

Wordplay

(something to be found)



Fall Semester 2013



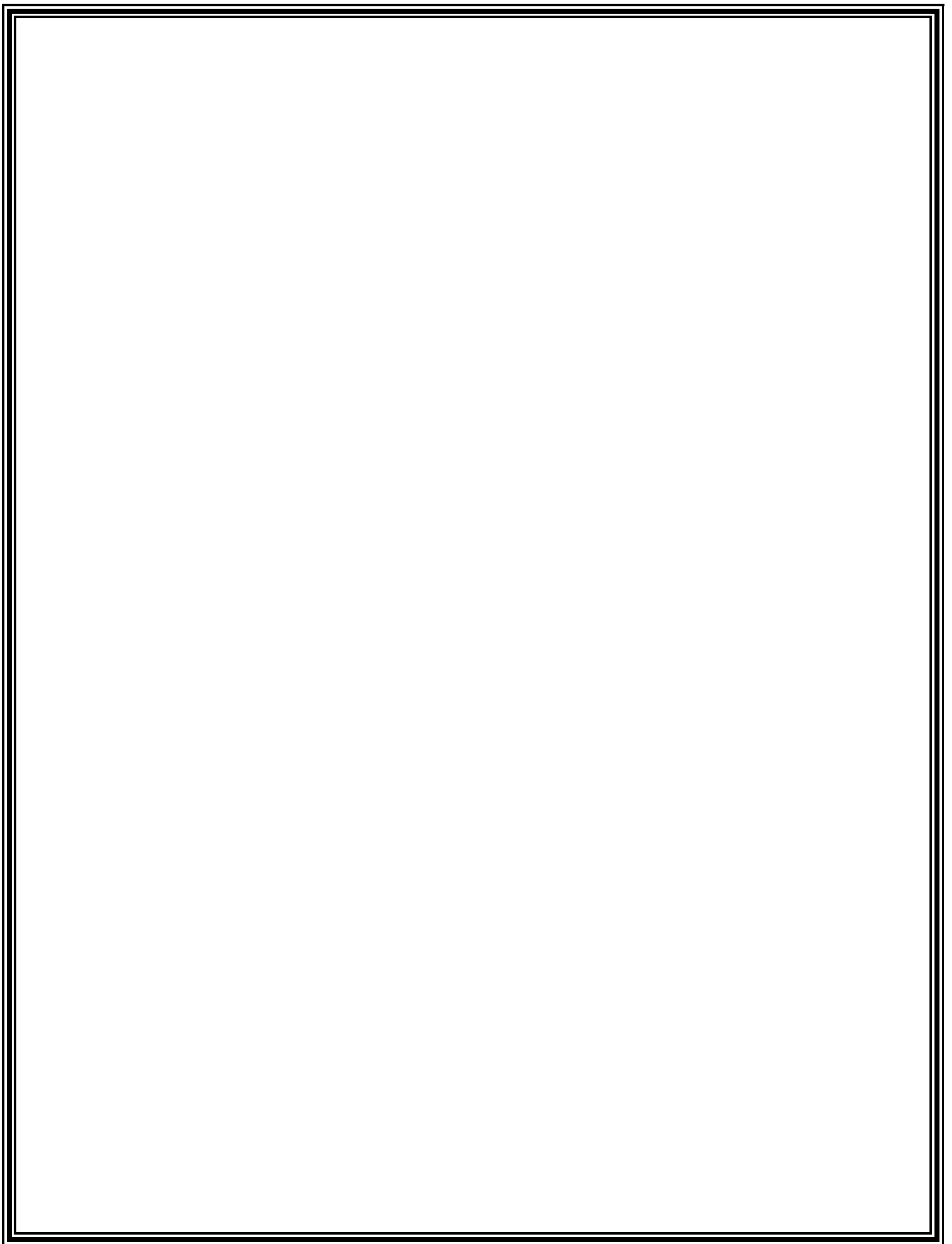
Notes and Acknowledgements:

First, a thanks to the Tutoring-Learning Center, the '57 Program, and all the contributors. *Wordplay* is not possible without your help. Reading through the submissions is always a pleasure. Whatever the reason for writing, it is always a process of intent. I hope that the intent of the writers of these works was found and that they enjoy this portrayal of their work.

Second, UWSP and the '57 Program do not endorse or promote any religious institution.

Phoebe Patten
'57 Intern and Wordplay Editor

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Special Thanks: Paul Kratwell, '57 Supervisor



Poetry

Dylan Leather

"I always look forward to working with Dylan and reading the wonderful thoughts and poems he writes. My favorite parts about his poetry are the unique metaphors that keep me thinking" Sylvia Kies

Too much of a good thing

It was the colorless grey
of the room that burned the scene
into my memory:
my emotions grew me
towards you like a flower
follows the sun,
not knowing that too much of a good thing
would hurt as much as
too little.

I turned down the music
and wondered at how strange it is
that a dying candle
produces its own fumes,
and a snuffed out moment
will do the same.

Gravity is not my friend

Gravity is not my friend.
It forgets from time to time to keep my feet planted firmly on
the ground.
I can't seem to get around these invisible blocks,
tripping over strangers' legs and knocking into things simply
walking in a straight line.
Gravity is inconsistent;
it crushes my chest when I'm stuck on you,
but when I close my eyes
I can feel my unraveling soul float through the ceiling
and hide among the rats in the attic.
Sometimes, I think gravity gets scared.
These neuron-firing and stomach-churning thoughts are
taunting gravity
and it runs to hide, knocking me off balance
skinning my knees,
leaving bruises.
They still sting when I press my memory against them.
Sometimes gravity fights back,
sticking my feet to the ground.
My limbs won't respond, I can't seem to move,
my head feels a hundred pounds,

and my body aches until I lie down
and sink into the quicksand carpet.
I wonder if you feel it too,
with your liquid confidence to keep you happy,
And your tales of falling down stairs.
You fall down, I fall up.

We bob together in a sea of change and hate and regret and past
and present and a hurricane future,
nursing our wounds through artificial uppers
until a very fed up gravity pushes us back
down,
down,
down.

Sometimes I think if gravity was less self-centered
we'd never have hit these bumps in the road.
I'd stay grounded, feet planted firmly.
You'd stay buoyant, far above me.
But gravity is a fickle bitch.
As I follow your path of fingerprints
trailing up the handrail to the
lock-chained door swinging into place,
I trip,
I fall,
up the stairs.
And float away.

You Are Gravity

You are gravity,
and I am the Autumn leaves:
just look at me Fall.

Broken Theaters

I dream in syllables alone,
as though the screen in the cinema lost its picture:
the projector's run-down; there's just sound.

A drawn out moan—
my name—
a gasp—

I cannot see you.
I don't know if your sounds are of pleasure or pain.
The phantom notes of your voice
roll over my skin,
through my fingers,
and out of my grasp.

Your laugh runs through my head,
leaving me exhausted.

And as I start to make sense of the sounds,
connect echoes to images,
the film reel clicks:

a tapping branch on my window,
a dripping faucet in the other room,
a reminder that we're never as happy
as we are in our memories.

Michelle Nieuwenhuis

“Michelle is a talented poet with the extraordinary gift of transforming commonplace topics into fascinating and original narratives. It is with great pleasure that I invite readers to enjoy the artistry of Michelle Nieuwenhuis.”

Austeen Yang

obituary-

she could drink you under the table
because, well,
she probably already was drinking under the table.
she preferred good looking black men
but would never say no
to any good looking man.

these are the pieces of a life,
little details of a person,
that don't make it into an obituary.
whether or not they are important
they are-- they do
make up a person.

a life shouldn't be described in a one columned
article posted in a hometown newspaper that no one
reads.
an avid packer fan, a supporter of the arts.
are those any final words?

i'm the girl who takes birthday shots when it's
not my birthday
i'm the girl slipping on every piece of ice.
i'm the girl with the eyelashes that can't be
matched
and i'm the girl who's too big for a one columned
article.

bathtub-

i bought the liquor store out of wine today.
the empty shelves stared back at me blankly.
the trunk of my car can hold twenty five boxes
of five liter bags of boxed wine –
who'd've known?

white zinfandel, merlot, pinot gringo, and
all those other french flavors i could never pronounce.

wine connoisseurs will show up at my door,
dying
to taste and smell the wine i've bought.

but they're not invited to my party.

lock the door to the bathroom.
shut off the lights.
pull the curtain closed
and lock the drain to the bathtub.

twenty five five liter space bags of wine lined up
neatly on the bathtub counter
a twist of each and they're emptying into the tub.
the warm liquid burns my skin.

past my ankles, past my thighs
past all your favorite parts of my body
my pool of wine grows.
over my shoulders...
 ...neck...
 ...mouth...
 ...eyes...

i couldn't drink until i forgot you
so i laid in wine until i could.

yet another poem about him-

i wonder if he's wrapped up in you these nights
with a cat in your arms, a dog by your feet
like when he was wrapped up in me those nights
and i thought our hearts beat in a way
no one else's could.

i wonder if he talks to same lies
while he's wrapped up in you these nights
and blows them into your mouth
like the smoke he's inhaling from the stolen pipe
of my roommates who hate him
and if he's offering you puffs from it
with a cat in your arms, a dog by your feet
while your hearts beat in a way
no one else's could.

did he meet you a year ago
on the side of the street
a cat in your arms, a dog by your feet
letting the lies creep out of his mouth
past the cigarette he's lighting
while he's wrapped up you in these nights
pocketing your lighter
like the stolen pipe
of my roommates who hate him
and then does the same thing to your heart
that you thought beat with his in a way
no one else's could?

Katherine Erdman

“We all have experiences which help us understand each other, and for Katie, she likes to capture her experiences in a way that everyone can relate to. Her first poem, “With Me,” is about what a girl faces when her father is in the military. “From Birth” is an unveiling of the false message we send to younger girls about beauty.” Melody Metz

From Birth

Paint on your face little girl
So that you can go outside
Paint on your face so you can hide,
In plain sight little girl
With your hair pulled up high.
Paint on your face little girl,
So that you don't cry.
Paint on your face little girl,
So that people can't see,
What you want, who you are,
What you strive to be.
Paint on your face little girl,
Because the world is so cruel.
Teased from the playground,
All the way home from school.
Paint on your face little girl,
Because the world might be,
A kinder place to you, than to me.
Paint on your face little girl,
So that you can live,
In this world, to which
You have so much to give.

With Me

daddys not home anymore
hes gone off to war
i hope hes safe over there
i pray that somebody cares
mommys in school
i am too
she stays up late at night
and sometimes she gets worked up and we fight
i know mommy loves me because she cries
i know she cares because she tries
i tell her i miss daddy too
she looks down at her shoes

i take my sister out to play
because i think mommy needs some time away
daddy called last night on the phone
and for a few minutes his voice was home
he says he is gone because he loves me
and he is trying to make the world a safer place to be
but i just want him home
safe
with me

Mary Marvin

“It's been a pleasure working with Mary this semester. She surprised herself by working only on poetry, and as a result, she has produced some exemplary work. Mary has a wonderful ability to flow seamlessly from the concrete world to the abstract, which makes her writing intriguing and beautiful. I hope you enjoy reading the following samples of her poetry.” Molly Cobb

Once upon a time

Once upon a time
there was silence

Why? Why ask why?

Words hadn't been made yet,
you see.

There were no
letters to

s

t

r

i

n

g

into thoughts

No grunts
to Shhhhhhape
into language

Everything was

silent

and everything was

still

You're ruining it
You're thinking too loud
Hush now,
I'm telling a story

All things were just ideas
floating around
even apples were

apples of the world's eye

How can apples be apples
when they're not apples?
Well my dear,
how can the world
have eyes?

Literary Analysis

If one spends enough time
in literary analysis
one begins to see double

Sometimes a rock
is more than solid
it's where you fell
and sprained your wrist
it's where you sat
after your first heartache
it's where you buried
your tin box of dreams

Sometimes a backpack
carries more than books
it held your first journal
and more than fragile thoughts
it doubled as a pillow
and a travel companion
it sits on your back
as proof of the world's weight

But then again
sometimes things are less
than they appear
the bubble in your mouth
is just air
there is no declaration to state
no confession to make
no song to burst forth

Sometimes the world lets you down
the cramp in your stomach
is more than the flu
the look in his eye
is more than friendly

the sign on the road
is more than a warning

If one spends enough time
in literary analysis
one will find themselves
far from where they started.

Jamie Johns

“Jamie’s poems are usually written from the perspective of various objects, such as a sword, a doll, or a human heart. Each of her poems allow the reader to slip into an alternate reality, or at least into a different pair of shoes. In her first poem, Jamie leads us down a path to experience the four seasons from an interesting perceptive. Her second poem, “High-Healed Shoes in Blue,” is written from the perspective of a pair of blue high-heals. In this poem, the reader can imagine he or she is a pair of shoes rather than merely walking a mile in them.” Leah McSherey

Untitled

Spring

Battered, beaten, broken
torn from sandy shores
in bits and pieces shattered,
chunked and hauled away.
Steel-white crunchers clash
dozers completely craze
shocked, amazed, astounded
as we watch our homeland
slashed and seared.
Still, we sparkle softly,
sweetly shifting sands.

Summer

Burned away we liquefy
to molten ice as one.
We, no I, set crystal clear, just as you see me now.
But you don’t *really* see me now,
do you?
I hear your waiting sigh, excited at the sight
of your friend’s approach along a lovely beaten drive.
Your breath mists quietly away, leaving precious marks behind
as crystal leads to opal skin.
Ah, but how long I would wait!
A massage for sure come “sunny-day,” an appointment you
always keep;
cleansing filth from tiny pores, and leaving crystal gleam.

Fall

Of course, on a rainy day like this

lightning flashes mob the dark, simply screaming shattered glass.

Rain pitter-patters against my crackled marquise skin, you are thankful I am here, your one and only friend.

I am your doorway into the world of elements both to block and to display.

You remain protected and warm sheltered by my tempered strains

A mixture made so pure.

Winter

As weeks,

and days,

and months go by,

I find myself broken again

despite my savior grace,

becoming melted molten swill.

Breath enters me anew,

reminding me of you – and hot summer days.

Becoming pretty; a bauble

bubbling sweetly on your cousin's sill.

Who was she again?

“The artist” as you always said.

A shard of your past life preserved

I look out in your place, glowing gently from within.

Where your breath once rested holding life,

reformed and shaped by molding hands

to protect a short-lived, fragile flame

High heeled shoes in blue

I remember sitting

lovely behind thin glass

windows, among other

pretty, dazzling clothes.

My heartfelt cadenza

stood out from the

tutti ripieno

of loud-looking trinkets

and proud-standing toys

in hues of lavender

rouge and lip-pucker pink.

Your papa chose me

with my baby-blue body

decked in a sheath

of fine silk-sea ribbon
and faux bejeweled toes.
With that first meeting,
I knew –
I was meant for you.
What a special day and gift
for us both.
Though you were
still a fledgling
novice to the song,
we went out dancing
now and then, and trod
among fallen-leaf
red talons
and flat-heeled
earthy hues.
We groomed our
pretty plush plumage,
each day prettier
than the last.

~~~

We met him  
there on that floor  
while flaunting feathers  
solo arietta.  
How could I forget  
those shining black shoes!  
He must take good care of them.  
We ruffled silk feathers  
together  
many times after that,  
no matter sanguine-skies or otherwise.  
But!  
Only when sure to meet  
that man with the perfect  
smooth raven-backed  
black polished shoes.  
He liked to dance  
alla marcia,  
always allegro,  
never lacrimoso.  
Though we did our best  
we could hardly keep  
pace with those shining shoes.  
You said it was because  
that man loved to fly!

~~~

We don't go out dancing –
not anymore.
You tell me every night
he was doing what he loved:
that man who wore
polished, coal-black shoes.
He was flying
in the baby-blue sky
from Berlin and Rome,
to the Sea of Japan.
Oh, how we wished
to soar a due!
But you said
last time he was here
we would soon go out again
and dance the night away.

~~~

You did keep your promise,  
and for years we danced  
each balmy-hot summer  
con somma passione,  
and every crystal-chill winter  
medesimo tempo –  
always beside those  
black-ash glazed shoes.  
Tiny, heel-size unshod feet  
appeared for a time,  
grew, and disappeared.  
They come to visit now and then,  
bearing sneakers, sandals, and pumps.  
Though some were larger than me, they  
were courteous and kind  
as I invited them to my home.  
It's always nice to have a visitor,  
especially since those  
black-shine shoes  
don't move much  
anymore.  
I haven't danced with them  
since that picture with boxes  
gridlocked beneath  
announced 1974.  
But it's alright.  
Even if the dance-halls  
fall, are torn away and replaced –

even if the music  
can hardly be danced to –  
we still have that one song.  
Our sweet largo-lento  
and piano waltz  
that both we  
and he could dance.  
Clear as the stars  
on that night we first met  
and of jet-black  
shined shoes,  
we move come prima  
with nightingale-black  
shoes in sight,  
watching  
each and every day.

*Prose*

## **Katie Loucks - Emails Home**

### Introduction

In this book, I try to answer some of the questions people might have about how Christians deal, or at least should deal, with some issues. I decided to write this book because I feel many people are struggling with these issues and don't want some long, boring non-fiction book. Also, Christians may be wondering how to respond to things, and non-believers might be wondering how they should be looking at Christians. I realize that long, boring non-fiction books are the type that some like, but we live in a society that loves to have quick answers, hence the email-type format. I have each chapter is set up where it is an email to God and a response back from Him. Some are asked by the same sender due to the similarity of subject, some are new senders. There is a reference section in the back of scripture I used throughout the book to help answer the questions; use it so that you can dig in more if you are thus inclined. I hope that you enjoy the book and pray that this is God speaking, not me.

I chose these threads based on what I thought the most people would be interested in. The topics here I felt spoke to a larger audience than some of my other emails. Hopefully these speak to you, no matter what you believe in.

Katie is a very gifted writer. Over the semester she has surprised me weekly with her new projects and pieces of writing. For example, toward the beginning of the semester we worked on a "college" set in the world of The Lord of the Rings. We talked about everything from setting to classes to extracurriculars, even dorm life and a motto. However, because the LOTR piece ended up being over 20 pages long, she decided to submit the following piece about writing emails to God, which is equally interesting and relevant.

Enjoy!" - Brittney Deford

### Thread 1

To: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

From: [whoamI@gmail.com](mailto:whoamI@gmail.com)

Subject: I don't know who I am

To whomever it may concern,

I'm not sure who this is, but I was told that I can trust you by my sister. She became more confident after emailing you. I am

having problems figuring out who I am. There are so many different sources in life telling me who I should be, but not who I am definitely. The TV says that I should look a certain way, my parents tell me to be myself, unconscious social dynamics tell me to blend in with everyone else. I am sure of what I can do, but that doesn't help me that much. I don't believe that works alone can help define who I am. Can you help?

Thanks,

Lost

To: [whoamI@gmail.com](mailto:whoamI@gmail.com)

From: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

Subject: Re: I don't know who I am

Lost,

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. You were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, you too may live a new life. To love me with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all offerings and sacrifices. You proclaim what you have seen and heard, so that everyone also may have fellowship. And your fellowship is with me and with the Son, Jesus Christ. Know that I am God. It is I who made you, and you are mine; you are my people, the sheep of his pasture. No one who is born of me will continue to sin, because my seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of me. You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Love always,

Your Father

Thread 2

To: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

From: [whysuffering@facebook.com](mailto:whysuffering@facebook.com)

Subject: Why is there suffering in the world?

To whomever it may concern,

My mom mentioned this email address when we were talking about this topic. She said it might be a good thing for me to email you because you deal with hard questions similar to this. I



am wondering why there is suffering in the world. Why, if here in the USA, do we have enough food right now to feed everyone in the country for years, but we still have poverty? What about wars? Why do we have suffering and will it ever end?

Thanks,

Sadness

To: [whysuffering@facebook.com](mailto:whysuffering@facebook.com)

From: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

Subject: Re: Why is there suffering in the world?

Sadness,

To the women I said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children." To Adam I said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field." Daughter Zion said, "The Lord is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command. Listen, all you peoples; look on my suffering. My young men and young women have gone into exile." Your comfort in your suffering is this: My promise preserves your life. Surely he took up our pain and bore your suffering, yet you considered him punished by me, stricken by me, and afflicted. But he was pierced for your transgressions, he was crushed for your iniquities; the punishment that brought you peace was on him, and by his wounds you are healed. Not only so, but you also glory in your sufferings, because you know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. For just as you share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also your comfort abounds through Christ. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Love always,

Your Father

### Thread 3

To: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

From: [interactionswithothers@aol.com](mailto:interactionswithothers@aol.com)

Subject: How should we act with non-Christians?

To whomever it may concern,

I wrote earlier about how to interact with Christians. Well, I don't have just Christian friends – some of my friends are non-

Christians. Some Christians say that it's better to have just Christian friends, but at the same time, how are we supposed to carry out the Great Commission if we don't? So, how should I interact with them? Is there anything I should stay away from or bring up?

Thanks,

Actions louder than Words

To: [interactionswithothers@aol.com](mailto:interactionswithothers@aol.com)

From: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

Subject: Re: How should we act with non-Christians?

Actions louder than Words,

On arriving at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas gathered the church together and reported all that I had done through them and how I had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. The unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. I have called you to live in peace. Paul wrote to you in his letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But Paul wrote to you then that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

Love Always,

Your Father

Thread 4

To: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

From: [whenidie@att.com](mailto:whenidie@att.com)

Subject: What happens when you die?

To whomever it may concern,

My grandpa died last week. Because of that, I am wondering what happens to us when we die. I have been struggling with this since before last week, but last week just emphasized it. There are so many questions I have right now, but right now that is the biggest one I have; what happens when we die?

Thanks,

Death

To: [whenidie@att.com](mailto:whenidie@att.com)

From: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

Subject: Re: What happens when you die?

Death,

If you have been united with Christ in a death like his, you will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in him will live, even though they die. For you believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so you believe that I will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. I loved the world so much that I sent my one and only Son so that those who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life. Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Love Always,

Your Father

Thread 5

To: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

From: [whybelieve@wi.rr.com](mailto:whybelieve@wi.rr.com)

Subject: Why should we believe?

To whomever it may concern,

My pastor and I have been talking about different topics in the process of confirming me into the church. One of the ones that came up was that of belief and why should we believe what we believe. He told me some reasons why, but I wanted to hear from someone who knows more answers (not that he doesn't know; just someone who knows more). He suggested coming to you because you talk about a range of topics. So my question is this: in a culture where one doesn't know what to believe, why should we believe in God?

Thanks,

Doubt

To: [whybelieve@wi.rr.com](mailto:whybelieve@wi.rr.com)

From: [ilovegod@heaven.com](mailto:ilovegod@heaven.com)

Subject: Re: Why should we believe?

Doubt,

To all who received Christ, to those who believed in him, he gave the right to become children of mine. The one who trusts

in him will never be put to shame. Christ came into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in him should stay in darkness. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I have reconciled you to myself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, I have brought you into my own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before me without a single fault. Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of me, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For when you were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in you, so that you bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound you, you have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. For I so loved the world that I sent my one and only Son that you shall not perish but have eternal life. But if Christ does the works, even though you do not believe him, believe the works, that you may know and understand that I am in him and he in me. Do not be ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of me that brings salvation to everyone who believes. Through my Son everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

Love Always,  
Your Father

## References

These passages have been quoted in full or in part in the text.

Thread 1: Who am I

- John 10:11, 14-15
- Mark 12:33
- 1 John 1:3
- Psalm 100:3
- 1 John 3:9
- Matthew 5:13a-14

Thread 2: Why is there suffering in the world?

- Genesis 3:16-18
- Lamentations 1:18
- Psalm 119:50
- Isaiah 43:4-5
- Romans 5:3-4
- 2 Corinthians 1:5
- Nehemiah 8:10

Thread 3: How should we act with non-Christians?

- Acts 14:27
- 2 Corinthians 6:14
- 1 Corinthians 7:14-15
- 1 Corinthians 5:9-11

Thread 4: What happens when we die?

- Romans 6:5
- John 11:25
- 1 Thessalonians 4:14
- John 3:16
- Matthew 18:3
- Matthew 7:13-14

Thread 5: Why should we believe?

- John 1:12
- 1 Peter 2:6
- John 12:46
- John 6:47
- Colossians 1:22
- Romans 6:23
- Romans 7:5-6
- John 3:16

- John 10:38
- Romans 1:16
- Acts 13:39

### Leah Pierce – Letting Go

The window reflects my cold, pale face perfectly shaping my distinctive cheek bones and my Norwegian nose faintly. I stare into my deep blue eyes for what seems like forever. I reach up slowly pulling my long blonde hair out of my ponytail. I watch as my

hair falls perfectly into place right where it always is, just passed my shoulders. It's four o'clock and outside it's almost dark but has what seems like a yellowish gold glow across it. Thoughts of you slowly drifted in my mind. I gently stroke the soft bundle snuggled up on my lap, as I intently look out the window trying to hold back the tears. This lump in my throat won't go away. The cat purrs loudly and looks up at me with his big green eyes, wanting me to forget the world. He knows something is wrong, he always does. I lean my head down to kiss him on the forehead letting him know I'm okay. As if satisfied with my response, his rough tongue catches my cheek before I can dodge it. He then rests his head back down on my lap. I managed to retain myself, but a single tear rolls down my cheek, sliding to my lips, the taste is salty and warm. No, I tell myself, I couldn't think about you now, all you do is tear me apart.

Outside the clouds grew darker and suddenly a rain drop hit the window. Sliding down for what seemed like forever the rain drop seemed to strike something inside of me. Two more splashed against the cold window,

then four more. Soon rain poured out of the violet sky. A smile crept across my face, this is what I have been waiting for I thought to myself. I quickly sprung up from my old armchair and a piercing meow escapes the cat as he leaps to his safety. Running into the living room, I opened the front door slowly putting both feet upon the porch. A cold electric burst shot

This piece is written by Leah Pierce, a freshmen majoring in English at UWSP. Leah enjoys writing creative fictional pieces and is currently working on a fantasy novel.

-Rachel Davis

through my body as my bare feet met the wet cement. The smell of wet grass and fresh rain fills my mind with clear thoughts. I made my way to the green grass as it soaks up the down pour. Thoughts rush through my mind again, but I don't let it get to me. Nothing will ruin the moment. I slowly lift up my arms with open palms embracing the sky. I felt the warm rain drops hit my arms and face. Now no one can see my tears. Twirling around in circles, my plain brown dress clings to my body. This is how I want to feel. I felt so free like nothing and no one is going to hurt me. I don't want this to end. Like nothing in the world can separate us, just me and the rain.



## Justice Thompson – Better Left Blank

### “Staying Alive”

is playing in the background, and as it does it becomes more and more warped leaving a sense of unease in my stomach-coiled deep within ready to strike at a moment’s notice. My eyes are closed and they continue to stay that way as I try to retrace my steps as to how I got here. A blank slate. I open them and my eyes widen at the monochromatic scheme that is before me.

Black and white tents of all sizes surround me, creating a maze that I’m trapped within. I feel I should be scared or confused as to how I got here or as to what this place is; yet I don’t feel anything. I only feel a sense of wonderment and child-like curiosity. My gaze drifts upwards towards a sky that is dull and washed out-the color of slate- towards a sky with no sun and no clouds. Just an endless sea of gray above me.

I turn my attention back to the tents. There is no one around. I walk to the first tent I happen upon. It is of a smaller size with the black and white stripes on them like the rest but with a crude sign posted “Come and See.” I enter expecting someone to greet me, but knowing no one will. The room is filled with tables and shelves covered with jars. I come to one and find a hand within; another has a baby with a tail: a head with no mouth. All of the jars are filled with things that should have me disgusted but I don’t feel that. I continue to pick up jar after jar until I reach the end.

Justice has been an absolute pleasure to work with this semester. Week after week, she brought in pieces that were both astoundingly brilliant as well as marvelously creepy. As seen in her piece “Better Left Blank” below, Justice enjoys writing about darker subjects and is not afraid to describe them in detail – detail that often leaves the reader cringing and shivering along with the characters in her stories. I hope the reader will enjoy her work as much as I have, and I wish the best for Justice as she continues her studies

Angela Bemowski

Reaching the end I turn to leave and come back out to the lifeless world. I enter another tent, this one seemingly empty- only until I close the flap behind me and look up. A bright night sky greets me. I feel the night air wash over me, and I smell the secrets of the moon, the stars shining their brilliance in full effect as if to outshine the moon. Unable to resist the urge I lie down and look up, soaking in all of its grandeur. I soon drift off into a dreamless slumber.

I wake up to the sky and slowly untangle myself from the grass. Taking one last look at the moon I leave.

I walk towards one of the larger tents tucked away in the corner, and excitement floods through every nerve of my being as to what could possibly lay inside. Entering, a chill spreads across my skin and travels through my body, leaving me exhilarated. Snow crunches beneath my feet and falls down into my hair. Everything is white and pure; trees covered in frost and ice beckon me over, and the pure white erases all thought. I laugh and twirl about in all of its brilliance.

I come out and my eyes land upon a rather dilapidated tent. Odd in itself, seeing as all the other tents are mysteriously well kept. The fear unfurling itself and slowly wrapping around me I enter.

As my eyes adjust to the dimness I see a lone light bulb gently swaying back and forth casting eerie shadows across the walls. Though it is a bit chilly there isn't the slightest of breezes. All across the room I see mirrors upon mirrors, erratically placed, leaving me to wonder why they would be here in the first place if not to create some illusion. Ears straining to pick up a faint noise I make my way toward the first mirror. A thick film of dust cloaks it. Busying myself at removing the grime I don't even notice what lay inside.

Nothing but darkness and suffering lay inside. In the middle there is a battered chair with an even more worn man chained to it. His eyes are blindfolded and his manacled hands fidget. His face is bruised to a near unrecognizable shape. There is fresh blood pouring from his nose and mouth falling unto his already soaked clothes. Then a man of ungodly stature steps into the picture.

Dressed all in black with thick armor covering every inch of him. Nothing but his vibrant blue eyes and mouth can be seen. His mouth is twisted into a malicious sneer and his eyes show his barbarous nature. Cold hatred fuels his every move. He takes out what looks to be some sort of mechanism and plunges it in the man's stomach. His scream penetrates through the glass and leaves me in pieces.

It's as if some spell was broken with that single scream, and all around me wails of pain and brokenness reach out to me through the mirrors. The smell of blood and filth finds its way up through my nose and I empty my stomach onto the dirt-covered ground. Able to take no more I stumble from the dilapidated tent and back into the strange world that I entered. But it is not the sound of silence that greets my ears.

I am bombarded by the noise of people yelling. I make my way towards the noise surprised and a bit confused that other people are here and I didn't notice, but more off put as to what the screams now do to me. I close my eyes and an image rises unbidden of that man chained to the chair. Nausea rises in my stomach and I push it down.

As I come closer and closer to the shouts I realize they aren't shouts of joy. No, they are cries of suffering. I'm about to turn around when I see a crowd of people through a crack in the tent. As silently as I can I make my way to the edge of the tent and peer out at the crowd. There isn't anything odd about them as far as I can tell. That's when I notice it. These people aren't alive, but they aren't dead either. They are somewhere in between, just standing there, lifeless.

I gasp at this realization and the sound draws their attention. Their eyes are dead and cold, piercing me from my hiding place. A cold sweat breaks out across my skin and I take off running through the maze of tents. Not having a single coherent thought, just wanting to flee their cold stares. Thinking I lost them I come to a halt, my breathing labored from the exertion. I look up to find someone staring at me; he is different than the others.

He looks at me with an odd expression on his face and walks towards me. I am not frightened of him and his sudden appearance. Somehow I know he wouldn't hurt me. We are face to face now and he takes my face in his hands and the look upon

his face brings me to tears. He strokes my cheek and whispers,  
“I live in you.” He does this as he plunges a knife in me.

