

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half shows a wide, sandy beach with some darker patches of vegetation or rocks. The middle section features a large, turbulent wave crashing against a dark, rocky shore, creating white foam and a deep turquoise color in the water. The bottom half shows the ocean extending towards the horizon, with smaller waves visible.

# AND SONS

*INITIATION AND THE YOUNG MAN'S SOUL*

**VOL. 6**



IN CASE OF GLOBAL PANDEMIC CUT HERE.

# AND SONS

*IMITATION AND THE YOUNG MAN'S SOUL*

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**CONTAINS MATURING CONTENT**

(But only the stuff that will feed a young man's soul)

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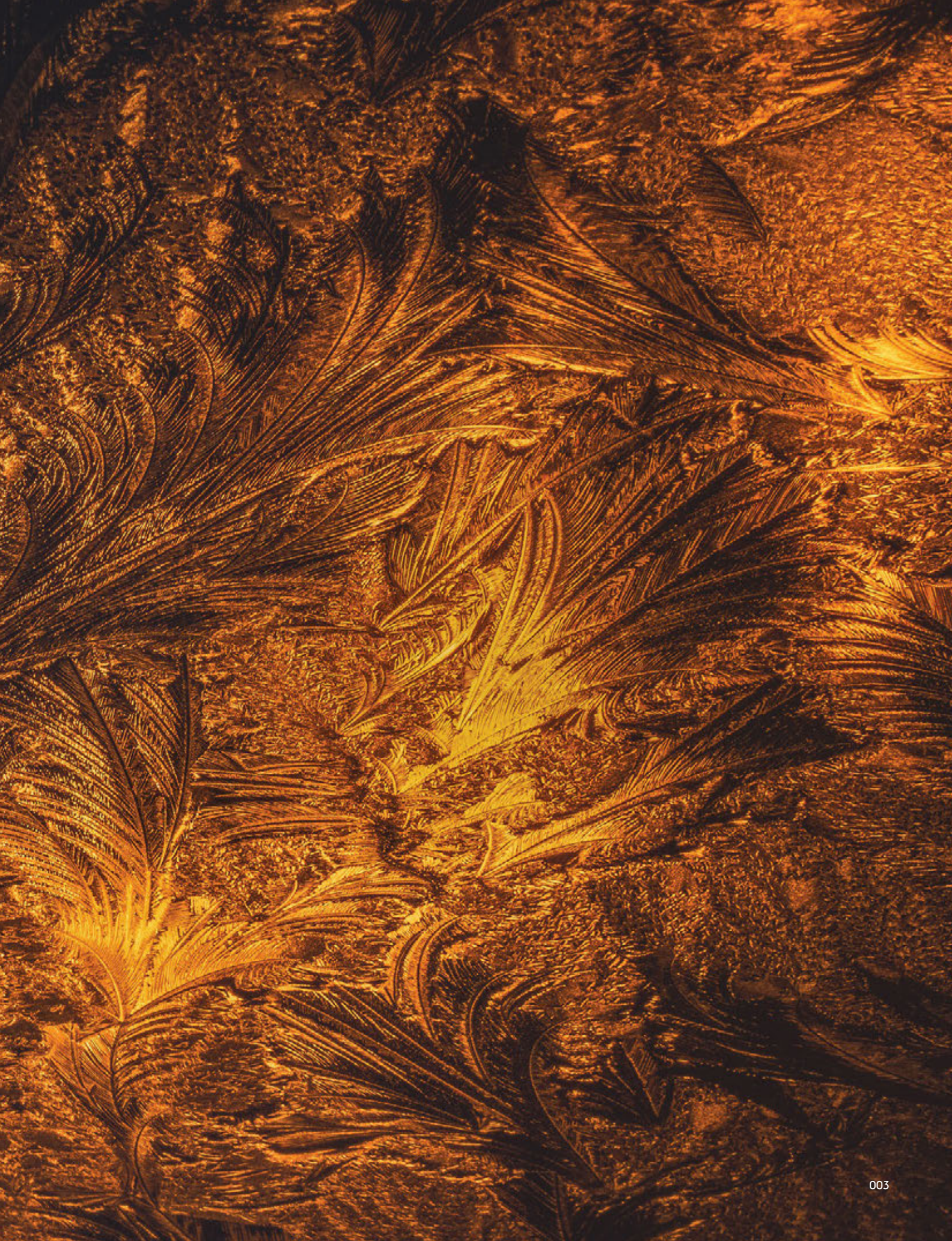
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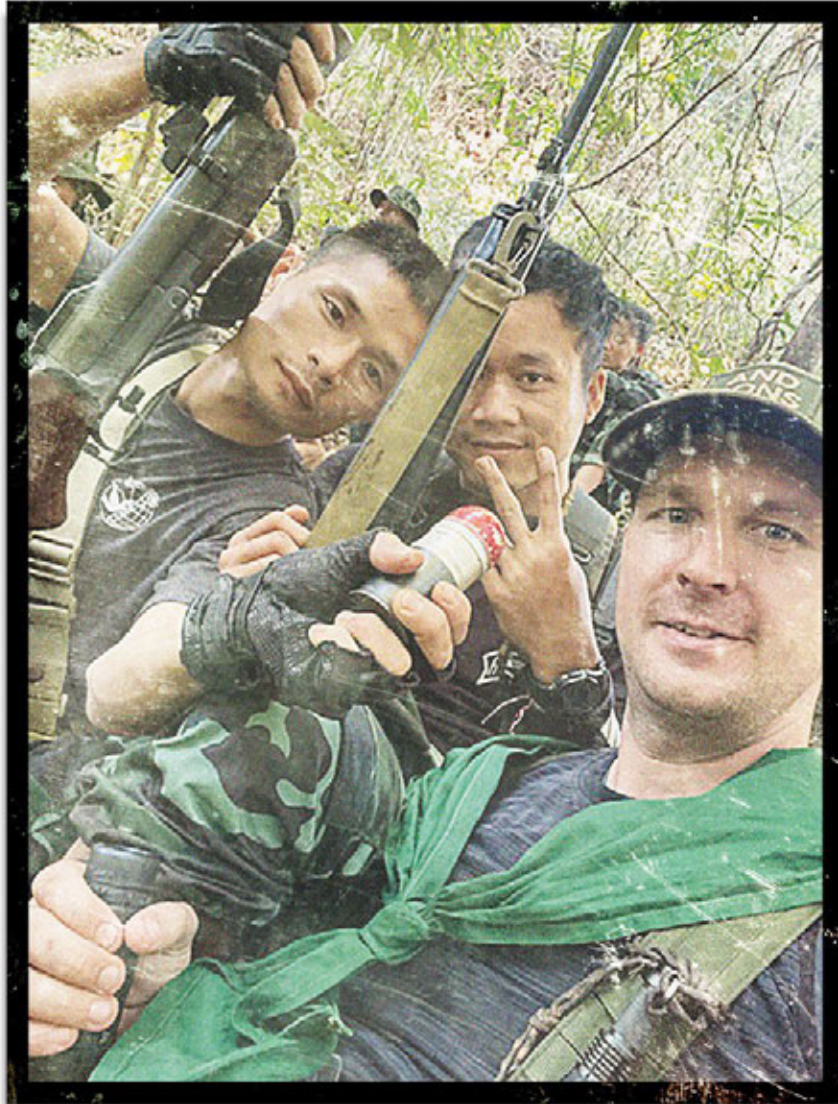
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*Front cover: "The Murder Hole" by Steven Hanna.  
This page: "Phoenix Rising" by Steven Hanna.*





*Dave Small, taking the And Sons multicam hat somewhere we'd never imagined it would go: to the jungles of Burma. Yes, the photo is real. Yes, you can read more about his story in this issue. And yes, we'd love to see where you take your And Sons hat. We promise not to compare if you won't.*

# FOREWORD

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Several years ago, some friends and I were hiking in the Tenmile Range. The cold came early that year, and though it was only October, the mountains were covered in a veneer of hard, slick snow. After an hour or so, our trail crossed a level snowfield. There was an ice-covered lake on one side with boulders strewn along its edge. Naturally, we went over there to throw rocks at the ice, and the first guy—being prudent by nature—tossed his rock from a distance.

The rock rose in the air. It did a slow-motion flip. It came down in the snow, far short of the lake. Only, it didn't stop on the surface. It plunged right through, with an icy glunk. There followed a moment of silence. Then, abruptly and at the same time, we realized three important things:

1. The snowfield was an ice-covered lake.
2. We were on the ice.
3. The ice was thin.

Like startled sheep did we bolt for the shore.

It's a story with several morals, but this time, the point is, when there's a crisis, we experience everything we observe. There are no outsiders in a hard time. We're all on the same thin ice.

That's too bad because distance feels good, which is one of the reasons many of us act like crises are happening to other people. We say things like "People are going crazy right now" or "Can you believe that Sally hasn't left her house in months?" or "Everybody (else) is acting so angry" or "I noticed that the rates of anxiety are rising—what should people do about it?...asking for a friend..."

The problem is, it doesn't work that way. A crisis isn't happening somewhere else. It's happening right here. We're going crazy, too. We're unreliable friends, too. We're emotionally raw, too. The only way through is in. Which means that, in the times we have, we need to take our soul care and our maturity seriously.

While we were building this issue, we called it the Med Kit. It's full of deep dives into the heart, sage advice, and real-world examples. It exists to give you, the And Sons crew, the tools you need to thrive.

This is an exciting time to be alive, which is not the same thing as an easy time to be alive. We all have a part to play, and though our parts vary, they start in the same place: our restoration and our initiation, a process by which we become men who can bring the Kingdom and change the world.

We're glad you're with us on the journey.

– Blaine Eldredge

# READER MAIL

---

**H**ey, And Sons! Just ordered my year 2 cap and wanted to say thank you! This is so dope! Your podcast and magazine are changing my life! Seriously!

In January 2020, my heart reached for your magazine and podcast as a lifeline to my masculine soul! Through a series of events orchestrated by God including many timely podcasts from you, I've quit my job in banking and applied for chiropractic school.

My wife and I are so stoked to be chasing our dreams with God and taking a step back to allow God to initiate us into the man and woman we're meant to be. So yeah this is crazy and we have a lot less money but I've never felt more alive!

Thank you for all you do!

– *Dustin A.*

**G**ood gentlemen. First the “Nerdy Boards” article. Then a Star Wars figurine search game. Then a crossword puzzle. These all brought me a smile. These all let me enjoy some playtime.

I'm reading a book about play by Bernard De Koven (“The Infinite Playground”), and he's teaching me how important play and imagination are to us all. I think they're crucial for our mental and spiritual lives. Play is a vital nutrient for us on every level. And I really appreciate your team swinging this into focus. I've heard you talk about it on your podcast, both how something like a game can be refreshing and how play with others is good for those relationships. I even remember Blaine's story about God playing a joke on him when the shower poured on him while he was fully clothed (ep. 97, “A Playful Jesus”).

We can maybe play too much if we aren't careful, and you've also discussed the dangers of leaning on recreation as a crutch or attempting to escape in it. But thank you for also giving us permission to play.

– *Adam S.*

**H**ello Sam and Blaine. I've just finished listening to one of your episodes (a Tuesday evening tradition that I very much look forward to) and wanted to let you know how very good (“helpful” doesn't adequately convey the idea) I've found your podcast. I first came across it about six months ago (introduced to it by my dad!) and have been listening weekly ever since.

I so greatly appreciate the way that you think and talk about life, faith, God, relationships, and the many things there are to consider and to grow in as we pursue a whole-hearted life with God. Your conversations have given me lots to reflect on and to pray about, and I'm trying to get a few friends to start listening to them so that they can serve as a jumping off point for good conversations of our own! So, thank you.

Listening to the two of you talking gives me hope (as a late 20s single gal) that there are young guys out there with a real depth and maturity of faith. I'll keep my eyes open! I also hope to see my younger brothers grow into such young men themselves and am grateful that, in listening to you, they can have an idea of what that looks like.

– *Heather B.*

**H**ey, guys. I really have a love for all of you at Wild At Heart Ministries. I was 15 when my dad picked up a Wild at Heart book. I watched him change at the heart level, then I watched my parents' marriage change, then I watched him help other men do the same. I'm now 27.

Wild at Heart Ministries has been a staple in our house and life. I've helped my father put on Wild at Heart and Waking the Dead boot camps. I've been a follower of your ministry for a long time, and this challenge (And Sons podcast, ep. 194, The February Experiment) is a great kick in the ass I need right now. I'm looking forward to going through it with you guys!

– *Luke*

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## WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK.

Please e-mail us at [readermail@andsonsmagazine.com](mailto:readermail@andsonsmagazine.com) or mail your letters to:

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*(Letters may be edited for length and clarity.)*

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*RIDE FOR THE BRAND.*



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# **WHEN WILL WE FEEL THIS?**

*WORDS Sam Jolman*

I once heard a story about a woman who was turning left on a two-lane country road when another driver came roaring up behind her, smashing into her minivan at full clip.

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**T**he cars careened around the road like a derailed train before skidding to a stop. As soon as she realized she was alive, she thought of her two children in the back. She turned to see them both crying but alive. She jumped out of her car, opened the sliding door, and pulled both children from the wreckage to the side of the road. To her great relief, though shaken and scared, they checked out okay. She sighed and slumped down in a hug with them, waiting for the police to come. It was only then that the pressing pain in her arms became clear. She had two broken wrists.

Survival is a gift we rarely appreciate. As a therapist, my job is to help people get out of survival mode, to stop just coping or getting by, and find their hearts and really live again. But all of that work matters only if we can first bless survival. Surviving a traumatic event or a crisis matters most. If we move on too fast or with too much gusto, we miss the chance to be grateful for what got us through.

You are surviving right now. We all are. You may be gutting your way through a lot of things, but I know at least you're pushing through a pandemic. It's the giant footnote in all our lives. It's implicit in how we talk with each other: "Oh I'm making it" or "Doing okay" or straight up "I'm surviving." It may simply be the laugh or sigh of anger we vent alone. A yearlong pandemic is not a car crash. Or maybe it's the slowest one ever. It's more a slow boil than a stab wound, though its onset was sudden and its losses enduring. All the same, the stress has become our normal, chronic and not simply acute. We aren't in shock as much as we are numb to it all now.





As my therapist told me, no one is doing well right now. That's felt true with my clients. Everyone has an extra layer of stress or grief or exhaustion between them and their heart. Some friends asked me a few weeks ago how I'm doing, and I simply did not know. It's been a lot harder to know this whole year. Of course we aren't all suffering to the same degree and some have found ways to live well, even appreciate the gifts in this season. Still, we are all the woman skidding along in the crumpled car, not fully feeling it all because we're still getting through it.

So when will we feel this? And what will it feel like? You've already felt a lot this year. Big stuff, exhausting stuff, maddening stuff. But what will the waking up feel like? I think the dominant thing we will all feel is an intense desire for life. Lots of life. Lots and lots of dreams and desires. We will want to do and experience everything. The dam of desire will bust. We will want to leap like lambs set free from the Covid restrictions. Insert your own metaphor here, but I believe this is how our hearts will show up first. We will want to binge life.

As Emily Freeman wrote on Instagram, "Of all the things we lost in the last 12 months, one that has taken the longest for me to name is a sense of possibility."

I resonate with that so much. We've had to halt, postpone, cancel, or shelve so much desire. It's made us all stir crazy. The human heart is not made for restriction; suppression requires its greatest effort. In the words of Gerald May:

*"Something that has been repressed does not really go away; it remains within us, skirting the edges of our consciousness. Every now and then it reminds us of its presence, as if to say, 'Remember me?'"*

And the end will bring this awareness. Grief will come as intense desire. Sometimes the ache for something is so intense it hurts. Which will bring us face to face with our health and mental well-being. We will want to jump back into life as we knew it and find our rhythm again, put this in the rearview mirror. But our bodies and beings will not let us.

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**We rarely appreciate survival.  
We do not often stop and thank the things  
that got us through.**

---

The muscles and the finances and the relationships and the depression won't catch up fast enough to what we want.

We will tire quickly. We will not have the stamina or the capacity. We will limp for a while and the letdown will show up. It will not feel like normal life. Normal life died and it won't resurrect as quickly as we'll hope. And this irritation that it's not happening fast enough will bring sorrow. This is when we must stop and let the grief come, when the world does not spin back up like it used to.

The hope of the end is in the air. Can you sense it? But we are not there yet. So in the meantime, may I propose something for you to do? I said at the outset that we rarely appreciate survival. We do not often stop and thank the things that got us through. I hear it most when people confess with embarrassment or outright contempt the things that got them through childhood abuse. The bedroom or the books or the imaginary friends we retreated to. The self-soothing that now is addiction. The places or the people that were never good for us but got us out anyway.

We do this because it's an act of self-kindness. You survived. Well done. Can you thank the things you used to survive the pandemic? What will you bless? What's getting you through?

I found the best jogger sweatpants at the outset and they made my sore body mornings more comforting. I love my coffee and the 10 gallons of eggnog I drank in the darkest nights of winter with its creamy soothing goodness. I am grateful for swear words that got me through many starry night walks around my block. (Sorry neighbors!) I am grateful for the prayers that came after the swearing. I love my men's group that found a life still on Zoom. Mando, you were a gift to me, too. My binge foods and my children. And for the passionate fights with my wife, the ones that made us humble enough to want to say we were sorry and talk even more. ■



Silicone Boone's "The Reaches" is a lauded concept album about exploring space and alien contact. Much has been written about how this ex-Amish songwriter came to love this topic, and we're honored that he took some time to discuss it in this And Sons exclusive interview.

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# Ten Questions with Silicone Boone





Photo by Eric Hurligen

**AS:** *When did you know you wanted to make an album about space?*

**SB:** I never dreamed I'd make any record until only a few years ago. By the time I actually started thinking seriously about a space record, I had nearly six completed "space" songs. As I edited the songs, and wrote new ones, I got into it and decided to make a nine-track concept album, with the hopes to make a work of art, not just a record. I approached *The Reaches* more like how a composer approaches a symphony than a "rock" album. The record has a clear beginning and end, has an arc, a trajectory, common themes and at the very end circles back to the beginning with a giant question mark over the whole damn enterprise.

**AS:** *How does the Amish kid show up in *The Reaches*?*

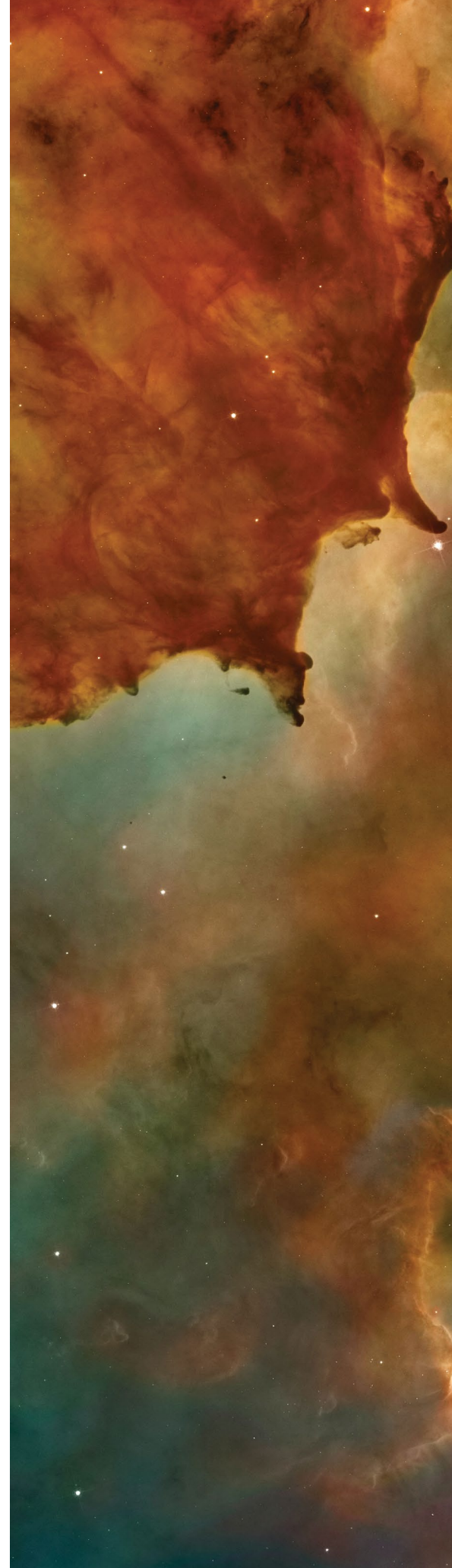
**SB:** I remember being very young in the kitchen with my mom as she was kneading dough and asking her a question that every good Amish kid knows the answer to: "What happens if we leave?"

"We will go to hell," she replied. I suppose the dissonance of being taught to believe such a harsh and damning thing and then suddenly one day being told we are leaving and that "we were wrong before but now we are right" might impact a person's ability to maintain certainties. Being able to admit and make peace with the unknown is very important to me. As such, a central theme in *The Reaches* is a sort of hallowing of the unknown and the need to enter into it. There's a reason why humans have a relentless hunger that drives them into the unpredictable.

**AS:** *What is "Found You" about?*

**SB:** "Found You" imagines the thrill of making first contact with another sentient life form. I knew that if I delved too deep into the specifics of such a thing it would either be 1) a turn off for everyone except sci-fi geeks or 2) really kitsch. So to tackle #1, I purposely wrote in a way that the song could double for the divine, a lover, a great discovery, a profound insight or any grand shift or change in one's trajectory. As for problem #2, I recall as I was drafting ideas for how to write the song, at one point I toyed with describing the ET visually and the more I played with that idea the more I hated the song. Something felt really naive and sophomoric about that. I eventually landed on writing from the POV of a nobody who, in a moment of sheer fortune, changes the entire trajectory of human history.

As for depicting the ETI (extraterrestrial intelligence), I was relieved I had abandoned that idea when later I learned that Stanley Kubrick, in his "2001: A Space Odyssey," had spent years seeking the right image/figure to represent the ETs in the film, and eventually discarded any such notion for a far superior one: the monolith. Kubrick realized that a simple, elegant symbol of ETI



(rather than an actual ET) would be far more effective and capable of delivering the ideas he was hoping to convey, as well as ideas he hadn't yet thought of.

**AS:** *How do you feel when someone interprets your song differently than you do?*

**SB:** In some respects, this is a compliment. A friend of mine who graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary told me that "Found You" is about God as alien righteousness (whatever that means!), and he went on to explain that the singer is Jesus and the choir is humanity and he worked his way through the song explaining it to me. I was kinda blown away at how airtight his interpretation was despite it being wildly different than the intent I had while writing it.

**AS:** *How did the secluded life that you lived in the Amish community and later in the mountains of eastern Kentucky affect your yearning for the Vast Expanse?*

**SB:** My childhood was marked by sheltering and seclusion. Socially (after leaving the Amish), this ended up being fairly painful for me and my siblings, as more often than not, we just didn't fit in anywhere. Or if we did, we felt like we didn't, which is really the same difference. We recall the first week or so in public school, not being able to tell the difference between boys/girls bathrooms, and waiting to see someone go in or come out so that we didn't make a mistake. Honestly, it wasn't until a few years ago that I stopped feeling like a foreigner in my own country. One upside to being sheltered is that sometimes you get to encounter cultural experiences with a more robust sense of fortune vs taking it for granted. It's still fascinating to "discover" a great artist or band or film that my peers grew up with, but for me is brand new.

**AS:** *When you embraced the writing of Carl Sagan, particularly "Pale Blue Dot," was there anything about the cosmos or space or God in your religious upbringing that you had to discard?*

**SB:** For sure. Some things changed immediately and some things took much longer. One of the scariest bits, the part I kept hidden, perhaps even afraid to whisper to myself, was that I found Sagan's vision of human future much more compelling and inspiring than the story I had learned in church or from reading Scripture. I started shuffling my own thinking about the cosmos, its intrinsic value, and how the story of the afterlife might look more like Sagan's vision of endless exploration and terraforming rather than living a life of uneventful routine in a safe and blissful city of gold. I remember telling a friend I felt like Sagan was an atheist who was peering through the glass door that is "heaven," and had a much clearer vision of it than most religious folks.

**AS:** *What do you find more useful in songwriting: structure or mystery?*

**SB:** I can really appreciate the right song that leans heavily on mystery, but if you go too far in that direction it can lose all foothold and mean anything and everything, aka nothing. And though I can find that interesting as an exercise, unless it's just pure genius and part of the "structure" itself, it quickly becomes boring. And if you lean too much on structure it becomes predictable and immediately exhausted. That's even more boring.

Songs that have influenced me the most play both hands exceptionally well, like Gillian Welch's "April the 14th (Part 1)." It's a first-person story and so naturally will have both those elements, but I love how she almost personifies the destruction of that date (Abe Lincoln's assassination, Titanic sinking, the great dust bowl of 1935) and wraps them into an anticlimactic moment of a poorly attended outdoor rock show that "ruins" the narrator as she relates that "I watched them walk through the bottom land and I wished I played in a rock and roll band. Hey, hey it was the 14th day of April." Like that song, I attempt to invest my writing with both mystery and structure alike, though sometimes I lean more on one than the other, depending on the nature of the song or my aim.

**AS:** *What's next for you, musically?*

**SB:** My last project attempted to peer into the future; the next one will peer into the past. The writing deals with 19th century America and hopes to embody and celebrate some of the myths of the period as well as critique the horrendous tragedies and arrogance of the time.

**AS:** *What current innovations in space exploration interest you?*

**SB:** I hope we'll succeed in designing a robot that will successfully drill through the surface of Europa's ice and investigate whether the moon has life.

**AS:** *Gotta stop you there. "Europa" is lyrically breathtaking. Sample verse: Seven miles down ice and stone/Fourteen months of drilling/We finally strike the oceans of your womb/Just to find that you're barren/O the madness that drove us to this/A mistress so neglected/To her bitter breasts will/Clutch you even long past death*

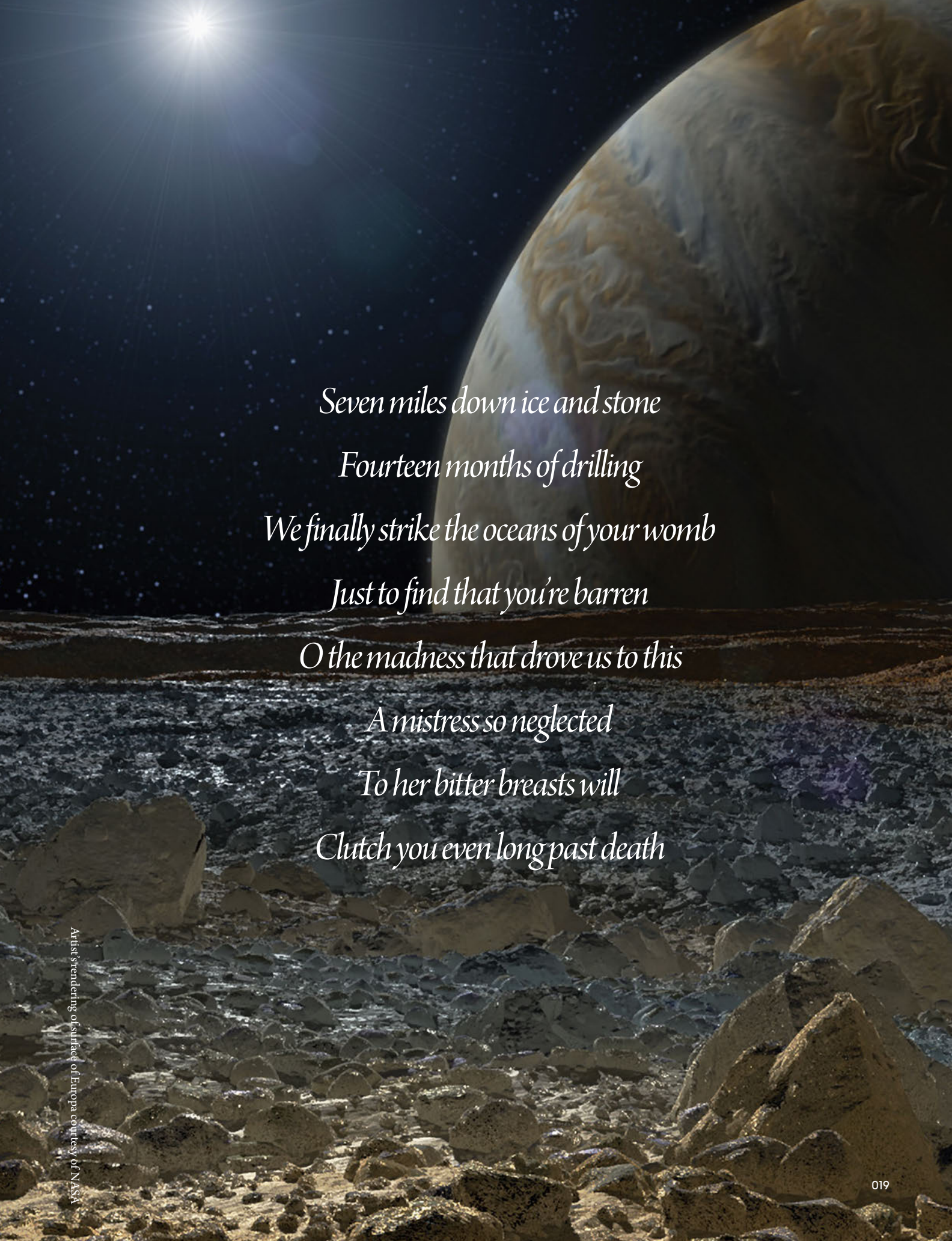
*Please talk us through this poetic vision.*

**SB:** "Europa" is a murder ballad and as such needs actual humans to go and drill through the ice in hopes of finding life, but in reality we know it'll be robots that will do it for us. The song personifies Europa, the "ancient goddess," who, in this story, has failed to secure a lover and therefore has remained infertile. Having grown jealous and bitter, she manages to woo and capture this crew of explorers with her icy beauty and a false promise of fertility. It's unclear how she kills them, though I would assume it has to do with the inability of their technology to withstand the harsh conditions of her world. The song begins as the narrator reflects on the final words of the last surviving crew member (besides the narrator) and then buries her "still suited and covered" "on the open clear" of Europa.

It appears a disaster struck the crew, killing them all, but only after they discovered that Europa is barren and therefore not worth attention, much less affection. But they never succeed in escaping the moon's icy embrace. The narrator, ruminating on the madness of the mission, concludes that all along the goddess's plans were to kill and collect their frozen corpses, to hang them on her neck like a silvery keepsake. The song is mostly imaginative, literary fun, but it also plays with some heavier elements, like nihilism, a theme that surfaces at various points on the record and in this particular song comes out on top. ■

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*Find the artist at [SILICONEBOONE.COM](http://SILICONEBOONE.COM) and "The Reaches" wherever you stream music. Want to buy a CD? E-mail: [SILICONEBOONE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SILICONEBOONE@GMAIL.COM).*



*Seven miles down ice and stone  
Fourteen months of drilling  
We finally strike the oceans of your womb  
Just to find that you're barren  
O the madness that drove us to this  
A mistress so neglected  
To her bitter breasts will  
Clutch you even long past death*

# The Anxiety Crisis

WORDS Luke Eldredge

My ability to instantly fall asleep was the source of great jealousy from my friends in high school. Any time someone would sleep over, rather than the rambunctious conversation in the dark that is sprinkled throughout every coming-of-age movie, I would slip into unconsciousness as soon as the lights were off. I was out within a couple minutes, tops. I was confused by my friends' irritation at this ability. I thought it was completely normal to be able to swiftly fall asleep.

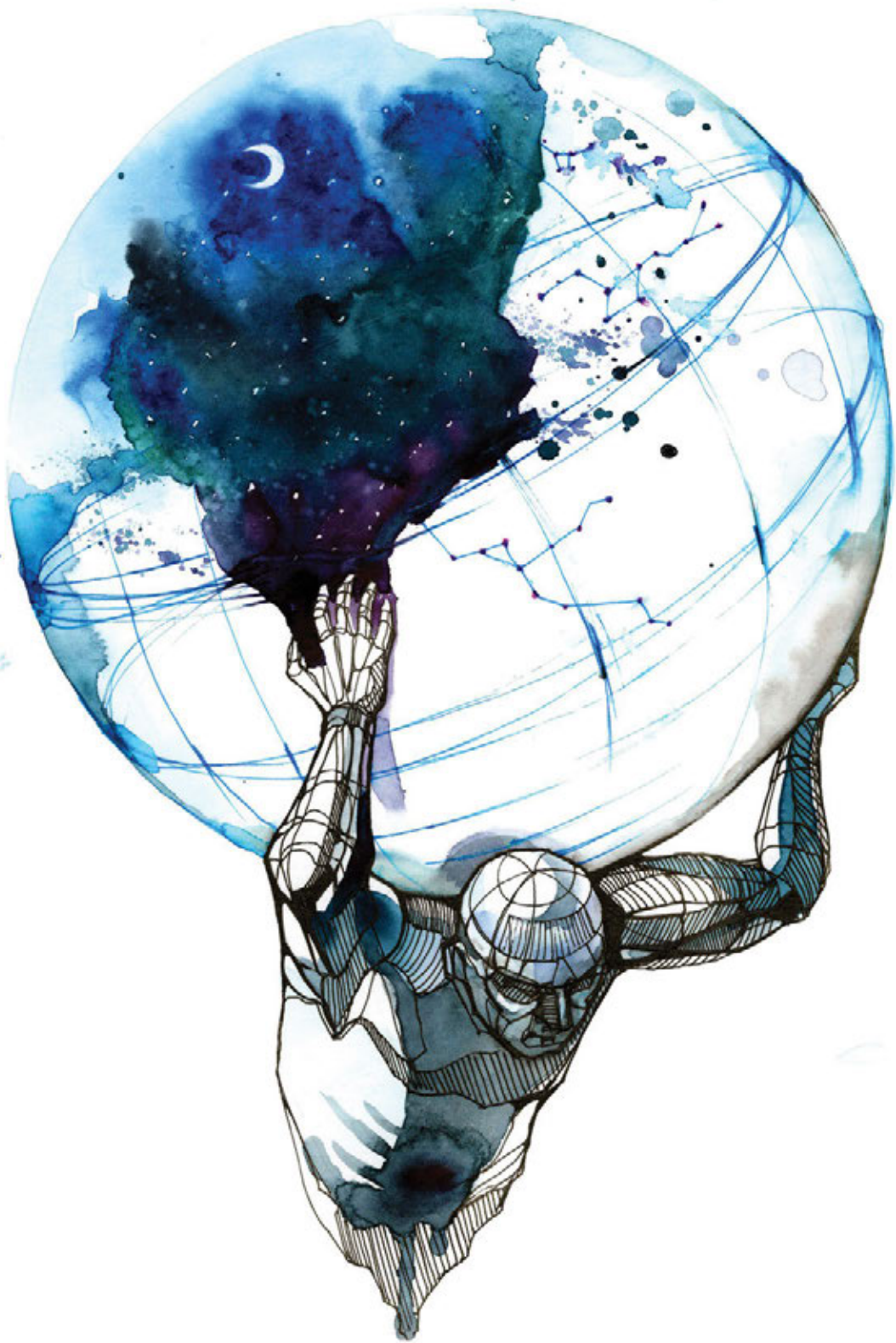
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**T**hat changed suddenly once I arrived at college. A nightly routine highlighted by an instant-out as my head touched the pillow was replaced by hours of tossing and turning. I realized what a tremendous gift I had taken for granted. Confused by this sudden shift in sleeping abilities, the only factor I could think of was stress.

I knew that stress can affect sleep and I knew I had never felt the level of stress I was feeling for the first time as a freshman in college. Sure, I had suffered the sleepless night before a presentation, or dance, or big test in high school, but nothing so sustained as this. Nothing as intense.

By the time I was a senior and finals in my upper division course approached, not only would I not be able to sleep, but I would find myself curled into a fetal position on top of my bed in the middle of the day, wrapped in my comforter. Not in an attempt to sleep, but in response to the overwhelming pressure. Once the wave passed, I would get back up and keep at it.

I graduated college and didn't think much about these episodes. But that ability to fall asleep never came.



More recently, my wife and I decided to get a dog. I grew up with golden retrievers and I love dogs to the point of bursting. A husky sticking his happy head out a window of a passing car is always called out. And we are part of the wave of people adopting dogs as a response to the nation's stay-at-home orders.

We put a deposit down on a dog from a friend's litter, but instead of eager anticipation, I begin to panic.

Panic is, to be blunt, a familiar feeling. I'm in my second year of grad school, and the amount of stress makes my college days feel like a cakewalk. But this is different. It comes in waves when I think about taking care of the animal. At first it is manageable, but it grows.

Driving home from school a week away from picking up our dog, I begin to think about everything I still need to do to prepare. I need to read the book on training we picked up.

I need to make sure we have everything we need to take care of him. I need to decide on a vet. I need to figure out everything I don't know that I need to know.

An intense pain blooms in my chest. My breathing becomes short as my throat tightens. My hands shake. I feel like I'm about to throw up.

I am having an anxiety attack.

Now two points very quickly: An anxiety attack is not a panic attack. They share many symptoms, but are vastly different in degree. A panic attack can send you to the hospital; it can paralyse your whole body. Often people experiencing a panic attack think they are having a seizure. Panic attacks can come out of nowhere, whereas an anxiety attack comes from a particular trigger and escalates gradually.

The second point is far more important, that anxiety is different from stress. Stress is the response to a threat in a situation. We all have stress.







## Some Data<sup>2</sup>

- Nearly 8 in 10 adults (78% of the U.S. population) say the coronavirus pandemic is a significant source of stress in their life. And, 2 in 3 adults (67%) say they have experienced increased stress over the course of the pandemic
- Nearly half of adults report their behavior has been negatively affected. Most commonly, they report increased tension in their bodies, “snapping” or getting angry very quickly, unexpected mood swings, or screaming or yelling at a loved one.
- Compared with 2019, the majority of adults still say health care, mass shootings or climate change/global warming is a significant source of stress. Around half say the same about the rise in suicide rates, immigration, widespread sexual harassment/assault reports in the news or the opioid/heroin epidemic (45%).
- Nearly 2 in 3 adults say the current amount of uncertainty in our nation causes them stress, and 3 in 5 say the number of issues America faces currently is overwhelming to them.
- More than 6 in 10 adults say the economy is a significant source of stress. This is significantly higher than the proportion who said the same in 2019 and is nearing levels reported during the 2008 recession.
- The majority of adults, regardless of race, report police violence toward minorities is a significant source of stress in their life.
- On a personal level, one-third of adults (33%) cite discrimination as a significant source of stress in their life, a significant increase from 25% in 2019. Among people of color, more than 2 in 5 (44%) report discrimination is a significant source of stress in their life, compared with 38% of people of color who said the same in 2019.
- Gen Z adults report the highest stress levels.
- Nearly 1 in 5 adults (19%) say their mental health is worse than it was at this time last year.

Anxiety, however, is a response to that stress.<sup>1</sup>

Grad school is stressful (deadlines, papers, teaching); getting my first dog is stressful (I’m responsible for keeping something other than myself alive!). My body and mind respond to this stress with anxiety. And I am not alone.

The American Psychological Association declared in 2020 that stress in America is a national mental health crisis.

If stress is our body’s response to a threat factor and anxiety is our response to stress, it is no surprise that with all this stress (which is compounded by the stress of everyday life—the furnace breaking, the deadline, the fight with your daughter, the unexpected bill, etc.) there would be an anxiety epidemic in the United States.

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States. They affect more than 40 million adults in the United States ages 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year.<sup>3</sup> That is more than twice the population that has contracted Covid-19 in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> as of January 30, 2021.

If it is so prevalent, why don’t we talk about it? Why don’t we name it for what it is? Why is it that church culture is the last place to feel safe to discuss mental health? That is so backwards.

1. Anxiety and Depression Association of America. “Facts and Statistics.” [adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics](https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics)

2. American Psychological Association (2020). *Stress in America™ 2020: A National Mental Health Crisis*.

3. Anxiety and Depression Association of America. “Facts and Statistics.” [adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics](https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics)

4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “CDC Covid Data Tracker.” [covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home)

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**We feel shame and emasculated by the simple fact of anxiety.  
As if we had any control over the limbic system or the sympathetic nervous system.**

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I can only speak for myself, but I have a feeling that it has to do with shame, especially for men.

My first response to stress is usually, *Buckle down and push through it. Or, Just get it done.* The thought is that I just need to finish the task that is generating stress and then I won't feel stressed. But underneath that drive is the fundamental belief that I would not feel stress if only I were a more competent man. If I was smarter, harder working, stronger, better, then I wouldn't be stressed in the first place. Stress makes me feel like I am failing. If anxiety comes from stress, what we feel that communicates is "I can't handle this. If only I was more competent, I wouldn't feel anxiety."

We feel shame and emasculated by the simple fact of anxiety. As if we had any control over the limbic system or the sympathetic nervous system.

When I talk about the sympathetic nervous system, I'm talking about fight-or-flight. Our kneejerk instincts to danger. When I talk about the limbic system, I'm talking about our brains' response to trauma. Capital "T" trauma is being chased through the woods by a bear that wants to eat you in an incomprehensibly horrible way. It's what our servicemen and servicewomen face on the front lines of combat. If stress is the response to a "threat" in a situation, what is the threat in getting a dog? What is the threat in teaching an undergraduate class?

Our brains don't know the difference between big "T" and little "t" trauma.

My therapist was telling me a story of when she was having her brain waves

monitored as part of a study. It was a routine day, but before her session her daughter called and they got into an argument. The argument triggered her particular wounding. When she had her brain monitored, the readings went completely haywire. From the technician's view on the screen, her brain was having the same response as being chased in the woods by a bear. Though we don't acknowledge it, most of us are living in "fight or flight," only at all times.

Add to that the pressure we receive from the Church. If "we can do all things through Christ," then all stress and anxiety must be proof that we are not spiritual enough, or that we are not praying enough, reading scripture enough, or tithing enough.

If that is what we feel anxiety is saying to the world, the last thing we are going to do is admit it.

Instead, we take it to our coping mechanisms. We take it to the places that soothe us, if only a little bit—food, alcohol, porn, the boobtube, the garage, the mistress, the office, whatever that place is that either comforts us or makes us feel at least a little competent. If this world offers no relief, let's find a little relief for ourselves, am I right? I mean come on. If no one is going to offer me some pie, I'll go cut a slice for myself for fuck's sake.

But there are other moves.

Anxiety disorders are treatable, yet only 36.9% of those suffering ever pursue treatment.<sup>5</sup>

The first step towards help—recommended by the Anxiety and Depression Association of America and the American Psychological Association—is to tell somebody.

(The obvious irony there being that if the church is supposed to bring healing to the world, its culture prevents the first and most fundamental step towards healing: talking about it.) That's not such a crazy first step, but for a lot of people it is the most difficult.

Talk to someone.

There are other proven methods to consider. Pursue therapy from a licensed professional. If there is a chemical component, then pursue medication. Eat a healthy diet that includes probiotics and fermented foods. Limit caffeine. Abstain from alcohol. Quit smoking. Exercise often. Try meditation or yoga.

The problem with a lot of these proven methods to help with stress and anxiety is that they take away the very source of comfort you turn toward because of the stress and anxiety. If you're worried about where you turn for comfort, it is always going to be better to address what's making you seek out comfort than just attacking where you find peace. So maybe start by talking to someone. Start by trying out the Pause app. Start small and go from there. I'm starting small.

Because I'm still in it.

I don't have the magic bullet that made it all go away. I'm not pretending that "I've done it and so can you!" I can't wrap this up with a nice little bow. I don't see the light at the end of the tunnel. I haven't magically succeeded where others have failed. I am very much still in the middle of suffering from anxiety.

I'm just talking to someone. ■

5. Anxiety and Depression Association of America. "Facts and Statistics." [adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics](https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics)





# LAMENT

WORDS A.J. Bianchi IMAGES Evie Shaffer

*Words fail as I sit here*

*And I wonder,*

*How long til the current*

*Drags me under?*

*Give me a word*

*Something that tells me*

*You are still listening*

On March 15, 2011, almost a year to the date that we had lost our third child to a miscarriage, my wife Sarah gave birth to another son. While holding him, she looked at me and said she wanted to change his name. She wanted to name him Theodore, which derives from the Greek "Theodoros," meaning God's gift.

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**I**t's perfect. This baby was clearly God's gift coming on the heels of losing a baby and then a one-shot conception story. There was no denying God's gift to us. And so we introduced the world to Theodore Charles, our little Teddy.

Teddy has always maintained a special place in our hearts in light of his birth story. On top of that, he is our biggest snuggler, and who doesn't want to snuggle a Teddy Bear? That made it so earth-shattering when at age 7 Teddy was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes.

*Can you just  
Take it all away?  
Could you just  
Give us words for this  
Somehow to  
Settle our souls in this  
Bring us healing*

It felt like déjà vu: Sarah called me at work and said, "You have to come home; we have to take Teddy to the hospital. The doctor believes he has diabetes." Rewind a couple of weeks, and I'm changing the sheets on Teddy's bed. He hadn't wet the bed since he was 3. A week later, he wets it again. We attribute it to growing and it being summer so he's playing hard and sleeping hard. After the third nighttime accident, we begin to ration fluids and call the doctor to make a checkup to rule out a urinary tract infection. Then I get the call.

I race to my car and begin the drive home. My first call is to one of my best friends whom I've known since college. His son Jax was diagnosed with Type 1 at 18 months old. Type 1 Diabetes isn't like the adult onset version where a change in diet can reverse the effects; it's an auto-immune disorder by which the body kills the pancreas, thereby preventing the body from making insulin, which is needed in order to break down sugar.

My friend is shocked when I break the news, but then says, "As soon as you guys are out of the hospital, I'm coming to help."

Instant support. God is showing up already in the midst of this nightmare.

When I get home and we tell the other kids that we have to take Teddy to the hospital, they don't say much. They know Jax, and have some understanding of what we are saying. While Sarah and I are upstairs packing for the hospital, we hear Teddy and his older brother Jack wailing. We run down thinking something's happened. Instead we find the brothers hugging and crying together. Teddy is apologizing for "ruining" Jack's birthday, and Jack is telling him not to worry. To see such love between my boys brings me great joy, and also breaks my heart to see them have to face this at such a young age.

*Where in the world is the rescue  
Where in the world did you go  
Where in the world is the rescue  
The only time I really needed you*

As we drive to the hospital, the same questions surface as when we lost the baby before Teddy: Why God? Why give us Theodore, our gift from you, only to give him this incurable disease? Why give us this burden? Why give this to Teddy?

Later, while we are pummeled with information on keeping Teddy alive through carb counting, insulin injections, and finger-sticking to check blood sugar, Teddy asks us, "What happens if my blood sugar gets low?"

Sarah tells him, "We just give you juice to get your blood sugar higher." I look in Ted's eyes and can see him processing. He looks up at us and slowly asks, "But what if no one is there to give me sugar... would I die?"

Not the discussion you want to have with your 7-year-old. I breathe deeply and reply, "Yes Teddy, if you don't get sugar when low, you could die. But we will do whatever we can to make sure you don't have to face that, buddy." We all hug and tears come. I want to fight those tears and the emotion, but I'm working on allowing more of it to show. To engage my feelings.

*Give me a word  
Something that tells me  
All of this doesn't fall on me*

*Give me a word  
Something that tells me  
You are still listening*

*Give me a word  
Something that tells me  
All of this doesn't end here*

This time, as we face this, we try to do it differently than our past loss. In the years since Teddy was diagnosed, we've moved forward unlike any time in the past. We've tried to allow ourselves permission to lament. Sarah is certainly better at it than me, and some times are better than others, but instead of trying to push past the weeping and moaning we have tried to embrace it, knowing that God doesn't want us to just move past the grief and sadness but to experience it with him.

Teddy's disease is a result of a broken world and I know it is not my fault. We are not being punished for anything. And one day he will be healed and we will celebrate a feast without having to calculate carbs and worry whether we've given him too much insulin. But until then, we have feelings of sorrow that rise and we have to let them flow.

My deep question of "Why?" is no longer the one I find myself asking. Instead, I'm asking "Where?" As in, Where is this taking me, taking Teddy, taking my family? Where, God, do you want us?

*We are not alone, not alone  
We are not alone, in the darkness*

*Hallelujah! ■*

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*Sarah Bianchi wrote and performed a musical project entitled "Lament," which we have pulled various lyrics from and interspersed into the family story above. Listen to the full album at:*

[ANDSONSMAGAZINE.COM/SARAHBIANCHI](http://ANDSONSMAGAZINE.COM/SARAHBIANCHI)









# *Adventure Reading*

WORDS John "Padre" Eldredge

I know that we're finishing the first quarter of 2021, vaccines are rolling out, and everyone is hoping that life is going to get back to some semblance of normal this year. But as I write this, many of my friends around the world are still in lockdown situations. Others are just emerging, like groggy bears coming out of the den for the first time this year, blinking in a sort of stupor.

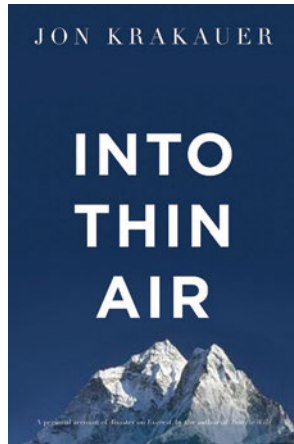
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**N**ow I truly hope with all my heart you are dreaming and planning some sort of adventure in the next several months—to reward your soul for surviving the last 12 months of insanity, and to give your heart something to look forward to. We all need something we are looking forward to.

But I also realize that the long-anticipated bounce-back probably isn't going to take place in a matter of days. My own hoped-for adventures are still out before me somewhere, probably in summer. So I want to throw you a line, and share a source of joy that has sustained me through this bizarre season.

When I can't get out, and I don't have the energy even to dream up an adventure, I read about them. I lose myself in a great adventure story. And fellas, it works. It's really nourishing. Not only does it get you back into that masculine space, but the bonus is that while you are immersed in a good story, you are blissfully ignorant of what is going on in the world.

So here are five adventure reads that are up at the top of my list. Hopefully there's one or two that you haven't yet read. Or maybe an old favorite that you haven't turned to for years. (C.S. Lewis felt that one of the great joys in life is returning to some of your favorite books to enjoy them again.)



## INTO THIN AIR

by Jon Krakauer

A gripping account of the harrowing '96 climbing season on Everest, one of the deadliest ever. Krakauer is a seasoned mountaineer and an excellent writer, and he was there in the thick of it. You don't have to be a climber to enjoy this book. The psychology of what drives men to such extremes, their personalities, the details of expedition life, and how people function once everything but their bare humanity has been stripped away makes this adventure diary hard to put down.

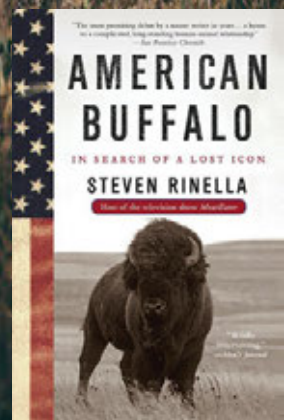




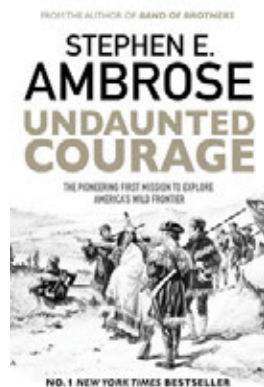
## AMERICAN BUFFALO

by Steven Rinella

Rinella scores a rare tag to hunt buffalo in the Alaskan wilderness. To get there he floats a dangerous river with a few buddies. Things get wild when his pals have to pull out, and Rinella finds himself pursuing his quarry alone in total wilderness, with grizzly tracks covering his own. I think I've read this book three times and given away several copies. It is a brilliant interplay between the story of a fairly crazy hunting trip and the equally wild history of the buffalo—or bison—in North America. You don't have to be a hunter to really enjoy this book. The history stuff is fascinating, and the adventure narrative in it will nourish your soul and get you dreaming.



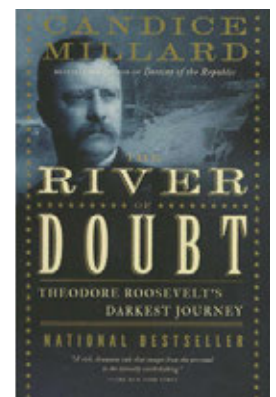




## UNDAUNTED COURAGE

by Stephen E. Ambrose

When Lewis and Clark set out on their famous journey into the largely unexplored (by white men) American West, it was a journey later described as the navigational, emotional and spiritual equivalent of going to the moon. Their first encounters with the legendary “Great Bear” (the grizzly) are practically worth the price of the book. But for me it is the descriptions of months wandering what was practically Eden, the American Serengeti filled with wildlife beyond imagination. Lewis wrote in his journal, “The country is beautiful in the extreme.” What they eat, how they overcome obstacles like waterfalls, wolves and native warriors make this a real page-turner.



## RIVER OF DOUBT

by Candice Millard

I’m not the only guy who has been fascinated by Teddy Roosevelt’s career. I mean come on—this is the man shot in the chest while making a campaign speech, and after a quick patch up simply carried on through the rest of his presentation still wearing his bloody shirt. Roosevelt is also the fellow we thank for our national parks. But late in life, Theodore was a lost man. Sidelined after losing a hasty bid for another presidential term, he needed an adventure. An invitation arrived to come to South America, offer a series of speeches and then join a small team that was going to attempt a “first descent” of a heretofore unknown tributary of the Amazon. What these guys got themselves into is just insane. Think “rainforest turns on you.” At one point Roosevelt was so injured he urged the company to leave him in the jungle to die. Enough said. Great read.

You might also enjoy the author’s “Hero of the Empire,” the story of a very young Winston Churchill in the Boer War in South Africa.



## THE ALCHEMIST

by Paulo Coelho

It might seem strange to include a work of fiction in this list, but this little story is one of our family favorites. A very enchanting narrative of a young man's journey across the northern tip of Africa in search of his "Personal Legend." He faces many hardships that will be familiar to young men; he meets the love of his life at a desert oasis; he learns to listen to his heart, and the voice of God. This adventure tale works in you almost like a parable. The audiobook is read by British actor Jeremy Irons, who is just fabulous. Take this one on a road trip. Or as you wait for that road trip that you can't yet take.

And when you are done, you will have new inspiration to actually get out there. ■



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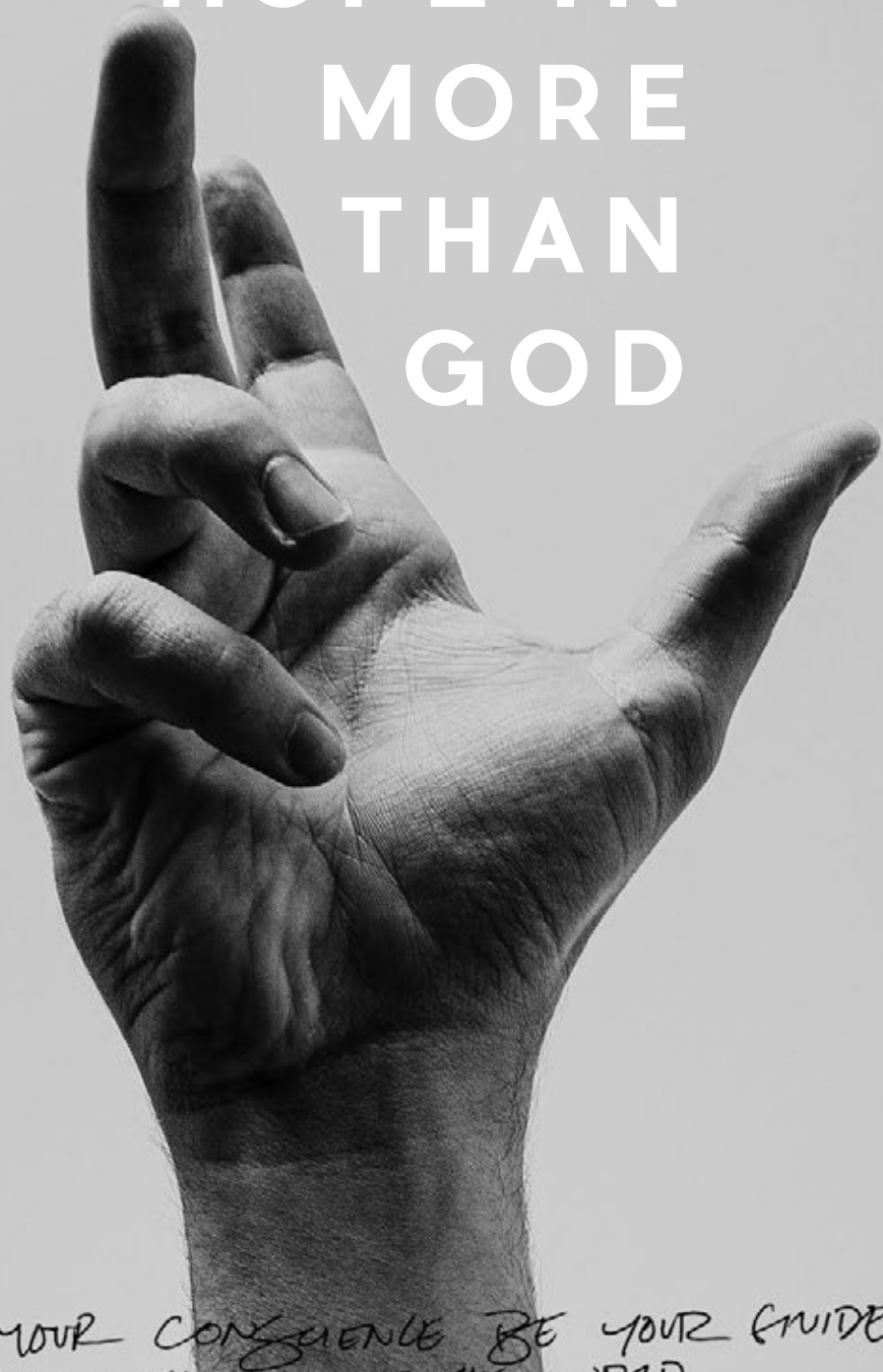


(GOOD) INFORMATION  
WILL SAVE THE  
WORLD.



WORDS Blaine Eldredge

# THINGS I HOPE IN MORE THAN GOD



LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE.  
THEN WE'LL SAVE THE WORLD.

*“The great masquerade of evil has wrought havoc with all our ethical preconceptions. This appearance of evil in the guise of light, beneficence and historical necessity is utterly bewildering to anyone nurtured in our traditional ethical systems. But for the Christian who frames his life on the Bible, it simply confirms the radical evilness of evil.”*

- BONHOEFFER

# 2020 was hard on my vainglory.

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**I**t went this way. I sat back, watching Christendom from (I thought) a safe distance, wondering why people were acting so crazy. Why wouldn't they just stop and think? If they read the right articles about COVID-19 and the right articles about race and the right articles about post-Enlightenment politics, they'd be saved. Which articles were those? Well—lucky for them—the ultimate curator already existed. Me! Born for such a time as this. All that remained was to find or inherit or receive a megaphone.

Then one day Jesus spoke up. I was driving. My son was screaming like a Nazgûl. He was a few months old at the time. Anyway. I was praying, when suddenly: Jesus. And he said, in effect, Tell me about this plan of yours. I explained. People were crazy. They should stop and think. They should listen to me. Etc, etc, etc.

There followed one of those long, pregnant silences.

Then Jesus replied, So your plan is to get people to say and do the right things, and that'll fix the world? That has a name, in history. It's called the law. And anyone who is under the law is under a curse, and the curse is death. So. You want to bring death to the world.

Oops.

DUTY. DUTY AND RESPONSIBLE ACTION  
WILL SAVE THE WORLD.

Find Your False Gospel Worksheet

If people  
would just  
                    ,  
the world  
would be  
better.

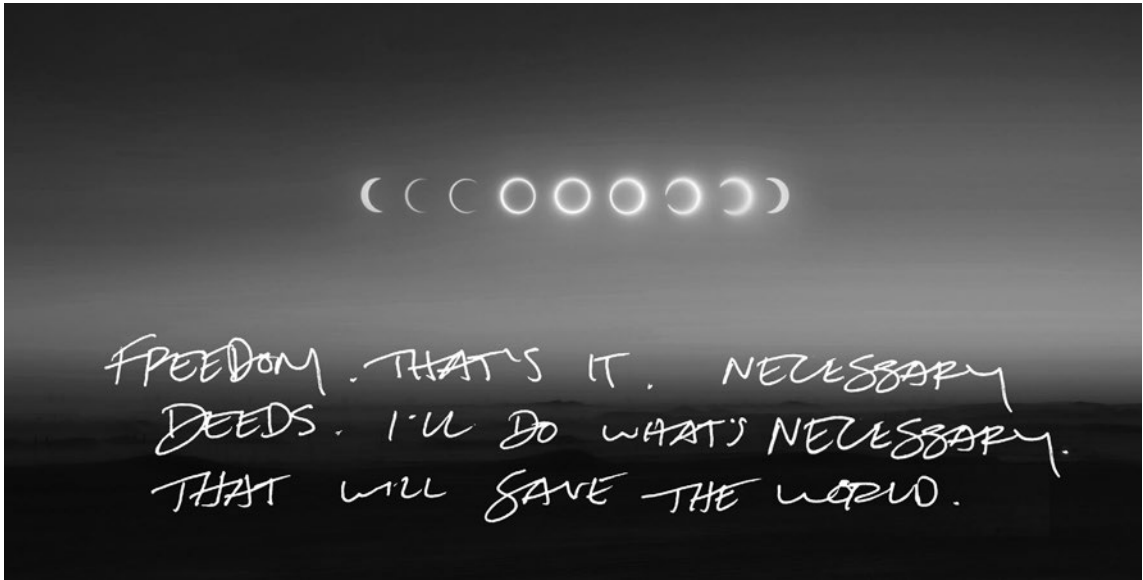


Photo by Abed Ismail

You see, rational progress is my favorite false gospel. It goes this way: though Jesus definitely helps, people can see the truth apart from him (ignore, for a second, Jesus's own thoughts on this), and when they do, they'll do the right thing. Good information saves the world.

Silly, right? Indeed. But no more so than the other false gospels, which are, in effect, alternative salvation strategies. Everybody has one. My neighbor, he thinks that everyone should mind their own business, work hard, and be decent, and that would save the world. This woman I know, she thinks people should wait because improvement is a thing that just happens. I was in a coffee shop, and the guy was insisting that people should just listen and things would be better.

If these sound funny to you, that's only because they're not your false gospel. What is? Complete the following exercise:

1. Think about the state of the world.

2. In a rare honest moment, fill in the blank: If people would just \_\_\_\_\_, the world would be better.

Just what, exactly? Calm down? Wait? Read that book you recommended? Adhere to tradition? Remember who they are? Love (what's that mean?); Hope (in what?);

If, like me, you fill in that blank with anything other than put their faith in Jesus and join him in overthrowing spiritual evil and restoring the human heart and love and serve their enemies and renounce all other allegiances, then you've found your false gospel.

Finding these is good. Because the world is a mess, and false gospels won't fix it. The real gospel will.

So. In the spirit of excavation, let's bring in Bonhoeffer. Back in 1942, he wrote a brilliant essay. It's called "After Ten Years"—it's a series of reflections on life in a hard time. In it, old Bonhoeffer spends a long time unpacking ineffective positions, aka false gospels, to save his peers some heartache. It's an embarrassing read because I see myself in most of these, but remember, that's good. If you'd like to save the world, you've got to renounce the stuff that doesn't work. Here's Dietrich.

*"The failure of rationalism is evident. With the best of intentions, but with a naive lack of realism, the rationalist imagines that a small dose of reason will be enough to put the world right. In his short sightedness he wants to do justice on all sides, but in the melee of conflicting forces he gets trampled upon without having achieved the slightest effect."*

Ouch. We've talked about this: People are not driven by their intellect. Reason will not save the world. But if, like me, you try to save the world with reason, you'll end up hurt, disillusioned, and unloving.

*"Then there is the man of conscience. He fights single-handed against overwhelming odds in situations which demand a decision. But there are so many conflicts going on, all of which demand some vital choice, that he is torn to pieces."*

**You cannot choose good and evil for yourself.  
You cannot, in your own time, determine  
the most important issues of your time.  
You must follow Jesus.**

---

This for the guy who tries to do what he thinks is right as an alternative to operating out of a life with God. Should you go to church or quarantine? Should you protest or stay home? Should you post on Facebook or hold your tongue? As Bonhoeffer notes, there's simply too much going on to follow your conscience. You'll end up shattered.

*"When men are confronted by a bewildering variety of alternatives, the path of duty seems to offer a sure way out. . . . But when men are confined to the limits of duty, they never risk a daring deed on their own responsibility, which is the only way to score a bull's eye against evil."*

It's not enough to do your job. It's not enough to be nice to your neighbors. It's not enough to focus on the micro because you can't change the macro. Why? Because, and this is the point, maybe Jesus wants you to. You'll only know what you're supposed to do if you ask him.

*"What then of the man of freedom? He is the man who aspires to stand his ground in the world, who values the necessary deed more highly than a clear conscience. . . . He must beware lest his freedom should become his undoing. For in choosing the lesser of two evils he may fail to see that the greater evil he seeks to avoid may prove the lesser."*

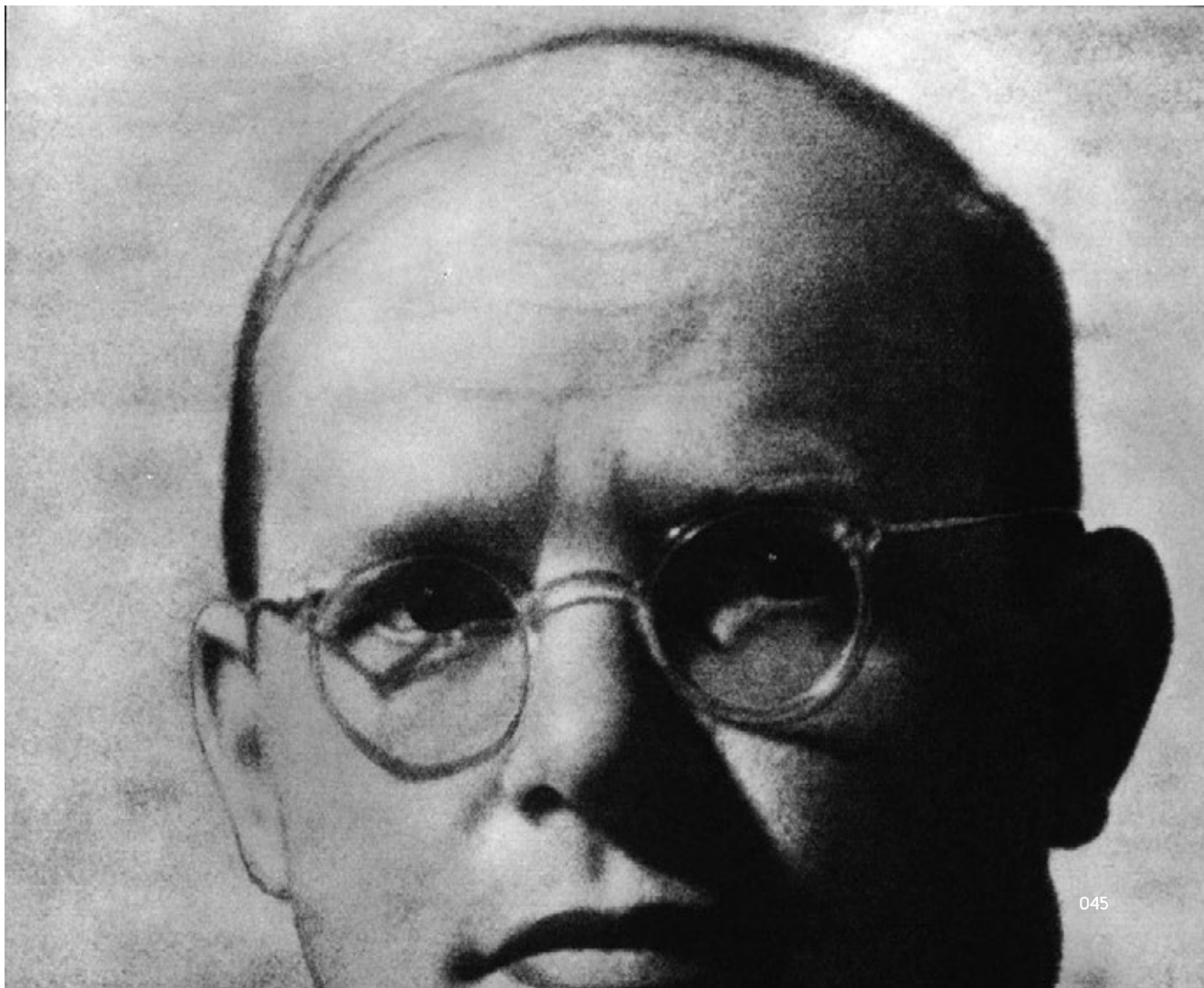
Pay. Attention. This is for the guy who acts. When people believe that a particular movement, virtue, value, tradition or anything else is more important than everything else, they're set up for failure.

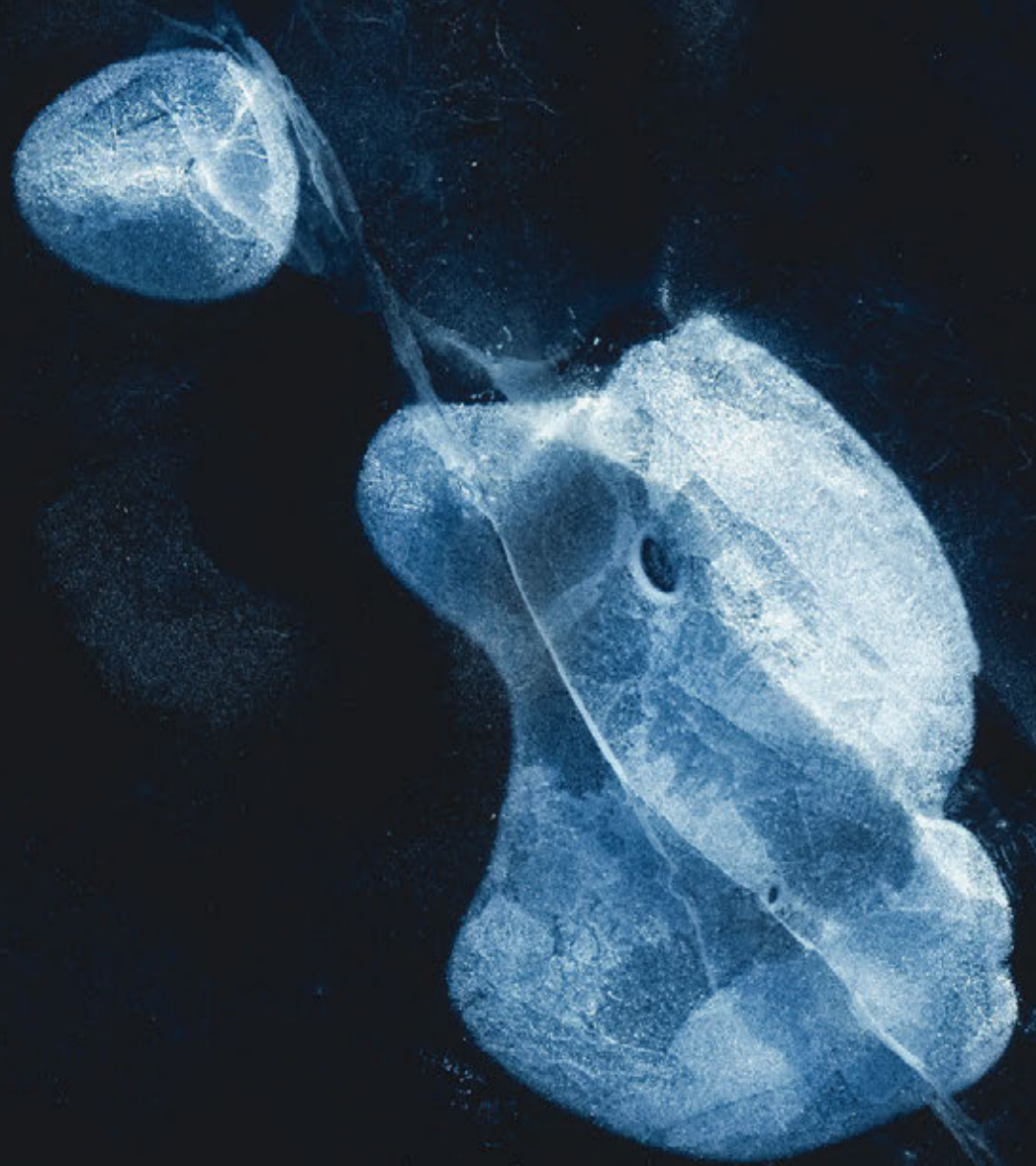
In 2016, I knew conservatives who believed it was more important to stop Hillary than to call out the excesses of their own party. I knew liberals who believed that it was more important to stop Donald than to call out the excesses of their own party. This is a dangerous impulse and everyone is vulnerable. You cannot choose good and evil for yourself. You cannot, in your own time, determine the most important issues of your time. You must follow Jesus.

What then, Bonny? Here is his advice:

*"Who stands his ground? Only the man whose ultimate criterion is not in his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom or his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all these things when he is called to obedience and responsible action in faith and exclusive allegiance to God."*

That's it, folks. Exclusive allegiance. This starts with renouncing our alternative salvation strategies. Then we can ask Jesus to give us a heart like his. Then we can ask him to see the world the way he sees it. Then, when we find ourselves loving God, and even loving our enemies, we can ask him what we should do. ■









*LIGHT & DARK*

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVEN HANNA

IMAGES Steven Hanna



Steven Hanna is a two-time award-winning photographer from Northern Ireland. Now, when we say award-winning, we mean actually awarded by his peers, the Professional Photographers Association of Northern Ireland, which feels more legit than somebody just saying, “Hey, this guy takes nice pictures.”

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**And Sons:** *Steven, great to spend some time together.*

**Steven Hanna:** Thanks for having me, guys. It is a real pleasure.

**AS:** *Walk us through a typical shoot. What does that look like as you head out trying to capture something?*

**SH:** So here in Northern Ireland weather literally will change from minute to minute, and it’s very, very hard when you’re trying to plan ahead. Most of the shoots will be planned around the weather, so there are certain locations I will go to certain times of year, depending on where the light is, but it all comes down to weather because in landscape photography, that’s the big changeable factor.

You’re looking at a long-range forecast, and then you’re trying to look at a short-range forecast. Then if you’re going to the mountains, you’re looking at the mountains forecast, then you’re trying to predict all of these things. And sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn’t.

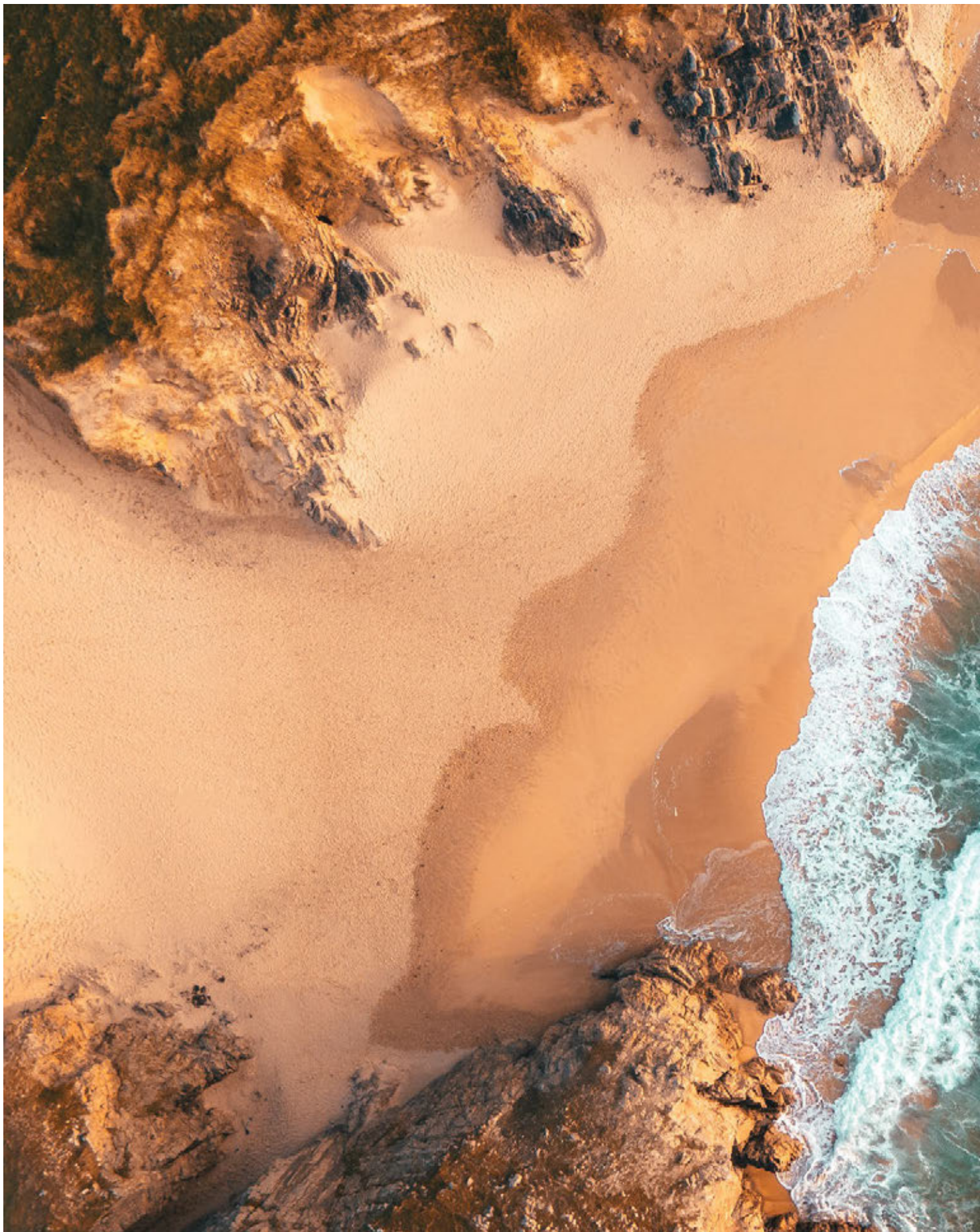
**AS:** *When and where were you introduced to photography as a medium?*

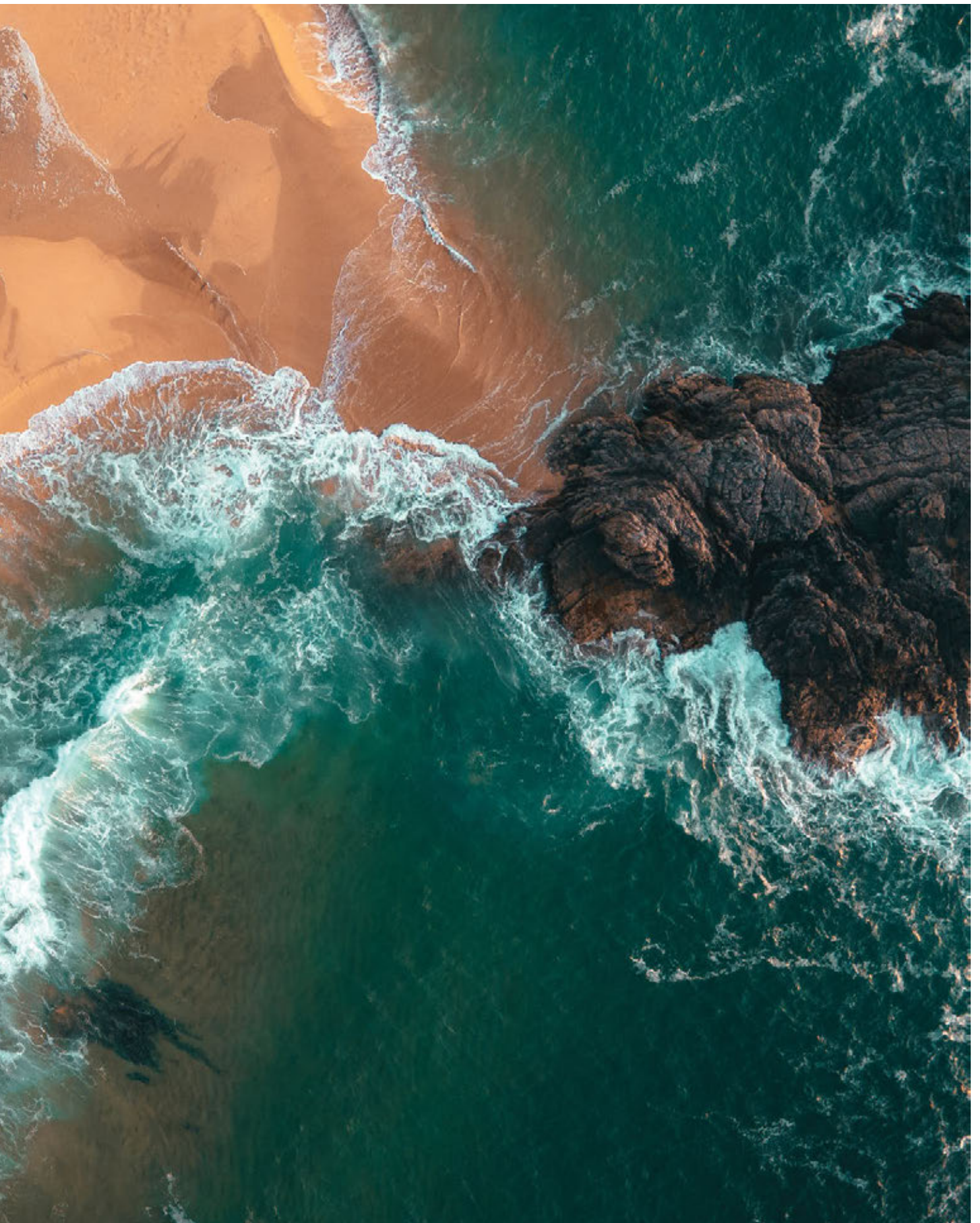
**SH:** To put it simply, I guess it all started for me about 15 years ago. I always had an interest in photography, but it was just that era where the first digital cameras were coming out with like two megapixels. This was revolutionizing the world.

And just prior to that, I’d always look at cameras, but whenever I started to look at the actual 35-millimeter film, and the cost of that, and then the cost of making all these mistakes and errors, and trying to teach yourself this, I was just like, “No. It’s not going to work out.”

And then, digital arrived. I got this little point-and-shoot digital camera for Christmas, and it sounds cliché, but the rest is history. But I was always drawn to nature. It was the landscape of the sea, of the mountains. I tried photographing loads of different things, but I always kept going back to landscapes.







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**That's something that you feel so blessed to be able to witness and, for me, as a photographer, to be able to capture, and then to share it with someone else.**

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**AS:** *Obviously we're massive nature fans. There's just something about it that speaks to us. When you go looking for a space, do you have an idea in your mind of what you're trying to capture? An emotion or a definition of a space? Or do you just go out for a walk, and you're like, "I want to go see what I can explore."*

**SH:** I guess there's a bit of a mixture going on. At the minute, I'm into mountains, that's my thing. I seem to be doing a lot more hiking. We have a range here called the Mourne mountains that I've started a project on. You'll obviously know of C.S. Lewis; this is where he got the idea of Narnia.

A lot of the time I will just be looking at the maps, looking at locations I want to go and shoot, and then I'll start to think, "Right. Okay. What time of year do I need to go there?" Because obviously, with the movement of light and the sun, certain places you go to at certain times of the year to get directional light, or to get back lighting, or whatever.

Or you could get a forecast of a dump of snow, so it's like, "Okay. We're going to head to the mountains and just literally improvise." And I guess the exciting thing for me about landscape photography is that it allows me to get into all these really cool locations that a lot of people don't actually go to.

**AS:** *Have there been shoots where you were really hoping for something that didn't come out, or have particular ones been really rewarding as you pursued a certain shot?*

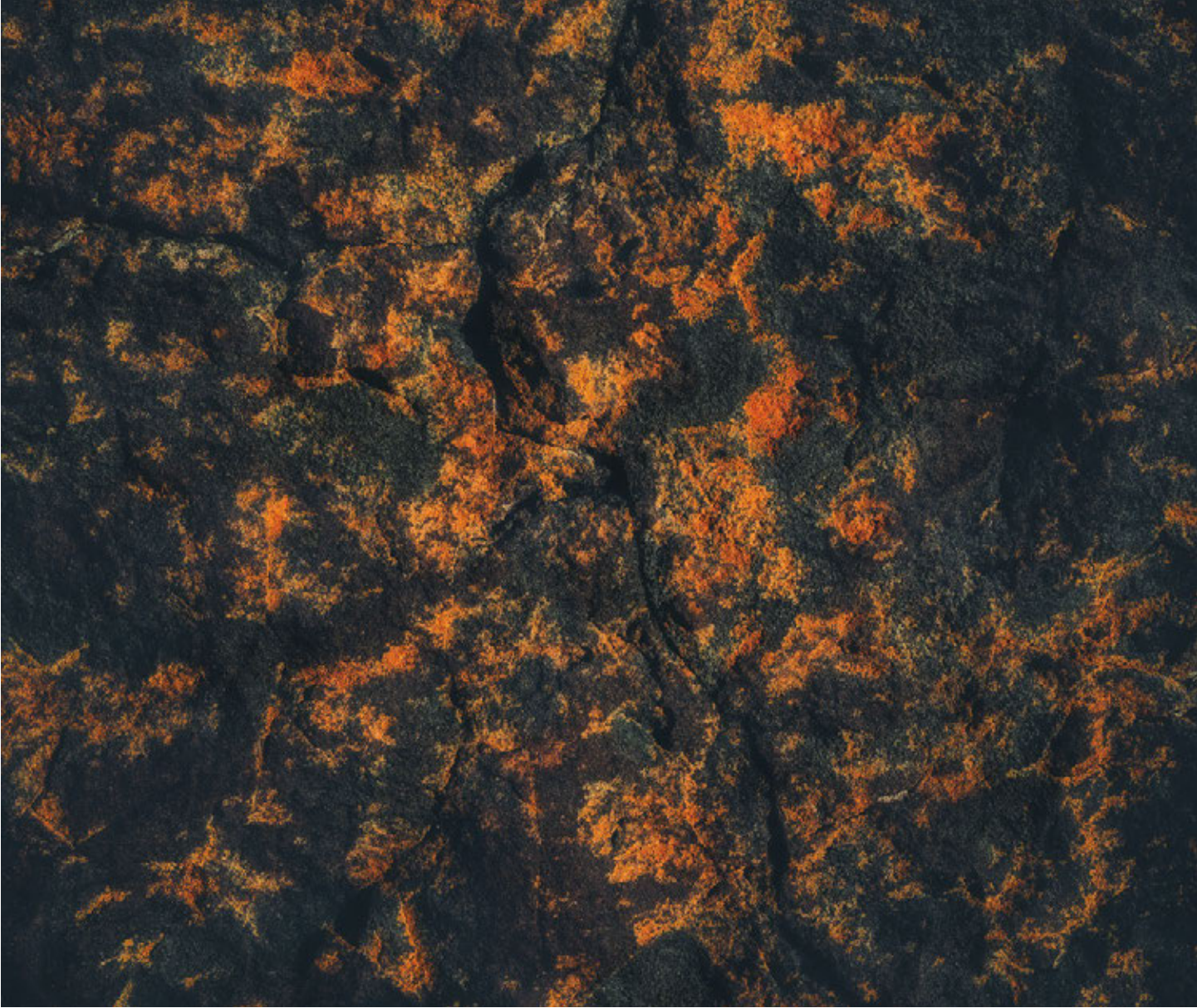
**SH:** Yeah, one was a few weeks ago, where we had headed up into the mountains. We were trying to predict what it was going to do because we checked about five different weather apps, and they all said something completely different, as always seems to be the case.

But one of the things that the mountain forecast said was about the chance of low clouds in the valleys, so we thought, "Okay. That could mean an inversion, where if we keep getting high enough, we can get above the cloud." So we set off. We had a bit of a two-hour hike, and we hiked two hours in clouds with about, maybe, 10-foot visibility. And we just kept stopping and thinking, "Is this worth it? Is this really going to pan out?" And as we broke the clouds, we just got up to the summit of a mountain called Slieve Binnian over in the Mournes, here. And literally, as we came up out of the clouds, we just saw the highest peaks, just appearing, and it was almost cotton wool of cloud, and we were just above it. And it was like, "Wow, that's just out of this world."

That's something that you feel so blessed to be able to witness and, for me, as a photographer, to be able to capture, and then to share it with someone else. Those are the times where that could have gone 50/50 because we could have just kept climbing, reached the summit, and then we're still in the clouds. That was really memorable because I never had that before, and to that extent.

**AS:** *How much of a gambler do you feel like? Because, like hunting, there's a little bit the gambling addict in, "Well, they're not here, but maybe over the next hill." There's just that consummate optimist, which is probably the better way of saying it.*

**SH:** I always say that those negative experiences make it worthwhile when you get that amazing light. It's so much sweeter. An example of that: We had about a three-hour drive to a location, and then about an hour hike. The cloud bank was literally at sea level, so we couldn't see anything. And we stood about for hours, hoping. In hindsight, there was no way it was ever going to clear, but we just...hoped. It was completely soul-destroying.



**AS:** *Just out of curiosity, what's your ratio? How many failures would you guess that you have, for every successful shot?*

**SH:** I would say one in 10, maybe two in 10. I think as you evolve in photography you scrutinize your work more, you're always wanting to try and improve. At the start, you would probably be just like, "This is amazing and that's fantastic." But now it gets to the stage where I have to be really critical. There's some times I've gone out, and I haven't actually taken the camera out of the bag.

**AS:** *Whoa.*

**SH:** When on a hike, or when out to the coast, I've just been sitting, waiting and watching what's been happening. And it's just like, "There's no point of me trying to photograph this" because I know when I get back, I'm just going to delete it. I'm just not going to bother.

**AS:** *How do you manage disappointment from a string of frustrating shoots, or the day when it did not go well?*

**SH:** That's tough. With landscapes, definitely, there's patience required. I can't lie and say, "Whenever I come back from a shoot, and it hasn't happened, that's fine. I just brush it off, and everything's fine." You come back and you feel gutted.









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**I am constantly searching for light in the landscape, but I'm also searching for light in my heart, and you're searching for a release from whatever's come over you, or whatever you're dealing with at the time.**

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But I try and realign myself, and think, "Well. Okay, I didn't come away with any shots, but I spent time out in the mountains, or out at the coast." That's a privilege just to be able to do that. And, again, it's just trying to focus the real reason why I was there. I guess, it's the issue of my heart almost.

**AS:** *As we've sat with creativity, and particularly photography, we've wondered about all the language that could be a metaphor. Like, what's in your frame? What are you doing with the light that you have? Where are you focused? These are phrases that we are using these days for mental health, for spiritual health, for general wellbeing, and yet they are also the language of your profession. What do you make of that?*

**SH:** To be honest, I sit there between literal light and darkness, and for me, in landscape photography, light is everything. Between a good landscape photograph, and a bad landscape photograph, it's more than likely going to come down to light.

And to me, that's quite exciting because, when you think about that, if you have a completely dark scene, all it takes is just a tiny, tiny, tiny little shaft of light, and everything just gets completely transformed. And I keep reminding myself of that because in your walk, in your daily walk, it's so true.

I am constantly searching for light in the landscape, but I'm also searching for light in my heart, and you're searching for a release from whatever's come over you, or whatever you're dealing with at the time. I really like that analogy with the light because, to me, I can totally connect with that. There's nothing more amazing whenever you're standing at a scene, and you've maybe been waiting for quite a while. It's that light. I mean, it doesn't have to be huge. We're talking about even a candle. There's that tiny little flame, how much light that gives off, it just totally transforms things. That's true with our walk. It's light and dark, isn't it? ■

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See more of Steven's work at  
[NEBOFINEART.CO.UK](http://NEBOFINEART.CO.UK)





## HEALTHY

EMOTIONALLY  
DISTANT

SECRETS/HIDDEN LIFE

ISOLATED

FANTASY

ARROGANCE

IMMATURE

OBJECTIFY

SELFISH

AGGRESSION

DEMANDING

INSECURITY

ASHAMED

## UNHEALTHY

EMOTIONALLY  
PRESENT

AUTHENTIC/TRUE

COMMUNITY

REALITY

HUMILITY

MATURE

HONOR

MUTUAL

KINDNESS

PATIENT

STRENGTH

UNASHAMED

# What is a Sexually Healthy Man?

*WORDS Andrew J. Bauman*

When you review the graph on the opposite page, what do you feel in your body? Do you feel regret, hope, or maybe longing and desire for something new? Where do you find yourself? Do you see yourself more on the unhealthy or the healthy side? If you have a partner and enough courage, would you be willing to ask them which of these character traits they experience from you? Would you be willing to write about each of these aspects of unhealthy and healthy sexuality, and how they apply to your life?

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Think about your past, your present, and what you hope for your future. Let's review these aspects of healthy and unhealthy sexuality together.

#### EMOTIONALLY DISTANT VS. EMOTIONALLY PRESENT

Simply put, does your partner have your face during intimacy? Are you with them, not just physically, but with the entirety of your being? Do you make eye contact during sex? Do you feel embodied, or do you at times feel you are a bystander to your own sex life?

#### SECRETS/HIDDEN LIFE VS. AUTHENTIC/TRUE

It is impossible to attain sexual health while you are living with secrets. Telling the truth is vital to genuine intimacy and lasting connection. If you are living a hidden life, the possibility for healthy sexuality is lost because authenticity is the basis of trust and sexual health. What do you fear will happen if you allow your true self to emerge? You may feel terrified to be fully seen and loved, but that is what you truly need. This fear is normal, as many of us are not accustomed to genuine intimacy. It takes some time to get comfortable with vulnerability, but it is worth it.

#### FANTASY VS. REALITY

Pornography and other sexually compulsive behaviors feed off of a robust fantasy structure. Fantasy structure is a part of the system of arousal, yet living in unhealthy fantasy takes us away from our partners emotionally, making it impossible to connect with them deeply. As explained in my book, "The Psychology of Porn:"

"Fantasy is an escape from what is real. Whether it be difficult emotions, such as stress, anxiety, or depression, or just the pain that genuine relationship inevitably brings, fantasy relieves those struggles for a moment. While healthy relationships live in the truth, pornography helps bolster a life of fantasy that is difficult to undo. Fantasy brings relief but does not bring restoration."

Do you live in full truth with your partner? Do you honor each other's scars and stories, or do you require them to attempt to become your porn-star fantasy, something that no human could ever attain?

#### ARROGANCE VS. HUMILITY

I have never met a sexually healthy arrogant man. True sexual health comes at a cost, and normally that cost is some type of suffering, which has produced an authentic humility. A sexually healthy man is humble in the way he gives and receives pleasure, attuned to his partner, and aware of both his glory and his depravity.

#### ISOLATION VS. COMMUNITY

Sexual dysfunction is bred in isolation. Most of the men I know don't masturbate to pornography in public; they do quietly and shamefully, either at night when their spouse is asleep, or when they are alone in the bathroom. To be fully known, we must be in communion with others. Community doesn't just mean accountability. It means bleeding together; it means sharing our deepest shame, greatest fears, and deepest delights. True communion is fully knowing and being fully known by another.

#### IMMATURE VS. MATURE

Pornography use, secrets, half-truths, and lies are all examples of adolescent behavior. These habits indicate a need to look deeply within yourself and see your immaturity clearly. Ask yourself, "How old do I feel"? What would it mean for you to live into your true age? What parts of your trauma story have stunted your ability to become a mature man, and how can you give that part of yourself tenderness, kindness, and care?

#### SELFISH VS. MUTUAL

Pornography has taught generations of men to be selfish with their sexuality. In my 13 years of use, it taught me that sex was about my pleasure, and no one else's. This conditioning is problematic when a real person is introduced in the context of an authentic sexual relationship because sexuality up to that point has never involved shared mutuality. Mutual pleasure and mutual service means that both partners get to use their full voice of consent; they get to say, "yes," "no" or "maybe" as they learn each other's bodies and desires.

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**The objectification of women has become normative. Many times through pornography use, men develop what I call a “pornographic style of relating” in which men learned how to relate to women from pornography.**

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**DEMANDING VS. PATIENT**

Building on the foundation of authentic mutuality, we must learn to be patient with each other as we grow in connectedness and listen to each other. Pornography and other forms of toxic, patriarchal masculinity have taught us that real men take what is “theirs”. This has brought about a rise in rape culture and a normalization of male violence against women. Healthy sexuality is about consent and patience as each partner learns how to love more fully.

**AGGRESSION VS. KINDNESS**

One of the most obvious traits of a sexually healthy man is that of kindness. Kindness toward yourself overflows into kindness toward your partner. Sex is not about meeting pleasure demands or trying to cover your own insecurities by being aggressive. Sexual health requires stepping into deeply rooted masculine kindness that flows out of genuine strength.

**INSECURITY VS. STRENGTH**

The sexually unhealthy man is an insecure man. These wounded little boys try their hardest to appear big because they feel so small inside. They try to find worth through money, toys, possessions, bullying, aggressive behavior, or the attractiveness of their spouse. These are all different ways of trying to overcompensate for how insecure they feel. Grounded, masculine strength never has to “prove” anything. Strong men know who they are and what they have to offer their partner and the world. Their strength protects and honors their partner, and does not try to gain mastery or power over them.

**ASHAMED VS. UNASHAMED**

Shame plagues many evangelical men. Some shame is guided by toxic beliefs about sexuality, and some of it is shame masquerading as guilt over living an inauthentic life. Shame and guilt are not the same. Shame says that the core of you is dirty and bad, while guilt speaks to your actions being bad, not your personhood. There is no place for shame in a sexually healthy man. He honors himself and his partner. He has made peace with his darkness and the stories of his past, and he now walks in courage and strength.

**OBJECTIFY VS HONOR**

The objectification of women has become normative. Many times through pornography use, men develop what I call a “pornographic style of relating” (this concept is explained more fully in “The Psychology of Porn”) in which men learned how to relate to women from pornography. Sadly, pornography is centered on the objectification of women, making women “less” so that men can feel like they are “more.” This view of women dehumanizes them, making it easier for men to harm them and harder for men to honor them. We must change the way we engage with beauty, standing in awe, and honoring the feminine, which God created and named the summit of all of creation. ■

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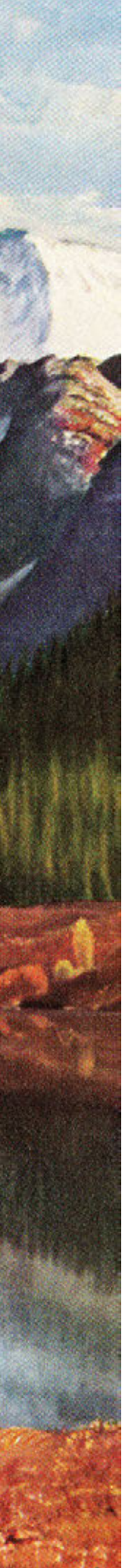
*This article is an excerpt from Bauman’s new book, “The Sexually Healthy Man,” available on Amazon.*

*Find more from the author online at*

*ANDREWJBAUMAN.COM.*







*Here's me on my first fishing trip, proudly displaying my catch, popsicle residue on my face.*

# *With.*

*WORDS* Michelle Thornberry Patterson

My dad is a world-renowned outdoorsman. His career was in the outdoors industry but it's also what we did for fun. I grew up in beautiful rural Alberta, and my earliest memory of doing something with my dad was fishing at three years old.

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**M**y dad was always inviting my brother and me into adventure. If he was home and not working, there was always an outdoorish endeavor in the works. Often, we would come home from school and find him loading up the truck for whatever fun he was rustling up for that night. We'd throw down our backpacks and grab our rubber boots. He taught us how to shoot BB guns at soda cans and .22s at tiny black metal animals that would fall into a wooden catch that he built for us. We shot little recurve bows into a hay bale in our backyard. In the summer we paddled a yellow dingy around the lake behind our house.

We made creekside campfires on northern summer nights when the sun stays high until 10 p.m. By the time I was 8, I could bait my own hook, gut a fish, load a .22, start a campfire and tell the difference between elk, deer and moose tracks. In the winter, we ran a rabbit trapline, tromping through the deep snow behind dad. We ice fished with two hooks on a line and pulled up perch in twos for hours. My childhood was idyllic in so many ways. I lived an adventure with my dad every day of my little girl life. The adventures weren't just for boys; I was welcomed into every one of them. It was time with dad and I was all in, whatever the adventure was.

As I got older and more into doing my own thing, I said "yes" to adventures with my dad less and less. He had to try to zero in on the new things I was interested in to get to spend time with me, and something of what we had was lost. I have a picture of him

stuffed into a suit, taking me to the opera when I was 14, trying hard to stay connected to me as I grew and morphed into someone different (my bangs were epic). Our adventures grew fewer and farther between and I got busy with my own pursuits that really didn't have space for a dad. It's a normal progression, albeit sad.

When I got married, dad made my husband his new adventure partner and I was thrilled for them to have that connection. When I had kids, my dad pursued them the same way he had pursued me. They went fishing and shooting and trapping and filled up their adventure punch cards with him. It has been heartwarming and fun to watch all of that happen. It takes me back to a time in my childhood when I was dad's adventure buddy, a time that had long passed.

Until last October.

I went home to Canada to visit and check on my parents in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. It meant I had to quarantine with them for two weeks, which is a rare amount of time to spend with your parents, as an adult. It was a glorious October in Alberta with the snow mercifully holding back and the trees as neon yellow and orange as I had ever seen them. Dad was wanting to get out and scout some areas to put up treestands and I offered to lend a hand. The nostalgia was thick for me as we loaded up the truck. Being the only kid sitting up front with my dad again was surreal; it made me need us to stop for ice cream.

When we got to our first scouting location, he handed me a walking stick and I fell in behind him. We were 10 yards in and my mind was snapped back open to everything I know because of being in that very position—tromping around behind dad.

I know things most girls don't know. I know the difference between a whitetail and a mule deer and I know the rhythm of 10 and 2 on a fly rod before you lay that fly down gently on the water. I know which wild mushrooms you can eat. I know the difference between a cutthroat and a brook trout. I know proper archery posture and when to breathe when you take your shot. I know how to approximate what a set of antlers will score on the Boone and Crockett scale. I know how to set a hook, cut the sinew off of a backstrap and what to do if I surprise a grizzly bear.

I know so much stuff. I may not use it every day, but it has been imparted to me through the faithful, steady, engaging presence of my dad. As we walked along a muddy riverbed that day last October, I felt a whisper in my heart that took my breath away. *"It was never about the what. It was always about the with."*

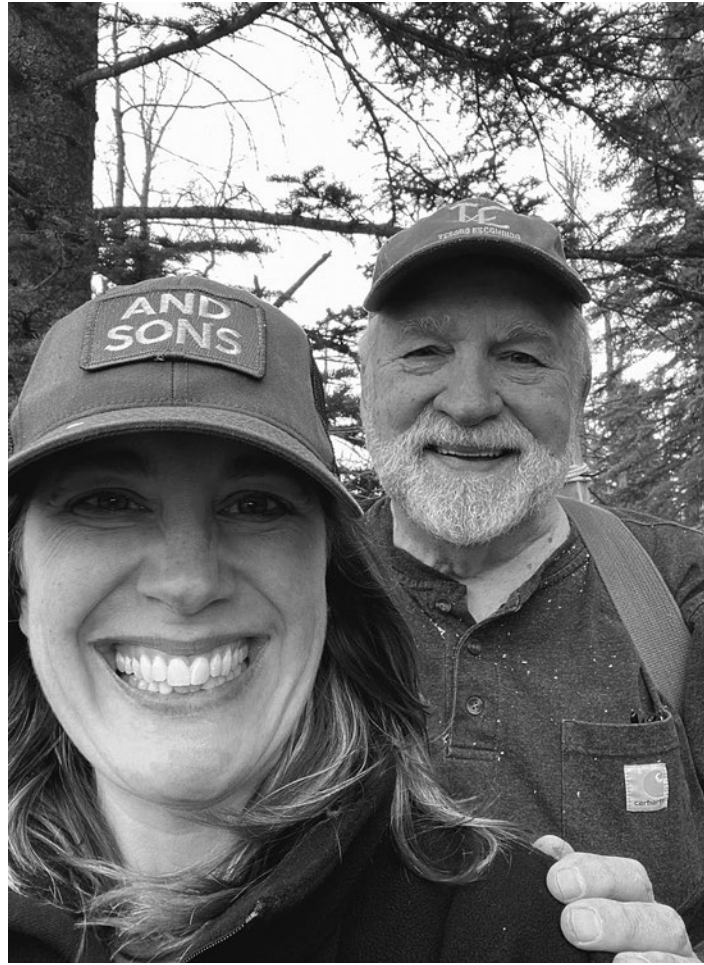
That word has such deep meaning for me, thanks to my friend Allen Arnold and his unfolding of it in his book, *"The Story of With."* Allen proposes that it is indeed the better way. The *with*.

The time. The miles. The shared beauty. The way dad never sat me down and gave me a lecture about deer. I just picked it up by being in his presence. He was always gently talking about what we were doing and why and there was never a test. There was never anything to prove, only an experience to be enjoyed. My brother and I picked up a wealth of knowledge about the outdoors because of the way our dad included and engaged us. It is the way he offered what he knew in an experiential, time spent kind of way. We wanted the *with*. The wild and varied skill set we have now is just a byproduct of all of the *with*.

If dad had been a farmer, I suppose I would know the best time to harvest alfalfa. If he had been a baker, I would likely have sourdough nailed by now. But like the whisper in my heart on the riverbed in October, it is never about the what. The impartation is just a byproduct of the *with*. The *with* is how I knew I was valuable and worth endless hours of dad's time. The *with* was love and it set the stage for me to believe I was loveable. He wanted to be WITH me.

Every day I had left of that precious October with my parents, I jumped at the chance for more *with*. I don't get to know how much time I will have with my dad, so I was all in for anything with him. I got up every morning and asked what adventure we would be on that day. We set up treestands, monitored the game cameras, cut down tamaracks for bow building and I watched and listened as he flint-knapped a knife from beginning to end.

Nothing but the *with* matters. ■



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**My brother and I picked up a wealth of knowledge about the outdoors because of the way our dad included and engaged us.**

# MAKING SPACE

WORDS Wookie Jones IMAGES Alyssa Joy



Wyleworth's "Bombast," a lounge with custom WWII bomber-style seats encompassing a magazine console.

Last year, the mother of invention birthed a passion project named Wyleworth and helped me keep perspective through the pandemic.

Over the last decade, several antique trucks lived out the last of their serviceable days in my care. It's hard to say if that speaks to my abilities as a mechanic, or just the effects of New England winters on old vehicles. Either way, one thing I always hated when the truck was scrapped was losing the memories, old car smell, and comfort of those worn-in bench seats. I had even sketched a few ideas over the years of lounge seating made from salvaged car seats, but the project never made it past my notepad.

Last summer, the concept was revived when Madré Necesaria came knocking on the door of my small-town coffee shop in the form of Covid-19 capacity restrictions. Our café already had cozy accommodations by 2019 standards, so my business partners and I decided to rent an additional unit to maintain the trickling lifeline of customers. Furnishing out the new space on a pandemic budget was proving to be a challenge, so I enlisted my skilled friend, Josh, to help bring about an idea that had been simmering in my noggin for several years—building stylish lounge seating from the remnants of tired vehicles.

Josh and I spent a handful of humid, summer mornings digging through the carcasses of old cars in a local salvage yard and scored a half-dozen or so seats in excellent condition.

We invested a slew of evenings and weekends adjusting CAD files, playing with hardware options and cutting sheets of cold-rolled steel on Josh's CNC plasma-cutting table, working and reworking the designs for the legs. We learned that all auto manufacturers must change seat mounts from year to year just for the joy of it. We learned that a couple well-placed spot welds make the difference between a usable product and pricey scrap metal. We learned that minor adjustments in pitch and height can make seating feel inviting or subtly infuriating. In the end we had unique seating made from another man's trash.

So far, the "new" seating has been well-received by our over-caffeinated test market. We are planning on building more of these over time as our passion and lives allow and are excited about a few upcoming design themes to push the idea further.

However, the most valuable part of the experience was learning to work together to create during a time of personal and global crisis. Through lost income, the untimely loss of a friend, the birth of a child, and the daily burdens of the pandemic, together we were able to bring about something new. As far as I'm concerned, that alone has made it all worthwhile. ■

See more of Wyleworth's designs at  
[INSTAGRAM.COM/WYLEWORTH](https://www.instagram.com/wyleworth)

*"Prerunner," a 3-up sofa with integrated cupholders and all the patina of its past life in a 1967 Ford 3/4-ton pickup.*



THE

WORDS Tanner Kalina

HERESY

IMAGES Sam Hall

OF

ADVENTURE



# URIANISM

## I backed into my gravel driveway and threw my car into park.

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I could feel the engine exhale after a long day climbing the Rocky Mountains' rugged terrain. My jello legs shared the same relief as I leaned my seat back and sank into my seat's cushion.

"I'm trying to get in touch with my inner wild man," confessed Tristan, a student I would soon be working with in my new campus ministry job.

"Yeah? You going Tarzan mode? I have an extra loincloth you can borrow." My joke didn't land. He stared at my console, face completely still. Oh. I turned down the radio. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know. I just feel...like...I don't allow myself to have fun." His eyes remained locked on my console.

"Was today not fun?" I positioned myself to better face him.

"No, it was. It was...I guess I just...don't trust that I can fully live life and also take my faith seriously. Like, in general. They just seem...conflicting."

I nodded my head. How do you explain to someone that faith and fun are lovers, not enemies?

Earlier that day, we set out at 4:30 in the morning to climb the Decalibron, an eight-mile loop that ascends and descends four 14,000+ foot peaks.

It hadn't even been a week since I moved from Venice Beach to Boulder, but I wanted to immerse myself into my new life and assumed that my surfer lungs could easily handle my first 14ers. Lesson learned. Water lungs are not the same as mountain lungs.

I felt the effects of elevation even before summiting the first peak, Mt. Democrat. The climb grew increasingly steep and dangerous, but I felt increasingly free. This hike was more than just a hike for me. I wanted to start out this new chapter of life with strength, especially with the way my last chapter ended. Each step made me dizzier, but each step also made me more determined. I was genuinely worried about my heart rate while simultaneously feeling a release from heartbreak, two totally different experiences happening at the same time. How was that possible?

Both and. The truth is, the truth is complex. Christianity is a faith that operates on the principle of et-et ("both and"). Et-et explains why truth tends to be structured around two fundamentally bipolar elements. Woo. That's a mouthful, I know. Put another way, truth is usually found in the tension of two—seemingly—paradoxical things. For example, Jesus is both fully God and fully human, the Trinity is both three persons and one God, He is a God of both absolute justice and absolute mercy, and on and on.

The problem is, our simple human minds try to make things black and white. We boil things down to make them more digestible. Heresy is the fruit of this proclivity.

Sabellianism came from trying to understand God as just one person and one God. Arianism came from trying to understand Jesus as just a man. There are countless other examples of trying to make the truth either-or rather than both and.

Either-or Christianity is not real Christianity. We can't reduce the most complex being in the universe—its Creator—to a pocket manual understanding. In Isaiah 55:9, the Lord says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

"You know that's a lie, right?" I challenged Tristan, "That taking your faith seriously makes your life less rich?"

"Yeah..." He stared ahead.

I held the silence before challenging him further. "You know the opposite is true, right?"

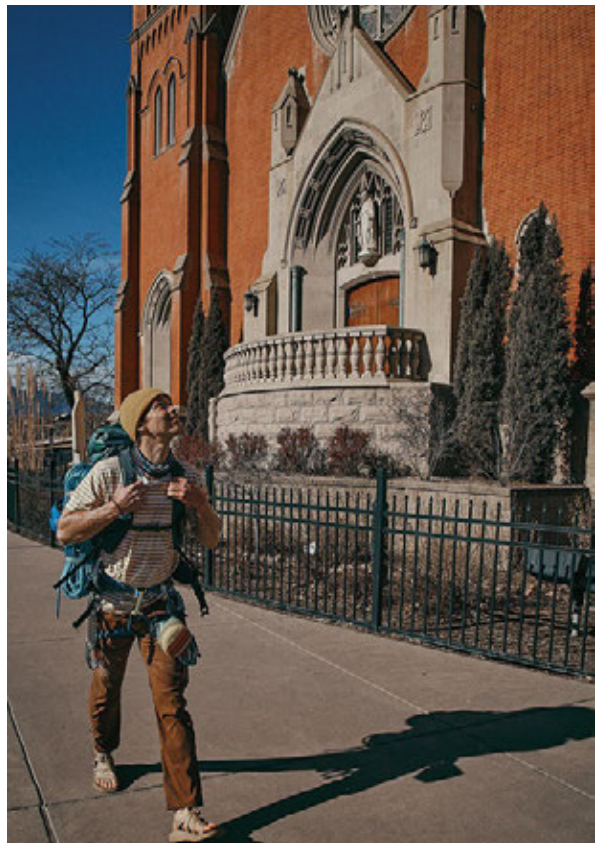
Eye contact. Finally.

"What is?"

"That you can't be fully alive without being fully invested in your faith?"

As I stood atop Mt. Bross, the last of the four summits, I took in the views. The sprawling beauty of the Rockies stirred me. Seeing something truly beautiful has always stirred a deep ache within me, an ache for intimacy. I thought back to my ex-fiancé who called things off just a couple months before.









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## If we truly viewed the world through the lens of Christ, we would see our lives as vibrantly adventurous.

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I looked out across the skyline toward Mt. Democrat, which is about as “mountainy” looking as a mountain can get. I related to it. Crafted from the same hands, born from the same breath, I felt a profound connection with my ontological sibling. Maybe I was just exhausted. Maybe too many brain cells died from pushing myself in the new elevation. In Mt. Democrat’s perfectly triangular shape, though, I saw the ascent of my promising future colliding with the descent of my broken past into a peak of presence, a peek into the divine.

My ex and I used to blast Kacey Musgraves, and one of her songs played in my mind, “Happy and sad at the same time.” Why is nothing ever as simple as it seems?

Both and. Beauty is complex. The life of Christ was both joyful and sorrowful.

In becoming one of us, Jesus showed us what it means to be fully human, to be fully alive. As people who follow Him, it’s Christians who actually live the most human lives and, therefore, the wildest lives. What’s more wild than being one with the One who created everything that’s wild? Why then do so many people think to become Christian is to forfeit adventure?

Our either-or tendencies don’t just affect matters of theology. They also affect how we view the Christian life. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we’re often tempted to think things like “virtue or fun.” “Discipline or adventure.” “Church or party.” This train of thought is just as heretical. Let’s give it a name: “adventurism.”

“It’s easy to look around at other people and think they’re living more life.”

Tristan nodded his head. “For sure.”

“Getting drunk on Pearl Street isn’t really ‘living it up,’ though. Hiking to a nearby waterfall in your new Lululemon pants isn’t an ‘adventure.’ Man. We throw around that word like we’re all REI-sponsored Lewis and Clarks.”

Tristan smiled. “Guess I should return this jacket then.”

“No, don’t. They do make the best stuff.” He smiled again. “Adventure is only adventure when there’s responsibility.

And what greater responsibility is there than living like Jesus?”

“Hm.” Tristan sat there, nodding. Something hit him, if ever so slightly.

“Think of any great adventure movie—The Lord of the Rings. What if Frodo didn’t leave the Shire to destroy the ring? What if he just stayed there? Like, ‘Meh. This is fun. This is adventure, just drinking with my hobs.’ That would be crazy, right? Would we look at him and think he was living his life to the fullest?”

The descent of Mt. Bross was gnarly. Not even two feet between us and an absolute plummet. Add in the fact that we were trying to beat an approaching thundercloud and things got intense. Quickly.

As we scrambled down loose rock, I looked up to the peak to gauge the coming storm. We prayed for protection, simultaneously laughing and pleading with God. My heart raced, risk and thrill mixing together in my veins, work and faith embracing one another—adventure. This mountain that God created, that God had indeed called “good” at one point, could destroy me a thousand different ways. Why are the good things in life oftentimes the most destructive? Why are the things we try to avoid oftentimes very good for us?

Both and. Goodness is complex. Sex, for example, can create life and unite two people. By design, it serves as a fiery foretaste of the eternal banquet in Heaven. However, it can also wound a heart deeper than any other human experience.

We tend to avoid suffering at all costs, but without suffering we can’t grow. Without the crucifixion we don’t receive the resurrection. Without the Cross we have fun, sure, but we don’t have adventure.

G.K. Chesterton once said, “And the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild.”

Without the map of our faith, we’re lost wandering. With it, though, we experience life on the most epic scale. There’s no greater adventure. ■



**m o d  
e r n  
m a n**

WORDS *Brandon Palma*



Pants around my ankles  
Hands around my phone  
Never not distracted  
Even when I'm alone

Need to do some thinking  
But that requires work  
"Lol, I'm cracking up"  
I type behind a smirk

Oh, the connected emptiness  
Oh, the crowded wasteland  
Oh, the necessary evils  
Oh, the plight of the modern man

I wrote this on my phone, you know  
The inspiration struck!  
And who has time for pen & paper?  
When did we all get stuck?

Is there still hope to crawl out from this hole?  
Is there a way to upend?  
Will we dig our way out and into the light?  
Shake the dust, look around, & intend?

Oh, the discouraged masses  
Oh, the sordid demands  
Oh, the potential possibilities  
Oh, the Hope for the modern man

And who will change, if not us?  
And when will it happen, if not now?  
It's not too late to deconstruct  
And rebuild a better vow

Our privilege comes with power  
To exercise gentle strength  
To exorcise all the demons  
That have tormented us at length

Oh, the chance for changes  
Oh, the invitation to expand  
The very definition and identity  
The honor of the modern man ■



# ANNIE, VOMIT, & THE COFFIN

WORDS & IMAGES Dave Small





I wonder if we make coffins so we have  
something busy to do with our hands because  
we don't know what to do with our hearts.

They empty out all the sawdust and shavings and even spend time sanding it. It seems a bit unnecessary, but at the same time totally necessary to keep the hands and mind occupied. They wrap the wooden coffin in a silver tarp. The corners are tight like a department store Christmas present, wrapped perfectly and stapled into place. It looks beautiful. As I survey the wooden box, I can't help but think it's going to be too cramped. Once they put the lid on and hammer it shut, there's not going to be enough space or oxygen in there. I feel a bit of panic rise up in me as I think of his final resting place.

His body lies just 10 feet away. Candles burning around him, someone has brought his plate with a full meal prepared on it. As if he is just taking a nap and will wake up from this whole ordeal with quite an appetite. But he won't wake up. And I can only hope that he is feasting with Jesus now, so full of joy. But I don't know.

I am angry at the people who taught me first aid and CPR. It's irrational anger, but I just need to direct my feelings somewhere. No one told me that CPR was so violent. When I learned CPR, it was in a temperature-controlled classroom. We had nice mats to kneel on when we did our chest compressions on the dummy they so carelessly called Annie. Annie had no limbs and was clean and sterile. Annie didn't vomit into your mouth when you gave breaths. The instructor was talking into my ear, telling me what to do, and I only did just enough to prove that I knew what I was doing.

They didn't tell me we would need to do compressions for long after my strength had failed, long after it made sense. They didn't tell me that we would be kneeling in vomit and blood and fluids and dirt. They didn't tell me that the casualty will most likely have soiled himself.

In class, everyone got a pat on the back and was told they were able to save Annie. But that cough and gasp for air from the casualty, that thought of "phew, it's all going to be ok... just like TV," doesn't come. Instead you just keep doing compressions. You look around pleadingly at the crowd that has gathered, desperately

hoping someone will know what to do, but all the eyes confirm what you're afraid of. It's time to stop. But you don't stop because you think "Just one more compression, one more breath, and then he'll cough."

You think stopping is giving up on him. You wish there were a doctor to take over, but there is no one. The body you're kneeling over was alive and laughing only an hour ago. Now it's cold and lifeless.

His backpack is beside him, as if he is going on a trip. His canteen is full of water, and someone's even bought him a Coke and a few cigars. His shoes are neatly put together just below his feet, socks in each shoe ready to slip on, and his flip flops side by side right next to his shoes. One of the other teams has made a sign saying he's part of their family. The other teams all follow suit and soon his body is surrounded by beautiful wreaths made from jungle flowers. Each team naming him as one of their own, as part of their family, as part of the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) family. There is something healing about the beauty of the flowers and the wreaths. A small reminder of goodness and new life.

As the body hardens in rigor mortis, a brownish fluid leaks from his mouth, nose and ears. Students take turns all night sitting beside him and dabbing the fluid away with cotton balls.

I sit beside him. I hold his hands, which are folded together over his chest. I pray that Jesus will have mercy on his animist soul. I pray for his family who sent him here to training from which he won't return.

I keep expecting him to stir and slowly yawn and stretch and open his eyes as if he is only sick and coming out of a deep sleep, comforted to see me holding his hand, smiling his beautiful smile at me. But he doesn't stir. Something we take for granted, the rise and fall of the chest, is noticeably missing.

I think about the pronouns I use to describe him as I write. Him. His. A man. A person. A brother, and I wonder when it shifts in my vocabulary that he stops being a "him" and starts just being a body. A corpse. Separate from the being, separate from the man. The coffin is finished and placed next to him.



We lay his body in the classroom, center stage. One blanket is rolled up as a pillow; another covers his body.

Only his face showing. Slowly, the students filter in. I am surprised when a group of students sits down on the stage not far from his body and starts to play cards. It seems callous. Students go back to their dorms and one by one bring hammocks and blankets back with them. They are going to sleep together one last night with their fallen brother.

Hammocks are strung up all around the classroom, in windows and rafters, every student is there. Then, what I can only describe as a party begins. A full celebration. It starts with us all standing and singing our Ranger song to him, and then our guitar player starts taking requests. Demoe plays with such passion and bravado, the best I've ever seen him play, only pausing momentarily to choke back tears. A large speaker is

soon put out and loud karaoke begins and won't stop until 4 a.m. the next morning.

All night we shout out the joyful choruses to our favorite songs. Movies start playing, food and drinks are brought out, campfires are lit, gamers game on their phones. There is laughter, dancing, stories, running around.

It is beautiful, crazy chaos. And when they are ready, each student and staff member sits beside his body, the only relatively calm place in the room. They light a candle, clean his face, hold his arm or hands or just sit quietly, keeping him company. At times the celebration is so raucous that people are tripping over his feet and legs. I know he would have laughed at that. I know he would be smiling at the whole celebration.

We hold a ceremony for him the next morning. I am asked to say something, but no words come.





It seems no words will comfort. I muster to tell them I am sorry and that I love them.

When everyone has had a chance to share, we lift his body into the coffin. We have to unfold his hands and force them to the side of his body so we can get the lid on. it's a tight fit. The coffin is attached to bamboo poles, and on the count of three we lift together and raise him to our shoulders. I am standing in the middle, right next to a photo of him fixed to the coffin, his hopeful young eyes staring at me as the procession slowly leads us through camp. "I am sorry," I whisper to him.

We carry the coffin from one side of our camp, right through the middle, across the bridge and through the other side. We cross the river again, this time wading through the waist-deep water and then through the jungle to where some of the students have dug a hole for him. I think about the students who dug the hole, how they are often told to dig holes, but this hole isn't for a trash pit, or a fence post, or a toilet. This hole is his grave. I wonder if it felt different, not like work, to dig this hole. They have picked a beautiful spot in the jungle, not far from the river that took his life.

It starts to rain as we open the lid one last time, shielding his face and placing inside his canteen, backpack, a few of his possessions, and his plate of food.

We read a proclamation from FBR, then tear the proclamation into pieces and place it in the coffin. We seal it and hammer it shut.

Using ropes, we lower the coffin into the grave and each student takes turns picking up a handful of dirt and dropping it into the hole. The dirt sticks to our hands like his life sticks to our heart. We fill the hole with sand and rocks and place all the wreaths around him and a FBR flag. Then we silently make our way back through camp, consumed with our thoughts and feelings. And just like that, it is finished. Yet my heart feels unfinished. Grief will take time.

To sit for as long as needed, touching the body of our brother, is healing, a loving goodbye, if not for him, then for us. Death is contagious: one day we'll all catch it.

We do, however, get to choose how we live each day, how we pour out our love and our grief and our tears and our laughter onto the lives, and souls, of those God brings in front of us, for however long He chooses. ■

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*In memory of Saw Gay Ku, Karen State, Burma.*

*Read more about the author's organization at*

*FREEBURMARANGERS.ORG*



*DIGNITY  
OF A  
NAME*

*WORDS Cameron Moix IMAGES Aaron Anderson*



*Vincent*



**G**rowing up an identical twin, it was sometimes—maybe more often than not—a challenge to develop and maintain my own sense of identity. Many friends and family members referred to us collectively as “the twins.” On my own, I was often asked, “Which one are you again?” I don’t blame them. Even I have trouble identifying myself in our childhood photos.

But I can’t remember Grandma ever forgetting my name. That doesn’t mean she didn’t, but it was such an exception to the rule that the inevitability is now obscured from my memory.

When she had something important to say, she’d lean toward me, looking over the rim of her glasses, and with raised eyebrows begin her story by emphatically stating my name: “Cameron.”

The wisdom of sages would sometimes follow. Other times, they were words of little consequence—an exaggerated tale of bargain-hunting or an endearing opinion about current events.

Regardless of the content, I felt seen and understood by her. I felt important because Grandma was telling me—and only me—something she cared about.

She called me by my right name, to paraphrase a Chinese proverb.

Dale Carnegie once said, “A person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”

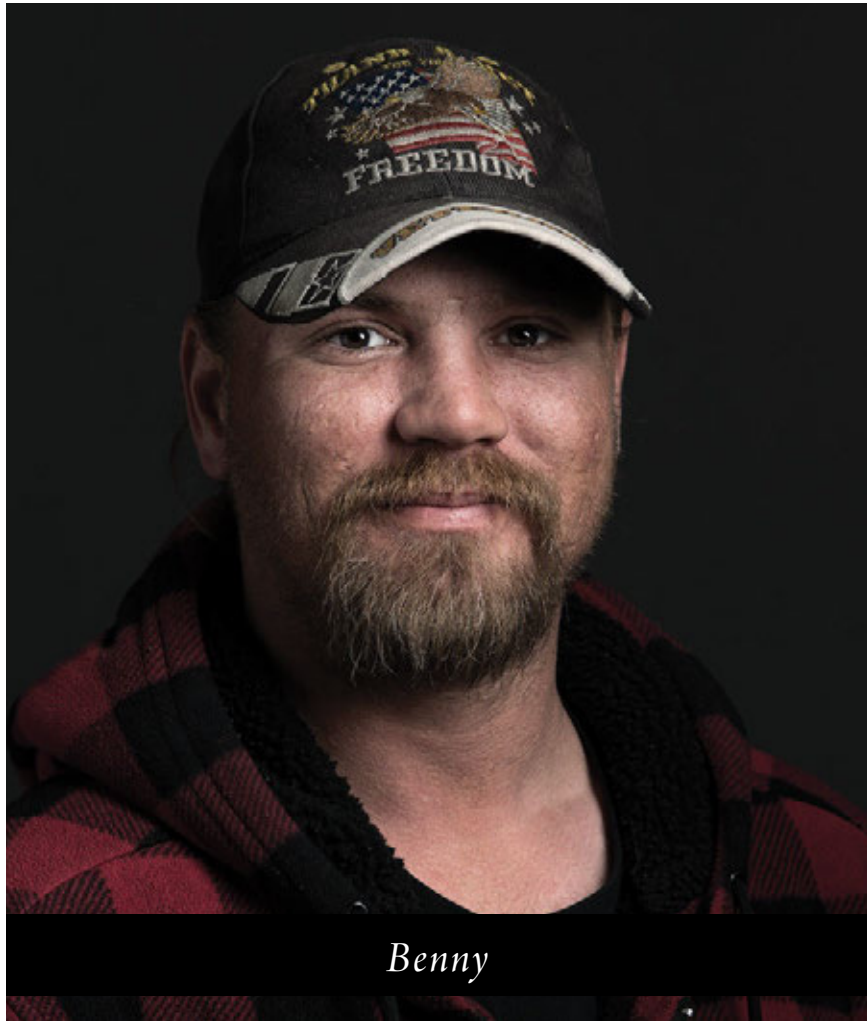
Imagine a life without hearing that sweet sound.

That can be a harsh reality for the thousands of men and women struggling with homelessness, poverty, unemployment and addiction who come to rescue missions for help each year. They are people who, for one reason or another, have been marginalized and depersonalized by the circumstances of their struggles.





*Ed*





*Carrie*



*Robert*



*Emilio*

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*Words have meaning. And names have power.  
The universe began with a word, you know.  
But which came first? The word or the  
thought behind the word?*

– Lorien, Babylon 5

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Since I began working at Springs Rescue Mission in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 2019, I've had countless conversations with our guests. Some have been among the best of my life, and I consider many of those men and women dear friends. Many have gone days, weeks or longer without hearing the sweet and special sound of their own names. Their names begin to fade and are replaced by "homeless."

But their true identities are not wrapped up in bank statements, fashion choices or where they lay their heads at night. They are as God made them and carry names that have the power to remind them of that fact. When evoked, calling someone by name can help restore dignity and self-worth. It can cause them to feel important and valued. It can remind them of who they are—the identity that may have gotten lost along the way.

For our neighbors in need, remembering and calling someone by their right name transcends language. It calls deeply to identity and individuality. It creates feelings of safety, respect and value.

This is at the core of helping restore dignity and humanity to those who have lost sight of it in themselves. When individuality becomes the exception to the rule, identity becomes a precious commodity.

When speaking of India's social group of "untouchables," activist and reformer B.R. Ambedkar said this:

*"Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self."*

Let us remember that we are all but drops in the ocean, but that there can be no ocean without each drop.





*Joseph*

## Five Ways to Help People Experiencing Homelessness

Wanting to be a helper is human nature. We all see people on the street—homeless and hungry, addicted and impoverished—and we try our best to lend a hand. But these issues are so complex, and these individuals all so very different, that it can be difficult to know how to help. That's why we've come up with a few ideas for how you might help your neighbors in need.

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### 1. BE A GOOD LISTENER

The next time you find yourself in a conversation with a person who is homeless, practice active listening. A great way to express care is by having a respectful and heartfelt conversation. We all want to be heard, and letting a person talk about their thoughts and feelings can really make a difference to someone who is struggling. You might hear something you need that day or find a way to provide hope and encouragement.

### 2. GIVE HOPE, NOT CASH

Every person experiencing homelessness has a different story, some of which include struggles with addiction and alcoholism. That makes helping someone on the streets a little more complicated. To avoid enabling self-destructive behaviors, don't give them cash or pocket change. Instead, look for ways to meet an immediate need: a bottle of water, a snack, a fast-food gift card or a pair of dry socks on a cold day. Then, encourage them to come to their local mission to address their long-term needs and life goals.

### 3. HELP THEM TO THE MISSION

Rather than give someone money or a ride—both of which could have adverse effects—direct those in need to the local rescue mission. If they're close, point the way. If not, buy them a bus pass or call them an Uber/Lyft/cab. Depending on the mission's resources, guests receive a hearty meal, a warm bed, a hot shower and access to a case manager who can help them find work, health care and housing.

### 4. GET INVOLVED—DONATE OR VOLUNTEER

In recent years, donors have helped expand rescue missions' campuses and programs—transforming lives and helping thousands of people overcome homelessness, hunger and addiction. To support our guests here in Colorado Springs and restore hope in their lives, you can give on a monthly basis by becoming a Good Samaritan Sponsor. Another great way to help is by volunteering weekly to help serve meals in Samaritan's Kitchen or process donated goods and food in our warehouse.

### 5. EXTEND GRACE, LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING

People dealing with homelessness often feel dehumanized by their traumas, addictions, circumstances and the fears of others. But they are people just like you and me, deserving of kindness and compassion. The simplest and most impactful way to help is to make them feel seen, loved and worthwhile. It can be as easy as smiling, making eye contact, shaking someone's hand or calling them by name. We are all unique humans with complex stories. We are all sometimes in need of grace and a helping hand.

Thousands of men and women struggle with homelessness, hunger, addiction and health issues. When you support your local rescue mission, it helps provide so many vital services each year: meals, shelter, access to drug and alcohol recovery programs and help for thousands to get back on their feet with the help of case management services. ■

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*To donate today and learn more about how your support helps neighbors in need, please visit your local rescue mission online or, here in Colorado Springs, at [SPRINGSRESCUEMISSION.ORG](http://SPRINGSRESCUEMISSION.ORG).*





# WELCOME TO OUR CITY

WORDS Josh Skaggs

Hey there! Welcome to our city. I wanted to give you a quick lay of the land so you won't be like, "Where the heck am I? What am I even doing here?" ;-)

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**T**he first and most important thing to know about is our city's Frictionless Lifestyle™, a community-based brand that empowers you to pursue your most meaningful self—without the roadblocks. We've developed this lifestyle to respond to your tastes and offer you great choices that are optimized for your happiness.

We're so glad you're here. You're part of our ongoing campaign to "keep our city weird." It all begins with our three core values: connect, discover, and engage. Let's dive right in!



## Connect

We've all used poorly designed websites that make us want to chuck our phones across the room. Relationships can be that way sometimes. If a friend's relational skills aren't dialed in, it's only natural to feel frustrated and go looking for a more "user-friendly" experience.

With endless recommendations and a savvy platform, our Frictionless Lifestyle™ will help you find your optimal friends (and dates!). Our algorithms kick in the moment you create an account, subtly influencing the way you interact with the world. You'll learn not to say things that put you in a bad light (because that's just cringey). You'll learn to share your life with thousands of friends (because inclusion is our *raison d'être*). And you'll learn to weed out people whose views and lifestyles don't mesh with your unique identity (because that's how you find a place to belong). You'll barely even notice as Frictionless sands down the rough edges of your personality to turn you into the kind of person everyone can enjoy.

Friendship isn't easy. There will be times when you're knee-deep in a conversation, and you'll realize you could be bingeing Netflix instead of trying to pay attention to this dude rambling on about his boring job. A friend will have a crying baby that is super distracting, or they'll try to bring up something hurtful you said a week ago, and you'll realize why "in person" isn't always the recommended friendship style. Texting is TONS easier. Instagram is even better, since you can literally put your best face forward.

Of course, there will be times when a friend is not at all "user-friendly," like a parking meter that doesn't take credit cards, or a dog that only responds to German commands. When you notice that a relationship doesn't feel comfortable anymore, it's probably time to move on.

## Discover

In our city, we believe it's important to discover the beauty in each of the seven personality types—square, circle, pentagon, octagon, squiggle, rhombus, and trapezoid. From your intake form we note that you're a squiggle with a square subset. That's a really fun personality type that tends to pair well with healthy octagons.

Knowing a person's shape will help you understand them better and recognize their unique traits. At first you'll have to ask people what shape they are, but in no time at all you'll be able to label them easily. That way you won't have to think, "Why does Sarah seem so anxious?"—a question that would require generous curiosity, careful listening, and thoughtful conversation to make any headway. It's a huge "aha" moment when you realize: "Sarah is anxious because she's a *rhombus*."

## Engage

You've probably already noticed that our city is divided on politics. Lively disagreements are essential to our society, ensuring that we have healthy diversity. You'll have to do a lot of research to figure out what your unique opinions are. If everyone educated themselves like you do, we'd all be able to progress together in no time! (Unfortunately, most people are uninformed and won't recognize the logic of your superior opinions.)

It's possible that some recent unrest in our city might make you feel as if the entire system is rigged to fail and that we must envision a new kingdom entirely—one that transcends what we have been able to build on our own. Believe me, we love people like Harriet Tubman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, heroes who subverted tides of darkness in their generations by shining a bright light. I'm sure you sometimes feel like you could be a revolutionary like that, in your own way.

The thing is, wouldn't it be better if we made revolutionaries completely unnecessary? If we made society a little bit better, with a little less tension and a little more comfort, we wouldn't need to take such an extreme stand. Like, maybe if the Civil War era had been a little less bad, Harriet Tubman could have, I dunno, chilled out a bit?

### (An Unfortunate Side Note)

Finally, I need to mention one design flaw that we haven't quite ironed out. There will be times at night when you're restless, and suddenly you feel weird for no reason. I saw someone quote a poem once from from a Polish guy, Czesław Miłosz, who described it like this ("An Appeal"):

*The feeling of a prisoner who touches a wall  
And knows that beyond it valleys spread,  
Oaks stand in summer splendor, a jay flies  
And a kingfisher changes a river to a marvel.  
In you, as in me, there is a hidden certainty  
That soon you will rise, in undiminished light,  
And be real, strong, free from what restrained you.*

But that's a little highbrow for my taste. Poetry, right? It's more like: The point is, we've noticed a glitch. And we're working really, really hard to make sure it doesn't bother you too much. In the meantime, you'll still feel weird sometimes. SRY!

The moment you start to feel like you're missing something vital, we'll reach out. We've made sure you always have fast, easy access to all that life has to offer. Lonely? Scroll through some photos of your friends traveling to Alaska.



Bored? We've cued up enough videos of silly doggos to keep you entertained for hours. Frustrated? Here's a group chat where you can vent while you stay up late being productive. Lonely still? Psst—maybe you should open an incognito window.

This restless feeling sucks, but you're not alone. Even though we don't have a cure yet, we can at least help you take the edge off. The main thing is PLZ don't let it get you down. The last thing you need is to start questioning your life, like, is there more than this? Who am I? What am I made for?

I've met some people who take these questions way too seriously, and it gets messy real quick. They go through highs and lows that you and I would never want to experience. They aren't always certain which way to go, because they've left the path our algorithms have provided for them. They wander off into the woods and have experiences that aren't even optimized for their best lifestyles. They laugh together when we haven't shown them anything to LOL at, and they cry together instead

of engaging great content that would help them not to feel sad in the first place.

It's a mystery why anyone would choose this. It makes a person restless just thinking about it.

The problem is, they actually want people to feel this restless feeling. They keep making movies and books and songs that awaken that feeling in some deep place we can't reach. It's as if they're living according to the laws and customs of an invisible city growing in our midst, and their lives are somehow making it visible and compelling and attractive. It's cruel, since they're making people feel a deep longing that our city is totally unable to meet.

Anyway, people who live that way do not fit in very well here. ͡\_ ( ͡\_ ) ͡\_

The good news is, even these people can rejoin our community at any time. We keep ping-ponging them with helpful reminders of everything they're missing out on, so that they can remember what they've left behind. We make it easy to come back. ■



# GEAR GUIDE

## COLD WEATHER CYCLING

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*WORDS Sam Eldredge*

*IMAGES Richard Seldomridge*

Here in Colorado Springs, our team loves to ride on the winding and ever-climbing roads and on the abundant dirt trails and singletrack.

**I**don't suggest you move here because I'm sure there are trails and roads where you live, just as where you live the glorious summer days give way to brisk autumn mornings and, eventually, to the winter months that presumably are meant for our bikes to collect dust in the garage.

Something we've been looking into is extending our riding seasons without using the indoor trainer, and as they say in my wife's home state of Minnesota: There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing. In the spirit of discovering some of the good clothing to combat the cold weather and extend our riding into the colder months, we've got a brief gear review on cold-weather clothing for road and mountain bikers.



WHAT WE'RE WEARING:

**Rapha™**

- *Brevet Insulated Jacket*
- *Core Winter Tight Bibs*
- *Brevet Reflective Gloves*
- *Neoprene Overshoes*

**WHAT I LIKED:**

That my tights have extra warmth on the front and are breathable on the back. The jacket is light and breathable, super thin where you don't need warmth and thicker where you do, like in the upper chest.

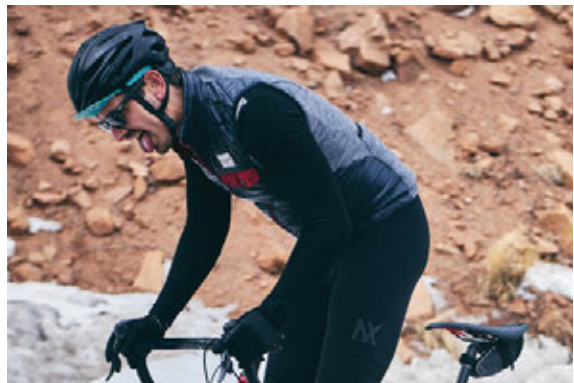
Gloves and booties. Nice and warm. Appreciate the visibility. Helps with wind chill. Nice padding in the gloves (no snot wiping thumb though).

**WHAT I WISH I HAD:**

A buff for my ears and neck and face. A warmer cap. And a warm vest that would pack up small once I got too hot.











### Café du Cycliste™

- Irma Grey-Black Long Sleeve Merino Wool Jersey
- Albertine Fleece & Down Vest
- Mathilde Short Bibs

+ Generic leg warmer add-ons for short-length bibs, full-finger gloves, Handlebar Coffee cycling cap [what's up SB?], DeFeet Sushi socks

#### WHAT I LIKED:

The style and quality of Café du Cycliste is hard to argue with, but it comes with a price tag and shipping from France that makes me hesitate with any future purchases. I like the versatility of the vest, as I can throw it on over my short-sleeve jerseys on warmer days, plus it's so dang sexy.

#### WHAT I WISH I HAD:

Better gloves that had real wind and water protection. Summer weather.



WHAT WE'RE WEARING:

**Handup Gloves™**

- *FlexTop Flannel*
- *A.T. Pants*
- *Full Finger Gloves (Poncho)*

**WHAT I LIKED:**

We went for a ride in 20-degree weather, and once I got moving the flannel and pants actually did the trick to keep me warm. Plus, the style of these means I could ride to work and not need to change, depending on how sweaty I am.

**WHAT I WISH I HAD:**

A fat bike. Something for my ears. ■







C O M P U T E R  
H A N D S

WORDS Morgan Snyder

*TO GET WHERE YOU WANT TO GO,  
YOU MAY HAVE TO GO BY A WAY  
YOU NEVER EXPECTED.*

# *It hurt like hell.*

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**T**he moment the block of Ponderosa pine slipped from the grip of my glove, I knew the fingers between that log and the bed of my truck were in trouble. Pain shot up my arm.

I paused to breathe through the pain. The cool evening breeze of autumn caught the sweat trickling down my face; winter was around the corner. As I drew in a deep breath, the setting sun caught my attention. One irony of the relentless drought and heartbreaking wildfires seizing Colorado last year was the magnificent haze-amplified evening glow, streaking the sky in magenta, apricot, and cobalt.

Suddenly, I recalled a long-ago moment with a buddy of mine and laughed out loud for the utter joy of it all.

“You know what your problem is? You’ve got computer hands.”

The diagnosis had come to my buddy when he was elbow deep under the hood of his truck, trying to learn—with the help of a crusty old mechanic—how to replace a fuel pump. With the mouth of a sailor and a waiting room that looked like a storage closet for broken chairs and greasy magazines, this mechanic was like a character right out of a film on masculine initiation.

My buddy was doing his best to unsuccessfully loosen a bolt when Neil (no last name—it’s just Neil) announced,

“The problem isn’t the wrench. The problem’s the hands. You’ve got computer hands.”

When he told me the story, my buddy and I had laughed, both looking at our hands. Well-groomed indeed and ready to bravely face any foe that might present itself—online.

But for doing real things—physical things, messy things—our “inside hands” were no match for Neil’s four decades of turning a wrench.

That was a long time ago, and though I still spend an obscene number of hours at a computer, my hands and my body are now marked with scars and stories of initiation into real things.

An hour earlier, I had been sitting behind a desk plugged into the matrix, faltering in that unique fatigue known perhaps only to modern humans. A fatigue not from physical labor but from choices. An exhaustion from decisions, mental activity, and the endless flow of byte-sized virtual communications. Each piece no doubt laced with deep meaning, but collectively too much. An overload of choices and inputs and a woefully disproportionate ratio of mental expenditure to the physicality that fuels the masculine soul like food. Too much of too many artificial things, all clouding my spirit and removing me too many degrees from the real.

Photo by Andreas Hammerl





Photo by Jesse Orrico

But now that was behind me. I was outdoors instead of indoors, in my weather-worn Carhartt coveralls infused with the scent of man and reeking of the joy of the last dozen or so adventures. My chainsaw chaps, caked in an aged compound of sawdust and bar-chain oil, reminded me of the brilliant coloring on the shed antlers of bull elk that hang from a rack in my garage: the blend of rich browns painted by the sap of pine trees mixing with blood from the bull elk scraping their antlers against hefty trunks in order to shed the summer velvet.

I removed my glove to confirm that my finger could make it through at least one more cord of wood blocked and loaded into the truck bed. Thankfully, I knew all I'd lose was another fingernail.

My thoughts went to Aldo Leopold and his epic work, "A Sand County Almanac." As a young man, I'd gotten lost in the wonder of what it would be like to experience what he did, a thousand times over—sitting with a pot of coffee on the front porch of his farm for over an hour, simply watching the earth wake under the glow of a new sunrise. Day after day, Leopold would posture himself to take in the magnificence of morning as God produced and directed another episode of the birth of a new day. I thought of

Leopold's invitation to take heed of two spiritual dangers: the twin illusions that heat comes from the furnace and food comes from the grocery store.

As my pulse thudded in my finger, I recalled the process of awakening, years before, to the reality that heat and food come from the grace of nature combined with the hard work of humans to painstakingly participate in, cultivate, and harvest the raw materials nature provides.

Now, more than a decade later, I took a soul's inventory: Though I still have a long way to go, the illusions created by my stubborn preference for convenience are slowly disintegrating through connection with real things. I'm now a gleaner of firewood from anywhere and everywhere. Tonight, the source is the property of a friend who needed to remove a couple of big Ponderosa pines that had succumbed to mistletoe. At my feet are a pair of well-used chainsaws. The logs are loaded in the pickup I waited 20 years to own, a truck now marked bumper to bumper with mud and scars from adventures in field and forest. The aroma of pine is nearly intoxicating.

I am surrounded by what will be the seventh cord of firewood I've put up beside my suburban house over the last year to heat our home for the winter.



I am finding remarkable joy in lowering the property values in my neighborhood as my wood pile grows. By the grace of nature and the love and leading of our Father, I am recovering my soul as a man.

In the pain and the sweat and the brilliance of the glimmering sky, I knew this: Lost parts of my soul are being recovered, and broken parts of my soul are being restored.

Right here, next to the driveway where our minivan is parked and the curb where we set out our trash cans on Tuesdays. Right here in the midst of a “normal life.”

Everything has changed.

From the inside out.

Now, much of our heat comes from pine and aspen harvested with care and story.

Much of our food comes from the field and choosing to hunt on public land in a state where wild game is available. Seven years ago, I asked God to allow us to never run out of wild game, to at all times have at least one package in the freezer. My Father has been faithful, and we’ve never run out of meat or new opportunities to harvest something, from rabbits to roadkill and everything in between. In August we were down to three packages, but by the close of archery season we’d managed the better part of enough animals to fill the freezer and pass some JoyBombs along to others. What could be happier than putting a rack of moose ribs in your buddy’s freezer? Oh, how I wish I could’ve seen his wife’s face when she went out to grab some more LaCroix.

The journey to exchanging computer hands for the hands of a generalist began with curiosity.

It began with responding to a Father who was inviting me into the impossible along my frontier of masculine initiation.

It started with one small but intentional step: consenting to an unknown path upon which men with computer hands like mine don’t feel too steady. Remember, true courage is feeling fear and doing it anyway.

It was partnership and participation. It was failure and setbacks. It was a long obedience in the same direction. And it was milemarked with joy around what seemed like forbidden and intimidating corners.

My finger will heal. But the scar will likely remain. I’ll take the scar because it helps me remember. This moment. And so many others.

Scars born of adversity, loss, failure, and many tears.

It takes a lot of shit to make good soil.



**The journey to exchanging computer hands for the hands of a generalist began with curiosity. It began with responding to a Father who was inviting me into the impossible along my frontier of masculine initiation.**

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**Take the time to learn how to sharpen  
a pocket knife or a chainsaw blade.  
Fix something that's broken.**

.....

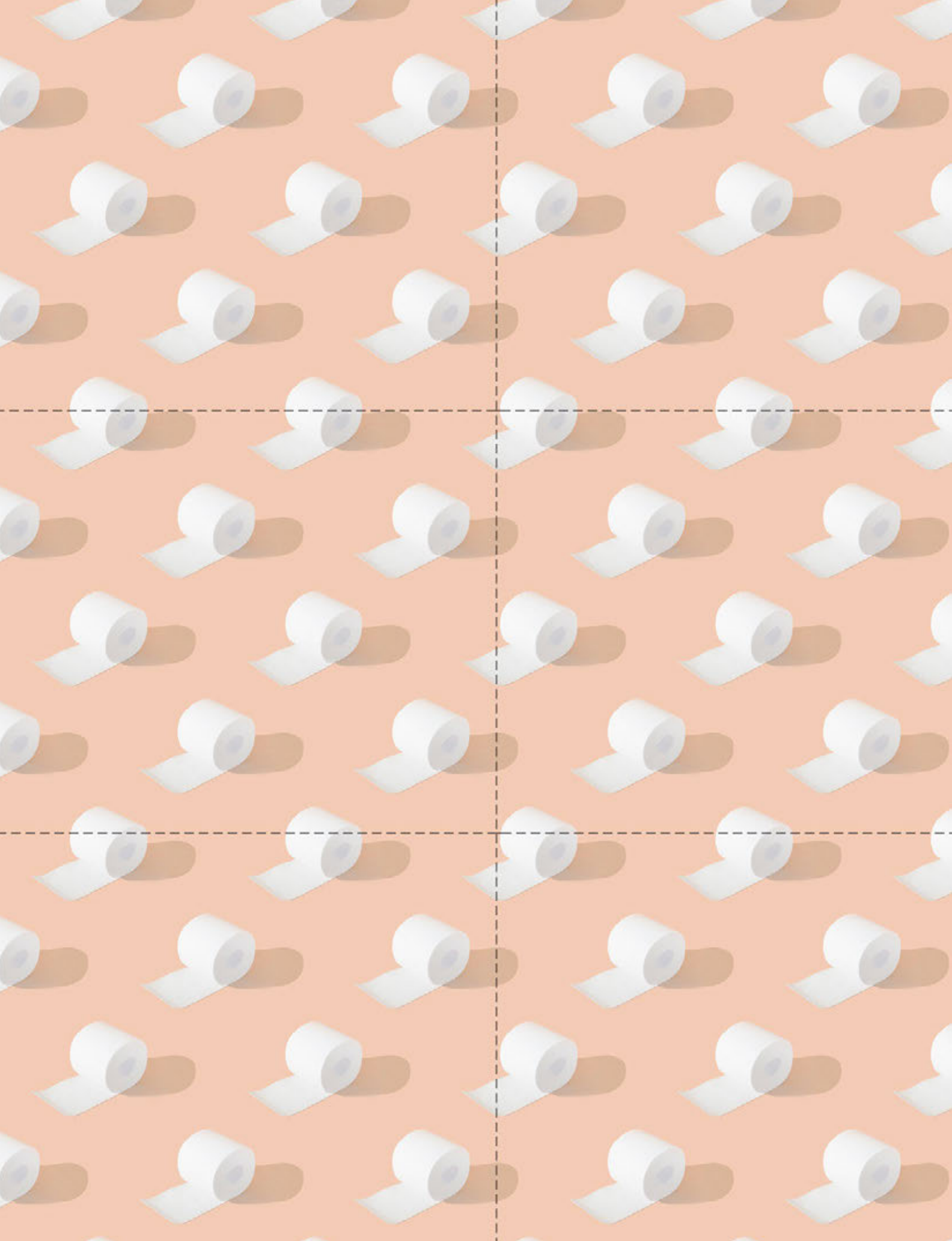
Go ahead, buy a chainsaw. Say no to alcohol for a month. See a counselor. Or, like Aldo Leopold, take a wonderfully inefficient hour to watch the miracle of the awakening day—with no technology at your side. Take the time to learn how to sharpen a pocket knife or a chainsaw blade (thanks, Justin, for the lesson last year). Fix something that's broken.

Let go of the thing that is no longer serving you. Unlearn the habits and mindsets that have cluttered your garage, your calendar or your soul. Get into your body in new ways so you can recover your masculine soul with a strength you might think is impossible.

Take a risk you won't regret. It's worth the cost. Everything He has for you is yours.

If you want it. ■





**AND SONS**