

Millions of Christians Send Clear Message to Hollywood

It's not often that a film centered on the power of prayer breaks big box-office numbers. But that's exactly the case with *War Room*, a new movie that tells the story of a marital crisis overcome by prayer. *War Room*, made for just \$3 million, has now raked in more than \$50 million after capturing the No. 1 spot earlier this month.

And *War Room*, from the creators of *Courageous*, *Fireproof* and *Facing the Giants*, is not alone. An influx of family-friendly, faith-based films is hitting the big screen this fall, including *Captive*, featuring the Emmy-nominated David Oyelowo and Kate Mara. The two star in the faith-based crime drama that opened on Sept. 18, where Oyelowo plays a killer on the run and Mara is his drug-addicted hostage. But underneath the gritty storyline, faith plays a significant role.

Then next month, the football drama *Woodlawn*, starring Academy Award winner Jon Voight and Sean Astin, follows a remarkable true story about how love and unity, fueled by spiritual revival, overcame racism and hate in Alabama in the early 1970s. Opening Oct. 16, the film is already creating buzz.

American Family Association, which often champions for family-friendly entertainment, says the attention to faith-based films this fall is evidence that Christian moviegoers are sending a message about the kind of entertainment they want to see in Hollywood. AFA adds that these faith-based, "good news" films will have an indelible impact on kids, families and society.

"American Family Association takes on many heavy issues in society, but we like to go to the movies too," said AFA President Tim Wildmon. "When entertainment, however, tears

down our society and is a negative influence on our kids, we feel we must step in. At the same time, when there are wonderful options for families to watch together, we want to bring these films to the attention of everyone. For decades, the big screen has been dominated by violence, sex, drugs and crime. But this fall, there is a bit of light, and families whose dollars are driven by their values will have some great movie picks this fall. Hopefully, this trend is a glimpse of things to come and our culture will show some evidence of the impact.”

Likewise, AFA’s own film debut, *Summer Snow*, went international this summer, with screenings in several countries around the world, including Spain, Brazil, Germany and Turkey, with interest from South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia and more. Released in the summer of 2014 by American Family Studios, a division of AFA, *Summer Snow* saw great success in the theater, on DVD and in its television debut on UPtv.

Starring David Chisum, Cameron Goodman, Garrett Backstrom, Brett Rice and Rachel Eggleston, *Summer Snow* tells the story of 8-year-old Hallie Benson (Eggleston), a small girl with a very big heart. Whether baking cookies for a grumpy neighbor or selling toothbrushes to help a friend, Hallie always thinks of others. Unfortunately, her “creative” ways of helping people often leave her father, Dan (Chisum), with a mess to clean up. Dan struggles to keep it all together after his wife’s death. He doesn’t cook, do hair or know how to help his three children without his beautiful wife and her unshakeable faith in God.

This past weekend at Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C., where several AFA representatives were featured speakers and moderators, attendees had the opportunity for a sneak peek of *Woodlawn*, as well as *Beyond the Farthest Star*, which tells the story of a Democratic senator who burns a courthouse nativity and brings the national spotlight to a forgotten Texas town

and a once-famous preacher.

6 Reasons Why Anxiety, Worry and Fear Are Issues for Believers

As a supplement to the message I did on anxiety and trust, I asked my friend Dr. Jennifer Degler to do a guest post on my blog with her thoughts and observations on the issue of anxiety and Christians.

A psychologist, life coach, author, speaker, wife and mom, Jennifer is passionate about helping people create healthy, successful relationships. You can find Dr. Jennifer podcasting and blogging about marriage, sex, parenting, friendships, and spiritual and personal growth on the Healthy Relationships Rx website.

Here's what she had to say:

About 20 percent of the U.S. population has an anxiety disorder. That's about 1 in 5 people, or 40 million adults. If you were allowed to pick your psychological disorder, pick anxiety because it's very treatable. Not every psychological condition is treatable, but anxiety responds very well to treatment; however, only about one-third of suffering anxious people ever seek treatment. If left untreated, anxiety can lead to depression.

When I was in graduate school in the 1980s, depression was the common cold of mental illness. Now it's anxiety. Americans live in one of the safest countries in the world, but after

the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the anxiety levels of Americans skyrocketed.

I think overexposure to and over-consumption of anxiety-provoking material, such as 24/7 scary news stories and increasingly violent movies and video games, has contributed to the rise in anxiety disorders. You would think anxious people wouldn't watch a lot of news and crime shows, but they tend to be heavy consumers, usually because they are subconsciously watching for what the victim "did wrong" in a misguided effort to keep themselves safe by avoiding similar behaviors. Unfortunately, instead of making them feel safer, overexposure to anxiety-provoking shows and news stories just makes them feel more unsafe and keeps their brains in a hypervigilant state.

Anxiety tricks our brain, and the amygdala in particular, into activating our fight vs. flight response when we aren't actually in danger. For example, when we watch a scary movie, our brains are tricked into thinking we are in danger even though we are safe in the theater. So our heart pounds, our palms sweat and we breathe faster—until the movie is over. Then we realize we are safe, and our brain and body calm down.

For chronic worriers or those with an anxiety disorder, worry about the future is the scary movie. Those "What If" worries about an uncertain future hijack the brain, trick it into activating the fight vs. flight response, and cause physical, emotional and spiritual distress. Once anxious people understand this neural hijacking, they are much less self-condemning of their anxiety and better able to use body-centered techniques to calm their anxious brain.

Here's my favorite quote to use in conjunction with teaching clients body-centered techniques, such as mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation, which help them use their five senses to pull their anxious mind back into today.

"Today is mine. Tomorrow is none of my business. If I peer anxiously into the fog of the future, I will strain my spiritual eyes so that I will not see clearly what is required of me today." –Elisabeth Elliot

And, most of the time, we are OK in today. Dry, warm, fed, roof over our heads—that's today, and we are OK in today. It's in the imagined future that we aren't OK.

It's so much better to live in the land of what is instead of the land of what if.

In my opinion, fear, worry and anxiety are particular problems for Christians for the following reasons:

1. Christians overspiritualize fear and anxiety. They tend to believe it's all a spiritual thing and overlook the genetic, personality and trauma contributors to anxiety issues. And when believers hear another person tell of their anxiety struggles, they tend to prescribe only spiritual solutions for a mind/body/spirit problem. If you have an anxiety disorder, you are unlikely to be able to "pray it away" any more than you could pray away diabetes.

2. Christians carry shame over their anxiety and fear because they tend to believe it always indicates a lack of faith or an immature faith. They believe lies such as "Good Christians never feel afraid or anxious" or "If I struggle with worry, I am a weak Christian."

3. Because of the shame, they tend to cover over how much they are suffering from an untreated anxiety disorder. They gloss over it, call it being "stressed out," and don't share their stories in community where they could possibly receive support and encouragement to get treatment.

4. Christians can give each other truly unhelpful but sounds-so-spiritual advice for managing crippling fear and anxiety, such as "Just let go and let God" or "Just give it to Jesus"

or “Just lean into Jesus.” What in the world does this look like practically?

5. Christians can be suspicious of helpful body-centered techniques for managing anxiety. It’s like we are Gnostics who believe the body is evil and only spirit is good, when in fact, body-centered techniques work well to reduce anxiety because of the way God made our brain.

6. Because Christianity offers peace, hope and a certain eternal future, it is particularly attractive to anxious people. So baseline, you’ll find more anxious people in a church than waiting in line to bungee jump. I don’t have hard statistics on this, but I think the incidence of anxiety disorders in a church congregation is higher than the 20 percent you find in the general U.S. population. Plus anxious people tend to also be imaginative, deeply feeling, empathetic people—the kind of people who are drawn to the kindness and compassion found in good churches.

If you are the 1 in 5 persons who struggles with anxiety, worry or fear, please get treatment from an experienced mental health professional. While treatment may not make the anxiety go completely away, it should help you suffer much less and be able to enjoy the abundant life and peace Jesus promises.

Ron Edmondson *is the senior pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky. For the original article, visit .*

After Nixing '19 Kids and

Counting,' TLC Promoting 'Sex in Public'

The Parents Television Council urged TLC to reconsider plans to air a show titled *Sex in Public*, scheduled to begin on Oct. 2.

According to news reports, a therapist goes undercover and ambushes strangers with the hope of getting them to open up about their sex lives on camera.

"TLC once stood for The Learning Channel, but today it stands for Totally Ludicrous Content. Sadly, this once-noble programmer is the latest in a string of basic cable networks using provocative titles and explicit content in a desperate move to attract attention. And because TLC is part of the cable network bundle, it can use its unfair business leverage to force every cable subscriber in the country to pay for its explicit content, whether subscribers want it or not," said PTC President Tim Winter.

While this show is being touted as "therapy," the title alone gives parents everywhere pause. No doubt the network will rate the explicit sexual dialogue as appropriate for children as young as 14 years of age.

"We are urging advertisers to steer clear of *Sex in Public* and other TLC shows that are clearly designed to shock and accelerate TLC's apparent goal of pandering to the lowest common denominator. And we are calling on TLC to issue a refund to the percent of cable subscribers in America who don't want to watch—or pay for—a program like *Sex in Public*."

What Do Men Seek From Church?

I am often asked, “Why are the men leaving the church today?” Sometimes it comes out as, “What can we do to keep the men of this church?” or “How can our church reach more men?”

There is no easy answer, but in this article I would like to provide some basic principles that will help you develop a male-friendly church. The overriding principle is simply this:

The environment you develop is more important than the events or programs you put on. A man is looking for an environment that is consistent with who he is as a man and a place where he feels comfortable belonging and becoming the man God wants him to be.

1. Relevance. Most men in our society today do not see the value of going to church because it is not speaking their language, and it is not addressing the issues they face. For example, a recent survey showed that 92 percent of church-going men have never heard a sermon on the subject of work. The unspoken message is: What you do for 60 to 70 hours a week does not relate to what you do on Sunday mornings. The most important issues for men are their work, family, marriage, sexuality and finances—and rarely are these addressed from the pulpit today? Some of the key questions men are asking are:

- What is true masculinity?
- What is success?
- How do I deal with guilt feelings?
- What is male sexuality?
- Is purity possible today?
- What does a healthy marriage look like?
- How can I raise my children to be successful?
- How can I be a man of integrity in the workplace?
- How can I be a leader in the home, church, workplace and world?

▪ What is my purpose in life?

2. To be involved in a cause greater than themselves. Men want to be involved in something driven by a compelling vision. Men want to know what hill the church is climbing, where we are going, what we are about. The church has the greatest and most far-reaching mission on Earth, and we should not be bashful about challenging the men of our congregation with it.

3. A shot at greatness. I have never met a man who wanted to be a failure or a loser. Men want to win. They want to be heroes. They want to come in first. Unfortunately, it seems the church today wants nice men, not great men.

4. To be challenged. Men tend to view the world around them as something to be overcome or conquered. It's high time we told them they do not have to check their competitive drive at the door of the church. If they are seeking risk, adventure, change, competition and expansion—tell them how to find it within the mission of Jesus.

5. Action. Men today are looking for something to do; they do not like sitting around and theorizing about the 27 views of the second coming of Christ! Men measure themselves by productivity and gain a portion of self-image based on what they do. Their desire for adventure is often expressed in the desire to be on the solution side of things. Many churches today are in maintenance mode, rather than being missional.

6. Men are looking for leaders, and they want to be leaders. This principle is simple: Men do not follow programs, they follow men. They want to follow a bold, courageous, visionary leader. Establish an environment where strong leadership is attractive. Not only are men looking for a leader to follow, they want to become leaders themselves. They want to lead in their family, workplace, church, community and world. One of the things you can do is equip them to lead.

7. Fun. If men walk into a church and see a bunch of serious,

stoic-looking people, shouldn't they wonder if Christianity really is a killjoy? The world is a serious place; men are looking to laugh and have fun to balance that reality. They love a good joke, funny story or movie. I encourage you to develop a ministry environment in which men have fun together.

8. Brothers. Most men have many acquaintances, but very few men have a good friend. According to statistics, the average man over 35 years old does not have one close friend. Men need teaching on how to develop and strengthen friendships and an environment where they can find genuine male friends.

9. Healing. Many are using socially unacceptable means to deal with their pain—making their work or their hobbies their life, misusing sex, drugs or alcohol. Unless these wounds and hurts are dealt with in a healthy way, they will never become the man that God wants them to be. They will never be able to have healthy relationships or move on from childish behavior.

I hope some of these insights from my own ministry to men will serve you well as you seek to minister more effectively to the men of your church and community.

Steve Sonderman is the associate pastor for men's ministry at Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wis., and the author of How to Build a Life-Changing Men's Ministry.

For the original article, visit .

What Does It Matter Who the House Speaker Is?

House Speaker John Boehner announced last week he would be

resigning from Congress, effective Oct. 30, and Republicans have already begun competing for the top leadership posts in the wake of his news.

House Republican leadership consists of four positions—speaker, majority leader, majority whip and conference chair—and current House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California continues to gain support from colleagues in his appeal to replace Boehner as the top House Republican.

Shifts among the leadership ranks depend primarily upon McCarthy's bid for the speaker—if the California Republican moves up to assume the top Republican position, it creates an opening for majority leader and potentially majority whip, depending on whether Republicans elect Scalise to serve as their new majority leader.

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington, the current chair of the Republican conference, was rumored to be considering a bid for majority leader, and her win would've created an opening for her position. However, the No. 4 Republican dropped out of the running Monday night.

But what do each of the leadership positions do, and how are House GOP leaders elected?

Speaker of the House

The Candidates: Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California, Rep. Daniel Webster of Florida

How the Position Is Elected: To elect a speaker of the House, each party in Congress first nominates a candidate in a closed-door meeting, according to a 2014 report from the Congressional Research Service. The House then convenes at the beginning of the new Congress, and each party officially nominates their respective candidates. To assume the speakership, a candidate must receive 218 votes, and the

speaker—typically the nominee from the majority party—has historically been elected along a party-line vote.

In January's speaker election, 25 Republicans voted against Boehner, the biggest defection from an incumbent in the last century.

What the Speaker Does: In addition to presiding over the House, the speaker administers the oath of office to new members, signs bills and resolutions passed by the House, and appoints members to committees. The speaker also recognizes members to speak or make motions and declares quorums.

Conservative lawmakers are focused primarily on the race for House speaker, a staffer for a conservative member told *The Daily Signal*, as the top Republican sets the tone for the remainder of leadership and dictates what action the House will take, regardless of the role the majority leader plays in planning the agenda. The staffer said conservatives are looking for a member who can “lead, set the priorities, have an open debate and maintain regular order.”

“When (Republicans) find someone who can do that, it will trickle down into the other positions as well,” the staffer said. “The speakership is the key position to concentrate on, and it kind of dictates what the other ones do.”

Majority Leader

The Candidates: Rep. Tom Price of Georgia, Majority Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana

How the Position Is Elected: In a closed-door meeting held before the start of the new Congress, a majority leader is elected by members of the majority conference in a secret ballot.

What the Majority Leader Does: The majority leader, second in command to the speaker of the House, oversees the daily

legislative operations. According to a report from the Congress Research Service, the majority leader schedules legislation to go to the floor and plans the legislative agenda.

Majority Whip

The Candidates: Chief Deputy Whip Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, Rep. Peter Roskam of Illinois, Rep. Dennis Ross of Florida, Rep. Pete Sessions of Texas

How the Position Is Elected: Like the selection of a majority leader, the majority whip is elected in a closed-door meeting of the conference and by secret ballot.

What the Majority Whip Does: The majority whip is responsible for “marshalling support” for their party’s position on issues and legislation, according to the the Congressional Research Service. With a group of GOP lawmakers who serve on the “whip team,” the majority whip counts votes on legislation and works to persuade members to vote in line with the party.

Conference Chair

The Candidates (if McMorris Rodgers decides to step down): Rep. Lynn Jenkins of Kansas and Rep. Luke Messer of Indiana

How the Position Is Elected: According to the Congressional Research Service, the heads of each respective conference are elected in the same manner as the majority leader and majority whip: in a closed-door meeting and through a secret ballot.

What the Conference Chair Does: The conference chair presides over party meetings and promotes the decisions and ideas agreed upon by the conference. {eoa}

Melissa Quinn is a news reporter for The Daily Signal. Send an email to Melissa.

For the original article, visit [The Daily Signal](#).

Megachurch Pastor Robert Morris Calls Out Christians Who Read Internet Gossip

We call ourselves Christians, but how often do we let the depths of the Internet creep into our brain when we're alone?

Guarding your heart and eyes from the rumors of the Internet grows increasingly difficult as the line between reality and falsehood blurs on the digital front.

We know gossip is wrong, but we continue to indulge with a few clicks of the keys. We pour over articles highlighting a pastor's failures or fall from grace. We post our comments without research, falling victim to a deadly sin.

Megachurch Pastor Robert Morris is fed up with it. Watch the video to see what he has to say.

The Generation of Bounce

We are all encouraged by a leader who demonstrates powerful resilience. We respect the ability to bounce back because, for most of us, quitting is easier.

I read an article recently about the documented decline in resilience among college students. This is no surprise to me

because I've observed the trend in my own classrooms. Students today view a grade of B or C on an exam as failure, which frequently results in the student dropping the class. More serious than class dropping is the onset of depression, aggressive behavior or thoughts of suicide stemming from academic performance.

In the vocabulary of youth, "This place is whack, let's bounce."

It's hard for me to forget a student who appealed his grade of A- because the grade indicated something less than perfection. The student's behavior was threatening and severely imbalanced. Faculty have become fearful of honest reporting of grades due to fear of personal attacks or other administrative hassles caused by grading.

Psychology Today reports that "there has been a decrease in the ability of many young people to manage the everyday bumps in the road of life." Faculty are called upon to do much more hand-holding and "helicoptering-in" to help students solve problems. The balance between support and challenge has tilted heavily toward support.

I believe this trend has been percolating for at least the last 5-7 years. Many of you would agree because we are now seeing these young people in our workplace. Human resource directors are working diligently to help with onboarding in a much more serious manner. The workplace doesn't offer a mollycoddled environment. Many of our young people are waiting for helicopter rescues that will not come.

The impact on leadership is somewhat numbing. Leaders must be able to cope with the emotional state of young underachievers while attempting to develop the neophytes into future leaders.

We learn to be resilient through mistakes and failure. We must create an environment in which mistakes are noted, coached and tolerated. We must allow the sting of a mistake to actually

sting a bit. The sting is a good memory tool.

At the same time, we must demonstrate that errors and failures are productive tools of growth. We must help our young people develop an improved mindset about failure. And we can only do this in a nurturing, restorative environment.

We must teach the next generation of leaders to stop bouncing out and learn to bounce back.

“As they were saying this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be unto you.’ They were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Feel Me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ When He said this, He showed them His hands and His feet” (Luke 24:36-40). {eoa}

Report: Sept. 30 Historically Worst Day of the Year for Stock Market Investors

September has been tough for stock investors, according to financial blog Bespoke, and history says the last day of September may deliver one more blow to already battered markets.

A Bespoke report examining data as far as 1945, the S&P 500 has posted positive returns at just 38 percent on the last day of September, making it one of the worst trading days of the

year.

“September has marked a particularly rough stretch for the S&P 500, with only the week of Sept. 11 closing higher as China’s slowdown, global economic uncertainties, and lack of clarity on the timing of the Federal Reserve’s expected interest-rate hike have shaken investor confidence,” MarketWatch reports.

MarketWatch markets reporter Sue Chang concludes: “If Wednesday’s trading action follows the historical trend, things could get worse for investors before they get better.”

Breast Cancer Diagnosis Provided Author With ‘Fresh Start’

I love fresh starts, don’t you? There’s something awesome about the opportunity to clear the decks and begin again.

I enjoy opening the cover of a brand-new book or the potential of a blank piece of paper. How about a set of just-washed sheets on your bed, or getting a mulligan when you whiff the ball? There’s something about a new start that gives us a sense of hope and a fresh wind in our sails.

Isn’t that the reason we make New Year’s resolutions or set goals? We take a look at where we’ve been and where we thought we’d be by now. We evaluate our progress, deal with our disappointments, and consider a new plan of action. That’s why the changing of the calendar from December to January fills me with a sense of hope.

When I received the heart-stopping diagnosis of breast cancer,

the initial trauma left me shell shocked, openly exposed on a battlefield for my health.

Thankfully, some experienced soldiers in this fight came to my rescue. They took my hand and led me to safety and hope. Thanks to them, I learned that this diagnosis was not the end, but a fresh start for me.

Maybe you've had a few "Oh no" moments too. This battle called life may have left you standing on the sidelines. You might have sustained a few hateful blows from our enemy, or maybe even some friendly fire from those you love. Well, be encouraged!

Our God is all about the second chance. He's always inviting us to begin again with Him. He never leaves us on the battlefield alone or unequipped. There are countless sisters in the same territory who want to rush to your aid. In the very place you thought you were beyond recovery, you can in fact be saved.

*The preceding is an excerpt from **Jan Greenwood's** book, Women at War: Declaring a Cease-Fire on Toxic Female Relationships (Charisma House, 2015).*

Despite Pope's Plea, Georgia Executes Woman for First Time in 70 Years

The U.S. state of Georgia executed its only woman on death row on Wednesday, marking the first time in 70 years the state has carried out a death sentence on a woman, a prison official

said.

Kelly Gissendaner, 47, died by lethal injection at 12:21 a.m. EDT at Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison in Jackson, a prison spokeswoman said.

Gissendaner was sentenced to death after being convicted of what is known in the state as malice murder for her role in plotting the killing of her husband, Douglas, in 1997.

Pope Francis, who concluded a six-day U.S. trip on Sunday and is an outspoken opponent of the death penalty, had urged officials to commute her death sentence.

Gissendaner's execution marks the first death sentence carried out against a woman in Georgia in 70 years. She was the 16th woman executed in the United States since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday denied last-minute requests for a stay of execution.

The state's Board of Pardons and Paroles met on Tuesday to decide whether its refusal earlier this year to commute Gissendaner's sentence to life in prison should stand.

Board members were not swayed by her latest appeal for clemency, which emphasized her model behavior in prison and her remorse. Her lawyers also noted she was not present when the crime was committed.

The man who carried out the kidnapping and murder, Kelly Gissendaner's then-boyfriend, Gregory Owen, received a life sentence.

Rev. Cathy Zappa, an Episcopal priest who taught Gissendaner through a prison theology program, had said Gissendaner was scared but had not wavered in her belief in God.

Prison spokeswoman Lisa Rodriguez-Presley said Gissendaner

requested a final prayer before she died.

Gissendaner's supporters included her three adult children and a former Georgia Supreme Court justice who says he was wrong to deny one of Gissendaner's earlier appeals.

But the family of Doug Gissendaner said Kelly Gissendaner showed him no mercy.

"As the murderer," the family said in a statement before the execution, "she's been given more rights and opportunity over the last 18 years than she ever afforded to Doug who, again, is the victim here."

Gissendaner's scheduled execution was called off in February due to bad weather affecting roads and again in March when officials noticed what they believed was a problem with the injection drug they were about to use. {eoa}

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