

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

Dr. Meeker
wants to tell parents:
You can raise a
great daughter even
in a culture that is
relentlessly sending her
negative, destructive
messages.

BREAKING
FREE
OF THE
VICTIM
MENTALITY

Page 10

**SPOKEN
WORDS:**
THE JOY AND
REWARDS
OF READING
ALoud

Page 4

**5 PHONE-
FREE WAYS
TO WIND
DOWN AT
NIGHT**

Page 2

Meg Meeker

HOW TO HELP GIRLS DISCOVER THEIR REAL WORTH

Page 6

5 Ways to Wind Down at Night

BARBARA DANZA

As we dive into a brand new decade and reflect upon the decade past, one stark societal change that we've all collectively experienced is the constant presence of the smartphone.

While having communication, entertainment, and information at our fingertips surely come with their advantages, by now it's become all too clear that the disadvantages also are quite significant.

One way to reduce the negative effects of owning a smartphone is to curb its use at bedtime. Looking at your phone right before bed keeps the brain stimulated, mentally and emotionally, stopping your mind from calming to a restful state. What's more, the blue light that your phone emits has been shown to have negative effects on eyesight and your sleep cycle.

Sleep is important. (Instagram is not.) It's best to plug in your phone outside of your bedroom and partake in other real-world activities for your bedtime routine.

Here are a few ideas.

Start During the Day

There are some things you can do during the daytime to ensure a better bedtime. Make sure you move your body during the day. If your lifestyle is sedentary, you're not exerting enough energy during the day and you may not find yourself feeling sleepy at the time you should be going to bed.

Make sure you're moving—hit the gym, go for a walk, ride your bike—whatever physical activity you enjoy works.

Additionally, wake up at around the same time each day. Train your body to know when it's bedtime each night by waking at the same time each day. A solid eight hours of sleep or more is what you should be aiming for. So, do the math to come up with your ideal bedtime and make it happen.

You should also be careful to cut off your caffeine intake early in the day. If you've got a hankering for coffee at 4 p.m., you're better off choosing decaf. Watch out for caffeine in teas, sodas, and chocolate as well.

Take a Hot Bath or Shower

When bedtime approaches, indulge in a hot bath. Oh, the luxury of bathing and then stepping directly into your pajamas. Warm water can relax your muscles, and the disconnection from technology, which thankfully doesn't mix with water, relaxes the mind. If you feel amped up and need to calm down, try a hot shower or bath.

Read Books

Use your local library or shop online to gather enjoyable books



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Some cozy evening lighting helps create a calming atmosphere.

Each night, take time to write down what's on your mind. Somehow, getting it down on paper allows your mind to relax.

that you read for entertainment or inspiration. Add a caffeine-free tea, a lovely candle, and a good reading light, and dive into a book or two each night.

Cue the Lights

As bedtime approaches, ready your mind for the transition to sleep by gradually dimming the lights as soon as you can disconnect from your phone. Then, slowly turn off lights you're no longer using and take advantage

of any dimmer switches you have in your home.

Journal

Often what keeps us from winding down peacefully are the thoughts swirling in our minds—the to-do list items, the worries, the calendar items, the deadlines, the fears, and anxieties. An effective way to relieve yourself of this thought tornado is to write it all down.

Keep a journal and a collection of pens at your bedside. Each

night, take time to write down what's on your mind. Capture the things you don't want to forget, ideas about ongoing projects, your feelings about things that happened during the day—anything and everything. Somehow, getting it down on paper allows your mind to release the need to keep swirling.

It's as if the ideas have been safely put away and your mind is free to remain clear—at least for the night.



The January Kitchen Cleanout

BARBARA DANZA

As the dust settles on the holidays and the new year gets into full swing, one area of your home that may need some special attention is the kitchen.

If yours is anything like mine, you may find in there a mélange of hors d'oeuvres, cookies galore, leftovers of all sorts, and perhaps some unrecognizable that didn't get the attention they deserved. Yikes.

It's time to clean out the kitchen.

Take Stock

It may be tempting to toss everything and start fresh, but much of what you have on hand may still be enjoyed. Rather than wasting good food, take a moment to take stock.

As you go through your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry, you'll obviously need to get rid of food that has turned or is no longer safe for your family to eat. You may be surprised, though, by how much you're left with when you're done.

Clean as You Go

As you address each food storage area in your kitchen, take a moment to wipe it down with a natural cleanser. I find vinegar and water to be a great option—especially in spaces that make direct contact with food (like the vegetable drawer).

Start a List

You'll also likely notice that items you need to shop for will pop into your head as you work your way through your kitchen. Keep a pen and paper within reach to capture all of these ideas as they come.

Get Creative

At the end of this process, you'll have a cleaner kitchen, a grocery list, and the makings of new meals. At this



point, it's time to get creative and decide how you'll put what you've got left to good use.

Stale bread can become breadcrumbs. Leftover cheese can be used for macaroni and cheese, be added to casseroles, or even enhance some soups. Overripe bananas are ideal for banana bread.

When in doubt, do an online search for the specific ingredients you have on hand to determine the best way to use them.

Reclaim Good Nutrition

Once the ornaments are back in their boxes, the days of cookies for breakfast, lunch, and dinner need to come to a close. Womp. Womp.

If you've still got cookies (some varieties last longer than others) store them in single-serving bags

for lunch box treats or share them with friends or coworkers.

Additionally, plan out a week's worth of healthy meals and add any further ingredients you need to your grocery list. January is a great time for nutrient-rich soups, stews, and roasts that can be easily prepared in a slow cooker.

Aim to shift from a mindset of holiday free-for-all to home-cooked goodness. Reduce the number of meals your family eats out. Steer clear of processed foods and refined carbs and sugars as much as possible. Enjoy providing your family with the best nutrition available.

Stay on Track

A kitchen cleanout in January jumpstarts the year with order and good habits. Aim to foster the habits of cleaning as you go, keeping a list within reach, and choosing healthy foods all year long.

You may just look back at this activity as a pivotal point in the year.

EDGAR CASTREJON/UNSPLASH



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Valley Forge National Historical Park commemorates more than the sacrifices and perseverance of the Revolutionary War generation; it honors the ability of citizens and their leaders to pull together and overcome adversity during extraordinary times.

We All Need a Valley Forge

DUSTIN BASS

It would be easy to look at those who have succeeded in life and point to their success as the product of a constant succession of kind years.

It would be easy to look upon a Charles Willson Peale painting of George Washington and see the general as all-conquering. Or John Trumbull's "Surrender of Lord Cornwallis" and see the Continental Army as an unstoppable force.

But to view success through such a short-sighted scope would be a disservice not only to those who have triumphed throughout history, but to yourself in your future.

Every year brings different perspectives. A good year, an uneventful year, or a year we wish to forget—we've experienced all of them, each one playing a significant role in who we are today. Our heroes of the Revolutionary War can never attest more firmly to this fact than during the late 1770s.

The Years That Forged America

Gen. Washington and the Continental Army needed the Christmas Miracle of 1776 in Trenton, New Jersey, and the follow-up victory up the road in Princeton a week later. It guaranteed the Revolution would continue because it ignited morale for the new nation and helped secure more recruits and volunteers for future campaigns. The winter of 1777-1778, however, was a different story.

The Pennsylvania defeats at Brandywine and Germantown, the Paoli Massacre, and the capture of the American capital Philadelphia brought the idea of Divine Providence into question. Although the victory at Saratoga, New York, brought relief from a dismal fall and winter, it also brought confusion and strife, as the victorious Gen. Horatio Gates began to undermine Washington and campaign for the position of commander-in-chief.

It was a position he long felt he deserved. Congress, which had fled Philadelphia and lost faith in Washington, indulged Gates's ambitions. Not only did Gates secure a much-needed victory at Saratoga, but it's argued that had Washington won at Germantown and recaptured Philadelphia, it could have brought the war to an end. But that was not meant to be.

After Germantown and a standstill battle at White Marsh, the Continental Army secured winter quarters at Valley Forge, about 20

miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Lessons for Modern Times

Washington and the soldiers of the Continental Army experienced major swings in the short span of two winters. Despite not capturing Quebec City in December 1775, that year had gone well. The following year had begun excellently, then nearly fell apart, only to end on a miracle. Now they found themselves building 1,000 log huts in mid-December and, depending on which state they hailed from, struggling to find enough food or obtain proper clothing to survive the winter.

To make matters worse, local farmers preferred selling to the British, who paid in hard currency (silver and sometimes gold), rather than the American soldiers who paid with the practically worthless Continental scrip. Many of the soldiers wore cloth around their feet because they had no shoes. Blankets were in short supply. Good health was almost as elusive.

The Continental Army would be pushed and primed like a musket from fire to fire.

Approximately 12,000 soldiers walked into Valley Forge. After desertions, hospitalization from disease or starvation, and death, the number was down to 6,000. It was a brutal winter, not so much because of the temperature, but because of the circumstances.

As with any and every year, however, it's about how you manage it. It is about what you do with those devastating moments that seem to drag on ad infinitum, those winters of isolation.

The Continental Army decided to make the most of it. It was time to put into practice what had been and would be required of them, moving forward. In late February, Baron von Steuben, a Prussian officer who had been elevated to the General Staff in Frederick the Great's army, joined the American cause as a volunteer and used his superior knowledge of technical warfare to train the soldiers.

With the assistance of numerous American officers, including Nathaniel Greene and Alexander Hamilton, the Continental Army would be drilled, maintained,

and organized as a professional army. The times of dropping weaponry and running wildly in a chaotic retreat, as some militia-men had done at Matson's Ford in December, were over.

Fire! Half-cock firelock! Handle cartridge! Prime! Shut pan! Charge with cartridge! Draw rammer! Ram down cartridge! Return!

Speed was the name of the game. Be faster than the enemy. Drill so often it becomes second nature, so often you won't think when the enemy arrives; you will simply do. The constant drilling. The continual motions. The handling of the muskets and bayonets. The daily routine of fighting with and without weapons. The recitation of formations. In the bitter cold, in the warming spring, and into the launch of summer.

The Continental Army would be pushed and primed like a musket from fire to fire.

Grit and Determination, or Discipline?

Grit and determination can win a battle. It can even supply a miracle. Discipline, however, wins wars.

Many of us meet the day-to-day grind with grit and determination. That mentality may win us some battles. But it's never smooth. It's never second-nature. In fact, it's just that: a grind. We battle the same exact issues over and over, and even waking up may become a strain. The same issues we battled in 2019, we battled in 2018, 2017, 2016, and so on.

Life can be viewed as unrelated individual battles, as if each conflict simply falls out of the sky. Or life can be viewed as a war with predetermined battles scheduled for fighting, worthy of preparation.

Washington knew his army couldn't win by mere grit and determination, although those two aspects were absolutely necessary. He knew his army required something only a von Steuben could render: discipline.

The Dividends of Discipline

The immediate battles following the winter at Valley Forge would prove the worth of the army's training. Against major odds, more than 2,000 American soldiers and militiamen avoided capture against superior British numbers at Barren Hill, which was very close to Matson's Ford. In fact, the night before the battle, Gen. William Howe held a dinner in celebration of the

certain victory the British would achieve. But the most important was the Battle of Monmouth, which proved to be the final battle the British would wage in the North. Although the Americans didn't win the battle, they weren't defeated, and it proved to the British that the Americans were now a fully trained and prepared army.

The following winter, von Steuben completed his "Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States," based on the training conducted at Valley Forge. It would be disseminated among the American officers to train the soldiers, and would prove a military roadmap for the Continental Army.

It's interesting to note the name of the Continental Army's quarters for the 1777-78 winter: Valley Forge. It would be hard to imagine a more fitting name for what would be required of that undisciplined army. In order to reach the mountaintop, one must begin in the valley. In order to be perfected, one must be forged in the fire.

No one enjoys their Valley Forge moments. No one in the Continental Army equated that winter with peace and tranquility. But without those moments, we can never hope to rise above the grind. And without Valley Forge, it's doubtful that the Continental Army could have had the discipline necessary to defeat the world's most powerful military force.

Even if this 2020 becomes a harsh winter, view it as your Valley Forge. Not as a moment to regret, but a moment to grow. A moment to become fully prepared for the future.

As much as we may not want it, we all need a Valley Forge.

Dustin Bass is the co-founder of The Sons of History, a YouTube series and weekly podcast about all things history. He is a former-journalist-turned-entrepreneur. He is also an author.

"George Washington and Lafayette at Valley Forge," by John Ward Dunsmore, 1907.



PUBLIC DOMAIN



MINERVA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Spoken Words: The Joy and Rewards of Reading Aloud

JEFF MINICK

Recently, I helped my friend Anna edit her memoir, “The Train From Greenville,” in which she recounts her trip cross-country and back again by rail.

It’s a fine piece of work, optimistic about Americans and the country, full of quiet wisdom and acute observations, and written so that readers can hear Anna’s voice on each page.

When we finished editing her book, both on the screen and in print, I suggested we read the book aloud. By reading aloud, we would not only catch more grammar and spelling errors, but would also hear when a sentence or passage was “off.” Anna lives in Western North Carolina, and I live six hours away in Virginia, so we agreed to do the reading by phone.

Though filled at first with trepidation, Anna quickly hit her stride, and twice a week, usually for 45 minutes or so, she would read while I followed along, catching a few misspellings and grammar errors, with Anna adding some changes to the text.

Voices

Anna’s voice is gentle and soft, slow and a little drowsy, and listening to her read her own words was a delight. When I mentioned this project to my daughter, who was best friends with one of Anna’s children growing up, she told me to encourage Anna to make a recording of the book, simply because of her unusual voice. (At her small church this Christmas, when Anna helped the youth group present a Christmas pageant by reading from scripture, three members of the congregation approached her about her voice, with two of them commenting, “I wish you could read me to sleep every night.”)

My next read-aloud encounter involving adults came at Christmas, when I was visiting family in Pennsylvania. My son-in-law read nightly to his family in the den, mostly stories by Patrick McManus. Mike has a rich, deep voice—he could have earned a living as a radio broadcast-

er—and his reading again brought great pleasure.

By happy accident, a trip to the public library four days later introduced me to Meghan Cox Gurdon’s “The Enchanted Hour: The Miraculous Power of Reading Aloud in the Age of Distraction” (Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc., 2019, 278 pages, \$26.99).

Not Just for Children

In her “Introduction,” Gurdon recognizes the importance of reading aloud to children, remarking that “social scientists now consider read-aloud time one of the most important indicators of a child’s prospects in life.” But she goes on to argue that “it would be a mistake, though, to relegate reading aloud solely to the realm of childhood.”

She writes a passage that reflected my own recent experiences:

“For frazzled adults in midlife, whose attention is yanked in a thousand directions, taking the time to read aloud can be like applying a soothing balm to the soul. For older adults in later life, its effects are so consoling and invigorating as to make it seem like a health tonic, or even some kind of medicine.”

Listening to Anna and Mike as they read was indeed a “soothing balm to the soul.” Long ago, nearly everyone read aloud. As Gurdon points out, observers regarded figures such as Alexander the Great and Saint Ambrose as eccentrics for their silent reading of a text. Of course, if all of us in the coffee shop where I am writing these words were reading aloud, the cacophony of voices might prove disturbing, rather than soothing or entertaining.

“

For frazzled adults in midlife, whose attention is yanked in a thousand directions, taking the time to read aloud can be like applying a soothing balm to the soul.

Meghan Cox Gurdon, author, *“The Enchanted Hour: The Miraculous Power of Reading Aloud in the Age of Distraction”*

That said, reading aloud in our homes with loved ones offers several other gifts, in addition to Gurdon’s “soothing balm.”

Other Incentives

Communal reading brings us together. These days, many of us spend our free time plinking away on our phones and computers, or we retreat to the solitude of various rooms in our house or apartment, and so often spend little time together. Reading aloud with family or friends gives us the opportunity for shared emotions: laughter, tears, pleasure, and wonder.

Television and film can do the same, but

when we read a good book with others, our imagination comes to life in a different way. We create the characters in our minds rather than having them dictated to us by a screen. Somewhere, I once heard of a child who had read “The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe” aloud with his family, and then watched the movie. At the end of the film, the boy turned to his mother and said, “That’s not how I saw Lucy,” the heroine of the story. “Well, just imagine her the way you did,” his mother said, to which he replied: “No, I can’t. I can’t get the movie out of my head.”

Reading aloud slows us down. We can take greater pleasure in the author’s words or turns of phrases, and we absorb more when we hear the story or the poem.

Anna’s voice brought out certain nuances I’d missed in my earlier edits. Mike’s bass voice gave resonance to the humor of the MacManus tales. The poetry of Emily Dickinson or Robert Frost, the plays of Shakespeare or Thornton Wilder, the short stories of O. Henry or Ring Lardner: In the hands of an enthusiastic reader, the words and sentences can jump to life.

For our young people, reading aloud also brings educational opportunities. (For those youngsters who dislike school, this is a wonderful way to teach them while flying under the radar.) The reading provides a springboard for all sorts of discussions, enhances vocabulary skills—“What does ‘myriad’ mean, Mama?”—and helps increase the attention span of children and perhaps some adults. Given the age we live in, when so many of us hop around on our computers like grasshoppers in a field of mown hay, this last gift is especially important.

Finally, reading with family or friends in and of itself is a pleasure without expense except for the time spent together. Throw in some hot chocolate, tea, or other treats, and enjoy an activity—storytelling—that began long ago around the fires of our distant ancestors.

Give It a Try

To make a success of reading aloud, we need a reasonably skilled reader possessed by enthusiasm, someone who understands the value of such tools as inflection and pause. We must then select literature that appeals to our audience. If Grandpa and 8-year-old grandchild William are part of the audience, we avoid Shakespeare and read instead the stories of Roald Dahl or the poetry of Shel Silverstein.

When I leave this café, this article will be in rough draft, and I will be heading to my son’s home, where I am visiting, to a house full of children and the front seat of my car full of library books.

As Gurdon says in her book, there’s no time like the present to start, and “there’s no present like the time.”

Gather round, kids.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

▲
Reading aloud with family or friends gives us the opportunity for shared emotions: laughter, tears, pleasure, and wonder.

Ileana Johnson: From Communist Romania to Defending US Freedom

CATHERINE YANG

America is forgetting what it means to be America, and that’s not a joke, says Ileana Paugh Johnson, whose arrival to the United States is one of her best memories.

Johnson grew up in communist Romania and knows intimately the ills of a socialist society; over her years as an educator, she’s seen how quickly communism’s lies can take hold.

“All youth, born in or around the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, those whose parents and grandparents survived decades of socialism tyranny under the boot of the Communist Party, suddenly became socialists, using the same playbook about the wonders of socialism as in America. How is that possible?” she said.

Johnson says the answer is quite simple. They’ve taken the same playbook used to implement communism in Europe, and it’s working like a charm in the United States.

Behavior and Indoctrination

“My first impression, as an inquisitive mind, was that when a child did not behave properly—and properly is defined as what the Communist Party deemed as proper behavior, they would get a bad grade in behavior. And believe it or not, there was a subject in school called behavior,” Johnson said.

Parents were always incredibly careful about what was said around children; something casually repeated by an innocent mind might be reason enough to haul a parent off to jail if it didn’t fall in line with what the Party deemed acceptable.

At school, students sat in straight rows with hands behind their backs. It felt primitive; they weren’t there to learn, but to behave, and if they didn’t, they were hit or slapped in the face by teachers.

If a student did get a low score, she said, the child’s parents would have to come down to the school for “an obvious, embarrassing dress down in front of everybody, because they did not raise their child properly.”

Still, even as a child in Romania, Johnson had an impulse to accumulate and impart knowledge to other people. She wanted to be a teacher, one who taught information, not behavior.

Johnson’s parents weren’t Communist Party members. Communists had confiscated her grandparents’ farm, her parents’ home, and all of their possessions.

“They were moved to a concrete block apartment with nothing much in terms of possessions and they received an ‘egalitarian’ salary, which was about \$40 a month,” Johnson said. “They understood what communism was, and they understood the rhetoric. So they didn’t want any part of it.”

Of course, that also meant they suffered more for it.

“They were always harassed more than other citizens because they were not [Party] members. They were automatically considered bad,” Johnson said.

Johnson was nearly 20 when she came to the United States, after she’d married an American citizen. She remembers coming out of John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York dazzled by the lights and the freedom—and just that she wasn’t being followed everywhere by the police.

“I wanted to kiss the ground,” Johnson said. She would have, had it not been frozen, as it was in January. New York was only the first stop, on her way to a Southern town where she would live.

It didn’t take long to see that communism was spreading its roots in America too. In the early 1980s, Johnson sought work as a substitute teacher and immediately encountered copious amounts of ominous red tape, which she found reminiscent of the communist bureaucracy state she was familiar with.

She was told she would have to be licensed to be a teacher, and then she learned all about what licensing entailed. Universities are famously left-leaning, and the teachers college where she sought her credentials wasn’t any different. Johnson saw how teachers could be indoctrinated into an ideology, and then sent off to further indoctrinate students. It was also obvious that the ideology was socialism.

“In 1989, the so-called communism fell, but it didn’t really fall—it kind of regrouped itself and morphed into this global communism,” Johnson said.

In 1989, Johnson’s father died in communist Romania the day before she graduated with her doctorate; a few months later, Romanian communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu was tried and found guilty of genocide, and was executed for his crimes. Johnson’s mother defected, and lived with Johnson’s family for a time. She taught Johnson’s daughters the Romanian language, and about the realities of life there under communism.

“I even took my oldest daughter [to Romania] when she was 5, and she understood



COURTESY OF ILEANA JOHNSON

Ileana Johnson grew up in communist Romania. It wasn’t long after she arrived in the U.S. that she realized how communism had also planted seeds here.



COURTESY OF ILEANA JOHNSON

Johnson at her school desk in Romania, a few years before immigrating to the United States.

enough at that age,” Johnson said.

“She remembered all the shortages of food. This was in 1985 when we went, and there was still communism then, and it was the worst it’s been, under Ceaușescu. And of course, Romania had the worst version of it, because of who was in power. My children know very well what communism was like.”

As a teacher, Johnson taught economics and various languages to 11th and 12th grade and college students. She could see they too had learned about communism as children—in a different way.

“They were so indoctrinated by the time they reached me,” Johnson said, remembering the students’ Che Guevara T-shirts and casual denigration of America. In the beginning, it shocked her how little Americans understood of their own civics, how the government operates, and how the economy works.

“They were already indoctrinated, and you cannot change their minds unless you place them in the communist society for a few months and let them see for themselves and suffer what it’s like to live under a dictatorship.”

When a poll came out a few years ago showing the younger generation’s majority support for socialism, Johnson wasn’t surprised at all. She says people born around 1989, even in Romania, have been indoctrinated into thinking that socialism is good.

That’s because the same people who wrote the slanted textbooks in America have brought those textbooks into countries around the world through NGOs, Johnson said.

“International baccalaureate schools were also brought in, which shaped the first generation of globalist citizens, who reject their own history and nationalism to the benefit of global collectivism,” Johnson said.

She met several Romanian students who she said “became the young leaders of a country which had just shaken the yoke of dictatorship but elected yet again more of the former communists to power. These communists had repackaged their images and fooled the electorate who had no history of a democracy to fall back on, they were

still beholden to decades of meager welfare dependency to the point of nostalgia.”

Covert Communism

Today, Johnson is keenly aware of all the aspects of society in which communism has planted seeds. It was about 10 years ago when she started doing such research.

Johnson retired in 2008 and moved to Virginia, where she had several friends coming up against property rights issues, which were tied to Agenda 21 being brought to their locale. Johnson started seeing Agenda 21 everywhere, and decided to look into it.

“Then I started researching more and more, and a lot of things that made me uncomfortable, because it 100 percent had elements of property confiscation and nationalization—as [what] happened under the socialist tyranny that people in my country in Romania had to live under for decades,” Johnson said.

Agenda 21 is a “sustainable development” action plan drafted by the United Nations, detailing a myriad of goals pertaining to how society should be organized.

“I read thousands and thousands of pages,” Johnson said. “The document itself that was issued in Rio [de Janeiro in 1992] is about 40 chapters.”

Environmental conservation is a seemingly benign topic, and Johnson is all for conserving natural resources and not abusing them, but this wasn’t what she was reading in the plan. This was all about central planning—a key tenet of socialism, leading the way to communism. Under the guise of being environmentally friendly, comprehensive land use plans are drawn up with the goal of eroding private property rights. The jargon itself may be complicated, but the idea is not. It is the same thing that has played out in every socialist country.

“Sustainable development” sounds innocuous. It’s defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. Here’s the important question to ask: Who decides? Who gets to decide what the pres-



DANIEL MIHAILESCU/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

A man walks at the Heroes of the Romanian 1989 Revolution’s cemetery during a commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Romanian Revolution’s first victims in Timisoara, Romania, on Dec. 15, 2019.

ent needs are, what the future needs are, and what that compromise looks like? This is central planning.

“It’s Collectivism 101,” Johnson said.

“I started recognizing it, that it’s starting at the local level all the way up to the United Nations, which has infiltrated itself already in our society,” Johnson said. Smart meters, green building certifications, and conservation easements are a few of those commonplace and innocuous sounding things that can pave the way for collectivism. Then there are outright stated goals like “redistribution of population based on resources,” which was how communist Romania justified confiscating Johnson’s parents’ and grandparents’ homes and land.

From there, Johnson started speaking to groups here and there about what she was learning. Not everyone had the time to read thousands of pages of such rhetoric, and she was more than happy to pass on this knowledge.

“Most of this is pro bono work,” Johnson said. “I do it because I feel like it’s my way of paying back my adopted country for giving me the opportunity to have a good life. And I certainly have worked very hard to be where I am; nobody has given it to me on a platter the moment I waltzed out of the airport at JFK.”

Johnson worked minimum wage for \$3.10 and ended up becoming a college professor with a doctoral degree—something she never would have been able to do in communist Romania because her parents were blue-collar workers, the proletariat, and not Communist Party members.

“I love America, because you can have the opportunity to be what you want to be,” she said. She has traveled to many countries, and to many places all over the country, and seen little pockets where education still thrives, but it is “just few and far in between.”

Education is crucial, because the multibillion-dollar public education system is teaching students to be ashamed to be American, “to be ashamed of the color of their skin or to be ashamed of all the things that America has done for the good of the world.”

Johnson asked, if they’re being taught to hate the society they live in, then how can these students then go on to do good for society? “We have to change that.”

Johnson’s greater hope is that the education system can be overturned, but for the moment she is doing her part to educate her fellow Americans.

It’s like dementia, she said.

“Eventually, they forget everything about who they are and where they came from and who they’re related to,” Johnson said. “And it’s a sad day, because they’re no longer the human beings they were born to be.”

“That’s how we are, we’re getting to that level in our country,” Johnson said.

Growing up in a communist society, you learn to be pessimistic because you’re disappointed time and again, Johnson said, so it’s hard to take an optimistic view.

“Generally by nature, I’m a realist,” Johnson said. “But I have learned to be more optimistic in this country because so far, it has been a good life for so many of us who have immigrated to the United States and have become American citizens. And we have tried very hard to make America better.”

Meg Meeker:

On Helping Daughters Discover Their Real Worth

CHANNALY PHILIPP

Over her 32 years as a pediatrician, Meg Meeker has seen thousands of kids in her practice. She has watched a whole generation of kids grow up, and now they are bringing their own kids in. But boy, have things changed from just 10 years ago.

She gets comments and questions from parents like, “My fourth-grader is on a diet, and I don’t know what to tell her,” “When should I get my kids a cellphone?”, and “How much time on social media is OK?” And when she asks teen girls about their two biggest concerns, they say, without hesitation, “being thin enough” and “looking sexy.”

Parents come to Meeker ridden with anxiety and angst, like deer in headlights, not knowing what to do.

But there is hope., and a lot of it. She’s straightforward about the challenges. There is no getting around the reality; you have to go in with eyes wide open, but from a place of strength rather than fear.

In her latest book, “Raising Strong Daughters in a Toxic Culture: 11 Steps to Keep Her Happy, Healthy, and Safe,” Meeker, a mom of four and grandmother of five, offers advice with warmth and encouragement, with an eye to solutions. She touches on screen time, eating and body image, sexuality, friendships, faith, healthy versus toxic feminism, and the roles of mothers and fathers.

She wants to tell parents this: Don’t be afraid—you can raise a great daughter even in a culture that is relentlessly sending her negative, destructive messages.

“The power lies in the parent,” she said. “I realized many years ago that if I really want to help kids, I had to help their parents.”

She’s seen enough bad situations turn for the better that she is optimistic. She has seen girls at the age of 15 or 16 who made her think “I don’t know where this is going to end up” who, 10 years later, end up walking up to her at a restaurant, looking happy and healthy.

“I always say to parents, you know, your goal isn’t to raise a good 15-year-old, it’s to raise a great 25-year-old,” Meeker said. Why 25? It’s only in their early 20s young people develop more abstract and sophisticated thinking.

The Measure of Success

Most parents want the best for their kids, to grow up to be successful; they may spare no efforts to find the best schools, the best coaches, the best music instructors, the best tutors, which will presumably and ultimately lead to the best college. Meeker knows this well; she grew up in Boston and attended Mount Holyoke College before heading to medical school. (“The bigger the city you’re living in, the harder the pressure is to jump on what I call the Crazy Train,” she said.)

“But what happens when it all stops?” Meeker asked.

For example, a girl athlete might hurt herself and be unable to run for a Division I school anymore. All the hopes pinned on her goal would now be dashed, a huge hit to her identity.

“She literally can fall into a depression because she doesn’t know who she is. She doesn’t really know why she’s alive,” Meeker said.

“As conscientious parents, we miss really teaching our kids why they’re alive. And so we give them all the superficial stuff that makes them feel good on the surface and makes us feel like successful parents. Because let’s be honest, if your kid goes to Yale and

“Parents are pretty good about teaching their daughters that you can be a really good soccer player, you can get really good grades, but girls aren’t satisfied with that. They want to know, ‘why am I alive?’”

Meg Meeker, pediatrician and author



“Raising a Strong Daughter in a Toxic Culture: 11 Steps to Keep Her Happy, Healthy, and Safe” by Meg Meeker, MD (Regnery, \$24.99)

Pediatrician and bestselling author Meg Meeker.



ALENA OZEROVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

A mother sees her daughter as a mini version of her and can play a mentoring role for her, including modeling a healthy self-image.

“Have you really taught your kids how to live a good life? How to have joy? Have you taught them how to be resilient, to have deep character?”

Meg Meeker, pediatrician and author

Girls have a deep longing to love and nurture.



JUDITHAN BORDA/ISTOCK

not a community college, you feel better.”

In the process, parents may be missing the fundamentals: “Have you really taught your kids how to live a good life? How to have joy? Have you taught them how to be resilient, to have deep character?”

Her True Worth

And that all begins with teaching daughters where their real value comes from. If parents don’t teach them, in that vacuum, they’ll turn anywhere: to their peers, to their teachers, to social media.

“We have girls at elite colleges having makeovers and having professional pictures taken that they can post to get a lot of likes by their friends and by guy friends,” Meeker said. “We have a lot of girls at Harvard, Purdue, and Princeton who have terrible eating disorders, because they feel their value comes from being really thin.”

Instead of tying their identities to external success, parents can show their daughters that working toward success and happiness starts with having a strong character and sense of compassion.

“Don’t put too much pressure on your kids; make sure you give them the deep stuff first. And then kids will really thrive and succeed,” she said.

4 Big Questions

Kids have a hunger to know why they are here. With all their intuition, they know that there is more to life than what’s on the surface.

“Even 8-year-old kids, 10-year-old kids know they’re living on a fairly superficial level, and they want to go deeper,” Meeker said.

“Parents are pretty good about teaching their daughters that you can be a really good soccer player, you can get really good grades, but girls aren’t satisfied with that. They want to know, ‘Why am I alive?’”

In her book, Meeker lists four big questions that kids need to have answered:

Where did I come from?

Am I valuable and significant (especially to my parents)?

Is there a moral standard?

Where am I going?

If you come from a place of faith, answering those questions comes easily.

“If you have a strong faith, you can look that daughter in the eye and say, ‘You’re not an accident. Guess what? You were created by a loving God, who put you here for a purpose.’”

“God’s good for kids,” she said. Research bears it out.

“Girls who have faith are less likely to get depressed, anxious. They do better in school, are more likely to stay in school longer, more likely to stay away from all the bad stuff—drugs, alcohol, sex at an early age.”

Social Media and Depression

Studies are clear about the connection between the risk for depression and the amount of time spent on social media. It’s no wonder: Girls crave approval and social media offers it—but it can just as easily deepen their insecurities.

“No matter how beautiful a girl can make herself look on social media, it’s never good enough,” Meeker said. “Eventually, somebody out there is going to say something negative about her, and that’s going to really pull her down. So she gets in this vicious cycle of trying to find enough ‘likes’ to feel good about herself.”

Here’s the thing, Meeker points out: Social media is not going away, and as much you might like to set her phone on the driveway and run over it, it won’t solve the problem.

Instead, teach her to manage how she uses social media and phones. If you can get her social media use down to 30 minutes a day, her risk for depression will drop significantly.

Here’s another idea: When it’s dinnertime, have everyone put away their phone for an hour. This might jolt parents as well, but taking charge of screens at home will teach your daughters that they will be OK without having to be alerted every minute, and it trains them to decrease their screen time over time.

“And guess what? It really feels good to daughters,” Meeker said.

But don’t stop there. Have a conversation with your daughter about what she really thinks about social media. Does she derive value from it? What kind of value? What does she really like about social media? Does she think “sexting” is a healthy form of communication?

By asking the right questions and guiding her, Meeker said, your daughter will get to the right answers.

Don’t be afraid of setting boundaries for your daughter, with social media as with other issues, like dating. It makes them feel loved and safe.

“Teach her how to live within those boundaries, because when she’s older, then she knows how to set [them] herself,” Meeker said.

Toxic Feminism’s Casualties: Good Dads

Back when Meeker was a young woman, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem were heroes to her and the generation of women she grew up with. The sentiment went like this, Meeker said: “We said we were going to beat men at their game. ... We can make as much money as men can and we can do everything men can.” They were going to work 60 hours a week and raise healthy kids on top of that.

They realized it didn’t work, but feminism kept getting bigger. “It morphed into this division between men and women, and we

see that so clearly right now,” she said. “In every revolution, there are casualties. And the casualties in the feminist movement are good dads.”

“Fathers are demeaned, they are put down.” And this is harming children, she said.

“My voice is saying, on behalf of kids, they need their dads,” Meeker said. Instead of jumping on this “bandwagon ... filled with anger,” parents can teach their daughters what it looks like to be a healthy woman, to be assertive but not hammer men.

Today’s culture might say that dads and moms are really interchangeable, but Meeker wants parents to know that’s not the case—they each play a crucial but different, complementary role.

A mom, Meeker explains, looks at her daughter and sees a mini version of her. She can mentor her daughter, teach her to be strong but humble, and model for her what a healthy body and self-image look like. She is the one who holds the family together. Mom’s love is “non-negotiable” and “inherent,” or in other words, a “security blanket,” Meeker called it.

Girls experience their dads’ love in a completely different way.

“A dad’s love is negotiable,” Meeker said. “A daughter feels that if my dad chooses to pay attention to me and chooses to love me and show me affection, I must really be something—because it’s my dad, he’s larger than life.” She will expect him to be her protector and to have her back.

As her first experience of male love, Dad sets the standard by which she will view the relationships with other males for the rest of her life—whether that’s her brothers, teachers, coaches, or pastors. If a young man were to treat her without kindness and respect, in a way that her dad never would, “she’s out of there, because Dad sets the standard.”

And if Dad believes in her and says, “You got this,” then she’s “already there,” Meeker said.

A Girl’s Heart

Meeker talks to parents about knowing their daughter’s heart—diving in and learning what she feels and wants. Girls have a deep, primal longing to nurture and love others, Meeker says.

When we encourage girls to focus too much on themselves, though, it can lead them to a dark place. For Meeker, one solution is work; you can teach them to contribute to life at home, starting with chores.

“You know how many times I heard my kids say, ‘But I didn’t eat, I didn’t dirty all the space.’ It doesn’t matter. You know, you’re part of the group. Life isn’t just about you. And beyond that, I think it’s very important to teach kids how to serve,” she said.

It not only helps their families and com-

“In every revolution, there are casualties. And the casualties in the feminist movement are good dads.”

Meg Meeker, pediatrician and author

munities, but it also makes them feel good.

“When we teach girls how to look outside themselves and think about other people, it makes them feel valued and takes the focus off themselves. It develops empathy, and it fills that deep need to nurture,” she said.

Encouragement

Today’s culture isn’t kind to today’s girls. But in the end, Meeker knows parents make the whole difference.

“As a parent of a daughter, [you know] that what she’s exposed to is tough. And there’s a lot of exposure you can’t control and it scares you to death,” she said.

“But let me tell you something. Today, this moment, Mom or Dad, you’re wired with everything you need to be a great parent, and to help your daughter navigate all of that stuff and to emerge on the other side, a very strong young woman. You have the wiring and you have the power. Don’t ever forget that.”

Joshua Philipp contributed to this report.



LIDERINA/SHUTTERSTOCK



Get to know your daughter; it’s important to know what she’s feeling and thinking.

“A daughter feels that, ‘if my dad chooses to pay attention to me and chooses to love me and show me affection I must really be something—because it’s my dad, he’s larger than life.’”

Meg Meeker, pediatrician and author

A girl’s father will set the standard by which she views her future relationships with other males.

Masaccio: The Early Renaissance Painter That Great Masters Followed

LORRAINE FERRIER

FLORENCE, Italy—The Brancacci Chapel of Santa Maria Carmine in Florence is where you'll find one of the most important fresco cycles of the early Italian Renaissance. It's important not because of the subject matter, but because of the innovative techniques that Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone, known as Masaccio, employed to paint the life of St. Peter.

Interestingly, Masaccio's new method of painting is side-by-side with the work of Tommaso di Cristoforo Fini, known as Masolino, who painted in the style of the day.

It was in 1423 that Felice Brancacci, a wealthy merchant, commissioned Masolino and Masaccio to paint the fresco cycle in the chapel that was originally dedicated to St. Peter. However, the frescoes were left unfinished in 1427 when Masolino had to leave for Hungary and Masaccio left for Rome. Filippino Lippi completed the unfinished and missing scenes between 1481 and 1483.

Here, we focus on two of the frescoes by Masaccio: "The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden" and "The Tribute Money."

Masaccio may not be as well-known as Michelangelo, but his impact on the art of painting has been far-reaching.

"All those who have endeavored to learn the art of painting have always gone for that purpose to the Brancacci Chapel to grasp the precepts and rules demonstrated by Masaccio for the correct representation of figures," wrote Giorgio Vasari in "The Lives of Artists."

And indeed, the great masters Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo himself did study Masaccio's frescoes. It's interesting to note that Masaccio's painting style was appreciated more after his death than in his short lifetime; he died at just 26 years old.

Vasari wrote that Masaccio was so devoted to his art that he cared little for his appearance or for worldly affairs, which may have led to his nickname Masaccio, meaning "sloppy Tom" or "bad Tom." It certainly wasn't a reflection of his character, as Vasari describes him as "goodness itself."

Masaccio was both a maverick and a traditionalist. While Masaccio's contemporaries were painting in the international gothic style characterized by its elegant posture and gestures, Masaccio was pioneering the use of perspective and chiaroscuro (light and shade) to develop a more realistic style of



Masaccio's "The Tribute Money," one of many frescoes in the Brancacci chapel in Florence, Italy.

Masaccio was one of the first to refine painting, by removing 'its harshness, imperfections, and difficulties,' to create natural figures full of 'expressions, gestures, boldness, and vitality.'

Masaccio was pioneering the use of perspective and chiaroscuro (light and shade) to develop a more realistic style of painting.

painting. He took his inspiration from the past: from Giotto and further back to the classical art of antiquity.

Masaccio was one of the first to refine painting, Vasari said, by removing "its harshness, imperfections, and difficulties," to create natural figures full of "expressions, gestures, boldness, and vitality."

Indeed, Masaccio puts the human firmly in the painting. He painted in solid forms that seem to set his figures in motion, and in turn, the figures' emotive gestures can move any viewer's heart. Through Masaccio's "The Tribute Money," we can see how he led the way in the early Italian Renaissance.

"The Tribute Money" Standing in front of the fresco "The Tribute Money," you certainly get a sense of the story unfolding. Here,

Masaccio depicts a scene from Matthew 17: 24-27 when Christ, surrounded by his disciples, is confronted by a tax collector who demands tribute money. Christ gestures to Peter to cast a line into the sea, and Christ says that the first fish Peter catches will have the money in its mouth.

In this continuous narrative painting, several scenes play out within the picture frame. Three parts of the story are laid out before you: In the center, the tax demand is made; to the left of the painting, Peter retrieves the money from the mouth of the fish; and to the right, Peter pays the tax collector.

Masaccio uses clever innovations inspired by classical antiquity to pull you into the painting: First, our attention is drawn to Christ in the center. Masaccio uses single-point perspective, a mathematical tech-

nique that his friend, the architect Filippo Brunelleschi, revived from classical times.

In this case, Christ's head is the single focal point. All the disciples, dressed in the clothing of ancient Greece, gather around Christ in a semi-circle, a classical composition that Brunelleschi had revived in his architectural designs. The overall composition of the main group is harmonious, even though each character's face expresses a different emotion.

Look at the tax collector. He stands to the right of Christ in the painting, with his clothes differing from the others in the scene. Most of his weight is on his left foot with his right knee slightly bent, a classical stance from antiquity called contrapposto, and a stance used by Masaccio's friend Donatella in his sculptures. The tax collector ap-

pears tentative on his feet, almost taken aback as he demands the tax. His back foot almost steps out of the frame, almost into our space, a device to pull us into the painting.

Then, we see Christ and Peter who both gesture to the left of the painting to move us to the second scene, where Peter collects the money from the mouth of the fish.

As you gaze over to the sea on the left, notice how the dark-brown foreground contrasts with the almost hazy gray-blue mountains in the background, to give a sense of distance and an awareness of space, a technique called "atmospheric perspective," or as Leonardo da Vinci called it, "aerial perspective."

Then rather cleverly, Masaccio uses the natural light in the Brancacci Chapel that enters from the window on the fresco's right, as the



The Brancacci Chapel, in Florence, Italy, houses a fresco cycle painted by Masaccio and Masolino circa 1425-1427.

light source in the painting. This light defines the pictorial space, solidifies the forms and structures, and allows shadows to naturally fall, as seen in life, and in classic Roman art. This technique hadn't been used for 1,000 years.

You could say that Masaccio uses the chapel window light to put

you in the space of the painting; or, it could be that the people in the painting are in the chapel with you. That's the magic of Masaccio's masterpiece; it's painted in a way that makes you wonder.

Masaccio humanizes the painting, and even divine symbols are solidified. Notice the foreshortened halos. Masaccio takes this ethereal symbol, and places it firmly in our reality. He makes the halos solid, as if they are on our earthly plane. He's saying these are real, perhaps to inform us that there's no separation between us and the divine.

Vasari notes that Masaccio perfected foreshortening from every viewpoint possible in his paintings.

And, lastly, John with his golden locks of hair, to the left of Christ, has classical Roman facial features, and as you follow along to the far right of the painting, there stands

a man whose pose almost mirrors John's, and who according to Vasari, is Masaccio himself.

"The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden" Let's leave the relative harmony of "The Tribute Money" for a moment and glance at Masaccio's first fresco of the cycle, to the left, as you enter the Brancacci Chapel: the emotive "The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden." It certainly packs a punch.

Here, we can see the full shame of Eve's actions, shown in her raw emotion and grief-stricken stride. She's been exposed and covers her naked shame in a very particular classical pose: that of the aptly named "Venus pudica," or modest Venus. There are no delicate details on Eve's face; here is a woman in agony and momentarily aghast with the horror of what has just happened. Adam holds his head in shame, in what appears more a mental pain than Eve's physical pain.

The painting is in stark contrast to the international Gothic style of the time, and can be seen directly opposite in two of Masolino's paintings, in the same fresco cycle: "The Temptation of Adam and Eve," and "The Healing of the Cripple and Raising of Tabitha." In these paintings, beautiful, elegant figures were almost rooted to the ground in a two-dimensional fashion.

A Tribute to Masaccio To us, Masaccio's painting techniques may now seem normal, but in his time, they were revolutionary.

Vasari confirms that Masaccio was a pioneer: "Works created before Masaccio can be described merely as painting, while his creations compared to those executed by others are lifelike, true, and natural."

Masaccio joins his friends Brunelleschi and Donatello as one of the fathers of the early Italian Renaissance; Masaccio's techniques advanced painting in the same way that Brunelleschi advanced architecture and Donatello advanced sculpture.

And although Masaccio died young, and no memorial was made, several epitaphs were written. One by writer and poet Annibale Caro sums up Masaccio's legacy:

I painted, and my painting was equal to truth;

I gave my figures poses, animation, motion,

And emotion. [Michelangelo] Buonarroti taught all the others

And learned from me alone.

SHEN YUN PERFORMING ARTS

Harnessing the Power of Music to Inspire

Why Shen Yun's music resonates with our souls

CATHERINE YANG

Shen Yun Performing Arts famously uses a unique ensemble, blending sounds and instruments of the East and the West, but what truly makes the music special, says conductor Chen Ying, is the meaning behind the music.

"I believe our music tries to warm and uplift people's hearts. It has something to do with our belief in

the function of music. What music is meant to be is to be something positive for people," Chen said.

"It comforts them and soothes them, or it inspires them and encourages them," she said. "So in terms of what we try to accomplish with our music, it's pretty different from many other methods that are just trying to do ... something unconventional or something other people haven't done before."

Even before a single note is written, the composers and arrangers work with the choreographers and designers to find an idea. Then, from the arrangement to the performance, from the tone colors to musical architecture, the conductor works to shape everything in pursuit of an artistic idea that is truly beautiful, positive, and can be transported to the audience.

Much of this beauty stems from tradition, Chen said. The unique ensemble is in effect an homage of the best of the Eastern and Western cultures, and Shen Yun seeks to cherish and convey the traditional values found in the best of these cultures.

A Connection to Something Higher Music has its beginning in sacred spaces. Whether in the East with the music of sages or in the West with our Gregorian chants, music has for centuries been used to convey reverence for the heavens, express human emotion, and connect with

the world around us.

"In Chinese culture, there are a lot of sayings about music, like 'virtuous music nourishes people's souls,' and it gives people guidance, or connection with nature," Chen said. "In ancient times, people perceived nature to have spirituality, with their connection to the heavens."

"I think from the time that music was formed, it resonated with the body, heaven, and earth."

With ancient China, the five tones of the pentatonic scale had direct relationships with the five elements in our physical world, and the five major organs of our human bodies. Whether it be singing or playing tunes on a bamboo flute, music was meant to aid in connection between heaven, earth, and humankind.

In the West, chants and hymns began in spiritual settings, used to convey appreciation for divine protection and the relationship between humans and the gods who watched over them.

"I believe in probably most cul-

tures, music was originally for communication, a way in which people communicated the divine sense of gods in their hearts," Chen said.

A beautiful musical experience can feel timeless, evoke awe, and even move us to tears.

"That view was lost in the last several decades," Chen said. "But I think the musicians and other artists at Shen Yun really share this vision, or mission, to restore those treasures from the past and bring back the tradition, the positive role that music can play in people's lives."

The artists at Shen Yun don't just believe this traditional philosophy of music, they live it, Chen said.

"We believe that to be a true artist, a good artist, we believe it's important to improve ourselves as a person," she said. "To become a more virtuous person. Even in ancient China, people believed that all the great masters were extraordinary persons as well; their character and integrity would come through in their artistic work."

Chen believes the pure thoughts and energy the artists put into their work comes through in each performance—that this is why Shen Yun has been so well received worldwide by audiences, no matter their background or culture.

"At our symphony concerts, so often people tell us they were moved to tears, and we just feel that their hearts were touched," she said. "The messages we try to give them are positive ones, and are genuine and powerful, because it comes from kindness and sincerity."

Best of Both Worlds The conductor's role is a dynamic one.

While the task of combining two very different musical languages may be a Herculean one for arrangers, and playing the incredibly precise music a challenge for the musicians, the conductor, in a way, gets to reap the rewards with a powerful, versatile ensemble at her fingertips.

"This orchestration remarkably expands our orchestra's palette of tone colors and versatility, stylistic capabilities, and vigor," Chen said. "The fact that we integrate Chinese instruments—pipa, erhu, the percussion—gives us the ability and versatility to tell these stories very vividly and authentically."

"For a conductor, you have to know the music, you have to love the music, you have to have enough knowledge about each instrument, and, very importantly, you have to be able to blend all of the music together so

you can help achieve the effect."

Sometimes the story takes a turn and characters find themselves in a celestial palace, and the music has to be able to evoke a heavenly feeling, a sound so convincing you almost glimpse heaven. Sometimes the story calls for warriors on a battlefield, and the orchestra provides the strength and power and intensity of the battle. Sometimes the dance is an ethnic or folk dance, and the music takes on the sound of horses roaming the Mongolian grasslands, for example.

Then there's the timing, because all of it—the animated backdrop, the lighting, the choreography onstage—depends on the precision of the musical tempo.

"So it's a very exciting job," Chen said with a laugh. "It's a lot of fun."

"I really feel privileged and honored to do something like this because I truly love and admire the music of Shen Yun. To have the opportunity to use my skills to help bring this music to life and present it to the audience is just unbelievable. I feel unbelievably fortunate to do this, because of the idea behind the music."

"In ancient Chinese times, people also believed the ideas behind the music were more important than



Conductor Ying Chen.

"I believe in probably most cultures, music was originally for communication, a way in which people communicated the divine sense of gods in their hearts."

Ying Chen



Shen Yun Symphony Orchestra.

Breaking Free of the Victim Mentality

The concept of the Drama Triangle can help you understand underlying dynamics of the victim mentality and find an exit

MICHAEL COURTER

Do you ever find yourself in a perpetual series of interactions with someone that lead to anger, guilt, and other painful emotions? You may be caught in a social game on the Drama Triangle.

The Drama Triangle model is an exceptionally useful structural diagram for understanding the dynamics of toxic interactions and how to escape them.

The concept was developed in the '60s by Dr. Stephen Karpman, who observed the consistent roles that people adopt in high-conflict, dramatic interactions. The roles and patterns of interaction are so consistent in these situations that the Triangle is a nearly universal model for understanding interpersonal drama and conflict.

The social maneuvers on the Drama Triangle are also referred to as games, since each move has an overt meaning and purpose, as well as a hidden agenda that is meant to advance a player's position.

Being able to see these dynamics clearly is the key to breaking away from them and the victim mentality they reinforce. Let's explore this model.

Defining the Roles

The roles are victim, persecutor, and rescuer. While people tend to start off in one of the roles, the roles shift during dramatic conflicts, and we may find ourselves in any of them. As I describe them, see if you can see yourself or other people you know engaging in the following behaviors.

The persecutor is the villain of the drama, so most people are fighting to stay out of this role. The persecutor vents angry emotions and deals out punishment, blame, and criticism to the victim. When people find themselves in this role, they justify their behavior by blaming others. They don't clearly see or take responsibility for what they are doing, because they believe the victim deserves their punishment and criticism.

The rescuer is the hero of the drama because this person is trying to rescue the victim. While most people in this role believe they are being helpful, and those acting as the victim believe they need that help, the rescuer reinforces the victim's belief that they can't help themselves. This ultimately keeps the victim stuck in a dependent position, powerless to solve his or her own problems.

People who are rigidly tied to the rescuer role can be caught up in a series of relationships in which they support other people who can't function without them. They can't see the collateral damage caused by their actions because of their powerful belief that they are "only trying to help."

The victim is the key role in the drama. The advantage of being the victim is that other people are obligated to take care of this person, who can't take care of himself. It isn't his fault, because someone else is to blame, and there's nothing he can do about it. This is a tempting position to hold because the victim deserves care and support from other people and thus doesn't have to take responsibility for the situation.



ANH NGUYEN/UNSPLASH

Switching Roles

In order to understand and end the game, it's also important to understand that the roles switch. The rescuer collapses into the victim when all of those valiant efforts fail. The victim becomes the persecutor when no one cares for him or helps with the terrible situation that he is in. The persecutor switches to the rescuer when he realizes he has "done it again" and seriously hurt the victim.

A myriad of things can cause the roles to change, and the faster the changes, the more bewildering and confusing the game becomes.

The Victim Role

The game played on the Drama Triangle can be seen as a competition to get to the victim role. The persecutor had no other choice and the rescuer was only trying to help. We camouflage our desire to be the victim by focusing on finding someone or something to complain about or a situation that is not fair. Because the potential list of these things is infinite, we can always justify a legitimate reason why we are the victims.

That is why these interactions can also be thought of as simply blaming others; blaming statements are the staple of personal arguments.

That isn't to say that there are no legitimate reasons to play these roles at various times. Police, prosecutors, coaches, and parents need to maintain order and discipline. Everyone needs care and help

While people tend to start off in one of the roles (victim, persecutor, or rescuer), the roles shift during dramatic conflicts, and we may find ourselves in any of them.

The concept was developed in the '60s by Dr. Stephen Karpman, who observed the consistent roles that people adopt in high-conflict, dramatic interactions.

sometimes, if only while a baby or child, and there are legitimate victims of crime and abuse. It's kind and noble to help others selflessly when they are in legitimate need.

It's the hidden motives that we conceal from ourselves and others that make the interactions a toxic game. With thoughtful observation, you can see the difference between legitimate needs and hidden agendas. If a pattern is playing out repeatedly, in different situations over time, it's probably a game.

The Drama Triangle in Society, Politics

The Drama Triangle also shows itself in various situations in society, as groups of people enact these roles and compete to be the rescuer or victim. It's easy to take advantage of these mentalities on a social level by convincing various groups that their unfair situation is the result of being the victims of something or someone. This may be the key method, used throughout history, to turn groups against each other.

Leaving the Game

One of the powerful uses of the Drama Triangle is that it makes explicit and clear something that was previously hidden or obscured. It's much easier to leave the game when you can see what's being played.

You need simply to refuse to participate and decline to play your role. Really dedicated players will then demand that you return to the game. Be prepared for dramatic responses and attempts to make you feel guilty, but don't buy in. Refusing kindly and firmly to engage is the only way out of the toxic game. It's also necessary to understand the opposite of the Drama Triangle. People need to learn to directly ask for the love, support, recognition, and validation they want from others, instead of seeking it indirectly, while hiding their motives.

Are you stuck on the Drama Triangle with anyone in your life? See if you can observe your role and the role of the other players. Share this article or other articles about the Drama Triangle with them to help them see the dynamics themselves.

Point out how other people are on the Triangle first, because people are usually more willing to admit that others are playing social games with hidden motives, before they are willing to see it in themselves. Maybe they will want to leave the Triangle with you. However, you cannot force anyone to leave the Drama Triangle without getting hooked back on yourself.

You can let them know that you are willing to offer help, love, or care when they ask for it, and you can make your own choice clear: "I am done with this toxic drama!"

Michael Courter is a therapist and counselor who believes in the power of personal growth, repairing relationships, and following your dreams. His website is CourterCounsel.com

Do you have questions about relationships or personal growth that you would like Michael to address? Send them to mc@CourterCounsel.com



ALEX_PO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jack Frost

by Gabriel Setoun

The door was shut, as doors should be,
Before you went to bed last night;
Yet Jack Frost has got in, you see,
And left your window silver white.

He must have waited till you slept;
And not a single word he spoke,
But pencilled o'er the panes and crept
Away again before you woke.

And now you cannot see the hills
Nor fields that stretch beyond the lane;
But there are fairer things than these
His fingers traced on every pane.

Rocks and castles towering high;
Hills and dales, and streams and fields;
And knights in armor riding by,
With nodding plumes and shining shields.

And here are little boats, and there
Big ships with sails spread to the breeze;
And yonder, palm trees waving fair
On islands set in silver seas.

And butterflies with gauzy wings;
And herds of cows and flocks of sheep;
And fruit and flowers and all the things
You see when you are sound asleep.

For creeping softly underneath
The door when all the lights are out,
Jack Frost takes every breath you breathe,
And knows the things you think about.

He paints them on the window pane
In fairy lines with frozen steam;
And when you wake you see again
The lovely things you saw in dream.



ROMAN SAMBORSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK



CHAMILLE WHITE/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Aidan Danza, age 13

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: CHICKEN BREEDS

Chickens are present on many farms across the world—their meat and eggs are very good to eat!

However, many people are starting to keep them in their backyards as pets as well as for their eggs.

If you're thinking about keeping chickens in your yard, there are many breeds of chicken to consider—each breed has a personality, and each breed looks somewhat different and lays different amounts of eggs. The breeds listed here would be best for a backyard chicken-keeper who wants a bird that will lay lots of eggs and has a good personality.



BUFF ORPINGTON

Buff Orpingtons are a breed created in Britain, and they were, along with the Black Orpington, the first chicken that was appetizing on the table and delivered large quantities of eggs. However, many people love the Buff Orpington because of their sweet personality—they are very docile and

friendly, and are supposed to be very good with children.

This docile personality can lead to their being at the bottom of the flock's pecking order, so if you have other chickens (especially breeds that have an angry personality, like Rhode Island Reds) they may not get along. They sometimes get "broody" which is when a hen will suddenly want to sit on the egg she's laying. This signals that she wants chicks. If you and your parents want chicks (as well as a rooster) then Buff Orpingtons are the breed for you!



PLYMOUTH ROCK

Plymouth Rocks come in many colors. Most are barred, black and white, or pure white. They lay in excess of 200 eggs per year, and are said to be very calm and docile, and enjoy being cuddled and pampered. Like the Delaware, they are quite talkative, but they aren't very loud. They like their space, so build a nice big coop and let them into your yard when you can.



DELAWARE

Delaware chickens are a beautiful, white chicken breed that can lay more than 200 eggs a year, or around four or five eggs per week. They are also calm, friendly, and seem to be very curious. Individual chickens will have different personalities; some love to snuggle, others are still friendly but won't let you cuddle them. They can be talkative, but never loud.

Ditch the Resolution: Do a Year-End Review Instead

NEW YORK—It is hardly a secret that people rarely stick to New Year's resolutions—only about 8 percent of people actually make it to the finish line with their goals, according to studies from the University of Scranton, in Pennsylvania.

So here is a better idea for your financial life: Before you look forward, look backward.

A year-end spending review is a far superior way to revamp your financial life. Instead of gauzy, improbable thinking about what you might do, you face the cold, hard truth about what you actually did. "We can only manage what we measure," said Sarah Newcomb, director of behavioral science at fund research firm Morningstar. "If you're not even measuring your own spending, then basically you're just flying blind."

This is especially true for the holiday season, when money seems to exit our wallets at hyperspeed. Average holiday spending on gifts

and travel was slated to exceed \$1,000 apiece for 2019, according to the National Retail Federation. In fact, among those who took out holiday debt in 2018, 35 percent of us were still trying to pay it off this past fall, according to personal finance site NerdWallet.com.

"Use a big event like the end of the year as a catalyst to do something you should be doing on a regular basis," said Dan Egan, director of behavioral finance and investing at Betterment.com. If you haven't been tracking your dollars, it can seem a daunting task. A few ideas on how to figure out where all that money went in 2019—and how to do better in 2020:

Open That Annual Credit-Card Statement

In the New Year, credit-card companies send out roundups of everything you have purchased in 2019. Typically, you might just ignore it. Don't.

For one thing, the documents are useful for tax planning, since purchases are often divided into spending categories that can help identify deductions. They are also excellent for shock value, to force yourself to see how your cash was deployed.

If an entire year of spending is too overwhelming to digest, break that survey period into something smaller, like two months, Egan said.

You can also focus on specific pain points, like pulling up your Amazon purchase history for 2019. Shocked yet? "Take an honest look at what your life is costing you," Newcomb said. "If some of those costs are frivolous and are purchases you regret, that is a valuable thing to take away."

Put Fintech Apps to Work
A typical excuse for those who don't keep track of spending: It's too complicated and confusing.

But with all the fintech apps now available, that excuse doesn't really wash.

"We encourage our clients to check their 'You Need A Budget' app every morning over a cup of coffee," said Brenna Baucum, a financial planner in Salem, Oregon. "It takes only one or two minutes to sort their latest transactions. Then, after 30 days, they have some handle on where their money goes. Most often, the results shock them."

Mint.com is a popular app, and one game-changer, according to financial planner Salim Boutagy of Westport, Connecticut, is its "Trends" section, where you can see how your spending has shifted over the last few months or years.

Calculate the Unknown

In performing an annual spending review, one thing will probably jump out at you: The sheer number of expenses that were totally unplanned and unforeseen.

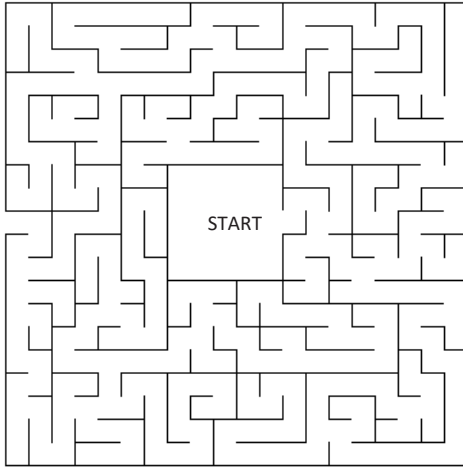
"We're all pretty good at estimating common expenses like electricity and phone and internet access," said Morningstar's Newcomb. "But we are very bad at predicting the size and frequency of exceptions."

That might mean car repair, or home improvements, or medical bills, or last-minute vacations. When you see how much of 2019's spending was a total surprise, then you can build a similar buffer into next year's budget.

Once you have done your spending X-ray for 2019, it is time to rework what Betterment's Egan calls your "Top-Down Budgeting." That means setting broad guidelines—like committing to saving a specific amount every month. "The point is not to be as austere as possible and deprive yourself of all joy," Egan said. "The point is to get to a right balance."

By Chris Taylor
From Reuters

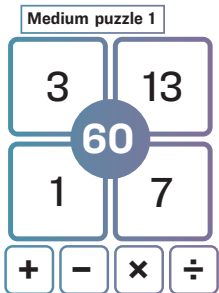
AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) +1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28



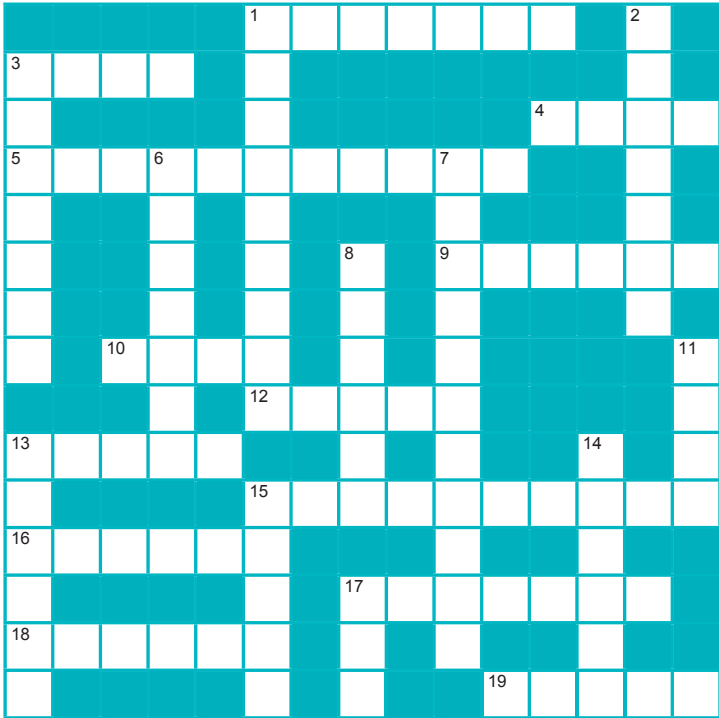
Solution For Easy 1
(8 - 6) × (6 + 2)



Solution for Medium 1
1 × 6 × (2 + 61)
(1 - 2) × (2 - 61)



Solution for Hard 1
92 - 6 + 6 + 92



Across

- Artform on glass or metal (7)
- Color quality (4)
- Made with a straight edge (4)
- Artist's greatest work (11)
- Sculptor's medium (6)
- Where pottery is baked (4)
- It may be stained (5)

Down


- Picture carved on a brass plate (9)
- #2s, e.g. (7)
- Alternative to oils or watercolor (7)
- Cotton or wool (7)
- Work of art (11)
- Come up with (6)
- Sculptor's medium that is finished in a kiln (4)
- Soft shades, and similar to crayon (6)
- Able to be seen (6)
- Used in sidewalk art (5)
- Grow, in a way (3)

- What an artist may draw on (5)
- Artist's skill (10)
- Quick drawing (6)
- Carving used to print a picture (7)
- Hard shiny coating (6)
- Red, blue, green, etc. (5)




View Subscriber Information at Our Customer Portal


service.TheEpochTimes.com


**Manage Your Account Details**

- Shipping address
- Contact details
- Payment information
- Billing history


**FAQ**


- Can I change my subscription plan?
- How will I be billed?
- How can I pause my subscription?
- What's The Epoch Times' story?

**Buy a Gift Subscription**

**ePaper Settings**

- Manage your ePaper logins
- Reset your password

**File Delivery Complaints**

**Check Terms and Conditions**

Don't Have a Subscription Yet? Visit [ReadEpoch.com](#), call 917-905-2080, or email subscribe@epochtimes.com to get Truth and Tradition delivered to you.

THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION

TRUTH AND TRADITION Can Be Blocked but Never Stopped

Here's how you can help bring Truth and Tradition to every household in America

You know that traditional journalism like ours is under attack by legacy media and Big Tech. That's why we need your help to restore honest journalism based on Truth and Tradition. Just as you're informed and inspired by The Epoch Times, your friends and family can be as well. The more people who know the truth, the more freedom we can all enjoy.

As a valued subscriber, you know well the values and tenets of The Epoch Times, and now you can pass those

along to friends and family members of your choice. With your referral, they'll experience Truth and Tradition by subscribing to The Epoch Times for just \$3* for 3 months. At the same time, you'll receive a month added to your subscription for free. It's our way of saying "thank you" for helping us spread the news—and the truth!

Why not refer your friends and family to The Epoch Times right now? Simply visit [ReadEpoch.com/Friends](#)



NO SPIN. NO HIDDEN AGENDAS. NO FALSE NARRATIVES.
NO CORPORATE CONTROL. TRADITIONAL JOURNALISM.
HONEST OPINIONS. FEATURES YOU'LL ENJOY.

GET MORE WHEN YOUR FRIENDS SUBSCRIBE:

FOR YOU: 1 MONTH FREE • FOR THEM: 3 MONTHS FOR \$3*

READERS
TELL US OUR
NEWSPAPER
FEELS LIKE
"HOPE IN
DARKNESS."

*Refer a friend or family member online at [ReadEpoch.com/Friends](#), and when that person subscribes with you, you'll get an extra month added to your existing subscription. Your friend will receive a \$3 for 3 months plan because of you—our valued subscriber. Their plan will renew at the rate of \$16.90 per month at the end of their first 3 months.



A detail of the glass panel that David Adrian Smith is making for the Ludlow Blunt hair salon.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

In Awe of Ornamental Glass

Craftsman David Adrian Smith reflects on reverse glass painting

LORRAINE FERRIER

From the late 19th century through to around the 1940s, everyday shopkeepers across England advertised their businesses on glass. Across the country, rows of glass storefronts would've glistened along the town's main shopping street. Most of the store windows were "gilded or chemically silvered. It was just a beautiful thing. It would catch your eye as you



Traditional ornamental glass artist David Adrian Smith in his workshop in Torquay, Devon, UK, on Jan. 13.


walked past. They would even position these glass pieces ... at a slight angle so that the consumer would be looking up into the work, into the actual name," said traditional ornamental glass artist David Adrian Smith in a phone interview. Similar ornate glass panels were commonly used to decorate pubs and gin palaces (the opulent gin bars of the late Victorian era). And breweries made beautiful panels

to advertise their wares. These ornamental glass panels were not limited to England. Other countries around the world, including the United States, had their own unique styles, especially Italy and France. These glass panels were made by reverse glass painting, an art whereby metal leaf and paint is applied to the back of a glass pane.

Continued on Page 16

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH and TRADITION



Returning to Tradition

Advertise in the Arts & Tradition Section

call 212-292-8359 or email advertise@epochtimes.nyc

What Our Readers Say:

“It’s the only sane newspaper amidst all this insanity.”

STAN K., PASTOR

“It’s bringing morality back to newspapers.”

LISSA T., BUSINESS OWNER

“It’s the only paper that I know of right now that actually gives you the honest, old fashioned journalism.”

DRUEL L., BUSINESS OWNER

“You’re presenting the facts and letting the reader decide.”

TERRI B., BUSINESS OWNER

“Everything I read in it is fair and balanced, compared to other newspapers.”

JUNE V., RETIRED BANKER



\$1

FIRST MONTH!

Subscribe @
ReadEpoch.com

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

LITERATURE

THE PRINCE OF PARADOX:

G.K. Chesterton

AND THE Art of the Epigram

JEFF MINICK

Born in 1874 in England, as an adult he stood 6 feet, 4 inches tall and weighed close to 300 pounds. He often wore a cape, smoked cigars, carried a sword, praised beer and alehouses, and converted to Catholicism. His bulk and eccentricities made him a popular figure for caricature.

When he married Frances Alice Blogg in 1901, he bought and carried a pistol on their honeymoon to protect his bride, and he remained her devoted husband until his death 35 years later. Famously absentminded, he several times sent telegrams to his wife, asking her where he was supposed to be. Those who knew him, even his opponents in public debate like George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, loved him for his gift for laughter and his ability to poke fun at himself.

He was the common man’s philosopher, a highly effective Christian apologist, a journalist, and a storyteller who wrote thousands of essays and hundreds of poems, novels, biographies, and plays. These include such critically acclaimed works as biographies of Charles Dickens and Saint Francis, novels like “The Man Who Was Thursday,” poems such as “Lepanto” and “The Ballad of the White Horse,” and his now classic books on the Christian faith like “Orthodoxy” and “The Everlasting Man.”

Meet Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

The Prince of Paradox

His literary style, intelligence, and common sense have influenced writers such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, J.R.R. Tolkien, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, Theodore Roosevelt, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Étienne Gilson, Jorge Luis Borges, C.S. Lewis, and Peter Kreeft. These and many others either highly praised the man’s works or claim a direct influence on their own writing. His books inspired such filmmakers as Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles.

His “Father Brown” stories have become a popular television series. Thanks to various devotees, nearly all the work that came from his pen remains in print.

He also wears the crown of “the Prince of Paradox.”

No other writer in the last two centuries approaches Chesterton in his deployment of paradox and the epigram. Embedded in all those hundreds of thousands of words he left behind are adages of great wit and wisdom. Those of us familiar with some of his writing and who write in whatever capacity—journalists, storytellers, poets—remain in awe of his ability to turn a phrase.

Let’s look at just a few of these aphorisms as given to us by The Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

COURTESY OF THE SOCIETY OF GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Chesterton was the common man’s philosopher.

“Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton: Volume XXXI: The Illustrated London News.”

(Left) G.K. Chesterton at work at Crisis Magazine.

(Below) G.K. Chesterton and his beloved wife, Frances.

COURTESY OF THE SOCIETY OF GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

ish the race. Chesterton himself did both.

“Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to that arrogant oligarchy who merely happen to be walking around.”

Here in three sentences, Chesterton reminds us of the value of tradition and its links to those who have gone before us. When he urges us to give votes to that “most obscure of all classes, our ancestors,” he reminds us of the good in some of the institutions and customs those ancestors left us.

Fallacies and Fanaticism

“Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions.”

That one appeared in The Illustrated London News almost 90 years ago. True then and true now, though some may be too blind or too hysterically bound to a cause to recognize that truth—or for that

matter, truth in general.

“A strange fanaticism fills our time: the fanatical hatred of morality, especially of Christian morality.”

A “fanatical hatred of morality,” particularly in matters of sexual morality, marks our culture. When we banish religion from public life, we have left only the residue of morality. Some try to invent new moralities while simply preaching universal tolerance, which offers no moral code at all. Chesterton understood where this “strange fanaticism” would lead, and we are living with it still.

A Thing Worth Doing

“If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.”

Here is my favorite Chestertonian quip. This wonderful advice, turning on its head the old saying “Anything worth doing, is worth doing well,” elevates the amateur above the professional,

the generalist above the specialist. Let’s say you enjoy playing golf. You may be a mediocre golfer or even a terrible golfer, but your level of play isn’t the point. The point is the pleasure you derive from being out on the course. (Of golf, Chesterton wrote: “I regard golf as an expensive way of playing marbles.”)

If you’re yearning for a voice of sanity, common sense, and wit in an age that all too often lacks all three, give Gilbert Keith Chesterton a look. It’s a thing worth doing.

To find out more about G.K. Chesterton and his writings, visit The Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton or Ignatius Press.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C.. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.



Become a Published Author with Dorrance.

We want to read your book!

Trusted by authors for nearly 100 years, Dorrance has made countless authors’ dreams come true.





Our staff is made up of writers, just like you, and we are dedicated to making publishing dreams come true.

Complete Book Publishing Services

FIVE EASY STEPS TO PUBLICATION:

1. Consultation

2. Book Production

3. Promotion

4. Distribution

5. Merchandising and Fulfillment

Call now to receive your FREE Author’s Guide

877-655-4006 or www.dorranceinfo.com/epoch



“I wouldn’t want to do anything else; this is what I was born to do.”

David Adrian Smith, traditional glass artist

While Smith embraces social media, he’s adamant that machines could never replicate what he does.

Reverse glass painter David Adrian Smith works on a sign in his workshop.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

In Awe of Ornamental Glass

Craftsman David Adrian Smith reflects on reverse glass painting

Continued from Page 13

In the past, several different types of craftsmen would combine their skills to work on a pane. The pane would be brilliant cut—a process that uses a rotating stone wheel to cut patterns into the glass. Then the pane would be passed to the signwriter for painting and gilding, and then on to the embosser for etching. Yet today, as a world-renowned signwriter and glass ornamentor, Smith does it all.

Smith’s clients include well-known names: luxury brands such as Burberry, liquor companies such as Jameson Whiskey and Booths Gin, movie studios including Universal Studios and Disney, music companies such as Sony Music, as well as world-class institutions such as London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

Smith is the only craftsman in the world who can teach all the processes of reverse glass painting, according to The Heritage Crafts Association, the UK charity that supports heritage crafts in the UK. He’s a passionate advocate of the art that’s critically endangered in the UK, and he’s keen to keep the craft going. In recognition for his work, Smith has just been awarded a Member of the Order of



David Adrian Smith with a copy of John Mayer’s album “Born and Raised,” which Smith designed in 2012.

the British Empire (MBE) for services to reversed glass ornamental artistry, a national recognition.

“I can’t believe it, to be honest,” Smith said. He feels the award is especially important to ensure that more people know about the craft. The recognition is not only for Smith. “It’s an honor for my family,” he says, who are the backbone of the business.

Smith also sincerely appreciates the people who have come

before him and shared their skills with him. “If it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t be here today,” he said.

Regardless of any accolades, Smith is simply doing what he loves. “I wouldn’t want to do anything else; this is what I was born to do, I guess,” he said.

Learning the Craft

Smith has always been interested in art. “If I wasn’t at school, I’d be drawing,” he said. He painted his first business sign at 14, after his father’s friend asked him to create a sign for his hotel in Torquay, Devon. That first foray into hand-painted signwriting led him to create more hotel signs in Torquay, the popular seaside tourist town in southwest England where he’s spent most of his life.

When Smith left school in 1984, his father helped him find a signwriting apprenticeship with Gordon Farr. “It was just before any computers came in, so I came into the backend of the old-fashioned trade of signwriting.”

For Smith, that five-year apprenticeship was a key point in his career. “I came into a trade where there were older guys there teaching you how to paint letters with a brush,” he said. One of the signwriters introduced him to

gold leaf, but he had to go further afield to learn more.

Smith then stumbled across the work of Rick Glawson in a magazine article. Glawson was a signwriter and restoration artist specializing in reverse glass painting, and owner of the Fine Gold Sign Co. in Wilmington, California. He read how Glawson taught old-fashioned processes to young people and the staff at Disney in California.

Glawson sounds a lot like Smith. He was “a kind, warmhearted gentleman who was working away trying to figure out how things were made,” Smith said. Then he’d share what he’d found with others.

The two formed a close friendship. “He was a huge inspiration to me for taking on this craft and going a little bit further with what I wanted to learn,” Smith said.

In 1990, Glawson invited Smith to the California Conclaves, a group of 100 or so gifted artists from across the world who met in Glawson’s shop. Over the weekend, the artists would share gold leaf skills and glassworking techniques. Almost every year, Smith took part in the event, right up until Glawson’s early death in 2003.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID A. SMITH UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

Smith recalls the first time he went to the California Conclaves event: “It just blew my mind! It was beautiful, just like an old candy store with all the gilded work and all the old-fashioned processes and all the original [glass] panels on the walls. You literally felt like you were stepping back in time.”

At that time, Smith felt that craftsmen in America were more open to sharing the techniques than the artists back in England.

Another important influence on Smith’s work was an American group called The Letterheads. Glawson’s California Conclaves, which hosted the event Smith attended, came under the umbrella of The Letterheads.

The Letterheads were set up in 1975 by seven artists working out of Denver, Colorado, who got together on the weekend to share skills and ideas. Noel Weber and Mark Oatis were two of the founding artists, and Smith is still in touch with them. They are also two of the numerous people who endorsed Smith when The Heritage Crafts Association nominated him for the MBE. The Letterheads grew from that small group to local meetups around the world, some as large as 5,000 artists. They’re a little “like Comic Con [a large comic book convention] but in the sign world,” Smith said.

Smith believes The Letterhead meetups that started to emerge in England in the 1990s were responsible for people sharing their craft skills again. Old-time signwriters joined the meetups out of curiosity and were pleased that the craft was being shared.

Smith remembers that when Gordon Farr retired around 2010, he said he was putting his brushes away because of computers. “I

Smith recalls the first time he went to the California Conclaves event: “It just blew my mind! It was beautiful, just like an old candy store with all the gilded work and all the old-fashioned processes and all the original [glass] panels on the walls. You literally felt like you were stepping back in time.”

At that time, Smith felt that craftsmen in America were more open to sharing the techniques than the artists back in England.

Another important influence on Smith’s work was an American group called The Letterheads. Glawson’s California Conclaves, which hosted the event Smith attended, came under the umbrella of The Letterheads.

The Letterheads were set up in 1975 by seven artists working out of Denver, Colorado, who got together on the weekend to share skills and ideas. Noel Weber and Mark Oatis were two of the founding artists, and Smith is still in touch with them. They are also two of the numerous people who endorsed Smith when The Heritage Crafts Association nominated him for the MBE. The Letterheads grew from that small group to local meetups around the world, some as large as 5,000 artists. They’re a little “like Comic Con [a large comic book convention] but in the sign world,” Smith said.

Smith believes The Letterhead meetups that started to emerge in England in the 1990s were responsible for people sharing their craft skills again. Old-time signwriters joined the meetups out of curiosity and were pleased that the craft was being shared.

Smith remembers that when Gordon Farr retired around 2010, he said he was putting his brushes away because of computers. “I

Smith recalls the first time he went to the California Conclaves event: “It just blew my mind! It was beautiful, just like an old candy store with all the gilded work and all the old-fashioned processes and all the original [glass] panels on the walls. You literally felt like you were stepping back in time.”

At that time, Smith felt that craftsmen in America were more open to sharing the techniques than the artists back in England.

Another important influence on Smith’s work was an American group called The Letterheads. Glawson’s California Conclaves, which hosted the event Smith attended, came under the umbrella of The Letterheads.

The Letterheads were set up in 1975 by seven artists working out of Denver, Colorado, who got together on the weekend to share skills and ideas. Noel Weber and Mark Oatis were two of the founding artists, and Smith is still in touch with them. They are also two of the numerous people who endorsed Smith when The Heritage Crafts Association nominated him for the MBE. The Letterheads grew from that small group to local meetups around the world, some as large as 5,000 artists. They’re a little “like Comic Con [a large comic book convention] but in the sign world,” Smith said.

Smith believes The Letterhead meetups that started to emerge in England in the 1990s were responsible for people sharing their craft skills again. Old-time signwriters joined the meetups out of curiosity and were pleased that the craft was being shared.

Smith remembers that when Gordon Farr retired around 2010, he said he was putting his brushes away because of computers. “I

Smith recalls the first time he went to the California Conclaves event: “It just blew my mind! It was beautiful, just like an old candy store with all the gilded work and all the old-fashioned processes and all the original [glass] panels on the walls. You literally felt like you were stepping back in time.”

At that time, Smith felt that craftsmen in America were more open to sharing the techniques than the artists back in England.

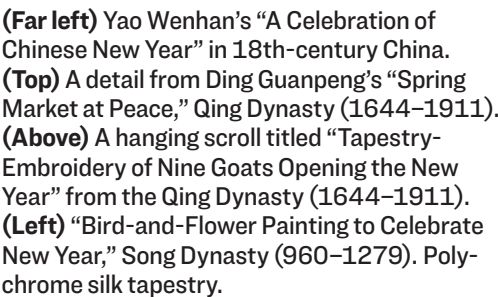
Another important influence on Smith’s work was an American group called The Letterheads. Glawson’s California Conclaves, which hosted the event Smith attended, came under the umbrella of The Letterheads.

The Letterheads were set up in 1975 by seven artists working out of Denver, Colorado, who got together on the weekend to share skills and ideas. Noel Weber and Mark Oatis were two of the founding artists, and Smith is still in touch with them. They are also two of the numerous people who endorsed Smith when The Heritage Crafts Association nominated him for the MBE. The Letterheads grew from that small group to local meetups around the world, some as large as 5,000 artists. They’re a little “like Comic Con [a large comic book convention] but in the sign world,” Smith said.

Smith believes The Letterhead meetups that started to emerge in England in the 1990s were responsible for people sharing their craft skills again. Old-time signwriters joined the meetups out of curiosity and were pleased that the craft was being shared.

Smith remembers that when Gordon Farr retired around 2010, he said he was putting his brushes away because of computers. “I

Working on the commission for the Ludlow Blunt hair salon: 1. Smith renders details, here the Statue of Liberty, for the etching. 2. The complete pencil drawing. 3. Adding elements to the glass. 4. A detail with New York icons, which have been acid etched and water gilded.



Sui Zhao Paintings:

Celebrating Chinese New Year Elegantly

A vertical Chinese painting on a light beige background. The central focus is a potted plant with a thick, gnarled trunk. It has several large, vibrant red flowers and some white blossoms. A small, dark bird is perched on a branch within the foliage. To the left of the main pot, a branch with several bright red, round fruits (possibly pomegranates) extends towards the bottom. The pot itself is a simple, light-colored ceramic vessel. In the upper right corner, there is a small red seal and a column of Chinese calligraphy. The overall style is traditional Chinese ink and wash with a touch of color.

"May All Your Wishes
Come True" by Chen Shu,
Qing Dynasty (1644–
1911). Hanging scroll.

This article is republished with permission from Elite Lifestyle Magazine.



(L-R) Bradley Whitford, Peter Dinklage, and Walton Goggins as three paranoid, delusional mental patients, in "Three Christs."

phy. Okay, well, two out of three ain't bad. "Underwater" is saying: Don't go too far down in the ocean, getting greedy for oil, or you'll wake up a marine form of nastiness. Everything in moderation. It's still a good rule to live by.

