

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

In "Infidel," a thriller set in the Middle East, Caviezel plays a kidnapped American journalist, imprisoned in an Iranian prison on spying charges.

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Thrift and Simplicity: A Pathway to Happiness

JEFF MINICK

“Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.” That old New England proverb, sometimes rendered as “Eat it up, wear it out, make it do,” was supposedly a maxim favored by Calvin Coolidge. Benjamin Franklin was another believer in frugality and thrift, coining such sayings as “A penny saved is a penny earned” and “Rather go to bed without dinner than to rise in debt.” The Boy Scouts include “thrifty” as one of their 12 Scout laws.

How times have changed.

In Arrears

As of July, the public debt of the United States was \$26.48 trillion, up \$4.45 trillion from the previous year.

Americans' credit card debt is nearly \$1 trillion, a record high.

Some 43 million adult Americans carry a combined student debt of \$1.5 trillion. Where's Franklin when you need him?

Drowning in Debt

For 20 years, my wife and I struggled with debt. During that time, we operated a bed-and-breakfast and a bookstore, worked part-time jobs in the bargain, and still had trouble every month paying our mortgage and our credit card bills. After Kris's sudden death in 2004, I hung onto the bed-and-breakfast for another year, but keeping the place open became impossible.

When a wealthy neighbor walked over one day and, within an hour, offered to buy the place, I immediately said yes to his proposal. The money from that sale paid off the mortgage and all my debts, and I cut up the credit cards and began teaching homeschoolers full-time. Because of these circumstances and poor financial planning on my part, like so many Americans, I will always need to work.

One additional note: for many of those years, I was plagued by headaches, a few of them severe enough to send me to bed for the day. In the 14 years since selling my business and clearing my debt, I can count on one hand the number of headaches I've experienced.

The Other Side of the Coin

Now, for a very different story. A man I know well graduated from college, married, and found lucrative work as a salesman. Both he and his wife, who was also working full-time, lived frugally, saved their money, and bought a run-down three-apartment house. They lived in one of the apartments, rented out the other two, saved their money, and began buying other older homes and small apartment buildings, flipping some and renting some.

Today, they own 14 such properties and intend to invest in more. They use a service agency to rent out these residences and take care of maintenance and repair. At the end of this year, this man plans to retire from his job in sales and continue his activities in the real estate market.

He's 32 years old.

“Mary and I live pretty pretty,” he told me. “We just have to pay our mortgage and insurance, and put food on the table for the kids. I have no desire for some

As Benjamin Franklin knew, the key to this practice of thriftiness is the ability to separate needs from wants.



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Benjamin Franklin had many sayings about frugality, such as “Industry, perseverance, and frugality make fortune yield.” Detail of portrait of Benjamin Franklin by David Martin, circa 1767.

sort of lavish lifestyle. Anyway, we'll see what happens.”

Penny-Wise

We can find all sorts of online blogs celebrating this young man's idea of thrift. At Choosing Voluntary Simplicity, for instance, there are various articles on frugality and the joys of the simple life: “It's the Simple Things That Count,” “Our Journey to a Debt Free Life,” “Does Frugality Mean You Shouldn't Have Nice Things?” and more. Other sites tout similar themes: living in the moment, divesting ourselves of unneeded possessions, taking control of our finances, saving, and investing.

Although the current pandemic has brought sadness and hardship to many households—the death of a relative or friend, jobs lost, loneliness and its companion, depression—the quarantine also provided us with the opportunity to look at savings options that might have otherwise eluded us.

Is it possible to work more from home, thereby saving money on travel, clothing, and food? Can our children receive a better and less expensive education at home than in elementary and secondary schools? Do we really need to spend exorbitant sums of money on a university education? Can we eat healthier and less expensively when we don't frequent restaurants so often? Can we shop in thrift stores for our clothing? Can we tuck away the money we last year spent on sporting events, movies, and other entertainment?

Some of these expenditures may seem insignificant, but as Franklin warned, “Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship.”

Reminders Regarding True Thrift

As Franklin knew, the key to this practice of thriftiness is the ability to separate needs from wants. Do we really need a new car? Do we require a five-bedroom home for a family of four? Do we eat steak every week or buy the finest wine?

All too often we also confuse frugality with stinginess or greed. We think of Ebenezer Scrooge in “The Christmas Carol,” who begrudged his employee coal for the fire and who ate cheap meals, taking little or no pleasure in his wealth.

Those of us who watch our money and have few wants find that we can then afford to be generous to others. We can give to charity, help a friend through a tough time, or send presents to our children and grandchildren on special occasions.

We can also afford small luxuries. During the months of extreme shutdown here in Virginia, I became desperately in need of a haircut, feeling as if I were wearing a cap on my head. When I mentioned this to my daughter, she told me of a friend, a divorced mother with children still at home, who comes to customers' homes to cut their hair. My haircut was excellent, the conversation delightful, the extra expense of \$5 and a tip trivial. No more trips to the barbershop for me.

The Essence of Joy

As Franklin and so many others have told us, there are three basic ways to grow personal wealth: earn more, spend less, or practice a combination of both. We as individuals have the power to do these things.

To my younger readers, please heed my warning about my mistakes. Start thinking now how you can lead a debt-free life and save money for your old age. Talk to people who have done these things successfully and learn from them.

To my older readers, particularly those past 60 who find themselves with little hope of retirement, let's take responsibility for who, what, and where we are, and appreciate what we have. In my case, I have little money, but I've lived a full life and generally wake every morning delighting in simple pleasures: that first coffee on the porch, writing and reading, the doctor-recommended stroll through the neighborhood, and conversations on the phone with family or friends.

Frugality is a defense against indebtedness, simplicity a gift that often brings freedom. Practicing both allows us to take joy wherever we may find it.

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.

Just an Average Person Turning the World Right Side Up

ANNIE HOLMQUIST

A friend of mine was recently venting woes to me in the midst of his bad day. Grumpily recounting his attempt to cool off by walking to a nearby store to buy a soda, he said, “I got halfway there and I realized, ‘I don't have my mask!’”

His frustration over this last straw was too much and I burst out laughing over the absurdity of his situation and everything else that is wrong with the current world. My laughter was infectious, and his grumpiness melted away as he joined me in a hearty chuckle.

I think we've all been in my friend's grumpy shoes far more than we care to admit in recent months. I know I can shamefully raise my hand and admit to being guilty as charged. Sheltering in place, worrying about the virus and chaos destroying our nation, dealing with new responsibilities like homeschooling children, or trying to work from home—all of these things make it difficult to approach life with a cheerful attitude and refrain from snapping at those closest to us.

Unfortunately, the strain is beginning to show. American divorce rates have skyrocketed in recent months. Suicide rates have soared. Chaos in our streets suggests a deeper chaos of the soul.

It's easy to look at the problems of the world and wonder what we, as average citizens, can do to improve life. The answer to that question is “not much”—at least on a large scale. However, we can do a lot about how we live our own lives. For starters, how do we handle our own grumpiness,

in our own homes, among our own families? Are there simple ways in which we can brighten the world for them, causing them to brighten others' lives as they head out into the world?

This question entered my mind after I read a book called “Retroculture: Taking America Back.” Author William Lind discusses the revival of interest in all things retro—furniture, architecture, and even travel—while suggesting that a love for retro needs to extend to our families and values as well. At one point, he quotes the following passage from an old etiquette book:

“I remember a prominent woman ... saying to me once, ‘Oh, how much pleasure I get out of remembering the breakfasts of my childhood! There was a rule that all members of the family had to come to the table. We had to be neat. We greeted our parents and each other. We were allowed to take part in the conversation and express our opinions. We never thought of complaining about the food, and of course a cross word or look was out of the question. If such a thing happened, it was flatly declared that we were ill and could be excused from the table. Everything looked so pretty, too—the colored china, the shining silver, and always a little flower. Because Mother said pretty surroundings made a great difference in how we faced the day. It was like starting out in the morning with everything rosy and beautiful. And if ever any of us had to miss breakfast, if we were really ill, we felt cheated.’”

I stopped when I read that passage, and I couldn't help but delight in this lovely thought. Personally, I have never been

It's easy to look at the problems of the world and wonder what we, as average citizens, can do to improve life.



We can help those around us by brightening up our surroundings and our attitudes.

a huge breakfast fan. I would rather get it over with quickly and move on with my day. But how much do those first hours of the day affect families? Furthermore, how much do our surroundings in our homes affect our attitudes as we go out into the world?

If we make our homes happy places to be—not only through furnishings and food, but through our own attitudes—might we not change our own outlook on life, along with

our families' outlooks and the outlooks of those our loved ones come in contact with?

We may not be able to immediately right the chaos in the world, but we can make life a happy experience for those around us. Average people doing average things can do a lot to turn the world right side up.

Annie Holmquist is the editor of *Intellectual Takeout*. This article was originally published on *Intellectual Takeout*.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

A 'Common Sense Checklist'

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

As an operations officer for an aviation unit, I was responsible for a group of soldiers who didn't appear to have any common sense. It became exhausting to counsel them in accomplishing their mission without screwing up in one way or another.

In aviation, we always use checklists, from preflight all the way to parking and engine shutdown. It keeps us out of trouble. So I applied the same thought process with my soldiers, produced a little card, which they all were required to memorize and to act upon, challenging each other, and the results were fantastic: The morale improved, discipline improved, the mission accomplishment improved, and everyone was happier, especially me. Here it is:

Common Sense Checklist

You can do anything you want, at anytime you want, without asking permission. However, You SHALL ask yourself these 4 questions.

1. Is it SAFE?
2. Is it LEGAL?
3. Is it MORAL?
4. Does it MAKE SENSE?

WARNING: Failure to answer each question honestly may result in embarrassment, loss of finances, loss of freedom, or loss of life.

When our son turned 4 years old, we taught it to him. Fast forward when he was 16, using my car to go on dates and

such. He would wave goodbye to us as he was leaving, and I would hold up 4 fingers. He knew exactly what I was talking about.

A few years later he was selected as the commandant of the USAF ROTC unit at the University of Georgia. UGA was a real party school, and there was a problem with the underclassmen in ROTC unit drinking. He called one evening and shared with me his plan to solve it. He gathered his subordinate commanders for a military meeting and explained that the problem drinking had to STOP.

He gave the order that they could work individually or as a group to offer solutions to the problem. Additionally they would meet at the end of the week to explain their plan(s). He would pick one of the plans, it would be implemented and enforced. Then he passed out the Common Sense Checklist cards to each subordinate commander with enough for each future aviator. “Your airmen will memorize this. If I discover that anyone of them does not know it by the end of the week, I am going to hold you personally responsible. Do you have any questions? DISMISSED!” Now he flies for a major airline. During his psych interview, he was asked, “How do you make decisions?” He started laughing and replied, “I have this thing stuck in my head, and I can't get rid of it.”

—Thomas W Owen
CW4, Aviation
U.S. Army (Ret)

In the late '70s, there was a bumper sticker on the back of a motor home that caught my eye and angered me at the same time. I have never forgotten what it said and have pondered it ever since. It read, “We are spending our kids' inheritance.”

At the time, I'm sure that I was in fact a selfish young person who just wanted

the golden ticket instead of the long road of hard work and chance. That was some 50 years ago, and now I am those people, with the opportunity to spend or share. I've realized that the world I grew up in was different, the parents did their job growing you until you finished school and then the conveyor belt of life kicked you out of the nest, ready or not—“Free fall until you fly or fail. We did it, now it's your turn. Good luck!” And free-fall we did: no money, paycheck-to-paycheck with endless hardships ahead, but we were free to do whatever we wanted.

I think it was, in fact, the challenge that refined me, the difficult road that made me appreciate hard work, commitment, loyalty, and long-suffering, but I have come to a very different conclusion from the bumper sticker people. Legacy transfer is critical to future generations. We must pour into our children and our children's children. Passing on ineptness is not an option. We must, as men and women of character and resolve, pass the torch, seamlessly, without interruption and without selfish resolve.

The societal disconnect from the elder patriarch to the youngest member of the group needs to be examined and passionately restored to a free-flowing, fluid interaction, passing on crucial techniques and formulas for successful and vibrant lives. Let us never hesitate to instill incremental values to those who go behind us. And to the selfish, nearsighted members: Keep your money and your bumper sticker.

Here is the conclusion: Don't hold God hostage for what well-meaning people with bad direction have done. It is your turn to right the wrong, be the leader you wish you'd had. If you take care of the small things, the big things will automatically come.

—Carl Leiber

Make plans, stick to schedules when you must, but keep your mind open

to spontaneity. Don't miss chances to do something new, unplanned, or slightly risky. Recently, I had the great opportunity to fly to Paris, but I only had two hours to make up my mind, pack up, and head to the airport. If I had pondered much on the decision, I would never have gone. It turned out to be one of the highlights of my life. Everything needn't be perfect to enjoy it. Take a chance!

—Jennifer Oberholtz

My advice to my children:

Family is family forever. We can always disagree, but do not get angry or hold a grudge. Additions to our family of our children's spouses are family. And their families are now our family. Same rules apply.

Learn the art of listening. Being louder doesn't mean you are more right.

Never say things that will hurt other people's feelings. Assume someone else wasn't thinking if they hurt your feelings. Forgive and forget.

You are never alone. Don't try to do anything without asking for wisdom from God.

—Jeff Stager

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001



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FILM

Jim Caviezel: On Truth, Faith, and His New Film 'Infidel'

CATHERINE YANG

When Jim Caviezel agreed to play Jesus of Nazareth over a decade ago in a Mel Gibson film, it became a pivotal event both in his life and career. "The Passion of the Christ" is still the highest-grossing Christian movie of all time. But now when Caviezel goes to

speak at schools and universities, he says he's baffled when he's told that he can talk about any of his movies except that one. We tiptoe around issues of faith in the strangest way, like visiting Rome only to ignore all the sacred architecture.

"You can't isolate history and say, 'Oh we're not going to talk about God here'; that makes no sense at all. Obviously, faith, religion, have great influences, even in non-Christian soci-

In a conversation with writer and director Cyrus Nowrasteh, Jim Caviezel insisted on the lead role, saying the film was important.

Every character has their beliefs deeply tested in director Cyrus Nowrasteh's new film, "Infidel." The film's release date is Sept. 18, 2020.

eties, [they] have big influences on how societies think, act, walk, talk, everything," said Caviezel by phone. The actor is also known for his role in the drama "Person of Interest."

Caviezel's character in his latest film, "Infidel," which premieres on Sept. 18, is fearlessly outspoken about his Christian faith, and that was what drew Caviezel to the character.

"I related to the character, I guess, because he stands up for what he believes in. And I know that's something that's lacking in today's cancel culture," he said. "People want to be liked so badly; they're so misinformed. You can be liked by the world, but do you want to be liked by many or loved by one?"

People of different faiths aren't at war with each other, Caviezel said. If anything, there is a culture war that has been waged against people of faith.

Caviezel initially wasn't approached to play the lead character, an American kidnapped in Cairo who ends up in an Iranian prison on spying charges. But he insisted.

Writer and director Cyrus Nowrasteh had worked with Caviezel a decade ago on "The Stoning of Soraya M.," beginning a long conversation between the two about faith and religion.

"So when he came to me, and he was looking for me to do a smaller part on the film ['Infidel'], I'd spoken to him so much and at great length that I said, 'Why didn't you come to me for the lead in this movie?'" Caviezel said.

Nowrasteh said that he thought Caviezel would be too busy, but Caviezel replied: "Not too busy for this. This is too important."

Bridging the Divide

"Infidel" is a suspenseful thriller that drops you right in the middle of an Islamic regime, where every character has their deepest beliefs, no matter how different, tested in the face of life-or-death situations. Caviezel plays an outspoken Christian blogger, Doug, and Claudia Karvan stars as his wife, a State Department official who has to try to rescue him herself when the American government refuses to intervene.

The film isn't based on one true story; it's an amalgamation of several true stories that viewers may recognize from the news. It is not a graphic film, though perhaps in today's climate, religion is more provocative than violence.

Caviezel remembered the 21 Christians executed by ISIS when he read what the character Doug would go through, how it blew him away that none of them would deny their faith. He thought about the disappearance of American agent Robert Levinson in Iran and the CIA scandal it revealed just a few years ago.

"The Stoning of Soraya M." put a spotlight on stonings, and Caviezel says that "Infidel" touches on other things that need light, like honor killings.

"There was one just recently where a father chased down his daughter and beat her to death, and drank tea next to her corpse while waiting for the police to show up," he said. "Obviously, these are the things that we can't even fathom, but in order to stop them we have to draw them out into the light."

Caviezel adds that there is less media coverage of these injustices than there used to be, that these aren't the stories they're telling.

"When I was younger, we learned about the hostages in Iran," Caviezel said. "When I was going to school in the '70s, we would see daily tolls: day 2, day 10, day 300—you knew those hostages, how long they were there. They were part of the definite narrative; we had to get those Americans home. That's different; that's changed now."

Acting is Caviezel's craft, and he said that he wants to use it to lend a voice to those who are crying out. When he and Nowrasteh worked on "The Stoning of Soraya M.," he remembers Nowrasteh telling him to be prepared to be asked tough questions about his religion by curious Muslims.

He told Caviezel: "Don't be afraid of offending Muslims. They're tough. They'll ask you a lot of questions about your faith and why you believe what you believe, and you probably better know your faith well, because they're going to want to know why [you believe that]."

And what Caviezel learned from these conversations was how the Muslims who want peace are suffering at the hands of the extremists.

"A lot of them said, much of the world panders to extremist Muslims, but the sad thing is the real victims are Muslims, the ones who aren't extreme, who want peace. They're the ones who are the most oppressed by these Islamic regimes, and many of them are in those prisons [that we

see Doug in]," Caviezel said.

Caviezel had a lot of security while he worked on these two films, and he wrote down what one of his security personnel told him: "He wanted people to understand what it's like there: Let people know in the West. Tell your media, you're not harming [peaceful] Muslims by taking a stand against radicals; you're helping [us]," Caviezel said.

What Caviezel learned on that first film and in conversation with Nowrasteh thereafter crystallized in the script for "Infidel," so when Nowrasteh finally approached him, Caviezel already had the heart to tell this story.

No one wanted the film to be anti-Muslim. "We have Muslim characters in the film that do take proactive measures, at the risk of their own lives, to fight against the extremists and the Islamic government," he said. Pressure and oppressive regimes can never quash true faith. In fact, the opposite often occurs, and we've seen many times in history that religion grows right in the middle of oppressive regimes.

Speaking the Truth

Caviezel said that the absolute most important thing in "Infidel," in any story, and in the conversations we have today between people of different faiths, is the truth.

"I'm looking for the truth that's in the story, and is it a fake truth? Is it a fake respect? Is it a fake peace?" he asked. We see examples of both false peace and true reconciliation of ideas in "Infidel," and their consequences.

"Like this [film], you're looking at Muslims and Christians and trying to bring the bridges together, trying to bring the divide together, and you can't do it by not being true, by pretending to be something you're not... that solves nothing," he said. "There's some great, entertaining things going on in 'Infidel' as well. We've got this Hezbollah leader and this Christian professor who, on another day, they might have been very good friends."

I don't believe we can sit there and be victims, but we have to be bold still and speak the truth that God gave us.

Jim Caviezel

The truth is, people of different faiths aren't at war with each other, Caviezel said. If anything, there is a culture war that has been waged against people of faith, and you don't have to look far to find, sometimes rather vicious, anti-Christian rhetoric or policies that would draw outrage if it were against any other group.

"This is a war that has to be fought and has to be won, and no one has ever won a victory on the backs of fake moral platitudes. We have to be bold and speak the truth, so that's what this thing equals to me. Looking for the moral redemption in that story is really what means [something] to me," he said. "I don't believe we can sit there and be victims, but we have to be bold still and speak the truth that God gave us."

"At the end of the day, you're going to be held accountable for what you did, you and your small voice," he said.

As a child, Caviezel saw "Ben-Hur" on the big screen. "I would say to myself, 'Man, these people really suffered for their faith,' never thinking that I would be on the screen, big and small, playing a guy suffering for his faith and representing a people suffering for theirs," he said. "The challenge from God is, 'Yes, Jim, you have a purpose, and can I use you now, as a man?' and that's all I can do."

Our culture isn't one that tends to see the good that can come from suffering. Caviezel himself loves the stories of saints and how they created greatness from it, but he says that you don't even need to look that far to understand it.

"Think about it like this: Look at an athlete; every day he goes in and works and trains, and he's in a lot of pain he has to deal with. The muscles hurt, but he knows that if he continues and engages in that, then that muscle will get stronger," Caviezel said. "Under pressure, how do you perform? Well, his training will show you if his training was good, when the rubber meets the pavement."

Caviezel's character goes through the same thing as those martyrs and those athletes, preparing long before he meets great suffering. The actor says that his character must have read the Gospel and the stories of the martyrs leading up to the story as we see it. "My character faces the same fate and has the same resolve in the face of evil, and I think that will inspire many people, even non-Christians who watch the film," he said. "That's how you start to engage in the truth of what's really going on."

Choosing Life

Parents reflect on a life-changing decision made 18 years ago

LOUISE BEVAN

Chastity and Kirk Barker, of San Antonio, Texas, have been married for almost 18 years and have two children, named Cameron and Caitlin.

When Chastity fell ill during her first pregnancy, Cameron's life almost never came to be. However, rather than take their doctor's advice and pursue an abortion, the couple decided to keep their baby. Today, 17-year-old Cameron is a "poster child" for the Barkers' mission: to help other moms choose life and trust in God.

An Impossible Decision

In January 2002, Chastity fell sick while she was pregnant with her first baby. "She lost 42 pounds in one month," Kirk said. "For that month, she was hospitalized most of that time. Eventually, the doctor told her, 'Look, there's nothing else that we can do.'"

The expectant parents were told that if they didn't terminate the pregnancy, Chastity's life would be at risk. "[The doctor] didn't want to work," Kirk said. "[He] never gave her an official diagnosis and all the nurses were pushing him to do blood work."

"I was scared," Chastity said, alluding to that moment. "I mean, I didn't want to have [the abortion], but I was scared that I was going to die."

Although Kirk didn't want to go through with the procedure at that time, it was a hard choice for him to make, between the life of his partner and the life of their unborn child. "Looking back on it now, I just wish we would have trusted God more," he said. "And even though we didn't go through with it, it still affects us today."

Frightened for Chastity's health, the couple heeded their doctor's advice and booked a termination.

However, on the day of the appointment, a stranger on the sidewalk intervened. A pro-life protester whom they encountered prayed for the troubled couple. Chastity and Kirk nonetheless proceeded to the clinic reception, but then came the second intervention of the day; before the couple was going to sign, they were handed what they now call a "death certificate" for their unborn son.

It was the last straw.

"God intervened in my life," said Kirk. "We got up and we walked out, and two weeks later, God healed her. Today, we have an awesome 17-year-old son who just graduated high school."

Welcoming Cameron

When the couple decided to pursue their pregnancy come what may, Chastity's family was very supportive. Loved ones rallied around to do what they could to the best of their ability to ensure the expectant mom's ongoing health and comfort.

Chastity made it to full-term with both her own and her baby's health intact. Her labor was induced, and she gave birth to Cameron via cesarean section.

"When he was first born, he didn't cry," Chastity said. "I just felt like, you know, everything was OK. There were no complications because I was worried about that... He was such a good baby."

Kirk felt the same thing upon seeing Cameron for the first time.

"It was just so exciting to see my son," Kirk said. "You know, he was very active



Cameron Barker as a baby.

It was a hard choice for him to make, between the life of his partner and the life of their unborn child.

in Mama's belly and he was a very active young child."

Since Cameron's birth, the couple revealed that they have not had any communication with the doctor who recommended Cameron's abortion. On one stage, Kirk said, Chastity was drafting a letter, but she eventually decided not to go through with sending it.

"Our hearts were full of anger for 13 years," Kirk said. "We were really upset with it. ... We almost killed our son. And if it wasn't for the last-minute intervention, we probably would have [gone] through it."

'We All Love Each Other'

As for Cameron, who supports his parents in their effort to share their story, he admitted feeling tongue-tied but overwhelmingly grateful for the decision that his mom and dad made. "I was grateful that they chose life for me," he said.

"Playing soccer, playing video games with my dad, playing with all the toys I did when I was younger... just, like, all the memories."

Every family experiences their ups and downs. "But at the end of the day," Cameron said, "we all love each other. We get through it."

However, Chastity's pregnancy complication with her son is not the only traumatic ordeal that the family has had to endure. On July 2, 2019, then-14-year-old Caitlin, Cameron's younger sister, fell suddenly sick and was rushed to the emergency room. Her condition quickly deteriorated, and the illness left her paralyzed from the neck down.

"She spent 35 days on a breathing tube and a feeding tube," Kirk said. "Her heart rate dropped so low that the decision was almost made to, you know, pull the tubes." But once again, Chastity and Kirk leaned on their faith and persevered.

After 113 days in the hospital, Caitlin returned home. However, through this ordeal, the family has vowed to help her reassess her ambitions in light of her setback and "make her shine."

"She started getting used to [using] one arm," Kirk said, "and she fights today, still, to get used to that second arm. But she hasn't given up, you know, she's happy."

Ask, Seek, and Trust

It is the Barker family's hope that their journey will inspire other parents to ask questions, seek help, and always trust in God.

"Don't let your decision be based on fear," Kirk said. "You know, there are a lot of charities and organizations that will help moms through the process [of exploring their options], and so we just encourage them to hear our story and seek the help they need before they make a decision that might affect them for the rest of their life."

"I was a non-believer most of my life. I turned my back on God. ... One day God showed me I was wrong, and so I was blessed with the opportunity to speak."

The Barkers are thankful that they chose life that day. However, Kirk realizes that "not a lot of kids are that fortunate" and that many aren't allowed to live.

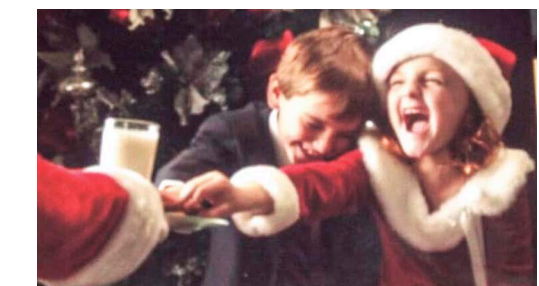
Additionally, the dad of two is grateful for the father-son moments he would otherwise have missed. Meanwhile, both parents are proud of rising to their "responsibility," as Kirk called it, to do everything they could to create a life for Cameron, rather than taking it away.



(Top) Jim Caviezel stars as a kidnapped American journalist in "Infidel." (Above) Caviezel's character (C) in "Infidel" gets locked up in an Iranian prison under the Islamic regime.



(Above) Baby Cameron with his mother Chastity Barker at the hospital.



(Top right) Cameron and his sister Caitlin.



(Right) A young Cameron.



(Far right) Cameron recently graduated from high school.

HISTORY

‘Presentism’ Imperils Our Future by Distorting Our Past

If presentism becomes the conventional wisdom, we will corrupt our history and forget much of the rest

LAWRENCE W. REED

New York City is famous for its fashion runways. Amid the oohs and ahhs and camera flashes, men and women sashay past the clothing cognoscenti hoping for approving reviews.

With a little help from “Star Trek” technology, the Big Apple was the site of a most extraordinary apparel show just last week. Several people from the past were teleported to a runway in Soho so they could strut their stuff: Cicero from ancient Rome was there. So was Joan of Arc from the 15th century; medieval Russia’s Ivan the Terrible; and Tastiguy, a cannibal from Papua New Guinea. Even Thag the Bohemian caveman showed up.

Judges in the audience represented some of the world’s most famous fashion houses: Giorgio Armani, Fendi, Prada, Versace, Salvatore Ferragamo, Gucci, and Max Mara, among others. The show, unfortunately, was an unmitigated disaster from start to finish. The critics were merciless, their worst epithets so distasteful I cannot repeat them here. But here’s a sample of the less offensive remarks:

“Hey Cicero, is that your mother’s blanket you’re wearing? And what’s with the sandals? Can’t you afford a decent pair of shoes?” cried the Gucci guy.

The judge from Giorgio Armani was especially offended by Joan of Arc’s armor-plated bra. “Where did you get that tin can, Joan? From the dump?” he shouted.

“Ivan looks like an Eskimo in drag” chortled the Prada person. “Hey Ivan, who does your laundry? The sewer treatment plant?”

Poor Tastiguy really got slammed. “Your breath reeks from 40 feet away. Get your act together!” screamed the Ferragamo rep.

Then came the caveman’s turn. “You look like you just stepped out of a ‘Far Side’ cartoon! And what kind of name is ‘Thag anyway?’” the Versace saleswoman yelled. “Is your last name Gag?”

My contrived report may or may not be humorous. You might think it ridiculous. Fair enough. But the sentiments expressed by the fictional fashion show critics are not

A profoundly good historian restrains his preconceptions, biases, and political agenda and seeks to understand the whole of a past event or person. He doesn’t erase them.

far removed from a trend that’s disturbingly on the rise today. It takes the form of judging people of the past by current standards, a failure to consider them in the context of their time and culture, a narrow focus on certain attributes rather than the whole person. Sometimes it takes a little absurdity to illustrate why something is absurd.

Terms for this way of looking at the past range from intertemporal bigotry to chronological snobbery to cultural bias to historical quackery. The more clinical label is “presentism.” It’s a fallacious perspective that distorts historical realities by removing them from their context. In sports, we call it “Monday morning quarterbacking.”

Presentism is fraught with arrogance. It presumes that present-day attitudes didn’t evolve from earlier ones but popped fully formed from nowhere into our superior heads. To a presentist, our forebears constantly fail to measure up, so they must be disdained or expunged. As one writer put it, “They feel that their light will shine brighter if they blow out the candles of others.”

Our ancestors were each a part of the era in which they lived, not ours. History should be something we learn from, not run from; if we analyze it through a presentist prism, we will miss much of the nuanced milieu in which our ancestors thought and acted.

As I’ve written elsewhere: “Imagine if we could join the Wright Brothers back to life for an hour so the critic could berate them. He would say, ‘You dummies! You two made this rickety flying machine and didn’t even install seat belts and tray tables, let alone in-flight movies. What good were you?’”

“Or it would be like attacking Adam Smith because he didn’t give us all there was to know about economics. He completely left out the Austrian trade cycle theory, for example.”

A profoundly good historian restrains his preconceptions, biases, and political agenda and seeks to understand the whole of a past event or person. He doesn’t erase them. There are degrees of presentism but the most radical form shows up in the destruction of monuments, the banning of books, and the flushing of entire generations down the Orwellian memory hole—all tactics employed shamelessly by history’s worst totalitarian regimes and now by many protesters and their presentist professors.

Amazingly, rioting presentists in Britain recently demanded the destruction of the Egyptian pyramids of Giza because they were built with slave labor. How could such an act possibly improve our understanding of the people of that age? As writer Chip Hughes laments: “We all too often color history with the lens of our current prejudices. Remember, attitudes and cultural values have changed over time.”

Paul Bartow, writing for AEI, explains that:

“The task of the historian, or the modern university student for that matter, is

not to descend from on high and mete out judgment. As historian Herbert Butterfield stated, the historian should be a ‘recording angel’ rather than a ‘hanging judge.’ When one studies the past, it is meant to be a deeply introspective experience. The goal is to enter into conversation with historical figures, to understand their world as fully as we can, to learn from them, and to let them challenge our worldviews. As historian Ashley Cruseturner so aptly states, ‘History represents the preservation of our collective past as well as the study of change over time. ... The role of the historian encompasses a sacred duty to offer a multi-dimensional picture of the past (and the people of the past) in the context of the past.’”

My summer 2020 reading included a fascinating book by historian Mark Perry, “Grant and Twain: The Story of An American Friendship.” It’s about two giants of 19th century America, Ulysses S. Grant and Mark Twain. In the book, I learned that Robert E. Lee’s nephew Fitzhugh marched alongside the casket at Grant’s funeral and that Grant’s wife, Julia, forged a close friendship with Varina Davis, widow of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. I couldn’t help but think, “If people you might dismiss as natural antagonists could make peace with history and with each other, why can’t we do so today?”

All too often these days, the poison of presentism prevents that very thing. Nonetheless, as writer Rosamina Lowi puts it, “History demands our humble understanding, not our hubristic outrage.”

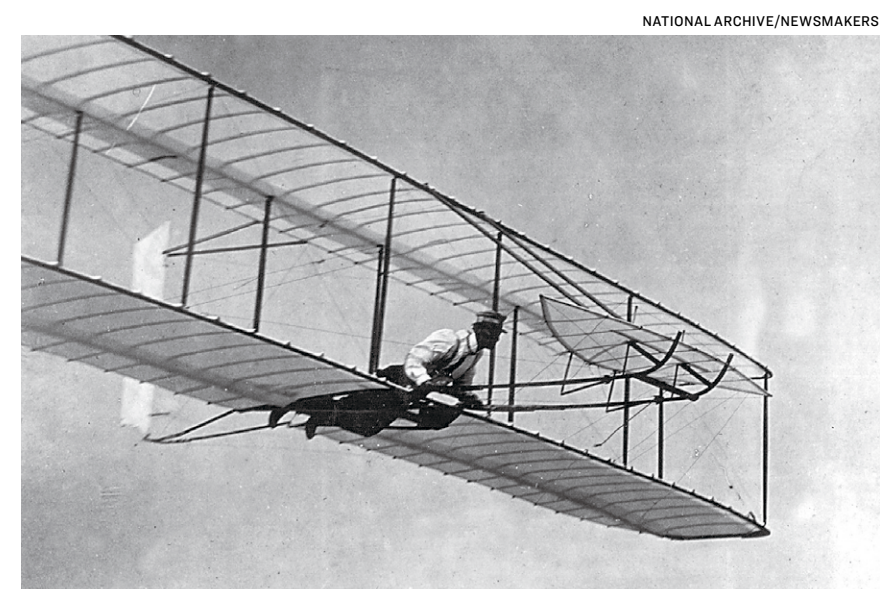
Presentism deserves your attention. If it becomes the conventional wisdom, we will corrupt our history and forget much of the rest. My gut tells me that any people who judge the past by the present will in the future be harshly judged themselves.

For additional information, see:

- “The Dangerous Virus Spreading Across College Campuses” by David Davenport
- “Presentism At Its Worst” by Sam Hanna Jr.
- “Warts and All” by Dan Hannan
- “What Future Do We Have If the Woke Warriors Destroy Our Past?” by Douglas Murray
- “The Growing Threat of Historical Presentism,” from the AEI blog
- “Against Presentism” by Lynn Hunt
- “Presentism Pandemic: Misjudging the Past,” from The London Edition blog

Lawrence W. Reed is president emeritus and Humphreys family senior fellow at FEE, having served for nearly 11 years as FEE’s president (2008–2019). He is author of the 2020 book “Was Jesus a Socialist?” as well as “Real Heroes: Incredible True Stories of Courage, Character, and Conviction” and “Excuse Me, Professor: Challenging the Myths of Progressivism.” His website is LawrenceWReed.com

This article was originally published on FEE.org



One wouldn’t dream of asking the Wright brothers why they omitted seat belts, tray tables, or in-flight movies.



This summer, some British protesters called for the destruction of Egypt’s Giza Pyramids, claiming they were built by slaves.



HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling by the Rules

A conversation with HSLDA attorney Tj Schmidt

BARBARA DANZA

The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a legal advocacy group for homeschoolers, has recently received an increase in requests for representation in some states.

As many new homeschoolers step out along their journey, it’s important they understand their legal rights and responsibilities. I asked Thomas J. “Tj” Schmidt, a staff attorney at HSLDA, for his insights and advice.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Please introduce us to HSLDA. What is it, and what work does it do?

TJ SCHMIDT: HSLDA is a national organization focused on helping parents homeschool their children. We explain the law in each state and help parents when they have difficulties with local school officials or just about anyone else. We provide both legal and practical advice while advocating for any parent who is interested in homeschooling for any reason. HSLDA was founded by homeschool parents, for homeschool parents, almost 40 years ago.

THE EPOCH TIMES: While homeschooling is legal in all 50 states, each state has its own regulations when it comes to homeschooling. How can a new homeschooling family best ensure they’re following the rules?

MR. SCHMIDT: Every state is different when it comes to what is required! But we explain in easy-to-understand terms what you must

do to educate your child. HSLDA has a series of articles for every state that will walk parents through the basic requirements. Members can speak directly with the team for their state and get any form that might be needed to withdraw from school and begin homeschooling. We also provide individual assistance for each member who needs step-by-step directions.

THE EPOCH TIMES: The first step to homeschooling a child who has attended public school is to withdraw that child from the school district. What is the best way to do this?

MR. SCHMIDT: For most states, a parent should notify their local school in writing of their intent to withdraw and homeschool their child. In a few states, a specific form to withdraw might be necessary. Depending on the state, the parent will often need to submit a notice of their intent to homeschool to their local district or state department of education. If the parent is pulling a child out after school has already started, then following the proper procedure is extremely important to follow—and to document that you have done so. In some states, a truancy action can be started in as little as three to six missed days.

THE EPOCH TIMES: HSLDA has seen a significant increase in requests for legal representation in certain states. What do you attribute this to? Can you give us an overall update?

If you are withdrawing your child from school after it has already started, it is extremely important to follow the proper procedure and document meticulously.

“Some states do have some complicated procedures, and that means there are plenty of ways in which both school officials and parents can make mistakes.”

Tj Schmidt, attorney, Home School Legal Defense Association

MR. SCHMIDT: HSLDA has seen an increase in a need for our help in just about every state. Many states didn’t decide what they were going to do to reopen until very late, and some are still struggling to try and implement the hybrid/remote plan that they are going to follow. Because of this, many parents didn’t learn until late what options might be available.

We believe there are several different reasons for the increase in the need for help in dealing with the legal challenges.

First, many school officials are struggling to implement these policies, and there is plenty of confusion. Second, because many parents are deciding that what is going to be offered will not work for their student or family and they are going to homeschool, it appears that some school officials are willing to try anything to keep kids enrolled in school. Finally, some states do have some complicated procedures, and that means there are plenty of ways in which both school officials and parents can make mistakes. But we are certainly seeing plenty of desperation on the part of school officials to try to keep kids enrolled in public school.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What legal challenges should a homeschooling family be prepared to face from their local government or school districts?

MR. SCHMIDT: The primary issue right now is problems withdrawing from school. Many school officials all across the country are claiming that a parent must use an accredited curriculum in order to homeschool (which isn’t true in any state). Others want parents to come down for a meeting before “allowing” the parent to withdraw their child. Another common statement is that if they want to re-enroll their child back into the school system that they could have problems. Some school officials have even said that they might not have room for students to come back. This is almost laughable because every state has an obligation to provide a free appropriate public education.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What do you recommend a homeschooling family do to best protect themselves legally?

MR. SCHMIDT: I would suggest that parents educate themselves as to what is required, find a local homeschool support group, keep records of any paperwork and school work, and join HSLDA.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Is there any final advice you’d like to offer homeschoolers?

MR. SCHMIDT: Relax. While education and academics are important, you don’t have to try and recreate a traditional school in your home. In fact, your children will likely benefit more if you are able to evaluate the needs of your child (academically, emotionally, and mentally) and focus on incorporating those needs into your educational program. You have the flexibility within a homeschool program to provide a much more individualized educational program for your child. But recognize that you don’t need to create a genius or accomplish everything in the first day, first month, or even the first year. And remember, HSLDA is here to help you every step of the way.

DEAR JUNE with June Kellum



When a Couple’s Views on Family Planning Differ

→ Advice for coming to agreement

QUESTION: How does a couple come to an agreement—both being godly in character and fearing God—when one feels that planning parenthood is wise (using life-preventative measures in the marriage) and the other sees the true blessing that children are, and does not want to sin against God by knowingly canceling His purpose for intimacy in their union with artificial means.

—Karen D., California

ANSWER: I can suggest something that will bring you out of conflict. Hopefully once the dynamic between you has shifted, this will allow for deeper reflection.

For you as the wife, I would suggest this: Read your scripture carefully about the roles of husband and wife, and perhaps consult a trusted spiritual counselor. As I understand it, the husband/father has traditionally been held to be the spiritual leader of the family. This means that when there is conflict that cannot be resolved, he makes the final decision.

Now, of course, he must be kind and considerate of the needs and wishes of his family, but since he bears the most responsibility, he must also have the power to make executive decisions. Certainly, though, no man is perfect, nor will he make perfect decisions all the time—indeed sometimes the pres-

sures of the world will skew his thinking. However, then a loving and moral wife can see this and bolster him so he has the strength to again see clearly. Part of this is having faith in his divine side—even if that side is obscured.

There are two important things to note here: First, you must be sincere in accepting him as the leader—this is why I recommend you first read and consult your spiritual adviser. Secondly, although you might accept his decision in this matter, you are absolutely not required to change your moral position.

By sincerely accepting that he has the right to make this decision, you will no longer be in conflict with each other on the matter. He will now have squarely on his shoulders both the spiritual/moral issue and the issue that he is asking you to do something that you believe is wrong. But any wrongdoing is now between him and God. Such a profound sacrifice on your part will, I think, also inspire him to reflect more deeply, and certainly the wisdom of the heart is more easily heard in peace rather than in conflict.

And in this process, though you may find that you struggle with intimacy, don’t blame him, but don’t pretend everything is fine. Perhaps it will be better to abstain until you are ready for a child. And since this is such an emotional issue, please do get help and support from your community.

Sincerely, June

QUESTION: What makes someone become an extreme cheapskate? I’m 80 years old and have always wanted to know.

—Lillian S., Texas

ANSWER: Extreme thinking very often has roots in a strong emotion. This could be fear, desire, or even a fervently held belief. This emotion causes people to lose perspective.

Regarding a cheapskate, perhaps the person fears loss, or they desire to have more for themselves (selfishness), or as a child the value of being frugal was impressed upon them while the balancing virtue of charity (generosity) was not.

Of course, there could be other reasons, too. If you know someone who is like this, think of the stories they have told you—there might be a clue there.

Sincerely, June

Do you have a question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Whether it’s a frustrating family matter, a social etiquette issue, a minor annoyance, or a big life question, send it to DearJune@EpochTimes.com or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

June Kellum is a married mother of two and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics.

Practice and Perseverance: Let's Teach Our Students to Write

JEFF MINICK

To impress upon the students in my homeschooling seminars the importance of writing, I would point out our everyday dependence on the written word, ranging from medical charts and legal briefs to police reports, inventories, and emails to the boss. Billions of dollars, I would tell the class, are lost annually because of poor communications. I would ask them whether the inadvertent use of a word or a badly constructed sentence on social media had ever led to a misunderstanding with a friend.

But the argument that best captured their attention involved a fictitious John and Mary, newly graduated from college, strangers whose eyes lock together while at a party. (At this point, I would torment my students by singing a few bars of "Some Enchanted Evening" from "South Pacific.") It's love at first sight, and they spend the rest of the evening entranced with each other, oblivious to those around them.

The glitch? John is an Army lieutenant en route to Afghanistan, and so forced to communicate with Mary chiefly by email.

I then presented the students with two scenarios:

Scenario No. 1: In his badly written emails, John does tell Mary he loves her, but spends most of the time complaining about the bad food, the bugs, the boredom, the heat, sunburn, and dirty socks.

Scenario No. 2: Writing like a poet-warrior, John tells Mary how the stars above the mountains remind him of the night they met and how he looks a dozen times daily at her photograph. He describes the magic he felt the first time she touched his hand, the sound of her laughter, the beauty of her eyes.

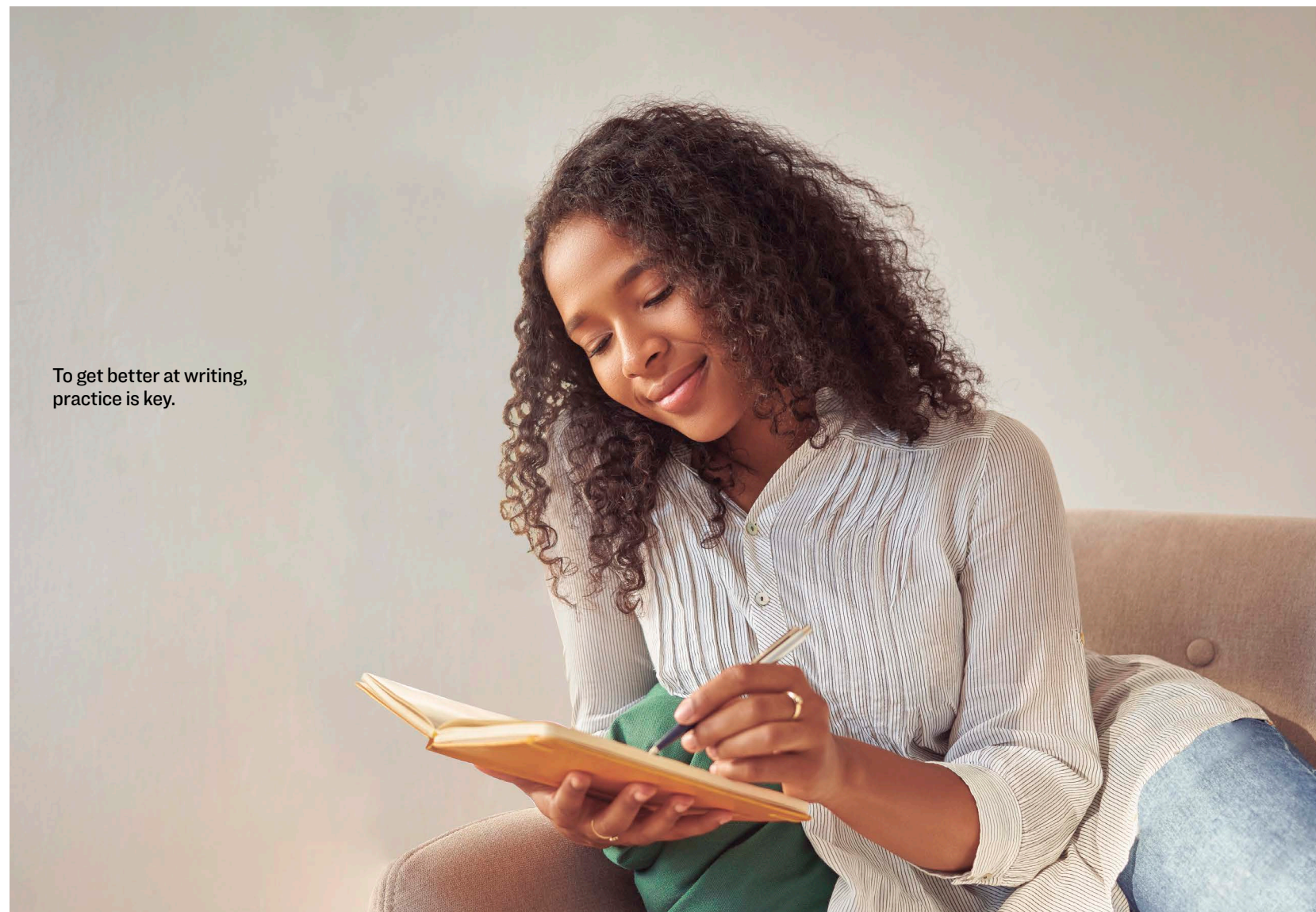
Then I would ask the girls in class: Which John is more appealing? You can guess the results.

Why So Many Write So Poorly

In a 2015 article in The Washington Post, "Why Americans Can't Write," Natalie Wexler wrote that in 2011 only 24 percent of students in the 8th and 12th grades were proficient in writing. As a consequence, nearly all colleges now offer students remedial courses in composition. Does this create better writers? Apparently not. In "Academically Adrift: Limited



Consider having your student keep a journal.



To get better at writing, practice is key.

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Learning on College Campuses," authors Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa reveal that during their first two years of college 45 percent of students demonstrated no improvement in a range of skills, including composition.

The reason for this failure is simple: Far too many of our students receive little instruction or practice in composition.

In many schools, grammar is neglected after fifth or sixth grade, and the art of the essay is all too often taught piecemeal or not at all. Part of the reason for this is that grading essays places a burden on teachers, and it's not enough to write an essay or two a year. No, to help students become competent in composition the teacher must have them write essay after essay.

Practice, Practice, Practice

While teaching, I often graded 50 to 60 essays and journals per week. It was tough, but here was my reward: Many of my students returned from college to tell me of their success as writers. Several found employment at their university's writing center, where they coached students deficient in the art of composition. A business professor at Appalachian State told one of my former students that his thesis for graduation was the best undergraduate piece of work the professor had ever read.

Another young man, Will, turned his back on college, enlisted in the Marine Corps, and joined Marine Recon. Once his sergeant asked him to write up a report. Will presented the report the following day. After reading what Will had written, the sergeant tossed it aside and said with a smirk, "Your college girlfriend wrote this report, didn't she?" "No, Sergeant," Will replied. "In fact, I help her write her papers." Will was no Shakespeare. He was an average student.

But he had learned to write in high school.

Why? Because for four years, he took my classes in history and literature, which meant that he wrote scores of essays.

These students who thanked me for "teaching" them to write always made me smile. I did teach the basics of writing an essay—if you can put together an essay, you can tackle anything from a business report to a love letter—and we studied some grammar,

syntax, and vocabulary.

But that's not how the students learned to write.

They learned to write by writing.

Some Practical Advice

There are numerous vehicles for writing. Here are three that worked for my students.

Journals. Consider having your student keep a journal. My young people wrote three entries a week, each 15 minutes long, with the stipulation that they were not to write anything unless they wanted me to read it. Some wrote funny anecdotes about their day, others described their pain over a grandparent's death or their failure to make the cut on a sports team. One young man simply described what he ate at each meal. What they wrote mattered less than the fact that they were driving their pens across the paper.

Letters. Asking students to send letters to grandparents, friends, and even celebrities is an excellent way to have them write with a purpose. In the case of celebrities, several of my students were delighted when their letters brought a reply.

Essays. These are the heart of any composition course. Here I suggest a weekly essay for teenagers, running from 400 to 800 words long. Google "writing essays," and dozens of sites will pop up.

Some Additional Tips

In my personalized manual on writing for students, which may be found at AshevilleLatin.com along with additional resources, I included these suggestions:

Generally avoid the use of "you" in academic essays. Too often "you" sounds as if the writer is commanding the reader, as in "Hawthorne will confuse you in the third paragraph." Use "you" with discretion in personal essays.

Avoid using "I feel" or "I think." Your name is on the essay; the reader knows what you feel or think. In addition, these words weaken your arguments. Compare these two statements: "I think Carolina will win the ACC" and "Carolina will win the ACC."

Avoid repeating the same word too often on a page, unless the word is germane to the topic. Select the right word. When you edit your essay, choose words with care. To paraphrase Mark

Twain, the difference between the right word and the wrong word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug. Consult a thesaurus.

Make the delete key your friend. Isaac Bashevis Singer once wrote, "The wastepaper basket is the writer's best friend." Put the trash in the trash.

Use active voice when possible. "Auntie Em wore a black dress" is more direct and powerful than "A black dress was worn by Auntie Em." (Note: In the passive voice, the subject doesn't perform the action.)

Become an Editor

Here is where so many students fall down. They complete the first draft of a paper and consider it finished, little realizing how tinkering with their work will vastly improve it. Here are some steps to make editors out of students:

Read your essay. Did you follow the rules of mechanics? Do you have a thesis? Do your paragraphs have topic sentences? Is the paper organized? Are you missing words?

Now read the essay aloud. Reading aloud slows you down, allowing you to pay closer attention to your work. You will also hear when a sentence rings false.

Have someone else read the essay for errors.

Print the essay and read it again. If necessary, make more corrections and then print the essay a final time.

A Gift for a Lifetime

Nearly everyone can learn to write clear, coherent prose. As should be plain from my above observations, this is less a matter of talent than of hard work and perseverance. There are no shortcuts, there is no magical formula, but the payoff is huge.

Ours is known as the Age of Communication. When we parents and teachers give our young people the ability to communicate through the written word, we are granting them full citizenship in this age.

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.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Week 37, 2020

The End

by A.A. Milne

When I was One, I had just begun.
When I was Two, I was nearly new.
When I was Three, I was hardly me.
When I was Four, I was not much more.
When I was Five, I was just alive.
But now I am six, I'm as clever as clever
So I think I'll be six now Forever and ever.

YUGANOV KONSTANTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same field, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882), AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER AND POET

WHY DID THE SCARECROW WIN THE NOBEL PRIZE?

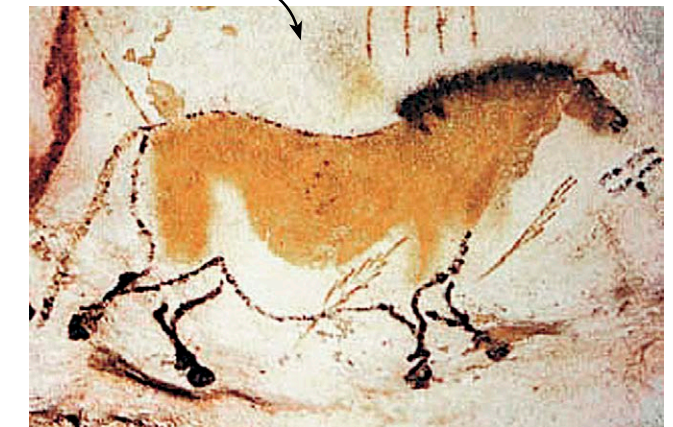
BECAUSE HE WAS OUT-STANDING IN HIS FIELD.

STUDIO 11/SHUTTERSTOCK

This Week in History

PREHISTORIC PAINTINGS DISCOVERED

A cave painting of a dun horse at Lascaux.



On Sept. 12, 1940, four French teenagers followed their dog into a cavern. The teens wound up discovering the now famous Lascaux Cave Paintings—a series of hundreds of paintings on the walls of caves in southwest France that date back more than 15,000 years. The sophisticated works are considered one of the first known examples of human artistry.

By Aidan Danza, age 14

AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

There are two subspecies (or species, depending on which scientists you ask) of African elephant: The African savannah elephant and the African forest elephant.

The forest elephant is smaller, standing eight feet tall, and lives in forests. The savannah elephant, on the other hand, is 11 feet tall, and lives on the savannah. Both subspecies inhabit a patchy range in central to south Africa. Savannah elephants can weigh up to 4 tons for females and 6 1/2 tons for males. The elephant's trunk must be the most useful nose in the animal kingdom. Instead of just sniffing and breathing, like most noses do, the trunk can lift things, drink water, and it can also be used as a trumpet. They often enjoy a shower, made by sucking water up the trunk and then spraying it out over their bodies. The trunk has 40,000 muscles so it can do all these things, and its skull needs a special bone to balance out the weight of the trunk.

Their ears are also quite useful—they not only listen to a wider range of sounds than we can, but also can flap around to keep themselves cool in the hot African summers. African elephants stay in herds consisting of only females and young. There is a leadership structure, in which the older, more experienced elephant is the "matriarch" or dominant female. Elephants can live for up to 70 years, and when an old matriarch dies, its oldest daughter will take its place.

With a 22-month pregnancy, elephants have the longest pregnancy of any mammal. When they do give birth, the baby will be three feet tall and 200 pounds. The baby will stay very close to its mother for its first four years, and males will leave the herd when they are 8 years old. Males often form their own loose herds, or sometimes stay on their own.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

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

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Across

1	Last summer month (6)
3	The beginning of Spring (5)
6	It starts when the ball drops at Times Square (7)
8	Spring color! (7)
10	Wintry weather is ____ (4)

Down

2	Earth's light source (3)
3	Planting month (3)
4	A bit cold outside (6)
5	Time to ready the soil (5)
6	First summer month (4)
7	It may pop out in the spring (3)
9	A Fall, back to school month " ____ " (9)
11	It may come with a summer thunderstorm (9)
12	These get planted in the fall (5)
13	A cold Winter month (6)
17	Winter blanket (4)
18	Summer swimming weather (3)
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A media that puts you first

Hello, Epoch VIP—and welcome to this week’s issue of The Epoch Times! We’re incredibly grateful that you’re holding this paper in your hands right now. In fact, that’s the moment most of us look forward to each week, whether we’re in the field reporting on the latest news or in the bullpen rushing late-night proofs to the presses. All of our work is done with this fact in mind—the fact that every week, a reader like you will pick up our paper and look both to be informed by the truth and inspired by tradition. It’s a fact that lets us take pride in the work we do, and also a fact that motivates us to push ourselves a little harder every day. If this is your first time getting our paper in

the mail, that’s wonderful! As this will be the baseline for you to evaluate us by, we hope you can take a good look. From here on out, the hope is that you’ll find us becoming a better read with each week. To that end, consider us always at your service. As an independent media, we’re not backed by any corporation or multimillion-dollar holding company, so you—our readers—are truly the people to whom we answer. We’re honored to have so many Americans depending on us as an honest window to the world, and it’s a duty we don’t take lightly. Feel free to contact us for anything from issues with your subscription to a suggestion for a new column. Let our editors know if anything can be even more accurate. Use our social media to post new ideas. Our ears

are open: we’re trying to bring truth and tradition back into vogue again, and we’d love any help we can get. Aside from “very informed person,” Epoch VIP has a second meaning for us. You are also indeed a very important person—not just to us, but to the rest of the nation. You’re a person who values honesty, freedom of thought, and the goodness humanity has passed down from generation to generation since its oldest days. And for such a person, we’d gladly give our all. Thank you for reading and for being a subscriber. Most of all, thank you for giving us hope that a media rooted in honesty can thrive in today’s society.

In Truth and Tradition,
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