

# Young Boy Boycotts Company That Makes Boys Cots.

**San Francisco** – Tristan Moore, 10 years old, has officially announced that he is launching a boycott. His target? *Cots and Stuff*, a company based out of Johnson City, Tennessee, that makes, among other things, portable sleeping devices. Young Tristan chose this cot making company for his boycott when he heard about the other boycotts happening all over the country.

Says Tristan, “I didn’t know what a boycott was so I asked my parents and they said I’m only 10 years old and shouldn’t be worried about boycotts. I was still confused about boycotts when I remembered that Mrs. Riding (Tristan’s 4th-grade teacher) always tell us to break words down into smaller parts so that is what I did. **Boy Cotts**. So I looked around on the internet and found a company that made cots for boys. So now I’m boycotting a cot company that makes cots for boys. That made about as much sense as anything else.”

If that makes little sense, you are not alone. We pressed young Tristan for a better explanation on the boycott.

“Um... I don’t know. There was that lady on TV that people were boycotting and then there was all that Starbucks stuff. It seems like people love to boycott stuff. I thought it sounded fun. But I still have no idea what a boycott does. Maybe someone that has boycotted can explain to me what a boycott is supposed to do. As far as I can tell it’s just a funny word that gets a lot of people angry or excited and then it doesn’t really do anything.”

Maybe Tristan understands boycotts better than he realizes.

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# The One and Only Pencil

Our ode to the mighty pencil on this, the National Pencil Day!

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## **The Pencilite Heritage** by Ben Plunkett

Pencil Day honors this day in 1858 when the first modern pencil came into creation. I will admit that I have lived in denial of my pencilite heritage for many years, probably since high school. But then just two weeks ago I was on a mad search for the ever elusive blue pen. On that day remembrance took me and I shed a tear as I beheld our legion of ancient yet unsharpened pencils lying idly in the junk drawer beneath the microwave. It was at that moment that I determined to return to my roots. So that very same day I bought a pencil sharpener and sharpened those babies to a razor tip. It was not long before waves of love and goodness washed over me as the fine lead point flew gracefully across the page. It had been so long...so long. And then I suddenly stopped. The pencil was turning...turning, turning, turningturningturning. And then it was a rocket zooming up into the ceiling fan. Oh how it flew that day, brothers and sisters, how it flew.

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## **The Short Pencil** by D.A.Speer

I've never been good at the game of golf. One measly time I was able to chip a ball into the hole from off of the green, but it wasn't due to any skill whatsoever. By the time I was in high school, I was able to hit par...for the first two holes. It was always downhill from there, on the express train to double bogey town. I was left fuming and defeated time and

time again on the fairways, angrily chopping away in futility because my score had long since exploded past anything reasonable.

But you know who was there for me through it all? The trusty short pencil.

Yes, it etched my failures onto the scorecard as the game inevitably progressed toward its disastrous end, but it never once complained. It was always there on the golf cart, clipped to the steering wheel, ready to celebrate with me in my victories and agonize with me in my defeats.

Truth be told, I always preferred staying in the cart and driving around instead of actually playing anyway. There are too few times in life that you can drive a miniature cart around outside, and it was always nice to have a small wooden pencil pal right there by my side.

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### **The Tale of the Bloody Pencil** by Phill Lytle

It was a dark day. A day of strife. A day of violence.

There was enmity between siblings. The elder abdicated his ordained duty and refused to assist his younger sibling with his arithmetic. The younger begged. He fell to his knees in desperate supplication. All his groans and utterings fell on deaf ears. The elder rejected every cry for help. He rebuffed every tearful plea.

It was then that something deep and dark broke in the soul of the younger sibling. Something ancient and evil awoke in the heart of that young child. A black stain that had always been there, but now knew that its time had come.

It searched for the closest instrument of war at hand. The options were limited. But there, on the table, was something that would suffice in this hour of great need. A lonely,

innocent pencil. There it rested from its academic efforts. There it lied, pure and undefiled, perfectly oblivious to the horrors that awaited.

The younger stretched out his hand, took the pencil, and lunged at the elder. He stabbed him then. He stabbed him with force, anger, and indignation. The elder stood there, shards of a pencil lodged in his hand, confusion etched on his face. How had it come to this?

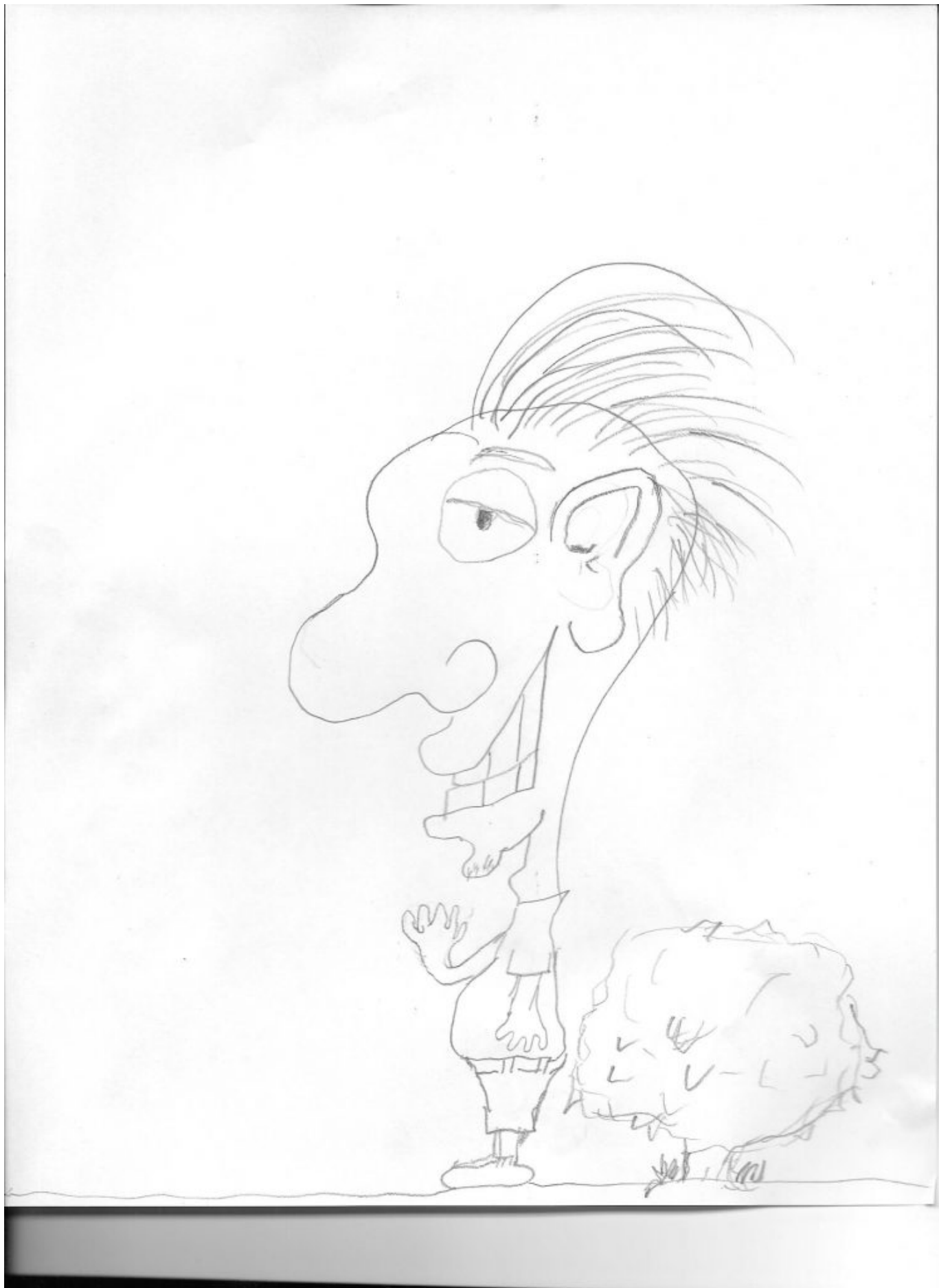
The poor pencil was broken and bloody. It fell to the floor, dropped by the younger in disgust and shame. There it rested, never to be used again as a tool of learning and knowledge. It was discarded after the events of the day. Weep for the bloody pencil, which suffered death and destruction through no fault of its own. Weep for all such tools that are wielded in anger and rage. Weep.

The end.

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**L'Art du Le Pencil** by Ben Plunkett

Without a pencil, I could not have created this masterpiece of masterpieces.



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## **The Always Reliable Pencil** by Phill Lytle

Technology is great. It really is. We are more than blessed to live in a time with technological advances that feel like science fiction come to life. Every aspect of our lives has the potential to be enhanced by ever-expanding and advancing technology.

But what happens when technology lets us down? Take the classroom for example. Schools are moving to more and more technological usage. There is a reliance on tablets, computers, and things of that nature. Yet it is not uncommon for things to go wrong. For systems to crash, computers to stall, tablets to bug out.

That is when the trusty and reliable pencil steps up the plate and does what it was created to do. The pencil is always ready to help. It is always available. It is always at hand, primed for use. You take it in your hand and you put its point to paper and viola! Glorious writing appears on the page. And when the point is dulled or the lead breaks, you take it to the sharpener and you give it a few twirls in those blades of renewal and all things are good again.

That is the power of the pencil. It is simple. Boring. But it lives in ever-ready anticipation to help. For that, let us be thankful. The pencil never lets us down.

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# **Millions Watch Porn Star on**

# Sunday Night, Some on 60 Minutes

Continuing an unbroken record that stretches years, millions of Americans sat down Sunday night for around 30 minutes to watch a porn actress.

“I do this once a week usually. Sometimes twice” said one young man who wished to remain anonymous. “I’m sure I’ve seen Stormy Daniels before, but it was weird seeing her with clothes on.”

There have been over 7 billion web searches for pornography since the start of 2015. Also, 1 in 5 mobile searches is for pornographic content.

“Wait, she actually has a life?” another anonymous man commented. “I always thought her entire existence was for my personal exploitive use. I’m really surprised to think of her as, well, another human being.”

24% of smartphone owners admit to having pornographic material on their mobile handset.

Not everyone was happy with the porn star’s fully clothed, non-sexual appearance on 60 minutes.

A third anonymous man remarked, “I am a big fan of Miss Daniels, but I feel like she really sold out Sunday night. It seemed very shameless of her.”

64% of Christian men and 15% of Christian women say they watch porn at least once a month.[1. All stats courtesy of [Covenant Eyes](#).]

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# Man Now Unable to Tell Difference Between Satire and Real News

CHICAGO, IL—Local ESL teacher Gowdy Cannon today confirmed that he no longer can distinguish between satire articles and actual news articles on his Facebook feed.

Cannon, 39 and also an associate pastor of a Bel-Cragin area Baptist church, commented, “Yeah, I give up. I saw a headline the other day about a couple getting married with AR-15s at the service. And I thought, ‘Those rascals at [Babylon Bee](#) or The Onion have really outdone themselves this time!’ But turns out, it was true. Then, I saw where Trump had blamed Obama for the stock market plunging one day, complete with a tweet by Trump with phrases like ‘Not good!’ and I thought, ‘Yep, that sounds about right.’ Turns out, it was a Bee article. I have no idea anymore.”

Sources close to Cannon at the website he writes for, [Rambling Ever On](#), have also verified that he has thrown in the towel. “I mean, if [Snopes](#) is so clueless they are fact checking Babylon Bee,” commented Phill Lytle, “I am not sure I blame Gowdy for his stance.”

“He had been teetering for a while,” commented Ben Plunkett. “Recently the Bee had an article on how Kamala Harris stopped briefly at a gun violence protest on her way to a pro-abortion rally and Gowdy was like, ‘That’s barely satire! That could totally be real!’ Juxtapose that with how incredulous he was when he found out last July that Trump’s tweeting a video of himself slamming a chair into CNN *wasn’t* fake and you can see



how this thousand mile journey had quite a few steps.”

It is also being reported by Cannon’s wife Kayla that he reluctantly has stopped getting any news from social media for this reason but also so he can focus more time on his March Madness tournaments.

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## The REO Rant: Interstate 440 in Nashville

I am not the first person to write about this. I won’t be the last. **Stated plainly: Interstate 440 in Nashville is an embarrassment.** It is an embarrassment to the great city of Nashville. It is an embarrassment to the wonderful state of Tennessee. It is unsightly, unseemly, and unsafe.

There are sections of I440 that are nearly un-drivable unless you actually are trying to cause damage to your vehicle. There are so many potholes that you cannot avoid them. Some of those potholes are so large they have their own ecosystem. I narrowly avoided one the other that was so big, I’m pretty sure there was a family living in it. (Tiny houses are all the rage these days.)

A handful of years back, I440 was a decent drive. It was never the most pristine or the most luxurious of interstates, but it was well-maintained and did its job. Shockingly[1. This is sarcasm. Nothing about government incompetence shocks me anymore.], some genius decided to do some form of milling[2.

Pavement milling (cold planing, asphalt milling, or profiling) is the process of removing at least part of the surface of a paved area such as a road, bridge, or parking lot. Milling removes anywhere from just enough thickness to level and smooth the surface to a full depth removal.] to the road. Now, I realize the interstate was not milled in the complete sense of the word. But something very much like milling was done. The road suddenly had deep lines that ran the entire length. At the time, it seemed as if this was the first step in resurfacing the interstate. How naïve and stupid of me to think something logical like that! Years and years later, no resurfacing has been done. The lines/grooves stayed and the road slowly began to crumble. I mean that literally. The road is crumbling. Falling apart. Eroding. You can see huge chunks of interstate splayed all over the shoulders of the road every time you are blessed enough to drive it. To make matters worse, when bad weather hits, potholes form. Instead of a few sprinkled here and there like any other interstate in the nation, I440 is simply riddled with them. I don't like hyperbole but in this case, I believe it is warranted. There are more potholes per square foot of I440 than on any road I have ever driven or seen. (And I grew up in Central America.)

I'm not sure who to blame. Tennessee Department of Transportation surely deserves a good portion of the blame. I think the Governor and the Mayor of Nashville deserve some blame as well. Evidently, those in positions of power never have to drive I440 because if they did, it would have been fixed by now. If leaving this interstate to literally fall apart before our eyes is some sort of ploy to make the people of Nashville desperate for some big fix to our traffic problems, then that is sickening and evil. The decision-makers that have allowed this problem to get this bad need to be held accountable, fired, or forced to drive on I440 in a continuous loop from now until the end of time. Or until their vehicle breaks in half. Whichever comes first.

How many more tires have to blow before something is done? How many gallons of coffee must be spilled each time a pothole is hit? How many hubcaps need to be forcibly removed from their wheel only to go spinning down the road alone and afraid? How many children must ask, through tear-stained eyes, "Dear father, why does I440 look like a third world road instead of a beautiful, smooth, and safe interstate in the heart of one of America's 'It' cities?"

Enough is enough.

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## Forgiveness

"Cutting someone a little slack." "Showing grace." "Giving a second chance."

All of these phrases interest me a great deal in terms of relationships.

There is a difference between cutting someone some slack or covering a multitude of sins, and forgiving wrongs done to us or others. The latter involves a definite transgression, a sin, a crime, even, and most of the time only those who are resting in their forgiveness in spite of the enormity of their sins against a Holy God, can extend forgiveness to others who neither deserve it or in some cases even want it. The former is more of the nature of overlooking, not making a big deal of others faults and frequent mistakes. Both are marks of a Christian who walks in fellowship with God, as is also our subsequent treatment of people we've said we forgive. Hence, the following simple outline for this devotional thought:

1. **Overlooking faults (I Peter 4:8 – “love covers a multitude of sins.”)**
  2. **Forgiving (Matthew 18, Luke 17, Colossians 3:12-13)**
  3. **Treating others as forgiven.**
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### **Overlooking faults**

I personally have come to the conclusion that I want to stop saying “I don’t like... (fill in the blank with whatever: genre of music, style of preaching, sports team, etc...). If it’s in the realm of preferences, not biblical and moral values, I want to say “I prefer,” or “I like,” and not run down others’ opinions. Most things do not rise above the level of simple preference (Think: musical tastes). Some things do, obviously, and must be defended, refuted, fought over, but even there, in the right attitude. Other things are just what one person likes better, and another person likes less.

When Peter reminds us that love covers a multitude of sins, it’s as the ESV Study Bible states: “Where love abounds, offenses are frequently overlooked and quickly forgiven.” (1 Peter 4:8)

Going beyond negativity in the area of preferences and offenses, I want to be Christlike in the matter of forgiveness. I want to overlook minor faults, and gently address major ones after having gotten the beam out of my own eye (Matthew 7). I am convinced that my dealing with myself first, a firm attitude with self, in which my own weaknesses, sins, and hangups get the most attention, will enable me to be more accepting of my brother. I must learn to move past minor differences, letting love triumph over them, and bring us together.

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## **Forgiveness (Matthew 18:18-35, Luke 17:1-4)**

I want to forgive from the heart, as I have been so graciously forgiven, undeserving though I am. If Matthew 18 doesn't stop us cold in our tracks as far as forgiveness is concerned, I don't know what will. We who have been forgiven the thousands of talents – an overwhelming debt – by our loving Lord, must forgive wrongs done to us, even as we've been forgiven. Peter thought he was really going the distance when he spoke of forgiving seven times until Jesus said it must be seventy times seven.

Pastor Daryl Grimes writes of his brother who was murdered more than 30 years ago, and of the man who killed him. "Forgiveness is important. I don't know when it happened but there was a time in my life that I had to let go of the bitterness and hatred I had for this man. Hating him will not bring my brother back nor will it do anything but destroy me...Jesus died for him, too."

Consider these examples from Scripture:

- Joseph and his brothers. – "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good..." (Genesis 50)
- Stephen and murderers. "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7:55)
- Jesus and those who crucified Him. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

A couple of examples from modern history, one from 50 years ago, and the other from recent weeks. First, the Vietnamese girl who was burned by napalm. Her remarkable story can be found in *Fire Road: The Napalm Girl's Journey Through the Horrors of War to Faith, Forgiveness & Peace*. For those of us old enough to remember the Vietnam War, we will remember Phan Thi Phuc, running down a street with her body on fire from a napalm bomb.

*Against all odds, Kim lived—but her journey toward healing*

*was only beginning. When the napalm bombs dropped, everything Kim knew and relied on exploded along with them: her home, her country's freedom, her childhood innocence and happiness.*

*The coming years would be marked by excruciating treatments for her burns and unrelenting physical pain throughout her body, which were constant reminders of that terrible day. Kim survived the pain of her body ablaze, but how could she possibly survive the pain of her devastated soul? Kim says she was following the religion she grew up with, but didn't know "the real God." She says God still knew her, though.*

*"The real God, He knows my heart. Ten years later I was just seeking the truth and looking for the answer, 'Why me?'" she says.*

*"I found a Bible in the library in Saigon. At that time I wanted to die, I was so full of bitterness and anger and hatred," she says.*

*But that's when she found Christ. After a lifelong battle with physical and emotional pain, she says, "God gave me peace and joy."*

*Fire Road is the true story of how she found the answer in a God who suffered Himself; a Savior who truly understood and cared about the depths of her pain. Fire Road is a story of horror and hope, a harrowing tale of a life changed in an instant—and the power and resilience that can only be found in the power of God's mercy and love.*

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More recently, the story of gymnast Rachel Denhollander, sexually abused by Dr. Larry Nassar, who both challenged him to repent and also forgave the man who abused her. Her words to her abuser:

*"In our early hearings, you brought your Bible into the*

*courtroom and you have spoken of praying for forgiveness. And so it is on that basis that I appeal to you. If you have read the Bible you carry, you know the definition of sacrificial love portrayed is of God Himself loving so sacrificially that He gave up everything to pay a penalty for the sin He did not commit. By His grace, I, too, choose to love this way.*

*You spoke of praying for forgiveness. But, Larry, if you have read the Bible you carry, you know forgiveness does not come from doing good things as if good deeds can erase what you have done. It comes from repentance which requires facing and acknowledging the truth about what you have done in all of its utter depravity and horror without mitigation, without excuse, without acting as if good deeds can erase what you have seen in this courtroom today.*

*The Bible [speaks of] a final judgment where all of God's wrath and eternal terror is poured out on men like you. Should you ever reach the point of truly facing what you have done, the guilt will be crushing. And that is what makes the Gospel of Christ so sweet. Because it extends grace and hope and mercy where none should be found. And it will be there for you.*

*I pray you experience the soul-crushing weight of guilt so you may someday experience true repentance and true forgiveness from God, which you need far more than forgiveness from me – though I extend that to you as well.”*

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### **Treating others as forgiven**

I want to treat others as forgiven, not just say the words. How we act toward others speaks volumes. The fruit of the Spirit that includes gentleness, goodness, and meekness are so indicative of our relationship with Christ and whether or not we are led by His Spirit. Truly forgiving will involve a

change in our attitude toward others. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3 that we are to “put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also are to forgive.” I think that treating others as forgiven flows from resting and rejoicing in our own forgiveness. The three points are interrelated and joined firmly; if I am able to cut others some slack, to forgive a multitude of sins because I’m loved by God and know that I am, and can, therefore, accept and tolerate differences and even disagreements, I have taken a huge step toward a joyful, balanced life. Going beyond that, if I can truly forgive even major sins against me because He has forgiven me all my sins, I truly live in freedom. Treating others as forgiven then means that I treat others on the basis of forgiveness and acceptance. That’s freedom and release!

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So how do we want to live? It really is up to us, to a great extent. We have the Guidebook, the Scriptures. We have the Inner Guide, the Holy Spirit. And we have a Savior who models this for us, and encourages us on to victory.

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## **The New Weight Loss Plan Sweeping the World: The Socialism Diet**

Caracas, Venezuela – After years of fine tuning, a paradigm-shattering breakthrough in the weight-loss world appears to have been discovered in Venezuela of all places. While test findings are still in the early stages, researchers behind *The*



*Socialism Diet* © are hopeful. Vincente Montenegro, lead scientist on the project stated, “Based on the data, the efficacy of this diet is overwhelming. I say this with all the hope and excitement I can muster – ‘*The Socialism Diet* is by far the best system we have ever studied.’ If you follow the plan faithfully, you will lose weight. A lot of weight.”

Señor Montenegro’s boasts are not without support. The average Venezuelan has lost nearly 25 pounds on the new diet in the past 12 months, and there appears to be no sign of the dreaded, rebound weight gain. “When you take away food from dieters, it will inevitably lead to weight loss.” adds Montenegro. “And there is no way to cheat on this diet. There is simply no food with which to cheat. It is foolproof!”

Some critics of the new weight-loss system argue that it leaves dieters hungry and fatigued. “That is to be expected in a plan this robust and aggressive,” adds Montenegro. “Fortunately, since this diet is socialist in philosophy, everyone is on the same level dieting field, as it were. We are all hungry together. It is a beautiful picture of a completely equal society.”

The rest of the world will have to wait to see if this groundbreaking system will make it to them. As of today, it is the one and only component of socialism that seems to thrive no matter where it is implemented.

Hat tip to Amanda Prestigiacomo for [her early reporting](#) on this promising new diet.

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# Biblical Outrage in a Twitter Outrage World

#JusticeforHarambe

His name has become a joke to so many people, including in [one of the more hilarious Babylon Bee entries](#), that I wonder how many people seriously expressed outrage over the killing of a gorilla in the Cincinnati zoo.

Regardless of the actual number, that incident is like the poster child in my mind for social media outrage era. I do not think anyone who uses Facebook or Twitter or Instagram can deny that these websites have given us a venue to show people just how upset we are by major and minor injustices in the world.

I'm not going to try to sort out the differences between major and minor here. There is no doubt that some events are worthy of mass outrage and social media posts, including things like shootings and sexual abuse. What I am going to do instead is look at a significant passage of Scripture that deals with appropriate outrage and then try to contrast how we filter and practice this passage in our modern day.

I have and will likely always teach that biblical truth is the intersection of what the Bible meant to its original audience and what it means today. Culture differences make applications to Bible texts akin to mining for gold and when the culture around us changes significantly in a short period of time (as it has in the U.S. with the extremely recent and prominent rise of social media sites), we are prudent to constantly evaluate how we apply the Bible.

The story in Ezra 9-10 is simple enough in its conflict. God's people were kicked out of their homeland for 70 years for idolatry in actions like marrying from among the surrounding

pagan nations. After they were mercifully allowed to come back, a report came to their spiritual leader, Ezra, that some had begun yet again to commit the same violations of their law that got them thrown out in the first place. Ezra's reaction is one of outrage. Ezra 9:3 says:

*When I heard this report, I tore my tunic and my robe and ripped out some of the hair from my head and beard. Then I sat down, quite devastated.*

The expression "quite devastated" here could very well be rendered "horrified". A few verses later in 10:1 we read:

*While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself to the ground before the temple of God...*

He had no keyboard and didn't direct himself to an audience. But Ezra was clearly upset in a similar way we see people attempting to communicate on the internet. And how he reacts beyond the outrage has a lot to say for us in the United States that will help us know how to react on Social Media and beyond. Here are a few things Ezra did that we would be wise to consider doing when dealing with injustice around us.

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## **Ezra's Outrage Was For His Neighbors**

Probably the most important thing I have gleaned from the Social Media Outrage Era is that we can be very selective about it. We tend to react to whatever we see based on the people we've friended or what news sources we follow. And if we wanted to, we could find something every single day to be upset about.

I've often feared that I am getting desensitized to much tragedy news. Because tragic events are constant in a 24 hour and social media news cycle. And then I wonder, why do we express outrage over things we see on Facebook that are

hundreds or thousands of miles from us when every single day there are certainly terrible injustices and people hurting in close proximity to us? That perhaps we are missing something because social media outrage is easy and convenient while dealing with real people in real messiness, as Ezra did, is hard?

What if we were proactive with our outrage instead of reactive? What if we were so involved in our communities, churches and neighborhoods, that we were aware of injustice for people we see face to face and as a result, we had less time for outrage over things and people we know far less about?

I've heard several people say that social media gives us a broad but shallow audience while the local church gives us a more focused but far deeper impact. Our outrage supports that claim.

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## **Ezra's Outrage Included His Own Sin**

Here is something I do not see very much of on social media: Someone expresses outrage over some act of injustice and then includes pronouns like "we" and "us" when referring to who needs forgiveness. Yet, that is exactly what Ezra did even though he was not guilty of intermarrying with pagan nations.

This is a pattern you see in the Bible. Isaiah (6:5), Nehemiah (1:6-7), and Daniel (9:4-17) all did the exact same thing. They were righteous men yet did not exempt themselves from corporate confession and repentance.

I can't help but wonder if social media outrage makes it easy to see the problem as "them" instead of "us".

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## **Ezra's Outrage Was Tempered By Confessing God's Grace**

Outrage can be healthy to experience and express but if a person is a follower of Christ, eventually they should be just as likely to express how gracious God is. Keep in mind, if a Christian victim of something like sexual abuse makes a social media post shortly after the event and doesn't mention God's grace, I am not going to judge that person. But on the whole, social media outrage is far out of balance in our expressions of gloom and doom, despair and bitter judgment.

Again, Ezra teaches us that we can be viciously angry over things people do to harm others. But if we need a theology of still proclaiming God's grace manifested in our past, present and future.

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## **Ezra's Outrage Was Profound, Lasting and Meaningful**

Ezra essentially fasted for many hours over the news he got. He mourned boisterously. He prayed with humiliation. What he expressed was so powerful, it caused others to join him.

I wonder how often we express outrage over some Twitter trending hashtag and then 15 minutes later are eating lunch and laughing with friends? Please understand I get that not all outrage has to be this significant. But I sincerely worry that we have replaced deep, personal grief that shakes us to our core with a wimpy anger that is a mile wide but an inch thick and leaves us about the same as we were yesterday.

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## **Ezra's Outrage Was Followed By Practical Action Steps**

Outrage is a part of the human experience. If you are an

emotionally healthy human being, you will feel it. But feeling anger is not enough. Confession and Repentance are the heart of Christianity and Ezra guides the people to swiftly do something to undo the horror they had committed. And when we have dealt with those things in our own lives, we need to get out and follow up practically, even on social media.

If I feel that some people are victims in the DACA conflict, I could write up a post telling people how I feel about it. Depending on how I expressed myself and if my post is based on what is true biblically and factually, then that could be good. But I could also post a link to help teach people where they can go to get help if they are in the mess. That's where I have felt conviction and where I want to change.

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And then there is plenty to do outside of the internet. But I want to be clear that social media, like fire, is something that can be productive or destructive and there are ways to use it with wisdom. Even with our outrage.

Comments are welcomed below.

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## **My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation**

He had a promise.

The LORD had given him assurance – he would see the Messiah

before his death.

Simeon lived with something more than hopeful expectation. He knew. As firm as the ground beneath his feet – he knew.

All his years of righteous devotion found their ultimate reward when he saw that face. That small, innocent face.

The Christ child. The light and revelation to the world. And so he proclaimed for all to hear:

“My eyes have seen your salvation.”

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**She was nothing.**

She was lowly and humble, yet the LORD had chosen her among all women.

Mary had nothing to offer but her obedience and praise. When the Maker of the world became the fruit of her womb, she responded in the only manner that made sense:

“My soul magnifies the Lord.”

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**He was a prophecy.**

His life had been ordained from beyond his birth. He was the voice crying out in the wilderness making straight the way of the Lord.

In the womb, John jumped for joy when his Lord drew near. In life, he proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom. When he saw his Savior approach, he gave witness of all that had been made known to him:

“Behold, the Lamb of God!”

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## **What about us?**

We are faced with unspeakable evil every day. We are confronted with injustice, pride, greed, and apathy. The world is broken, seemingly beyond repair.

But we have seen the Lamb of God. He has been revealed to us in our lowly state. The darkness of our lives has been transformed by the truth and love of the great Light of the world. Our broken ways have been made straight. Our souls magnify the Lord for we have seen with our eyes His salvation.

## **But it cannot end there.**

We are now faced with the same truths and the same impetus at Simeon, Mary, and John. Now that we have seen salvation with our eyes, it is for us to share this good news of great joy to the world. Our sins have been washed by the blood of the Lamb of God, so it is for us to proclaim his coming. We have been visited by the Great I AM, so our souls magnify the Lord.

We, who have been given this greatest gift, are now the gift-givers. We carry the light to a world stumbling in the darkness. We cry out to the lost that the Lamb of God has come and salvation is here. We live lives of praise to the only one who is worthy. How can we do anything less? Our eyes have seen His salvation and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior!

Merry Christmas from Rambling Ever On!

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# Five Reasons “Away in a Manger” is the Worst Christmas Song Ever

I love Christmas music. I believe my unblemished record of staunch Christmas musicophilia on *Rambling Ever On* [says](#) it [all](#). Yet, not all Christmas music is created equal. For every transcendent *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, there is a painfully awful *Last Christmas*. For every majestic *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, there is the horrifyingly terrible *Christmas Shoes*. So, while I love Christmas music and celebrate it every year, I don't embrace every Christmas song out there. Case in point: *Away in a Manger*. As bad as the previously mentioned songs are, they aren't nearly as terrible as the manger song, due to its insidious nature. It poses as a beautiful, sacred song. It gets played on Christian radio. It gets sung to small children. It even has the audacity to get sung in church! I reject it. Yet its soul is as black as night. I reject all of it. Here are my five main reasons.

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## **It is biologically fraudulent**

Let's get the most obvious one out of the way. Jesus was fully God and fully man. Which means He was fully baby. If Jesus had been born and then placed in a manger, and did not cry at any point, as the song states, something would have been terribly wrong with Him. Babies cry. It's a good thing they cry. Doctors make sure they cry as soon as they are born to test their lungs. Babies cry when they are hungry and thirsty. They cry when they need to be held. If Jesus did not cry then He was developmentally stunted. And we know that is not true. Which leads me to point number two.

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## **It is emotionally manipulative**

At its core, *Away in a Manger* is a lullaby. It seems to have been written for the express purpose of convincing children to go to sleep. So the wording used in the song is deliberately manipulative to that end. The thinking behind must have gone something like this – “Good little children want to be like the “little Lord Jesus”, right? Well, He didn’t cry so they shouldn’t either. And if they do cry, then they are not like Jesus at all.” That is almost unconscionable.

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## **It is poorly written**

I get really irritated with songs that change perspective. *Away in a Manger* is a big offender in this regard. It starts off third person for the first three stanzas but suddenly goes into first person on the three final and climactic stanzas. Why? Because the writer ran out of more drippy examples of insipid, idealized first-century life? Or because the writer wanted to really pour on the guilt trip for the listening children that were struggling to go to sleep like good little boys and girls? Or was it because the songwriter wanted to include some lame declaration of love to the “Lord Jesus.” I say lame, not because loving Jesus is lame, but because tacking it on at the end like that is sloppy, ham-fisted, and obsequious, not to Jesus, but to the listeners in an attempt to convince them that this is truly a good, Christian song.

And the line, “no crying He makes” is just bad poetry on every level. Did Yoda get co-writing credit on this or something?

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## **It is patronizingly ordinary**

The incarnation of Christ is one of the most miraculous and amazing things to ever happen. It is good to sing songs about it. It is good to be brought to worship thinking about it. What *Away in a Manger* does is take that magnificent event and turn it into a sickly-sweet, mushy, touchy-feely mess. Shepherds, angels, and kings worshipped this child, and the best this song can do is celebrate his sleeping, his sweet little head, and that he didn't cry? O come let us adore Him indeed!

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## **It is theologically bankrupt**

I don't expect deep theological truths from every song. One of my all-time favorite Christmas songs, *O Holy Night* is not the most theologically impressive song out there. But it is poetic and beautiful and contains enough truth to make it worthwhile. *Away in a Manger* is none of those things and is most definitely not worthwhile. Beyond the silly stuff about Jesus not crying – which contradicts the rest of the Scriptural account of His earthly life – the final stanza is a hodgepodge of pseudo-religious sounding phrases mixed with shockingly modern day spiritual sentimentality. Let's unpack it, shall we?

First, Jesus is not "looking down from the sky" and if He were why would he look down from the sky "and stay by our cradles til morning is nigh"? I guess you could argue that the writer is trying to say that Jesus is everywhere, but if that is so, why start with the idea that Jesus is looking down from the sky?

Second, the penultimate stanza has the singer asking Jesus to be near them, or us. We don't have to beg Jesus to stay near us. He has promised to be with us in his Word. Many times, actually.

Third, when you further examine that stanza, you come upon an even worse question – “love me, I pray.” Once again, not necessary as it has already been promised. And to make this even more ridiculous, this song is about Jesus as a baby – His incarnation. What more proof did this writer need of Jesus’ love than this act of complete sacrifice? “Look, I realize that you just gave up Heaven and your power, and you came to earth as a human baby, with all the awful stuff that entails, but do you think you can do something else to prove to me that you love me?”

Finally, the last stanza closes things out in spectacularly wrongheaded fashion. It starts off okay with a request for blessing for all the children that are in Jesus’ care. I can get on board with that. It ends with a request for Jesus to take us all to Heaven to live with Him there. It doesn’t work like that. Jesus doesn’t just take everyone to heaven. That’s where repentance and salvation come into play, but let’s not get hung up on the very foundation of the Gospel or anything!

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This Christmas, listen to as much music as you can. It is a profitable and worthy endeavor. Yet, for the sake of your soul, and the souls of those around you, avoid garbage songs like *Away in a Manger*. While there are probably more aesthetically offensive Christmas songs out there – I’m looking at you *Christmas Shoes* – there is no song that is as deviously evil as *Away in a Manger*. It cloaks itself in religious language and holy imagery, in a vain attempt to hide the utter darkness of its twisted and corrupt heart. Flee from it my friends. Flee for your lives.