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Perspective

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Perspective is a monthly journal with articles and book reviews. It is part of the “equipping” ministry of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, where we exist to KNOW, EQUIP, and SEND one another for the worship and glory of God.

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Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

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The Songs of Songs for Today

Part One, 1:1 - 2:17

Aaron Menikoff

OVER THE PAST CENTURY, something disastrous has happened to the way we think about sex. It's been robbed of spiritual and emotional content. Sex has been reduced to a physical experience. Sigmund Freud defined sex in merely material terms, the goal being the "release of sexual tension – a temporary extinction of the sexual instinct." His analysis was expanded by the likes of Alfred Kinsey in the 40s and 50s and William Masters and Virginia Johnson in the 60s through the 90s. You may not know their names, but their idea—sex is nothing more than a physical action—has radically changed the landscape of sexuality.¹

One of their disciples, Esther Perel, argues that the clock is ticking for monogamy in marriage. Just as premarital sex is now accepted by the culture at large, so it will soon be widely accepted that faithfulness between two married partners is not just unrealistic, it's unwise. We are on the brink of affairs in marriage being promoted as healthy and good.² This is what happens when you take Freud at his word, when you insist that sex is nothing more than mashing two bodies together in response to a physical urge. If that's all sex is, no wonder so many people today don't care when they do it, why they do it, or whom they do it with.

But there is another way, a better way, a glorious way and, yes, an older way to think about sex. We don't need to turn to the doctors, philosophers and psychologists of our age, but to the poet of another age. Let's revisit an ancient love song that still speaks words of wisdom today because it is inspired by the God of yesterday, today, and forever. This poem is in the Old Testament. It is known widely as the Song of Solomon or, as the book calls itself, the Song of Songs. Song of Songs means the best of songs, and it's the most romantic love poem ever written. God inspired it for the good of his church. Therefore, it is worth your careful consideration.

Why should we study the Song of Songs? Not because we want to be hip. Admittedly quite a few pastors in the past decade have preached from this book. Sex is edgy, and pastors trying to show the relevance of Christianity may turn to the Song of Songs as proof that Christians can talk about sex, too. But one shouldn't read and talk about the Song of Songs to be cool.

There are several other, good reasons to pour over the Song of Songs. The first and main reason is because it's in the Bible. Neither Jews nor Christians have ever questioned the canonicity of the Song of Songs. It is Scripture. God gave us this book for our instruction and edification, and we ignore it at our peril. Second, we should study the Song of Songs because the biblical view of sex and sexuality is under constant attack, and in this poem we find a much-needed corrective. Sadly, when it comes to sex, the world no longer knows up from down. Though the Song of Songs isn't everything we need to know about sex and marriage (we need passages like Genesis 1-2, Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 6-7) it is hugely helpful to see romance treated in this lyrical form.

Third, problems of sexual morality are in the church, so the church has a vested interest in honing in on God's plan for sexuality. Single men and women in the church are being hurt by pornography—they are hurting themselves and the spouses they will one day marry. Marriages are being crushed under the weight of online porn. And so if that's you—whether you find yourself addicted and you hate it, or whether your spouse is addicted and you don't know what to do—I want you to know there's hope. The Bible gives us a positive, practical, gospel-centered approach to our sexuality, and we find it in the Song of Songs.

Now that we've figured out why to study it, let me ask another question. What is the Song of Songs? In an nutshell, *the Song of Songs is an explicit but tasteful, ancient love*

¹See Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* (Continuum, 2006).

²Hanna Rosin, "Why We Cheat," *Slate* (27 March 2014). Found at http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2014/03/esther_perel_on_affairs_spouses_in_happy_marriages_cheat_and_americans_don.html. Accessed May 22, 2014.

song designed to point singles to patience, spouses to each other, and everyone to Christ.

The Song of Songs is wisdom literature—it's practical instruction on how to live a godly life in this world. Surely we would expect God to help us navigate issues of singleness, sex, and marriage—and he has in the Song of Songs. But that's not all. The Apostle Paul tells us that marriage—the one-flesh union of a man and a wife—is a mystery pointing us to Christ and his bride, the church. And so any study of the Song of Songs is incomplete until we allow it to point us to the gospel.

Admittedly, there has been a lot of controversy throughout church history regarding how to interpret the Song of Songs. Let me just say that I don't take it to be an allegory. In other words, I don't think we only find here symbolic language, creative references to Christ and the church. I do think we are given very practical wisdom on how to live as a husband and wife. But at the same time, the Song of Songs isn't a sex manual. There is wisdom on sex, no doubt, but the verses in this romantic poem ultimately point us to Jesus Christ. It is, after all, our Savior who told us in Luke 24 that all of Scripture is about him. Ultimately, then, the Song of Songs is about the King of Kings.

Finally, I don't think that the Song of Songs is a progressive story that lays out, chronologically, the journey of a couple from being engaged to being married. Commentators disagree on this point, and whatever you decide won't change the application of the text. But as best I can tell every chapter in the Song of Songs is about a wife and her husband enjoying and discussing love. Therefore, as I dive into the Song of Songs in this article, I'm going to be referring to the main female character in the poem simply as Wife, and the main male character simply as Husband. I do this to drive home the point that this is a poem about romantic love in marriage.

I'll be walking us through chapters 1 and 2 of the Song of Songs. You might want to take a moment and actually read those chapters now. Really, I mean it. Grab a cup of coffee, a Coke, or if you are really healthy, a glass of water; find the Song of Songs in your Bible—it's right after Psalms and Ecclesiastes and right before Isaiah—and read the first two chapters aloud.

It's amazing, isn't it? In this article, I'm not going to address every question that comes up. For example, you may be wondering who those people are that keep breaking into the dialogue and talking (1:4; 1:11). I'll get

to that later. But for now, let me make four simple observations that begin to crack open what the Song of Songs means, and how it applies to us today.

First, Wife longs to be with Husband.

One of the most interesting things about the Song of Songs is the centrality of Wife's voice. She is in active, verbal, even physical pursuit of her husband. She is no wallflower, quietly waiting in the wings for her husband's initiative—though he does initiate. She is comfortable in her own skin, in love with her own man, and she longs to be with him.

Look closely at chapter 1, verses 1-2. This is clearly a woman who wants to be touched, and not just touched, she wants to be kissed. So let me state the obvious: there is something special about a kiss. In chapter 5 she describes her husband's lips as "lilies, dripping with liquid myrrh" (5:13). We should assume that it is a godly thing for a wife to long for her husband's kiss. Philosopher Roger Scruton tried to explain the power of the kiss. He wrote, "To kiss that mouth is not to place one body part against another, but to touch the other person in his very self. Hence the kiss is compromising—it is a move from one self towards another, and summoning of the other into the surface of his being."³ Scruton isn't even a Christian, and yet his summary of the power of a kiss is profound.

So here is Wife summoning Husband, intoxicated by her man, by his smell, by his name. To say that virgins love him (v. 3) is simply to say he's a catch. And notice in verse 4 that her longing is satisfied: "The king has brought me into his chambers." We don't have to assume her husband is a king. This is poetry. He is a king to her! This is such a tasteful and yet explicit description of a wife's longing for her husband.

It appears that her longing is fulfilled. Look at 2:17, "Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains." Do you understand why I say this song is explicit yet tasteful? She uses metaphors that are beautiful—her husband is a gazelle, active and virile, and he is free to frolic in her "cleft mountains." There is no mistaking what she is saying—she longs to be with him.

The application to be derived from this observation is simple: wives should long to be with their husbands. And not just that, if you are a wife you should express that

³Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2009), 40.

longing to your husband. After all, sex with your husband is a wonderful gift from God.

In the garden, Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed (Gen. 2:25). They knew each other emotionally, intellectually, and physically. They kissed and they cuddled without shame or remorse. Eve was not ashamed of her body nor of uniting with Adam. In the Song of Songs we see how a godly marriage can recapture something of the innocence God intended for us to truly enjoy. By God's grace, a wife can and should truly long for her husband.

Maybe you are thinking, "But how can I have this kind of relationship? I'm insecure about my body." You see images every day and you think you don't measure up to what you see and to what your husband sees on billboards and television. But did you notice that Wife struggled that way, too? Look at 1:6, "Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me." Wife was accustomed to hard work—she had been darkened, maybe even burned by the sun as she labored in the field. She doesn't feel very attractive. And look at 2:1, "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys." Her point is that she is simply *one* lily in a whole valley of lilies. She is tempted to wonder why Husband would be attracted to her. Wife is being honest. She is communicating her insecurity. And yet notice that her insecurity does not keep her from longing for and reaching out to her Husband.

Maybe you are a married woman and you really struggle here. You want to long for your husband like this, you want to desire him physically, but it's hard. Your own insecurities, perhaps devastating events like past sexual abuse or even your husband's sexual immorality make it hard for you to long for him. What should you do? The first thing to do is to have an honest conversation with your husband. Tell him about your struggle. It may be something he's doing or not doing that makes it hard for you to long for him. A godly man will listen to you with compassion. If past sexual abuse makes it hard for you to long for your husband, again, I'd encourage you to talk to him. In addition, find an older sister in the faith and seek her counsel. Pray for God's help. Ask the Lord to give you this longing.

Part of being a godly wife is longing for and giving yourself to your husband in this way (see 1 Cor. 7:5). This isn't always easy, but it's God's wisdom for marriage.

Second, Husband woos Wife with words.

Perhaps you've heard it said that when it comes to sex, a man is a microwave while a woman is a crock-pot. In

other words, a man is quite easily excited while a woman must be romanced, she must be wooed. We see this in Song of Songs. Husband woos Wife with words. And Wife finds these words helpful and encouraging and exciting. Through his words she is convinced that her husband cares not just for her body, but he cares for her.

Look at chapter 1:8. Just a moment ago I mentioned how Wife was sensitive about her looks. She felt the sun had somehow blemished her skin. But notice what Husband says. In verse 8 he calls her the "most beautiful among women." Words are powerful. And look at verse 9, "I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels." I know this doesn't sound like a compliment. But consider this: Pharaoh's horses would have been the nation's finest stallions. And a mare in their midst would be desired by all of them. Husband is saying that Wife is a woman every man wants—she is so attractive to him.

Consider just one more example from the text. Chapter 2:8, "The voice of my beloved! Behold he comes, leaping over mountains, bounding over the hills." Notice what causes Wife to leap for joy. It's the "voice" of her beloved. It's the sound of Husband. In verse 10 she says, "My beloved speaks and says to me . . ." Wife continues in verses 10-15 to recite Husband's words to her. Husband has been hard at work communicating with her, making a case that now is the time for love, now is the time to be together. He delights in her beauty—and he tells her! He doesn't want anything to get in the way. Wife is worth pursuing, and so he pursues her with words. And she hangs on every word. She feels loved by his attention, by his care, by his careful, patient, verbal pursuit of her. She wants to know he doesn't just want her body, but he wants to be with her. He woos her with words.

Men, the failure to grasp this concept will harm your marriage. Society teaches us to view women as objects to lust after. God teaches us to view women as made in the image of God, noble and dignified. If you are married, your wife is to be affirmed and cherished by you—not simply for what she can give you—sexual delight—but for who she is. Until you grasp this truth, your marriage will never be what it ought to and your view of sex will always be impoverished.

Once again, the application of this observation is simple: husbands, you should woo your wives with words. She is not an object created by God to satisfy your lust. You are not an animal instinctively pursuing a mate. You are a man, made in God's image. She is a woman, made in God's image. And one of the marks of being in God's

image is our amazing ability to communicate, with words, to each other. Husbands, before you can be united with her physically you should pursue her verbally. Take heart, you don't have to be a poet like the husband in the Song of Songs! But you do need to find ways to encourage, build up, praise and describe your wife. Every wife is different, but none of them want to be treated as merely a tool for your sexual pleasure.

I love how the husband in the Song of Songs speaks to her. Do you remember when she was concerned because she saw herself as just one lily in the valley? He responds to her insecurity by calling her a lily among brambles (2:2). It's as if he tells her, "Look, honey, I know that you see yourself as just one lily in a whole valley of lilies. But I need you to know that I see you as a lily among the brambles. You stand out to me as the most beautiful of women. Every other woman is a thorn to me. You alone are a flower."

Too many husbands fail to romance their wives. We fail to give time and attention to pursuing them verbally before we go after them physically. Husbands, why do we do this, why do we so often fail to romance our wives? Maybe we are lazy. Maybe we fear rejection; it's not fun to try to say something nice to your wife, with the hope of being romantic, only for her to look at you as if you are a doofus. Maybe you think work or play is more important than wooing your wife.

My married brothers, let me encourage you to make a habit of writing kind notes to your wife. Send her tasteful but romantic text messages and emails (remember, no text message or email is really private, so keep it tasteful). Call her and let her know how much she means to you and why. It's important to woo your wife with words because this is God's wisdom for marriage.

Three, the marriage of Husband and Wife is marked by intimacy and commitment.

I want to hone in on just one simple idea: their marriage is marked by intimacy and commitment. In other words, Husband and Wife enjoyed one another passionately, but only after they committed to one another permanently.

We find examples of intimacy and commitment throughout the opening chapters of the Song of Songs. Look at 2:3-6. Once again, we find tasteful but explicit poetry. These are the words of a wife describing intimacy with her husband. She sits in the shade and eats of his fruit—verse 3. She describes how he holds her in verse 6.

This is a couple that enjoys one another's touch. In verse 4 she describes the scene. Their union is like a great banquet, a lavish party, a house of wine. But there is no crowd here. There is just Husband and Wife striving to be together, naked and unashamed in a fallen world. There is intimacy.

But there is more than intimacy. Look at the end of verse 4, "His banner over me is love." I take "banner" to be a reference to a military or tribal standard or flag. It's the flag that united the troop. Everyone who stood under that banner belongs to the group, is included in the group, is committed to the group.⁴ And with passionate intimacy in mind Wife says about Husband, "His banner over me was love." In other words, she is saying, "I belong to him, and he belongs to me." The foundation of their intimacy is commitment.

We find another explicit and tasteful passage in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 2: "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains." Her "lilies" is probably a reference to her lips. Husband has made a home in her lips. And here is a woman inviting a man to enjoy her body. We see here a sweet, wonderful, satisfying intimacy. But there's more than that going on here. There's commitment as well. Notice how she put it in verse 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." What makes their love so passionate, so good, is not the quality of their sex, but the quality of their commitment. Wife can look into his eyes and say, "You belong to me." Wife, who has freely given herself to Husband, can also say, "I belong to you." That's why I say that marriage is marked by intimacy *and* commitment.

The application of this truth is important and stunningly counter-cultural. First, sexual intimacy belongs only in marriage. You should not be intimate with someone who is not your spouse. If you are dating, don't fall into the satanic trap of ignoring this counsel. Your physical intimacy with your boyfriend or girlfriend is not only rebellion against God, who designed sex for marriage, but it's damaging you and him or her. Think of it like this: when you place your palm in drying concrete, the imprint lasts forever. Physical intimacy is like that. You are leaving an impression in another person that will never go away. Sex and even foreplay is never just physical—it is always has an emotional and spiritual component.

⁴Tremper Longman III, Song of Songs in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Eerdmans, 2001), 113.

If you are struggling in the area of physical intimacy with someone who is not your spouse, take the following three words of counsel to heart:

- 1) Stop. Put an end to the intimacy today.
- 2) Pray. Ask for the Lord's forgiveness for what you have done, the Lord's strength to resist temptation in the future, and the Lord's restoration.
- 3) Tell. Find a mature Christian—a pastor, an elder, a godly sister in the faith. Confess what you have done and let them help you turn from your sin, find forgiveness in Christ, and move forward in purity.

Second, husbands and wives should remain committed to each other. Commitment in marriage is not like a rental agreement that you can opt to renew each year. The wife says, "My beloved is mine and I am his." Marriage is a lifetime deal. When my wife and I were married we agreed that divorce would never be an option for us. And what got us through a very hard seventh year of marriage was the conviction that marriage is rooted in a commitment to one another, through thick and thin. When the passion is not there, the commitment is there. When the sex is not great, the commitment still runs deep.

On the basis of Scripture, and after 18 years of marriage myself, I encourage you to look into your spouse's eyes and with God-given, grace-filled conviction, say, "I am yours, and you are mine." In God's wisdom, marriage alone is to be marked intimacy and commitment.

Fourth, Husband and Wife are showing something of the Savior.

What I'm about to say is rooted in the fact that Jesus himself said in Luke 24 that all of the Old Testament—including the Song of Songs—is about him. And as Paul wrote in Ephesians 5, the relationship between a husband and wife points us to Christ and the church. That's why I assert with confidence that each of the previous three points say something about the Savior. Let me show you what I mean.

First, as Wife longs for her Husband, so we should long for our Savior.

In marriage we find a temporary reality pointing toward an eternal truth. We are to long for Christ, for his

presence in our lives, for his protection, and for his praise. Christian, do you long for Jesus? Are you cultivating a desire to know him deeper? Let Wife's example of longing for Husband remind us that we have been called to long for Jesus. It's the longing we see in Paul's life. Philippians 1:23, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ." Do you have that desire?

Second, as Husband woos Wife with words, so our Savior woos us with his Word.

We find Christ's words in Scripture, the Bible. It is through this living word that we are drawn to know and love him more and more. Jesus pursues us through the pages of the Bible. Christian, are you diving into God's Word? Like us a husband ministering to his wife, Christ ministers to through his word (Ep h.5:26).

Third, Christ is radically committed to his church.

Christian, Jesus is more committed to you than the best husband. I love the story of Robertson McQuilkin, the former president of Columbia International University. He had a serious job—training students and promoting global missions. But when Alzheimer's invaded his wife's brain, his life changed. He remembered the covenant he made with her, and it was more important than anything else in his life. And so he gave up his job and spent the rest of her life caring for her day in and day out. And when he was asked to explain why he did this, he said:

One of the simplest and clearest decisions I've had to make is this one because circumstances dictated it. Muriel now in the last couple of months seems to be almost happy when with me, and almost never happy when not with me. In fact, she seems to feel trapped, becomes very fearful . . . But when I'm with her, she's happy and contented. And so I must be with her at all times, and, you see, it's not only that I promised in sickness and in health, 'till death do us part, and I'm a man of my word . . . It's not that I have to, it's that I get to. I love her very dearly . . . She is a delight. It's a great honor to care for such a wonderful person.⁵

Husbands, I commend to you the example of Robertson McQuilkin. Love your wife and never leave her. Delight in her. See her as wonderful—today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life.

But as exemplary as McQuilkin's service may be, it's but a drop in the bucket when compared to the sea of God's

⁵ To learn about McQuilken's love for his wife, and to hear his words, see "The Robertson McQuilkin Story" at <http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=7D7ZWNNX>.

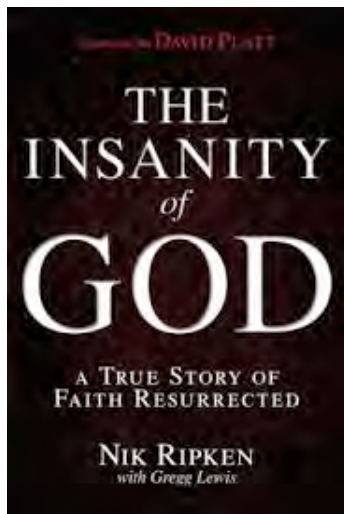
covenant love for us. We were *not* wonderful. Before God came to us, before God committed to us, we were sinful, God-hating, hell-bound rebels. We were faithless and unworthy of God's attention. And yet, while we were still enemies, God loved us. He committed his life to us. Jesus went to a wooden cross and he shed his blood, bearing the wrath of God we deserved. This is the gospel.

And so, as you study the Song of Songs, I hope you think a great deal about how important commitment is in marriage. For those of you who are single, I pray that you learn something about the importance of commitment. And for those of you who are married, I pray that you are reminded how commitment to your spouse is one of your main jobs in life.

But most of all, I hope you see the perfect commitment God has shown us in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the Song of Songs is a testimony of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the husband of the church. The Song of Songs is about the King of Kings.

~Aaron Menikoff

This article was originally delivered as a sermon on Sunday, March 30, 2014. Visit www.mvbchurch.org/sermons for an audio recording.



Book Review

The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected

by Nik Ripken

Reviewed by Bryan Pillsbury

WE LIVE IN A COLORFUL WORLD OF CONTRASTS: conservative vs. liberal, North vs. South, East vs. West, one

denomination vs. another denomination, and so on. One of the deepest contrasts for many evangelicals is between the biblical gospel and prosperity gospel. How could professing Christians distort Scripture's clear teaching and advocate that suffering and persecution are not God's plan for Christians?

Yet, Paul said, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). This is in utter opposition to the false teaching of the prosperity gospel, which says that financial blessing and physical well-being is God's will for all Christians and that through faith, positive speech, a good attitude, and "seed" donations, God will always increase one's material wealth and physical health.

The Insanity of God is a catchy but bothersome title. It implies that God is insane. Yet, we know that not to be true. God is not insane. In fact, if you have any reverence for a holy omnipotent God, to utter such words seems quite insane itself. So what seems so insane about God?

It is that persecution and suffering is God's, humanly speaking, insane strategy to grow his church. Nik Ripken shows this to be the case from his captivating journey. He conveys story after story where evil reigns and where the few gospel victories seemed crushed by persecution.

Persecution and suffering seems to be an insane strategy to church growth, especially one that doesn't work in America. Ripken presses us to listen to stories of men and woman, who love the gospel and God's glory of God more than their own lives. Ripken encounters believers who experienced tremendous persecution but counted themselves fortunate to suffer because Jesus is worthy and better than health or wealth.

Chapter one begins with a riveting description of Ripken's first trip into Somaliland in 1992. This war-torn land was under the chaotic control of various warlords who had no regard for the sanctity of life. Starvation, disease, and death were an expected way of life. Islam was the only acceptable religion.

For the next several chapters, Ripken compares his early life to his ministry experiences in Somaliland. He grew up in a poor farming family in Kentucky. Education was his ticket out of poverty, and his parents pushed him in that direction. The summer before college he became a Christian while working at a Kraft Cheese factory. It is not your typical conversion story, Ripken is not your typical Kentucky farm boy either. His conversion completely changed his life and Matthew 28:18-20 became his focus.

In August of 1993, the United States sent an Army Ranger Task Force to Somaliland to root out rebel forces that were the epicenter for many of the country's problems. Two months later, eighteen American soldiers were killed, eighty-four wounded, and over seven hundred Somalis were killed in what became known as the "Battle of Mogadishu." (This battle was popularized by the book and movie "Blackhawk Down.") All this took place within a mile of Ripken's compound.

Shortly after this incident, the U.S. pulled out leaving a society in complete disarray and millions of Somalis in economic ruin and starvation. Ripken fled the country. But his conscience was nagged by important missiological questions – how do you boldly share the gospel in a country where it is against the law; how do you urge people to repent and believe knowing that conversion to Christianity could cost them their lives? Ripken returned to Somaliland but experienced more challenges and heartache because in the spring 1995, the United Nations withdrew and all ministry opportunities ceased.

Ripken also shares stories that will challenge your faith, worldview, and even evangelistic methods like Bible distribution. Ripken recounts when a well-intentioned Christian organization delivered ten thousand bibles to a Somali refugee camp. Yet, Islam's dominance over their mindset was so strong that they ended up using the bibles as stepping-stones to keep their feet out of the mud and for toilet paper. Such realities are startling and cause you to ask deep questions about your faith and mission methods.

One of the most gripping stories is about Ripken's son, Tim, who suffered with asthma. One night, when he was sixteen years old, Tim had a severe attack, went into cardiac arrest, and eventually died. At that moment, Ripken said that something in him died. Such a terrible loss left he and his wife rightly brokenhearted. Coupled with the very difficult experience in Somaliland, they were brought to a crisis point in their ministry and faith. Ripken writes, "I had left Africa after Tim's death wondering how my faith applied – or if it applied – in brutal places like Mogadishu."

Eventually, healing came to the Ripken family, and God began to press them into a new direction. Captive to the thought that "if Jesus is not the answer to the human condition, then there is no answer," Ripken wondered about other similarly difficult and hostile places in the world – how do those persecuted Christians survive without losing their faith? What can we learn from them?

These questions led he and his wife, Ruth, to start "The Persecution Task Force." They have conducted extensive interviews with over seven hundred persecuted Christians. The truth of God's miraculous provision is recorded. Several of these stories are shared throughout the rest of the book. They may draw you to tears.

Why should you read this book? If you enjoy the status quo or secretly think that you are so special to God that he should continually bless you then you will struggle to understand the realities told in *The Insanity of God*. However, if you care about the gospel and are concerned about making disciples of all nations and people groups then you will be motivated and challenged by reading this book. It will push you to love and serve a God whose ways are sometimes seemingly insane. Yet, he is infinitely wise and any suffering and persecution is worth it because Jesus is supremely worthy.

