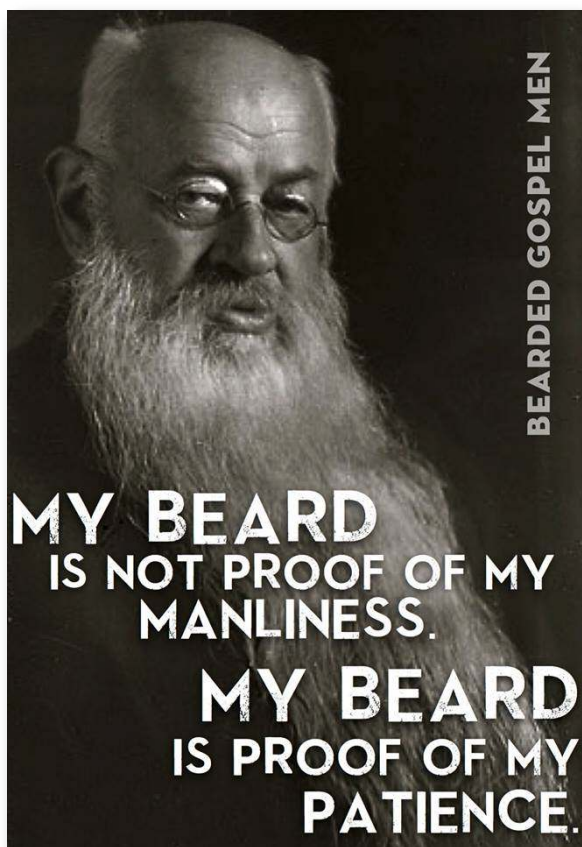
Fun fact: dihydrotestosterone, the hormone that grows beards, also makes men go bald. It's like God was saying, "choose this day whom you will serve."

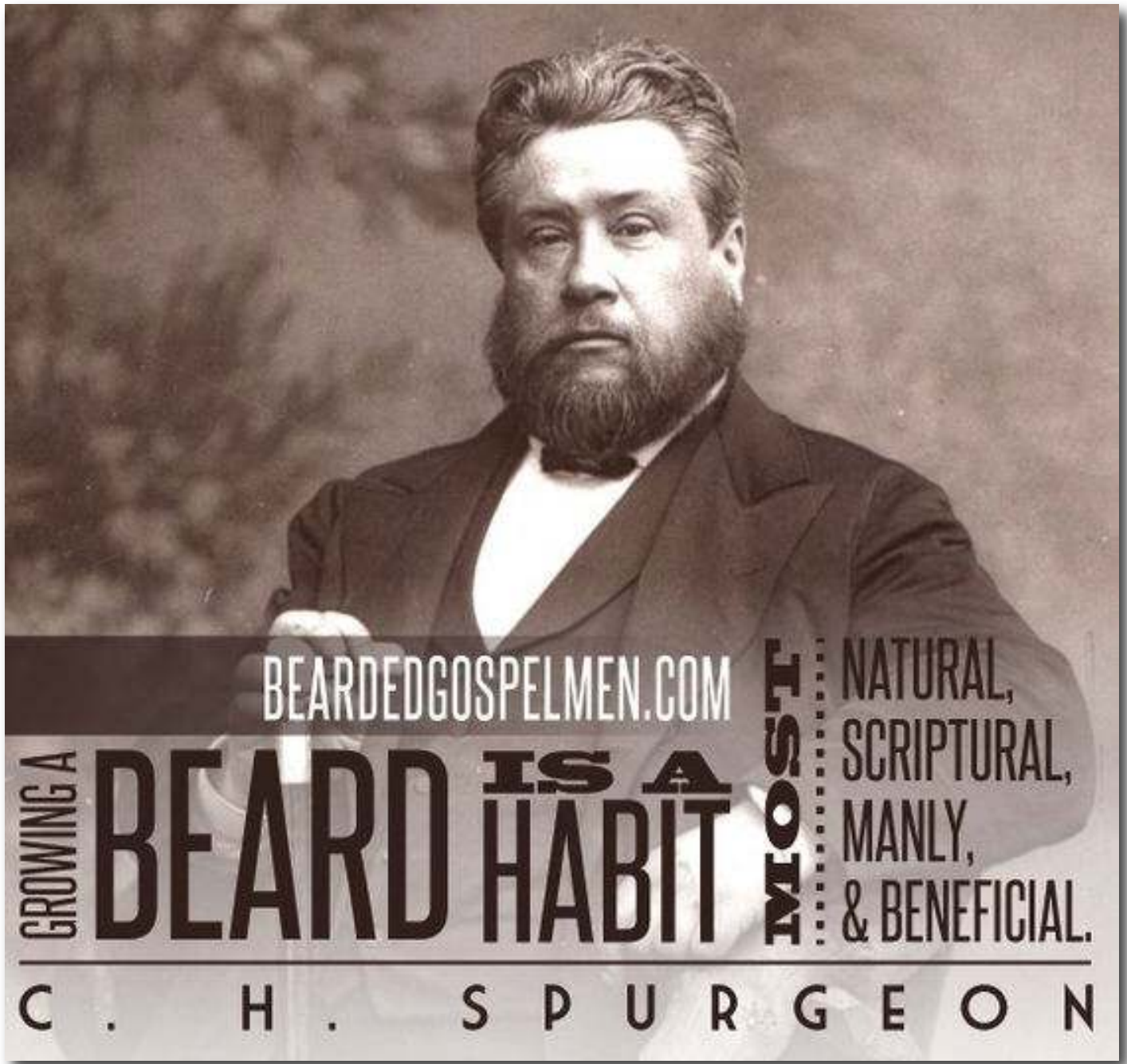
CWRm: *Beards are also seasonal. You get the "playoff beards" in sports, especially in hockey. But there's also "No-Shave November" —AKA "Movember." What can you tell us about that? I know it has to do with below-the-belt cancer in men.*

Jared: The No-Shave November and Movember movements were started to raise awareness and funds to combat cancer. We applaud their efforts. Now just imagine what could be accomplished with No-Shave Ever!

CWRm: *Tell me about **Bearded Gospel Men**. What is this book about?*

Jared: *BGM* is a month-long devotional that profiles 31 epic dudes throughout Christian history. You don't have to have a beard to read it, obviously. Our hope is that it inspires readers to answer Christ's call to live a higher life. And maybe grow a beard when possible.





CWRm: Tell us about some of your favorite bearded gospel men?

Jared: There are so many! C.T. Studd gave up a fortune and a career as the top cricketer of his time to become an impoverished minister. Josiah Henson escaped from slavery and kept coming back to rescue more than 100 others. Thomas Barnado started an orphanage in a super dangerous part of London (where Jack the Ripper was killing women at the time) and it's the biggest children's charity in the United Kingdom—150 years later!

CWRm: Beneath the beards, did the men in your book share some common character qualities?

Jared: We like to think that true beauty is on the inside, but clearly, these men's faces have sprung leaks. Aside from their titanic topiary, yes, there were quite a few important commonalities. The first, of course, is Christlikeness. They all remind me of Jesus in some way or another. They were selfless. They loved God and they loved people.

CWRm: What else did you learn from researching these incredible men of the faith?

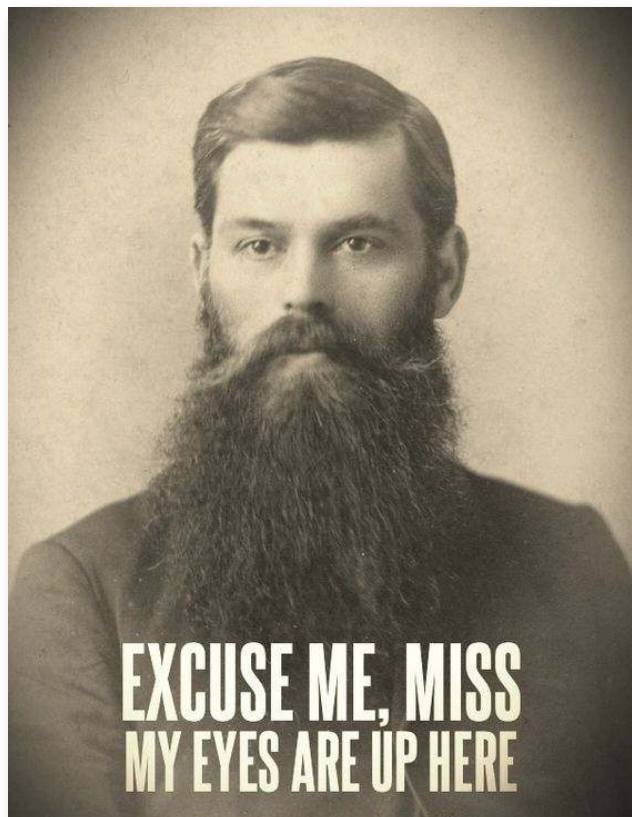
Jared: All the BGMs (bearded gospel men) we discovered understood the proper use of influence and affluence. They used their fame to further God's kingdom, not their own empire. They saw money as a tool and a stewardship to cultivate the world, not enrich their own lives. They realized the whole idea that "He must increase, we must decrease."

CWRm: *What are the challenges associated with being a Christian man in today's world?*

Jared: I think it's the same things it's always been: sex, money and power. But now it's been digitized. Porn on cell phones, unethical investing, hiding behind systems that take advantage of others on a mass scale.

CWRm: *Why does it seem like men are less likely to live their faith more visibly?*

Jared: I think of two sides to the same coin: the fear of man and the love of praise. I could elaborate, but I think every man who takes a moment to contemplate those two problems will realize how it rings true in their own lives. It certainly does in mine.



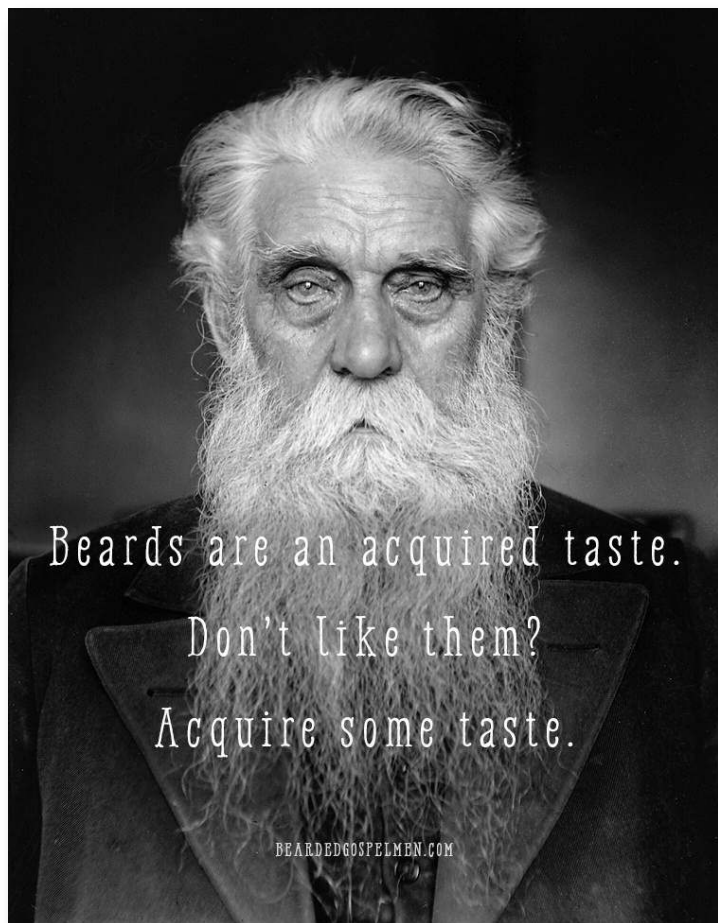
CWRm: *You say in the book that men often suffer in silence. We allow sin to fester—what is needed to change this in our culture?*

Jared: I've been blessed to have a band of brothers, a handful of godly dudes who know me. We play and pray and laugh and lead together. Without a community of others to help shine light on dark areas, it's inevitable that we'll suffer. We think we're the master of our fates and the captains of our souls, and that we must be self-reliant and go at it alone. The enemy's plan is to divide and conquer, and he's doing a great job.

CWRm: *What do you hope to ultimately achieve with Bearded Gospel Men?*

Jared: In a word, togetherness. We hope *BGM* is a tool that helps guys grow closer to God and each other. We like to compare *Bearded Gospel Men* to a pub. Everyone is welcome to pull up a chair and talk. The fire is lit. The drinks are poured. Welcome to the table. □

Jared Brock is the author of Bearded Gospel Men. Visit www.beardedgospelmen.com to watch the trailer and download free chapters.



"BIG GOD, BIG LOVE, BIG CROSS"

CWR AUDIO MESSAGE

BY WM. PAUL YOUNG & BRAD JERSAK

PAUL YOUNG: I have a band of friends. That alone is a miracle since I spent much of my life hidden behind masks of performance and shame, isolated and lonely. You wouldn't have known. Addiction, fear and an inability to love myself kept me from being known, but I seemed friendly enough. Behind the mask was deep sadness and a desperation that leaked out as witty and biting humor, the need to be right, a perfectionism that covered a deep sense of unworthiness. So, for me to have a band of friends is rather stunning and miraculous.

If my friends and I chose a motto it might go like this: If you like someone you give them your time and money, but if you love them, you give them your friends.

For those of you who don't already know my friend, Brad Jersak, I want to give him to you. He is a theologian, a father, a husband and much more. He is brilliant and broken, and kind tenderness slips through his words and presence. Like me, he was saved, in part, by his wife.

Brad and I participated in a weekend gathering in British Columbia called, *The Grand Embrace*. The link below leads to a message near the end of the last day and is one of those heart-engaging, simply-profound few minutes that invite you to sit under a warm, embracing waterfall of truth and grace. I tell a beautiful story at the end, but that is only to offer a small example to frame the magnificent and expansive portrait of God that Brad presents.

You are my friends. I want you to hear this. Enjoy!

<https://www.ptm.org/big-god>

Note: The photo to the right was taken at the Grand Embrace conference where the "Big God" message was given. It features Paul Young, author of *The Shack*, sitting on Brad Jersak's shoulders, with light from the stained glass window behind them forming a cross-shaped shadow on the tile floor.



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October 2018

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—Week of October 14

The Life of Our Risen Lord
—Week of October 21

Taking, Possessing or Giving?
—Week of October 28

November 2018

We are GIVEN the Victory
—Week of November 4

Success by Excess is Not True Greatness
—Week of November 11

First Things
—Week of November 18

Never Judge a Book by its Cover
—Week of November 25

St. Stephen, New Brunswick
with St. Stephen’s University
—October 1–7

Abbotsford, British Columbia
with Soulstream Community
—October 13

Saint John, New Brunswick
with Threshold School of Ministry
—October 15–16

Morro Bay, California
with Coastlands Vineyard
—October 19–21

Southampton, UK
with New Community Network
—October 26–28

Ashburnham Place, UK
—October 30–November 1

Jersey, UK
—November 2–4

Miami, FL with Hope4Life Foundation
—November 16–18

Bellingham, WA
with Abundant Life Church
—November 25



CWRm

BRAD JERSAK

“Are Jesus’ warnings to be taken as threats?”

Question: I’m nearly finished reading *A More Christlike God*. I appreciate your insights. I’ve been on a journey away from the angry, vengeful, bloodthirsty God over the past year. But now I feel like I’m in one of those valleys where I wonder if we’re creating a version of God who doesn’t exist?

I’m curious about Jesus’ interaction in John 5 with the man at the pool on the Sabbath. Jesus tells him, “*See you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.*” Are Jesus’ warnings to be taken as threats? Is Jesus warning him about what the Jewish council might do to him? Is he using the word “sin” in a cheeky way, since he obviously doesn’t believe carrying a mat on the Sabbath is a sin? It seems like a stretch but that’s all I can think of.

Response: A very good question! First, let’s begin by acknowledging that when we see our loving Father issuing warnings about the effects of sin, we need not regard loving warnings as threats.

It’s similar for me as a 12-step recovery sponsor. If someone finds sobriety from self-destructive cycles of addiction and is enjoying their new life in recovery, I may say, “Now that you are clean, you need to live in daily surrender to the grace and loving care of God, because apart from that, relapse is inevitable. Since addiction, by nature, is progressive and destructive, your next slip is normally going to be worse for you and/or your loved ones. This stuff can kill you. No, *I’m not threatening you.* I’m urging you to say “no” to self-will and instead, depend on the love and strength of your heavenly Father.”

Hopefully, you can see that I would only give such dire warnings to addicts flirting with going their own way rather than following the Jesus Way. I never do this to threaten them or heap guilt and shame on them, but only because I want them to live.

A slightly more mundane illustration comes from the world of traffic. Think about speed limit signs. If we view them through the eyes of a legalist or a lawbreaker, we will mistake the signs for threats of punishment: *the speed limit is 30. If you go 60 around this corner, you will get a ticket.*

But are speed limits imposed with the intent of threatening punishment? No. Speed limits and their signs are warnings intended to save lives. *The speed limit is 30. If you go 60 around this corner, you could harm yourself or someone else. Indeed, you could die! So slow down!*

No, the traffic cop won’t kill you for speeding. But gravity, a tree or the ditch make speeding a life and death issue. The same sign speaks differently to two mindsets—law or love.

In the case of the paralytic in John 5, we are not privy to the original cause of his disability. Nor are we told what sins Jesus imagined the newly healed man might be tempted to commit. But a love mindset starts with the assumption that God is love, revealed in Christ, so we don’t read about Jesus the threatener or Jesus the punisher in this passage. Rather, this is Jesus the infallible Guide, offering loving directions as the man’s new legs give him freedom to either follow Christ’s way or to careen along some other more perilous path.

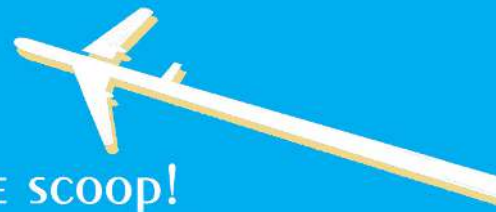
As a dad, I connect with Jesus’ concern for the man’s first steps—just as I felt concern for my children when they took their first steps outside our house. Will they run to Daddy or make a break for the busy road? I wasn’t prepared to keep them locked in the house forever, so I expressed parental love in both encouragement (“*Go for it, boys!*”) and warnings (“*Stay away from the road!*”). I can’t say how good my parenting was, but I know that when we see Jesus, he reflects the love of our perfect heavenly Father. □

Brad Jersak was a pastor and church-planter for 20 years prior to his teaching career and signing on with CWRm.

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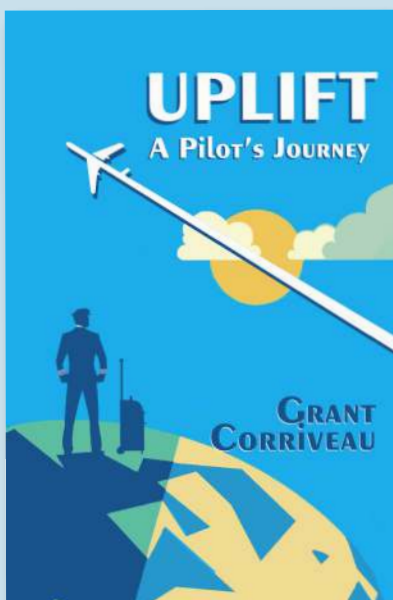
"I'm still a rookie second officer but even I know it's not supposed to happen like this."

The captain called "Before Landing Check." That's normal. The first officer and I moved the appropriate switches, levers and buttons, and chanted the usual incantations. That's normal. The trusty old Boeing 727 responded with its arcane dialect of flashing lights and flickering needles. That's normal. And the all-important landing gear panel is now showing three green lights assuring us that the wheels are locked down. That's normal. But the landing gear control panel is also glowering at us with a trio of red lights, telling us that the green lights are not to be trusted.

"That's not normal."

→ → →

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Reviews are in: UPLIFT is a fabulous read ... and makes a GREAT GIFT!

Hi Grant,

I just wanted to let you know how much we enjoyed your book. My husband Karl and I read the book together. We laughed, we discussed the different situations you encountered, and we truly have a far deeper appreciation for what it takes to be an airline pilot! The story we found particularly funny was the encounter with the obnoxious drunk (you should have worn your hat). We just finished the book as we drove from BC to Alberta, with Karl as captain on the left and I as FO on the right—reading and barking out SOPs while navigating. Thank you so much for the enjoyable read.

—Regards, Donna and Karl