



The Christian life is a journey.

*TrailNotes* speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced, wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

## ElderTalk: Avoid the Floodwaters of Sin!

ERIC BYROM

Recently we had a week with lots of rain. When I arrived at the church property, I noticed how high the creek had become. I knew from previous warnings I had heard in my past that it was not a good idea to go wading in the creek when it was at flood stage because one could easily be swept away.

You may have heard warnings never to drive through water across the road because only 12 inches of rushing water can sweep a car away. It is often difficult to know how deep rushing water over a road is.

In the same way, we must not use our freedom to “wade” into sinful situations or behaviors. We may think, “I’m the exception,” or, “It won’t affect me!” Those are the famous last words of people who have been overcome or swept away by those very things. This is a good warning and encouragement to strongly consider. It implies that we can use our freedom in such a way as to cover up evil while living as servants of God.

2 Peter 2:19 elaborates more on this topic by saying, “*They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.*”

This verse implies that we can use our freedom in such a way that we again become enslaved. The term “recidivism” is defined as “recurring: the act of a person repeating an undesirable behavior after they have experienced negative consequences of that behavior or have been trained to extinguish it.”

This past weekend I took some of the guests from the Table Fellowship Conference to see the old Ohio State Reformatory Museum here in Mansfield. Amazingly, I had never gone to see it

myself even though I have grown up here and lived here the past 13 years. It was sobering to see the tiny cells that inmates had to live in and the solitary confinement area. We talked about how coming to a place like that really drove home the idea of not breaking the law and avoiding going to prison.

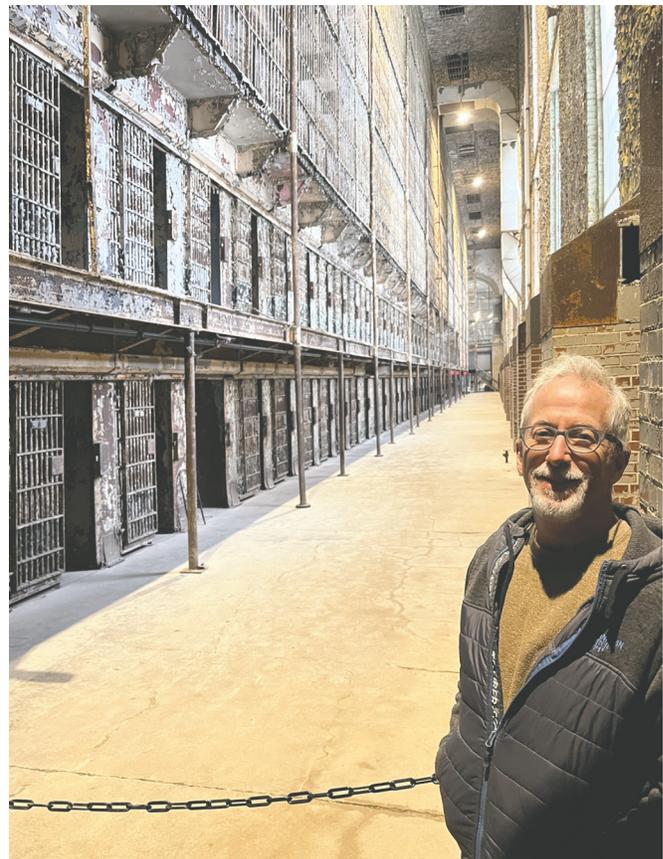


Table Fellowship President, Tom Kelby, in MANSI  
—just visiting, of course!

I looked into what the current rate of recidivism is for ex-convicts who are released from prison. Within three years 67.8% were rearrested  
(Concluded on p. 2)

## Avoid the Floodwaters of Sin!

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and within 5 years 76.6% were rearrested. That is not a great statistic! Some studies showed that if ex-convicts obtained an associate's degree that this rate went down by 70%. That seems promising. What this shows is that a key way to prevent people from going back to the same behavior that enslaved them is providing opportunity for them to improve their lives.

How does this relate to us spiritually? Peter's command to us to use our freedom to love God and others well is meant to re-educate us into a different type of living than we are used to living. We are used to living for ourselves first and for others and God second. When we rely on the Holy Spirit to help us to live differently, we will guard ourselves from falling back into that old way of living.

2 Peter 3:17-18 gives some great principles to live by in relation to this idea of falling back into the slavery to sin. Peter writes, *"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

This idea of being swept away by error reminds me of being swept away by floodwaters. The conventional wisdom concerning not being swept away by floods applies well to not being swept away in error into sin. Stay away from floodwaters. Don't even go near them! We need to be watchful!

Secondly, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This implies that we have choices to make to grow in grace and knowledge. We can educate ourselves and grow in our understanding of God's grace for us. We can educate ourselves and grow in our knowledge of Jesus and how to live like Him.

We can use our freedom to choose to move in these positive directions. Let's be mastered by Jesus as our Lord rather than be mastered by sin, for we are slaves to whatever has mastered us! Jesus is such a better master than anything this world has to offer.

## Church Kitchens Get Chopped

Daniel Silliman

*"Fellowship halls are changing as fewer congregations choose to cook together."*

*"Church kitchens are disappearing. They are disappearing from rural, suburban, and urban churches. From liberal and conservative churches. From contemporary and the megachurches and the medium-sized."*

One by one, across America, as buildings are remodeled and new construction replaces old, kitchens are getting scrapped. No one tracks exact numbers; there's no census on fellowship halls—but architects who specialize in sacred spaces told *Christianity Today* that the trend is hard to miss. "I can't remember the last time I was asked to design a big kitchen," said Jack Slagall, who designs church buildings. "A small kitchen maybe."



Churches these days don't have a lot of cupboards with drawers labeled "forks and knives." That kind of space is gone. Or at least it's going away. One architect had 40 churches she had designed from around the world. Only five had dedicated spaces for gathering around food.

"Culture has changed. It's not part of the culture now where you have 20 women who come together and make a meal. Today we order from Panera."

Some Christians say that despite broad cultural changes over the last 140 years, church kitchens are still used. Food serves an important function in the life of the congregation. *"It's so much at the heart of who we are as a people. When we gather around a table for a meal, it's an extension of the gospel,"* said architect Rick Archer.

*Excerpted and edited from Christianity Today, March/April 2025, pp. 76-78. (Used by permission)*

## Gossiping the Gospel in Nepal

*“Rapid church growth in the Himalayan nation is credited to women.”*

SURINDER KAUR

Tanuja Ghale saw a young woman on the street in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, and told her she was beautiful. The woman started weeping.

“Her husband had beaten her that morning and told her that she was the worst woman in the world.” Ghale is an evangelist who owns a salon. When I tell women, “*You are so beautiful,*” they are shocked and want to know what beauty they see in me that their loved ones have never seen or acknowledged. It is then that they are ready to hear the Gospel about the God who loves them unconditionally.

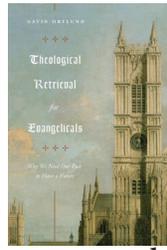
Women are the ones who have carried the Gospel. They have been the church planters. In 1951, when modern-day Nepal was founded, there were no known Christians in Nepal. Proselytizing and conversion were prohibited. Unlike in many countries, Nepal’s first churches were not led by missionaries from the West. Nepali believers led the way.

By the early 70’s, there were about 500 baptized Christians. Evangelism carried a 3-year prison sentence, but Christians continued to tell people about Jesus. By 1990, when a democratic reform movement decriminalized conversion, there were an estimated 50,000 baptized Christians in the country. In 2022, the Nepal Christian community counted roughly 800,000 believers out of a total population of 30.5 million, gathering in about 8,000 congregations. About 75 % of those are women.

Reshma Williams, a Christian who lives in Kathmandu and has been evangelizing for 21 years, said it is common for women to talk to each other about personal and family struggles. She has had deep conversations with women in buses, taxis restaurants, and dance bars.

“Whenever, wherever God opens the door, I share,” she said. “I try to look for the opportunity to share a testimony.”

*Excerpted and edited from Christianity Today, March 2023, pp. 25-26. (Used by permission)*



## Theological Retrieval... – a book, a concept

JOHN KURTZ

This is not meant to be a book review, but it is to share some personal impressions from my past several days of being involved in reading the book. It also consists of a “teaser” for an anniversary coming in June 2025. The book is a 218-page paperback volume, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals*, by Gavin Ortlund, published by Crossway in 2019. The author has put together a relatively concise and reasonably understandable book “written with pastors, theology students, and interested Christians especially in mind.” As I find myself in the last of those categories, Dr. Ortlund’s categorization of his book as being “mid-level” no doubt explains my need for reading numerous portions through more than once, and often with a dictionary in hand, to get the full grasp of all he has written. That aside, this is a subject and thus a book, worthy of a read-through by every twenty-first century, “post-modern” era Christian.

It was this book’s title which caught my eye when first seeing it mentioned some place. As it turns out, it has much to do with a subject dear to my heart—history. Church history in this case.

Ever since being introduced to church history by Gordon Walker, Peter Gillquist, and our own dear Ray Nethery back in the early 1970’s, it has fascinated me. Previously, I had little or no knowledge of what my Christian brothers and sisters prior to the Reformation had experienced or were taught, except for the martyrdom of many at the hands of the Romans and occasional hints from men like Augustine. During those years of conferences at Grace Haven Farm and listening to cassette tapes of some of them over and over, I realized that many of the questions that folks were discussing were indeed clarified by the writings of those who have preceded us by many centuries.

Not only does Dr. Ortlund explain the importance of “theological retrieval” for the reader, he also gives “case studies” on the nature of God and the atonement as examples.

Stay tuned for next month’s *TrailNotes!* June 2025 has something to do with “theological retrieval.”

April  
10-12



2025

# TABLE FELLOWSHIP

Annual Conference Photos  
"Wisdom"



Teaching



Sound



Food



More Teaching



Pastors



Speakers



Worship

## May 2025

		1	2	3		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**3** Games Reach Family Game Night, 6:30-8:30 PM, at Foursquare Gospel Church, 383 Davidson St.

**4** *Keys to Freedom: Breaking Generational Patterns*, Elder Matt Godsil, preaching. *Keys to Freedom* studies for men and women, 7:00 PM.

**5-7** Drop-off hours for GFC Rummage Sale, 9 AM–2 PM.

**8-10** Rummage Sale, 9 AM–4 PM, Thurs.– Fri.; 9 AM–noon, Sat.

**11** *Keys to Freedom: Using Your Authority in Christ*, Elder Jadaé Fox, preaching. 🍷🍷

**18** *Keys to Freedom: Maintaining Lifelong Freedom*, Pastor Eric Byrom, preaching. Kids DTS team planning meeting, 12:45 PM, church lobby.

**21** End-of-year Connect party.

**24** Ladies' tea, time T.B.A.

**25** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on 2 Peter 1:1-2. 🍷🍷 Teen DTS team planning meeting, 12:45 PM, church lobby.

### Grace Fellowship Church

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Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)