

# { Well Thought }

Engaging the city

ISSUE 005 : NOVEMBER '14



DARKNESS  
& LIGHT



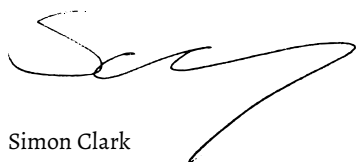


## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's fitting that the fifth edition of Well Thought - with its theme of Darkness and Light - is coming out in November. The clocks have changed and lighter mornings are giving way to darker evenings. Whether you like it or not, winter is coming - and with it, Christmas, and then there'll be a whole new year. We've got a range of great articles for you this time - from poetry and personal essays to a look at how this summer's big hit, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, says as much about other worlds as it does ours. We're also continuing our interview series with a look at how Mat and Ana Bellino's lives have changed more than they could have dreamed over the last few years.

There's a lot of darkness in the world. Any time spent watching the news shows you just how bad things can be. It's important to remember that light - whatever that means to you - is just as easy to find. For Christians, Christ was and is the light of the world - a promise that goodness will eventually triumph over everything else. Hopefully you'll find something inside this Well Thought to connect with and think about. As ever, if you have something to say, or want to get involved in the next edition, e-mail your thoughts and ideas to [wellthought@jacobsowellnj.org](mailto:wellthought@jacobsowellnj.org)

Until next time,



Simon Clark

# Well Thought

**NOVEMBER 2014**

Issue V

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Simon Clark

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**

Brandon Rechten

**EDITORS**

Scott Jones

Becky Rodriguez

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Simon Clark, David Kurz,  
Reid Monaghan, Jon Pflingst,  
Brandon Rechten, Mark Twombly,  
Stephanie Van Huss, Jelani Walker

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Jacob's Well is a Christian community which exists for the glory of God and the good of the city by extending hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**CONTACT INFO**

Mailing and Office:  
2000 New Jersey 27  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

Phone:  
(732) 354-1595

Email:  
[WellThought@jacobsowellnj.org](mailto:WellThought@jacobsowellnj.org)

Website:  
[www.jacobsowellnj.org](http://www.jacobsowellnj.org)

# A STORY FOR OUR TIMES

by Reid Monaghan and Simon Clark

This summer, Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy* became a box office smash, grossing more than \$770 million worldwide as of November 2014 – and all this despite the relatively obscure fictional universe that *Guardian of the Galaxy* is based on. While DC Comics' Batman and Superman are household names and Marvel's string of Avengers movies brings together a string of already beloved heroes, *Guardians of the Galaxy* is, for all intents and purposes, an enigma. How did a movie with no widely established international fan base, whose heroes include a genetically modified talking raccoon and a tree, get so big so quickly? The answer may lie in what it says about our own culture, rather than those of other worlds.

## **Guardians of the Galaxy – Mirror to our World?**

First, let's make one thing clear – we are both huge fans of this movie (and Reid can boast that he was a fan of the comics long before the leap to screen). It's a space epic that relies just as much on witty and engaging characters as it does on a complex, high-stakes plot. It's also a movie that, despite being based on comic books (or perhaps because of it) deals with some decidedly PG-13 stuff. *Guardians of the Galaxy* has it all: explosions, danger, snappy dialogue and relatable characters. More than anything, it's a movie that speaks about one thing: being human.

## **Guardians of Humanity**

Who doesn't want to be a

hero? We all dream, as kids and as adults, of being special, being placed in a situation that demands something extra and stepping up to save the day. This isn't anything new. What do *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Spider-Man*, *Iron Man* – in fact most action movies – have in common? Family and friends are in danger, there is fracture and loss, a mission to overcome a threat, and the promise of a newer, safer community as a reward. *Guardians* gives us all of this while managing never to lose the characters' individual human touches – something with which many great movies struggle. Groot, a sentient tree, has time to give a single flower to a child as a simple act of kindness in a world that's falling into chaos. Gamora, adopted daughter

of Thanos (which is, let's not forget, Greek for “death”), turns her back on a life of cruelty and subjugation in search of freedom and heroism. They may be aliens, but they're aliens that audiences can relate to and root for. It's this relation – between audiences and the characters of *Guardians* – that's the true secret to the movie's phenomenal success. *Guardians'* heroes, you see, are far from perfect. Instead, they're just what people want most in the 21st Century: murderers, assassins, thieves, and bandits ... with good, even noble, hearts.

## **Guardians of the West**

“Be good ... but not too good” is, arguably, one of the most prevalent messages in our culture today. The rebel

with a cause – the gentleman thief – seems to speak to something in modern Western civilization that's never quite been here before. When did it become a bad thing to be too good? At *Guardian's* heart is its protagonist, Star-Lord – a thief with a conscience, who has no problem breaking rules. That's why *Guardians* works: it's managed to present its main character in the perfect sweet spot between do gooders and baddies. We're told increasingly by society that the best place to be, morally, legally, and even spiritually, is in the middle: rebels who act nicely, but are happy to break the law. We're told to be our own persons, as long as we temper our bad sides with a little charity every now and then. *Guardians* exemplifies and glorifies this world view (and does a fantastic job of it). The movie ends with perhaps the most succinct summation of this philosophy: Star-Lord defending himself in the face of his obvious flaws, explains that while he “may be” difficult, he's “not 100%” selfish. Well, he uses some language that is a bit more salty than this. Is that a good thing? Is it better to openly be a bit of both, good and bad, than to strive to follow a path that is good, right and true? In the *Guardians* universe, the answer's a resounding yes. In our universe, things aren't so clear.

## **Conclusion**

Towards the end of the film, after clear acts of heroism and virtue, some of *Guardians* main characters engage in some witty



and fun dialogue. Speaking to a police officer-type, Rocket Raccoon asks about a new moral dilemma he faces: “If I see something someone else has, and I want it really bad, can I just take it?” The cop, of course, answers that no, that would be stealing. Rocket, stuck on this line of thought alone, goes further: “But what if I want it really bad and much more than them?”

Similarly, Drax – one of the more muscled fighters of the *Guardians* – asks: “If someone says something irksome, can I rip out his spine?” The answer? “No, that would be ... murder.” It’s all goes to show us that now that the characters are good, they really don’t want to be that good.

Years ago, the French philosopher Simone Weil made an astute observation. In her book *Gravity and Grace* she wrote the following:

***“Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating.”***

-Simone Weil  
*Gravity and Grace*, 120.

What she wants us to see is that while evil in the fictional world can be exciting and fun, in the real world it is terrible and inhumane. Too much goodness in our books and movies gets boring, while our world is greatly starved of bold, courageous virtue.

*Guardians of the Galaxy* is

just a movie, of course, so we don’t have to worry about the victims of the thieves and the assassins we’re told to love. There’s nothing wrong with that, either. You can love Indiana Jones without worrying that he doesn’t follow international treaties for the removal of antiquities. You can love this movie without worrying that it glorifies violence and law breaking. It’s worth thinking about, though, how different things in the real world might

## “WHO DOESN’T WANT TO BE A HERO? WE ALL DREAM, AS KIDS AND AS ADULTS, OF BEING SPECIAL.”

be if, in place of self-justifying rebellion, sacrificial love were the basis for community. This is what we strive for in the church: clear and compelling love and an embrace of truth and goodness. In fact, this sort of sacrificial love and goodness is what forms our rebellious Guardians into an actual family on a mission.

We see Drach thanking his friends for forgiving him his many blunders. We see Groot have his only line in the film, “I am Groot,” turn into “we are Groot” precisely at the moment where he is giving up his life for his friends. In *Guardians of the Galaxy* we see a group of misfits and losers formed into a new family – one that lives out a bold mission. How does

this happen? It is not through selfish, rebellious and evil-doing behavior. It is sacrificial love that forms their community.

One of the rallying scenes towards the end of the film shows the Guardians coming together to undertake an impossible task: deciding why they should give their lives to save the universe. Star-Lord, going beyond his earlier reasoning that they should save the galaxy because they are part of it, says this: “I look around

and see losers. Life has given us a chance to give a #^&\*...” His friends know that his call to action may very well mean a call to die. Drach’s reply is simple: “You are asking us to die? I would gladly die among my friends.”

Such sacrificial love, and real communities of friends built upon it, aren’t hard to find in this world. Jesus himself said there was no greater love than to lay life down for his friends. In Jesus we see exciting goodness, clear truth and compelling beauty. In his leadership and sacrificial love, we see a new community emerge with a glorious mission and hope. Jesus’ call to us is to die to ourselves as we live out his

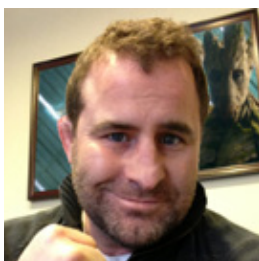
mission among friends. In fact, he already died for his friends and showed himself to be the greatest leader this world has known.

We have been called to be guardians of the galaxy, in a sense, because we have indeed received good news. No misfit is too far away or too far gone to receive forgiveness and grace from God. The good news is that Jesus takes a bunch of screw ups, puts them together as a new family, calls them to give their lives for others so that many will be saved and join the team of redemption throughout the world.

In our world today following after God in true righteousness might just be the greatest rebellion there can be. Is it possible that we can be bold and bad by truly joining a revolution for good? The late British journalist and literary critic GK Chesterton says this so well:

***In the upper world hell once rebelled against heaven. But in this world heaven is rebelling against hell. For the Orthodox there can always be a revolution; for a revolution is a restoration.***

The *Guardians of the Galaxy* sought to restore peace to a war-troubled universe. We bring a higher call to the table as we seek to see people restored to peace with God and one another. This is the precise reason that Jesus has a church. **WT**



**Reid Monaghan** - Reid spent years in campus ministry with athletes and then in local church ministry with young adults before sensing a call to help plant a missional movement of churches. He and his family moved to central New Jersey with a small group of friends to establish Jacob’s Well, which launched in the fall of 2009.



**Simon Clark** - Simon has been living in New Jersey for almost two years now, after he moved here from Britain, via Japan. He currently lives in Old Bridge and works as a writer in Warren. You can read more things by him, including short stories and various thoughts about writing, on his website - [www.simonpclark.com](http://www.simonpclark.com)



# THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF MASS SHOOTINGS: A LOOK BACK AT NAVY YARD

by David Kurz

## An ongoing tragedy

One year ago, Aaron Alexis' murderous rampage through Navy Yard left a nation shocked as, once again, senseless evil hit close to home. In its wake, the tragic mass shooting led millions of Americans to ask all too familiar questions about mental health, gun control, and security standards at US military facilities like Navy Yard - as well as schools, movie theaters, religious buildings, and countless other public contexts where mass shootings have taken place in recent years.

Psychological red flags in Alexis' past have been examined, gun laws have been debated, and security clearance procedures have been questioned. As we continue to have these discussions, we rightly feel that we are doing what we can to minimize the risk of future

shooting sprees. Yet, with 200 mass shootings and counting thus far in America in 2014 (shootingtracker.com), we find ourselves wondering again and again, why? A closer look at Navy Yard, from a less than comfortable perspective - the spiritual realm - may yield potential answers.

## The influence of spiritual forces

What happened to a man who claimed that three people followed him from hotel to hotel, talking to him through walls, and sending vibrations into his body at night to keep him from sleeping? If we invoke Occam's razor, perhaps the answer is - precisely that.

Many of us (me included) have never had a visible encounter with an evil spirit or demon, yet most major religions point to their active involvement in

the affairs of man. Sharing this belief could be a leap for some who do not acknowledge the existence of the supernatural, but for roughly 80% of the American population (self-professed believers in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism), such a claim should - theoretically - not be particularly troublesome. After all, Christians believe in a Christ who cast out demons from the sick; Muslims hold that jinn are invisible spiritual beings, some evil, who have free will and can interact with the physical world; Hindus believe in multiple demon-like gods, and some Buddhists believe that beings from a lower Realm can invade the thoughts of humans. Even amongst Jewish people there is a distinct, albeit peripheral, belief in the demonic throughout history.

Despite this pluralistic agreement that certain forces in the spiritual realm can and do influence us towards evil, we are, as a culture, resistant to real investigation of this notion. It feels ludicrous to discuss demonic oppression or exorcism in any kind of rational forum, yet we are (justifiably)

more and more comfortable with, for example, pursuing non-traditional medicine and seeking psychiatric help for mental disorders. Why are we so quick to embrace mental, psychological, and emotional healing, but not spiritual healing?

## Seeking answers from a gospel account

To answer this question, we can look at one of many instances in which Jesus directly engages with evil supernatural forces. In the Gospel according to Matthew (Chapter 17, verses 14-18), a man asks Jesus to heal his son, an epileptic (or a lunatic or mentally ill, in other translations). Jesus obliges, but not by counseling the son or giving him medicine:

And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly (ESV).

Jesus heals this boy, whom Matthew tells us is mentally ill, by casting out a demon. Based on the text, it seems to be true for us to say both that the boy had mental health problems and that he was demonically



possessed. He had a physical or psychological sickness at the same time as he had a spiritual one.

### **Moving forward**

Even though spiritual issues are often bound up with material ones, Americans intensely dislike engaging with spirituality that seems “freaky-deaky.” We like putting the boy into the medically-defined category of “epileptic” and driving him to the hospital, but hate wading into the messiness of spiritual warfare. Even though, two thousand

years after Jesus walked the earth, billions of people (the vast majority living outside the US) would consider a story like that of Jesus and the demon-possessed boy to be reliable and plausible today. Whether witch doctors or Christians, Hindus or ghost-hunters, vast swaths of humanity live as though unseen powers in the spiritual realm influence their daily lives in profound ways.

My point is not that we should look for a demon under every bush, but simply that we ought to include spirituality in the critical milieu as we seek

answers, and solutions, to the evil that occurs regularly in our midst. We do not know exactly what Aaron Alexis experienced in the days prior to his slaughter of innocents. Perhaps he was, as he claimed, a victim of some form of spiritual attack. Perhaps not, but either way we can process what we do know about his life through the grid of various religious and spiritual traditions. What do we have to lose? Because no matter how effective our medical prescriptions, how stringent our gun control laws, or how secure our military facilities, these measures alone cannot stop

future Navy Yards, just as the full suite of rational approaches cannot contain evil writ large.

Whether the result is specific, such as a greater offering of religious counseling to government employees, or generic, such as a heightened awareness of spiritual forces in everyday American life, we ought to consider the supernatural carefully. If gods, angels, and demons do indeed have a role to play, we would be remiss and unwise to do otherwise.



**David Kurz** is a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former member of Jacob's Well. He has written articles for a variety of publications, including *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Princetonian*, *Well Thought*, *Imagine*, and several scientific journals.





# CONTRAST

by Jon Pfingst









# WELL TOLD: CHANGING STATES

by Simon Clark photos by Brandon Rechten

Sometimes people's lives change in ways they could never imagine. Mat and Ana Bellino are proof of that. Just a few years ago, Mat was working as a police officer in New York City, while Ana lived and studied in Mexico and Texas. Now they live in Staten Island, working as freelance artists. We sat down with them to talk about the changes they've gone through.

**Well Thought:** Guys, thanks for agreeing to this. Mat, why don't we start with you. You were NYPD – now you're not. What happened?

**Mat:** I spent the better part of a decade working for the City of New York but a really bad car accident messed me up. After a long road of trying to fully recover, including surgery, they didn't see me fit to continue and retired me on disability.

**When was that?**

**Mat:** New Year's Eve 2012 was my official retirement date.

**And Ana, your life used to be pretty different too. You grew up in Mexico, right? Where about?**

**Ana:** I was born and raised in Juarez, Mexico, but during college I moved to El Paso, Texas. I started college in 2007 and I did that for three and a half years, just going back and forth every day from one country to the other. And then my last semester I had a very early morning class so I had to move. Then, right after I graduated I started working in my field. After that, I met Mat, and well--

**It was all downhill from there.**

**Ana:** Ha, no, no!

**And Mat, after your accident, what made you decide to become an artist?**

**Mat:** I guess it had always been in me, and the desire to pursue it. I've been drawing since I was a kid, but I never had the full inspiration or the time to make it a full time career. Even as a cop I was designing tattoos for my buddies at work, doing my own tattoo designs, stuff like that. I got a Bachelor's in my other artistic love too. Fresh out of college I had my writing degree, but that market was tough to break into - journalism was flailing, literature was, and is, super competitive. And I wanted to *eat!* So I went with a more secure career choice instead. Now I've come back to those art forms again. Ana's helped push me.

**So Ana is a big part of why you're an artist now?**

**Mat:** Yeah, I wanted to create something myself, even if it takes forever to actually complete it. It's nice to have the time to focus on it. And I think in a way, an artist is an artist not because of how much art they produce, but how they view the world. At least for Ana and I, we view creating art as a reflection of God's artistry.



**And how about you, Ana? Always wanted to be an artist? What was your plan back in college?**

**Ana:** You know, it's funny, I always wanted to be an artist, but I just didn't know what type. I didn't see that as a very realistic option for me anyway, so I went for Biology, another love of mine. When I was in college I worked doing research, and then when I graduated I volunteered at the zoo and started working as an allergy specialist. I really loved working with the animals and developing relationships with my patients but I guess when I met Mat, I saw myself with possibilities I didn't have before and the opportunity to experiment and it just ... happened.

**Mat:** It's really not a cliché to say that this was all God. With everything – I mean, the early retirement from the job is the big thing that enabled us to meet each other, and to now take our time producing art. Without it there'd be no way we could do this, especially at the pace I work at. I'm constantly hindered by my injuries, my work process is epically slow. The illustrated book has been a year in the making and I'm still only about half done. We'd be struggling.

**So, thinking about your past life as a cop - does that affect the work you do now?**

**Mat:** Yeah, definitely. The novel I'm writing, it's direct – it's fiction, but it's also mixed with real stories from when I was on the job. It's about the hard struggles you go through as a defender of law

and justice. In a way, you become inoculated to the evil and the stuff you're surrounded by. Even death doesn't have the same impact. Pain, things like that, they're just a normal part of life. That definitely affects me as an artist, bringing a history of seeing the darker side of the world, and then also being a Christian, knowing the future hope we have? I see both sides, and I bring that to what I do as a writer. I'm trying to expose more of the light.

Ana, how about your past? What was the area like that you grew up in?

**Ana:** When I was a kid, the city I grew up in was very touristy, very famous, very active. I think it used to be a great city – but then, by the time I was a teenager, it started being very violent. That's one of the reasons my family sent me to college in El Paso, because there were a lot of murders in Juarez at that time, especially women. And my family didn't want me to take that risk so they sent me to El Paso where everything was safe, pretty much. It was a huge contrast. In Juarez, there was a time where I was literally running for my life, and in El Paso I would take my frog out for walks at midnight with no worries. Still, despite that, I think sometimes it was hard to see the difference. Because the cities are right next to each other it's kind of easy to forget where you are. Even in El Paso I had moments when I was afraid and in Juarez moments when I was very confident.

**Mat:** What Ana just said - how sometimes being in a Juarez and El Paso, being a part of both at the same time, can blur the lines on where safety is or isn't? Sometimes even though you're a Christian you can get so deeply involved in the things that are going on in the world, that you can lose sight of your relationship with God. I think there's a parallel between Ana's life living where she was and our lives here on earth that can translate to everyone. We're not in heaven yet, we haven't been transformed yet, and so it's easy to lose sight of heavenly things, to forget where we actually belong, because we're here and not there. The same way Ana could lose sight of the dangers in Juarez, we can lose sight of the dangers around us, the things pulling us far from God.



Mat, last question. How do you feel your faith affects your art?

**Mat:** It affects it dramatically. My faith is at the core of everything I do. Through my art I want to create a clear presentation of the Gospel, and a clear presentation of who God is. With the novel, I was actually faced with a lot of decisions about how much I wanted to put in, how much of the darkness I wanted to expose. As a Christian I had to choose where my lines would be, and it's difficult. You want to expose certain things but you don't want to do it in a way that actually offends people. As I've gone forward I've solidified my audience, I want Christians to be able to read this, so that's a difficulty, getting the balance right.

Ana, how does being a Christian, and looking back at your journey, affect how you work now?

**Ana:** I think for Mat, because he draws and he writes, it's easier to be more direct, to share his faith. I do sculptures and figures so it's a little more difficult to make something that directly represents my faith. But I've learned to use my business's social media to share my relationship with God. In a way, my art is just the start. I use my blog, Instagram, and pretty much anything, even the way I speak to customers I hope shows a difference between me and the world. I've been in really bad places in my life so I can empathize with others going through struggles. I create small sculptures but they carry with them so much more. I'm so thankful for the opportunity of being an artist and try to use it to bring joy and God's love to the hurting.

**Mat:** Exactly. At the end of the day everything we do as artists should glorify God. And that's not corny Christianese. I mean it. You look around us, racial tensions, diseases, terrorism, it seems like chaos. But as artists we can create something beautiful in messed up place, something to point back to the ultimate Creator. I think we all need to find that in our lives. That sense of hope that pours out from us. For some maybe it'll be through hospitality, or gifts of service. For Ana and I, as artists, it's just a little more visual. **WI**

#### Simon Clark & Brandon Rechten

Simon and Brandon, both living in New Jersey, work as a writer and graphic designer respectively. You can make them both happy by giving them gummy bears. To see more of Brandon's photography, as well as twelve short stories written by Simon, check out their ongoing joint project, *Eren Tales*, at [erentales.com](http://erentales.com)





# WHEN SORROWS LIKE SEA BILLOWS ROLL

by Stephanie Van Huss

**WHEN YOU KEEP SOMETHING  
IN THE DARK, YOU MAKE IT  
EASY FOR SNEAKY LITTLE LIES  
TO POKE AND PROD. WHEN YOU  
TURN ON THE LIGHT, ALL THOSE  
LITTLE LIES SCURRY AWAY  
LIKE COCKROACHES.**

In Fall 2012, I was working sixty hours a week, taking sixteen credits at Rutgers University, leading a weekly women's bible study in my apartment, managing the box office at Cabaret Theater Company, and trying to pretend like that was a manageable work load. I stopped going to church. I stopped going to class. I started lying to professors about getting work done. I withdrew from everyone who loved me. I started obsessing over my jobs, and committed too hard to being the best barista I could be.

My schedule allowed for about four to five hours of sleep a night, but I was only capable of utilizing about two or three hours for actual sleep. That's when I started to wonder if there was something wrong with me. I would lay awake in the dark and my mind would race. Images would flash, rapid fire, on the little television in my mind.

Apples. Veronica. Spiders. Film Strips. Cell Phone. Hippos. Dad. Oreos. Juanita. On and on, in nonsensical order, some painful, some innocuous. The images would not stop. They would not let me rest.

I began to fear sleep. As long as I was moving from work to class, class to work, rehearsal to bible study, bible study to work, the little lies swimming around my head couldn't haunt me. But at night, in the darkness, the thoughts would come and crawl around my brain, unrelenting.

When I drove my car on Route 18, I would speed my manual Ford around traffic and curves and try to outrun the fear in my brain. Somewhere inside me, in a place I still don't fully understand, I believed that outrunning my dark thoughts would make them leave me alone. If I could make it home in one piece after traveling down route 18 at 70mph, then I

would have beaten the demons for the day. I started staying up all through the night, spending time with the kids at work who drank and got high to fight off the darkness. Satan kept finding me in the dark and reminding me that I was falling apart. Every night for months I listened to the lies: You're alone. You're crazy. You hurt everyone and everything you touch. You never talk to God anymore - maybe He's forgotten you. God is ashamed of what you've been doing. If you just disappeared, everything would be solved...

One night, high as a kite, I sat on a stranger's bed and felt nothing. The room was pitch black and silent; people were noisy and drunk outside the door. I thought to myself: "I don't want to be this way, anymore." And in my head, I heard a voice that I know was not my own.

*When peace like a river,  
attendeth my way.*

*When sorrows  
like sea billows roll.*

*Whatever my lot,  
God has taught me to say,  
It is well,  
it is well with my soul.*

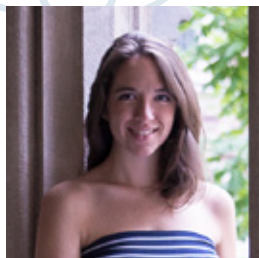
I cried. I felt emotion for the first time in three months. I cried for all that I was giving up by staying in the darkness and not reaching out to someone. I cried because I was so thankful

that my God had not forgotten me. At my absolute rock-bottom, He was there to sing me a lullaby and remind me that I will always belong to Him. He was there to remind me that Satan's lies of my worthlessness were just that: lies.

I went home, I slept, and the next day I went to the doctor and started a long and interesting journey towards mental health recovery. That journey is another story of God's amazing grace in and of itself, but for now it is pivotal that one thing is expressed: When you keep something in the dark, you make it easy for sneaky little lies to poke and prod. When you turn on the light, all those little lies scurry away like cockroaches.

God will never leave you or forsake you. He will meet you right where you are and carry you back to the place He knows is best for you. I don't know where you may find yourself these days, or how alone you may feel, but reach out and bring things into the open light. You may believe that you are in the darkest, dirtiest corner of your life; you may feel that no one will understand, but He is right there with you, waiting for you to accept His help.

Turn on the light, and let Jesus scare away all of your cockroaches. **WT**

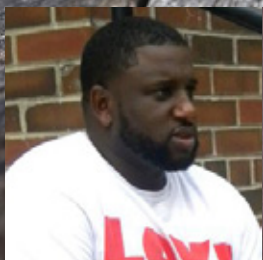


**Stephanie Van Huss** – Stephanie is a senior at Rutgers, double-majoring in Theater Arts and English Literature. She's an aspiring actress and currently teaches theater at Rutgers University.

# NEW BEGINNINGS

by Jelani Walker

In the distance, life  
Without shape, without form  
Ready to be molded into reality  
What will she become  
What will she call forth  
Will she make me the form that I long to be  
Will she take hold of my hand and marry me to destiny  
Or will she keep marred by the past pains of the former me  
**My soul longs to be cleansed**  
**To be right from within**  
**To see the new day and know that my heart rests within**  
**To know that my aspirations and unshaped days rest in truth**  
**May the longing of my heart cause my soul to sing**  
**Of the joys of the that are to come**  
**And at the end when it is well with my soul**  
**May I rejoice and say, "Glory, glory, hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down"**



**Jelani Walker** – Jelani is currently a Sociology Major at Thomas Edison. A native of New Jersey who currently resides Somerset, NJ. He's an avid listener of Hip Hop music and in his free time likes to frequent record and thrift stores for old 70s Rock and Soul records. He finds humor in the small things that people may not see and you will probably hear his laugh before you see him. He has been a part of the Jacob's Well family for the last three years.



# SERVANT LEADERSHIP?

by Mark Twombly

“Greed, for lack of a better word, is good.  
Greed works.”

- **Gordon Gecko**, *Wall Street*

“A creative man is motivated by a desire to  
achieve, not by the desire to beat others.”

- **Ayn Rand**

“You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- **Jesus Christ**, *Mark 10:42-45 ESV*

What are we to make of those who lead us these days? For many, we idolize so-called heroes. For many more, we decry that there is a leadership crisis in nearly every area of society, from families to social, business, and government institutions.

What are we to make of all of this? Where are we to turn?

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” This tells us two important things. The first is that as humans we have to take ownership of the problems we create. Congress, for example, is not made up of aliens, but is made up of *us*. The second is the dilemma of source: If we are the source of our own problems, where in the world can we find the solutions? Our thinking, at the very least, must change. However, perhaps something deeper and more fundamental must change to change our thinking.

An *Amazon.com* search for books on “servant leadership” yields no less than forty books. Most are business oriented, some very specialized (e.g. for nurses, firefighters), with just a handful specifically about Jesus. I haven’t read all of

Authors like Chip Bell (*Managers as Mentors*), John Maxwell (*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*), Jim Collins (*Built to Last, Good to Great*), and Malcolm Gladwell (*The Tipping Point, David and Goliath*) write explicitly and unashamedly about this. I like

such qualities are not flashy or self-promoting – in fact, you’ve likely never heard of them – but they are demonstrably effective in the long term.

I often say to myself after reading such things, “Yes! But where will we find such people?” My heart screams this emphatically and with frustration.

Enter Jesus.

The most influential man in human history was notoriously not self-promoting. As God, He shed the glory of deity and took on the form of man (see Philippians 2:5-11), an act of infinite condescension beyond comprehension. He abhorred the proud but gave grace to the humble. He sought out and served the marginalized of society. He said that the way up is actually down. He said that we prevail by being a slave – a servant – and He took that to its full end by dying for humanity’s sin. In His life, He owned no property, had no

## THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MAN IN HUMAN HISTORY WAS NOTORIOUSLY NOT SELF- PROMOTING

them, but when I see servant leadership reduced to “steps,” or a “technique” to “improve the bottom line”, I suspect the author may have gotten away from both the origin and the intent of the concept.

In contrast, some books and article have a very different tone. They recognize that successful leadership must transcend technique and must be built on certain character qualities.

these books. They help me. Instead of giving me seven steps to this or twelve steps to that (I just can’t keep up with all the lists!), they give me transcendent principles that strengthen my heart and motivate me not just to *do* different things, but to *be* different. One article in particular, *Level 5 Leadership* by Jim Collins (Harvard Business Review, January 2001) promotes the dual qualities of humility and fierce resolve. Leaders with



formal education or position to speak of, never traveled more than 200 miles from his place of birth, and personally mentored twelve men of questionable credentials to carry on His work.

become-man do to leave such an impression?

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come

spokesman for the disciples. But Jesus went on to explain:

Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:12-17 ESV)

The work of Jesus continues to this day, in and through His people throughout the world as they tirelessly – and often anonymously – perform acts of service for the benefit of others. How can we possibly reduce this to a technique or formula? This takes many forms, in many communities and workplaces. Opportunities for service abound, yet are often

unattended. Why?

As a friend recently pointed out to me, if you take on the role of a servant, you may just be treated as such. Jesus certainly was, being abandoned by those closest to Him and killed in an act of barbaric suffering. And yet, none of us can ascend to greater significance and impact than Him.

Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus saves those who repent and believe in Him. He changes our hearts so that we joyfully submit to Him *and* seek to be like Him. He sends us into the world to sacrifice for the benefit of others with the promise of eternal glory with Him in eternity.

The world needs Jesus – everywhere and in every realm of life. And Jesus shows up – to serve, to seek, and to save. Will you join Him? **WT**

## AS HUMANS WE HAVE TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THE PROBLEMS WE CREATE

James Allen Francis summarizes it well at the end of his poem, "One Solitary Life", by saying that none of the powers of this world "Have affected the life of mankind on earth / As powerfully as that one solitary life."

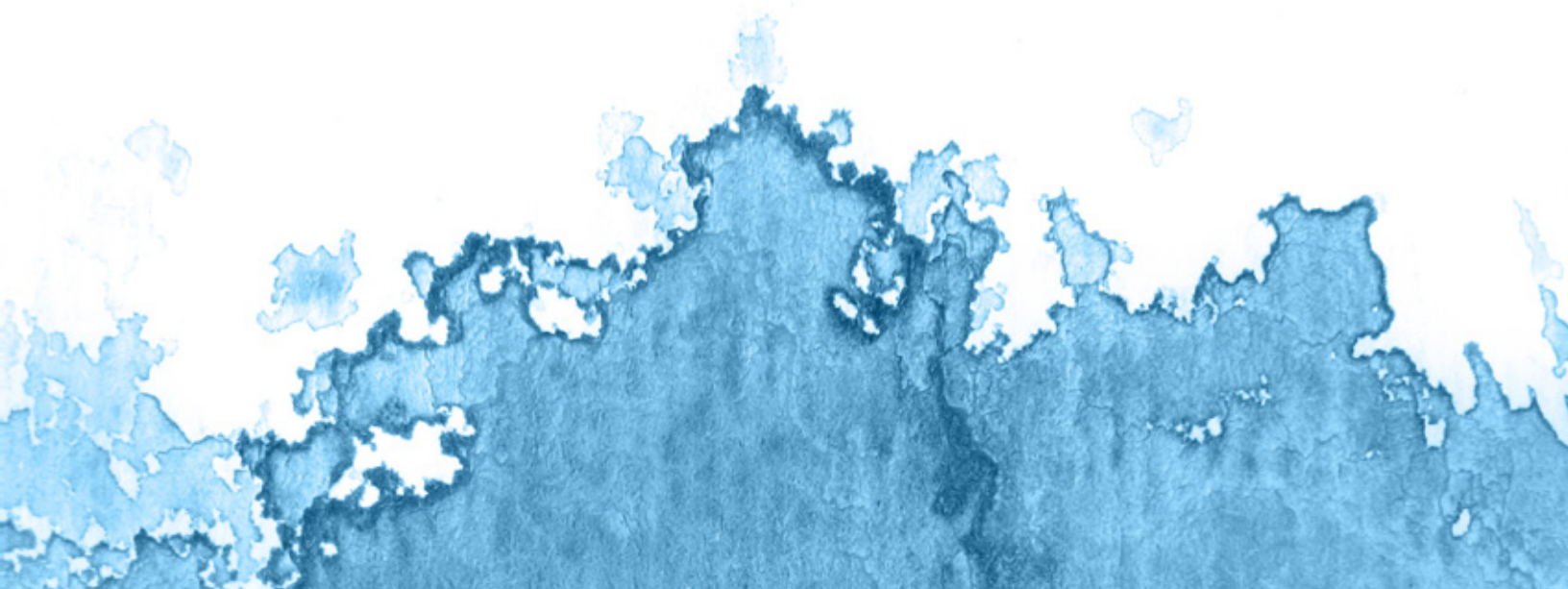
In a stunning narrative, Jesus – knowing that He was about to die – sought to demonstrate the full extent of His love to His disciples. He wanted to do something that would leave a lasting impression. What great and magnificent act would God-

from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:3-5 ESV)

This was an act of stunning humiliation. Not only had Jesus condescended from His heavenly throne as God, He intentionally took on the lowest position among men. This was initially rejected by Peter as the



**Mark D. Twombly** - Mark is a follower of Jesus Christ, a Program Manager in the telecommunications industry, and loves things to be planned and organized! A graduate of Rutgers College with a B.A. in Mathematics, his interests range from sports (from football to disc golf) to history, politics, and philosophy. He and his wife Betty and their six children have attended Jacob's Well since the fall of 2009.





JACOB'S WELL