

# EASTER EMPOWERS

How on earth is the ancient story of a crucified carpenter relevant to society today?

BY JODY BENNETT

**H**AVE you ever heard someone disparage the Easter story by saying, "Well how could God have done that to His Son – send Him to the cross. It's child abuse!?"

Besides the obvious fact that Jesus was a 33-year-old man by this stage, and not a child; He Himself refutes this argument when he says in John 10:18

*No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

Jesus was no victim. He freely obeyed God and He freely gave Himself over to the purposes and plans of God. And lately I have come to understand that Christianity is the very opposite of the popular modern narrative of victimhood.

Today people seem to revel in their status of being a victim, asking that they get special treatment and that less be expected of them because of the hardships they have endured. Whether it is criminals demanding leniency because of their sad childhoods, addicts demanding

legalisation of their drug because they can't stop, people groups demanding reparations because of past injustices, or people whose feelings contradict scientific fact demanding everyone reinforce their lifestyle.

Now I am not saying that we shouldn't be compassionate, caring and understanding towards such people and give them the help they need.

What I am saying is that there is an unhelpful attitude of resignation and fatalism in this embracing of victimhood that encourages people to wallow in self pity and demand punishment of those who don't agree with them, instead

of owning their lives, shouldering their responsibilities and facing the consequences of their choices.

Christianity on the other hand, notwithstanding its call to lay down one's life,<sup>1</sup> is unexpectedly empowering.

It acknowledges that "without God we can do nothing"<sup>2</sup> and are "slaves to sin"<sup>3</sup> but it also tells us that the very power that raised Jesus from the dead can fill us with power to live godly lives and to say no to ungodly



Aniza Serrano, of a church in East Hollywood, displays several of 400 orchids that were ordered for the cancelled Easter services in 2020. Although the church, like many others, suffered due to the pandemic, they turned it into an opportunity to bring hope to others by passing out free orchids and food to needy people throughout the week. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)

passions<sup>4</sup>. This is one of the things that makes Christianity so different from other religions.

Christianity does not allow us to play the victim. Those who come to Christ, regardless of how hard the situations they have come out of, are required to first off, face up to their own sins and failures and turn away from them<sup>5</sup>, recognising that none of us are only victims, we all have been perpetrators of wrongs<sup>6</sup>.

Then it requires one to seek forgiveness from those one has hurt and make reparations where

possible<sup>7</sup>. Which sets us free from the awful burden of guilt so many of us carry unnecessarily.

We cannot change others, but as we come into a right relationship with Jesus He changes us, and indeed how we treat others, and our responses to how others treat us. Either we can take offence and harbour resentment, demanding vengeance; or we can free ourselves through forgiveness to live whole and happy lives.

Christianity turns our heads around from looking back with

regret, hurt, anger and bitterness at all the 'unfairness' in our lives, to looking forward with hope and faith at the glorious future that God has prepared for everyone who comes to Him<sup>8</sup>: To a time when there will be no more tears or hurts<sup>9</sup> or injustice and when every wrong will be made right and every secret thing will be uncovered<sup>10</sup>.

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# An atheist uncovers the evidence

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

**I**F you're a committed atheist and your spouse becomes a follower of Jesus, it might just rock your world. That's what happened to hardnosed Chicago Tribune legal affairs editor Lee Strobel, who marshalled his skills in journalism and law to find out what had happened to his wife.

Strobel's quest became a bestselling book, *The Case for Christ*, and now a movie. He writes that Leslie's 1979 announcement stunned him. He felt "like the victim of a bait-and-switch scam. I had married one Leslie – fun...carefree...risk-taking – and now I feared she was going to turn into some sort of sexually repressed prude who would trade our upwardly mobile lifestyle for all-night prayer vigils and volunteer work in grimy soup kitchens.

"Instead," he continues, "I was pleasantly surprised – even fascinated – by the funda-

mental changes in her character, her integrity, and her personal confidence." He aimed to investigate faith from top to bottom to see if it made sense.

**Rigorous methods; avoiding pitfalls**

Educated at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and Yale Law School, Strobel determined to use the rigorous methods a veteran journalist and legal analyst would about a court case: sifting evi-



dence, evaluating reliability, considering alternatives. He studied history, archaeology, and ancient literature and interviewed experts.

Strobel wanted to avoid pitfalls he had experienced earlier in his career when an apparently clear-cut court case he was covering had its guilty verdict reversed. In retrospect, he realized he had been viewing the facts through preconceived biases that blinded him from objective evaluation. He determined to study from a fresh perspective the faith he had thought was a fairy tale.

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Fun for Kids

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BACK PAGE



I SURRENDER ALL

CODY GARBRANDT

# The things that matter most

BY ALAN BAILEY

**WILLIAM** Carey was a cobbler. He mended shoes in an English village called Piddington, as a youth, while he taught himself Latin and Greek. His heart's desire was to go to India. In the year 1793 he did so and stayed for 40 years. As a brilliant linguist, he translated the Bible into more than one Indian language and was responsible for some valuable reforms. The movie *A Candle in the Dark* tells his story.



Recently I saw a quote of his. "I am not afraid of failure; but I am afraid of being successful in all the things that don't matter."

I felt the impact of that. Being successful in what doesn't matter is common to us all. Think about it. We do all sorts of things every day that in a final or ultimate sense have no real consequences. Little tasks, casual play, being entertained and so on. There is certainly nothing wrong with what is everyday activity. But where the rub comes is when there is nothing else but the inconsequential in a whole life lived. Imagine coming to the end of the road and realising we have spent ourselves on things that don't matter.

This, of course, raises the question 'What does matter?'. We could decide on a list, quite a long list. But at the head of it should be our standing before God. We all have a relationship with Him. For many, God is a far-off stranger, mainly ignored. For others, He is an opponent, the cause of hardship and suffering. Then to many, He is a loving Father.

We need to do something about being in a right relationship with God. Going our own way in life is actually rebelling against the rule of the Almighty. It is keeping God at a distance.

In contrast, John 1: 12 says, speaking of Christ here among us, "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." We can have this relationship because the Saviour was crucified in our place, rising to a new life which He shares with those who come to Him.

What matters? Think of this: What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul. Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8: 36, 37).



This is an example of someone who has used the power of the cross to turn their tragedy into opportunity for good. Pastor Eric Fitzgerald (left) comforts Matt Swatzell at the graveside of Eric's wife. In 2006, when he was 20, Matt was responsible for the death of Eric's pregnant wife and unborn son when he fell asleep at the wheel of his car after a night shift as a fireman. Two years after the event, Eric sought out Matt to express forgiveness to him. The men have since become fast friends and have each since married. Eric's second wife is step-mum to his daughter, who survived the crash as an 18-month-old. Instead of being a victim, Eric showed forgiveness and grace towards Matt, and as a result both men and their families have been empowered to be forces for good in their communities.

# Easter empowers

• From page 1

Christians are not victims, but recipients of the undeserved grace and kindness of God<sup>11</sup>, which heals them of their pasts and allows them to spread that healing to others through kindness and doing good deeds, making the world a less hurtful place for all.

And even if terrible things happen to people after they become Christ-followers (which they will because awful things happen to everyone), they are still not 'victims' because they know that God reigns supreme and everything that happens does so because it has either been allowed or ordered by Him for their ultimate good and His glory<sup>12</sup>.

Victimhood is like a pair of distorting glasses that cause us to see everything twisted by our own hurt, leaving us

angry, helpless and aggressive. Becoming a Christian is like taking those glasses off and seeing things as they really are – our lives are messy but meaningful, others are flawed

## VICTIMHOOD IS LIKE A PAIR OF DISTORTING GLASSES



but forgivable, our hearts are rotten but renewable, history is polluted but purposeful, and the future will make sense of everything and all our suffering will be worthwhile<sup>13</sup>.

So that is why Easter, celebrating the death on the cross of the historical person of Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead, witnessed by over 500 people<sup>14</sup> about 2000 years ago, is relevant for you and me in 2021. Believing in it and embracing it can set us free to live in what the Jews call 'shalom' -

wholeness, peace, joy and satisfaction.

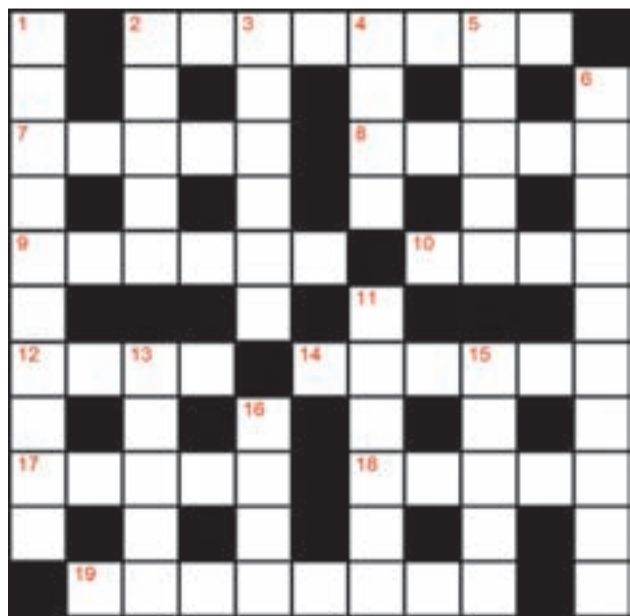
Footnote Scripture references

- 1. Mark 8:35; 2. John 15:5; 3. Romans 6:6; 4. Titus 2:12; 5. Matthew 4:17;
- 6. Romans 3:23; 7. Matthew 5:23-25; 8. John 14:1-3;
- 9. Revelation 21:4; 10. Ecclesiastes 12:14; 11. 2 Peter 1:2-4;
- 12. Romans 8:28; 13. Romans 8:18; 14. 1 Corinthians 15:6

## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

**ACROSS**

- 2 Envy
- 7 Stone landmark
- 8 Whinny
- 9 Genuine
- 10 Gawk at
- 12 Lightly burn
- 14 A sudden outburst
- 17 Thighbone
- 18 Extreme
- 19 Local area network



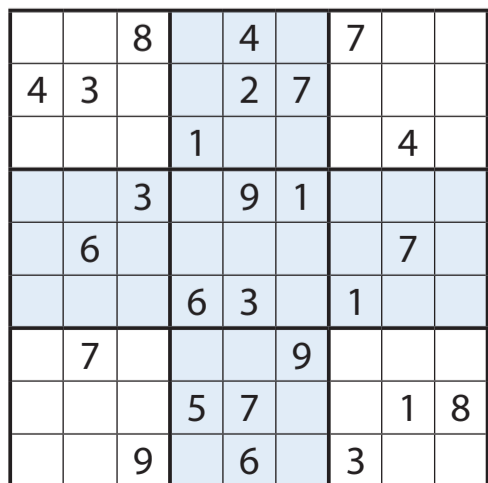
**DOWN**

- 1 Downgrade (a secret document)
- 2 Supportive beam
- 3 Occurs every year
- 4 Pigpen sound
- 5 David's weapon
- 6 Creamy dessert tart
- 11 Reddish-brown hair
- 13 Acknowledge
- 15 Eight musicians as a group
- 16 French cheese

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



"He is the world's foremost authority on himself"



# An atheist uncovers the evidence

• From page 1

For nearly two years he asked hard questions about source reliability, about Jesus' life, death and alleged Resurrection, and more. The book and the film present what he discovered, not as academic treatises – though the book is well written for thinking readers, and extensively documented – but in the context of colorful, touching stories about how he wrestled with his findings.

**Skeptical, analytical questions**  
The movie skillfully weaves his skeptical, analytical questions into the fabric of love, pain, sorrow and joy that composed his marriage and family life. A glimpse of what he encountered:

Regarding the source material, he found scholarly support for "the essential reliability of the New Testament documents...their accurate transmittal through history...extensive corroboration by ancient historians and others," and for the assertion that "archaeology underscores their trustworthiness."  
Regarding Jesus, he found multiple

attestations that Jesus claimed deity. Jesus' "I and the Father are one" New Testament claim is echoed by contemporary friends...and even enemies, who accused him of blasphemy for an assertion they considered outrageous.

Lots of mentally disturbed people believe they are God. Was Jesus one of them? Strobel says Jesus' discourses display "no sign of dementia, delusions, or paranoia." Rather they evidence "profound wisdom...uncanny insights...poetic eloquence, and... deep compassion."  
Jesus fulfilled many Hebrew prophecies regarding the Jewish Messiah. Strobel cites Peter Stoner, a mathematician who calculated the probability of just eight of these coming true in one person as one chance in 1017.

**Empty tomb; a little girl's wish**  
And Strobel found convincing evidence that Jesus was executed, buried, and returned to life. The tomb was empty and many eyewitnesses said they saw him alive again, some



at the cost of their lives.

He concluded, "The atheism I had embraced for so long buckled under the weight of historical truth. ...It would require much more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to trust in Jesus of Nazareth!" He invited Jesus to forgive him and become his personal friend in 1981.

The change in his formerly self-absorbed life was so radical that a few months later, his five-year-old daughter said, "Mommy, I want God to do for me what he's done for Daddy." •

Rusty Wright is an author and lecturer who has spoken on six continents. He holds Bachelor of Science (psychology) and Master of Theology degrees from Duke and Oxford universities, respectively. This article is from www.Rusty-Wright.com and is used with kind permission.

# From black shadows to bright light

## Covid takes Africa's Billy Graham home to Jesus

Stephen Lungu was 20 years old and angry. He was a freedom fighter in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) at a time of heightened racial tensions in 1962, and he hated white people and their Christian God.

When he and his gang, the Black Shadows, heard that South African Christians were preaching Jesus at a tent meeting, they decided to "teach them a lesson" and blow them up with petrol bombs.

He divided his friends into groups and co-ordinated an attack. "At 7pm I will whistle and everybody throw their stones and petrol bombs into the tent entrance," I said. They grinned in anticipation. "I want," I continued, "everyone inside that tent to die," he relates in his biography by Anne Coomes titled *Out of the Black Shadows*.

At five minutes before the appointed time, Stephen and his pal Robert entered the tent. He explains in his book how those next few minutes changed his life and his destiny:

"The wages of sin is death," the tent preacher proclaimed. It had an

instant effect.

The silence seemed to echo with the phrase. Seconds piled up into several minutes. He was simply standing there staring at us, but he certainly had the electrified attention of the crowd. Sin is death! Through my mind flashed all the evil things I had done of late, all the hatred I had shown. Death, death. No one had to tell me I was going to die as I had lived: in evil and misery. ... And then, this man's face began to crumple up. His great dark

eyes filled with tears. They ran down his cheeks. Harsh sobs racked him. He was crying! Well, I was astounded. I'd been prepared for ranting and raving, and would have shut my mind to it. But nothing had prepared me for this.

But the preacher continued: "You have disobeyed God, and you think He does not see your evil lives? Even every time you open your mouth, you sin. Your language is full of blasphemy and deceit. Your tongues are as full of poison as vipers."

I was stunned. Only the previous day Robert's primus stove would not

*Stephen Lungu is a perfect example of someone who was trapped by his difficult past until he was empowered to break free of it by giving his life over to Jesus Christ.*

light. I had kicked it violently, and sworn at it, sending it to hell several times over. But how did this man know? I could think of only one way. Robert, sitting near me on the bench, must have told him. So I pulled out my knife and whispered to him savagely. "How dare you tell this man my sins? I will kill you!"

Robert jumped and stared at me in total amazement. Obviously, though, he was feeling guilty as well, because he said, "Well, you've told him about me as well, so I will kill you too."

We glared angrily at each other, but meanwhile the preacher carried on talking about sin and the damage it did. He kept on pointing, and the more he spoke, the more I felt he was

talking directly to me. I know now that I, Stephen Lungu, had without warning hit a spiritual crisis in my life. But at the time I didn't know I had a spirit, and I did not in the least understand what was happening to me.

I was a very simple, literal person, with no sophistication whatever, and to me it was as if that preacher was standing up there talking only about me, and telling everyone the secrets of my heart. I had not realised then that people's hearts are very much the same.

By now our planned attack was quite forgotten. The preacher's pointing finger had me mesmerised. But I never dreamed of just leaving



the tent. Instead, I decided to be clever, and in my very simple, literal way, avoid his finger by ducking down every time he pointed. Soon I was bobbing up and down like a duck. My bag of home-made petrol bombs bounced about alarmingly. It was a strange way in which to hold the greatest spiritual crisis of my life, shying about at the back of a dusty tent, armed with deadly weapons, but frightened stiff of the accusing finger of an unarmed preacher.

And then the preacher turned to the solution. He preached about Jesus. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

And as Stephen tells it, this was a Jesus he could identify with. "He had suffered in all the ways I knew so well. Poverty, oppression, hunger, thirst loneliness." And the offer of Jesus' riches, and an end to self-hatred and fear, bought Stephen to tears. He sat sobbing in the tent's crowd while also experiencing something he had never known.

"I never used to laugh until when I accepted Jesus at the age of 20," Stephen often said. "That was the first time I laughed."

A powerful conversion, led to a life as a powerful preacher.

Stephen became known as "Africa's Billy Graham", leading thousands to Christ and becoming head of the evangelistic African Enterprise (AE) organisation. "I don't think I have ever known a more passionate and endlessly energetic preacher of the gospel than Stephen," said Michael Cassidy, who founded AE.

Sadly this inspiring man died from Covid-19 on Monday, January 18, during a resurgence of the disease in Malawi. Stephen was 78.

"We all prayed. However, it has pleased the Lord to rest him," current AE CEO Stephen Mbogo announced.

Stephen's wife, Rachel, mother to their six children, also has Covid and was isolating in Lilongwe at the time of writing.

# ACTOR'S LIFE-CHANGING EASTER

Jordin Sparks is a singer-songwriter and actress who rose to fame after winning American Idol in 2007. At 17, she was the youngest winner in the series' history. After her success, she released a number of studio albums and EPs, went on world-wide tours, starred on Broadway and made appearances in many TV shows and films.

Yet, Jordin was not happy with the way she was living and one miraculous Easter, she discovered the true source for a joy and a success like no other.

Jordin grew up in Phoenix, Arizona in a loving Christian home. However, she didn't fully commit herself to following God.

"My life and my heart was only half in it," she says. "I believed I could be happy if I continued to do the 'norm' a Christian should do: go to church, read the Bible, be good to other people, be successful in my music and devoted in my romantic relationships."

Then Jordin became so invested in reaching success that she did not have time for God anymore. She says she relied on her fame and musical talent as a source for her identity but this turned out to have a negative effect on her life.

"After a while, my behaviour began to make me feel like a zombie and I wasn't sure who I was. It wasn't working for me," she confesses. "At that point in my life, my belief in God

was that He was this big Creator and that He ruled over everything but that He wasn't with me or near me."

Then, at church on Easter Sunday 2016, a miraculous change occurred in the singer's life.

"I was completely broken and torn," Jordin tells with tears in her eyes, "And Jesus poured His love on me. I completely surrendered to God. I wept and asked for prayer and for Jesus to heal and forgive all the pain that I was feeling."

Afterwards, Jordin says her life was dramatically changed: "I didn't view anything from my life before as my ultimate source of happiness anymore. Now I know that the only way to receive joy and contentment is to follow and obey Jesus and to make decisions for and because of Him, not because of myself."

Jordin's life has taken some tough turns. Her parents had divorced before her recommitment to Jesus and her mother had remarried. Earlier in 2019, her stepfather died from a stroke and, 15 months previous, her stepsister Bryanna passed away at 16 after a lifelong battle with sickle cell anaemia.

However, Jordin has not wavered in her strong faith and speaks out about where her true identity lies.

"In my old life, my identity and fulfilment was based in my success and music and I used every opportunity to work and be proud of the things I could do, the things I could

accomplish myself," she says. "After I revived my relationship with Jesus, the things I did with my time completely changed and now I wake up every single morning seeking Him and I pray that He uses me for anything that He sees fit for me – not what I try to control or what I want for myself. My life has changed dramatically and even though I may still struggle with many things, they're getting better. I have a peace that I've never had before in my entire life and a joy that nobody can take away."

Jordin had a rocky relationship with singer Jason Derulo, and the two parted ways in 2014 as friends. She gives some motivating advice to other young girls who have gone through bad relationships and hard break-ups: "I want to encourage you to trust God with your life. He has been so faithful to me and has never aban-

doned me. He has always been by my side and is protecting and guiding me every step of the way and I know that He loves me so much and I know He loves you too."

Today, Jordin is married to Dana Isaiiah and they have a son. She juggles marriage, motherhood, a singing career and partnerships with brands that promote keeping physically active and advocate a healthy body image.



*Jordin Sparks at iHeartRadio Wango Tango in June 2019 in California. (Photo by Frazer Harrison/Getty Images)*



Tara Morrison doing cafe duty at Esther House's cafe in Kalamunda as part of her rehabilitation program.

# Stalked by death & drugs but now free

BY JANICE TEO

Death was a frequent caller in Tara Morrison's life.

First it was her best friend, who died in his sleep when Tara was 15.

Then when she was 21, her fiance hung himself.

And in July 2020, her partner and father of her eight-year-son, Kade, died.

"I felt cursed," she told *Challenge Newspaper*. "Everyone around me died. The devil just had a field day with me."

She felt the devil had her on a roller-coaster of depression, crime, and drug addiction.

"The one thing that kept me going was my family," she said. "I still remained close to them."

Tara knew she was headed for an untimely demise if she didn't break out of her self-destructive cycle. So in 2009 she entered a rehabilitation program at Cyrenian House in Perth, joined Narcotics Anonymous, and got a job at a nursing home. She was 24.

Fuelled by her determination and support from her family, Tara stayed clean for three years. Her horizons started looking brighter.

But then "I made bad relationship choices," she admitted. "After three years clean I relapsed and I became pregnant with my son, Kade."

The slide downhill picked up speed again and when Kade was 18 months old, Tara's partner was sent to jail for murder. Needing money to support herself and her baby, Tara began selling drugs and got arrested. Kade was two-and-a-half years old when his mother was sent to jail for 18 months.

Any hope that prison would have forced Tara to get herself out of the drug-dealing business faded almost as soon as she was released, because she jumped straight onto that bandwagon. Not surprisingly, she was caught again.

Hauled into court one more time, Tara resigned herself to a lengthier

sentence and steeled herself against the pain of not being able to watch Kade grow up. Then - a miracle. Instead of being sent to jail, the court asked for a Pre-Sentence Order.

A PSO involves reporting to a corrections officer fortnightly, in addition to random and frequent urine and drug tests to prove her sobriety. These requirements are non-negotiable and cannot be refused. There are no more second chances after this. As regimented as this routine was, Tara was grateful that it kept her out of jail.

Tara means it when she says that the PSO was a miracle from God. "Nobody, nobody who does what I did ever gets a PSO," she said. "I knew it was God and from that moment on things started to change."

Tara had some blurry knowledge of God and Christianity thanks to grandparents who had taken her regularly to church and the annual Nativity play at Christmas. But God remained a childhood story, nothing more.

"After my second arrest I hit rock bottom," she said. "I finally cried out to God for real and He did rescue me, but I had to be arrested for that to happen. It's not how I would have chosen to do it, but God has His ways," she joked.

She enrolled in Esther Foundation, a residential recovery and reintegration program for young women from crisis backgrounds based in the Perth Hills. It has not been plain sailing for the strong-willed Tara, who confesses she still struggles with changing her mindset.

But, according to Esther Foundation CEO Anina Findling, she has made tremendous progress. "There's been a visible transformation in Tara," Anina said. "She is an amazing woman walking a challenging path. There have been some

bumps along the way, but she has kept going."

The most important catalyst for the changes in Tara's life has been her decision to give her life to Jesus Christ.

"Nothing else has helped me the way Jesus has," Tara said. "I had tried everything else, good and bad. Some things had a temporary good effect but nothing has been permanent except Jesus."

"It's hard to describe but I guess knowing my life is in the hands of the highest power in the universe gives me hope. I never felt good enough, always a failure, so finding out that Jesus died for me, even with all the things I'd done, was a huge revelation."

"Being a Christian has opened me to a whole new way of thinking - about myself and about others. When I accepted Jesus I felt a huge weight lifted off me. It didn't matter what I had done in my past. I know I still have a long way to go on my journey."

She is very grateful to Esther Foundation, which she says has loved her through all her mistakes on and off-campus. "They never gave me the boot though others would have," she said. "If not for them I would be institutionalized, or jailed or dead."

Thanks to Esther Foundation, Tara is pursuing a Certificate 4 in Community Services Management and Leadership and Management.

"I still struggle with learning to be a leader and to self-regulate, to walk the talk," she said, "but I know God has a purpose for me, even though we battle about that sometimes," she chuckled.

Her honesty is refreshing, as refreshing as the light in her eyes when she speaks of God. The God who has given this woman, once too well acquainted with death, a new lease of life.

# Cancer healing led to heart healing

Allen Jackson, lead pastor at World Outreach Church — a 15,000-member church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee — recently recalled how an incredible miracle transformed his family's faith.

In an interview on Youtube with Cornerstone Television Network, Allen explained how he grew up in a nominally Christian home, with two brothers, where church-going was a non-negotiable but there was no living for Jesus during the rest of the week.

Then they faced tragedy when Allen's mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Their church pastor was so unconnected from Biblical Christianity that when he came to the hospital, he told them not to worry because there was no heaven or hell!

As the family was flying to Mayo Clinic for testing, Allen's mother prayed that if there was a God, could He please let her know the truth before she died, so she could tell her sons what religion to follow.

On examination at the Clinic all the tumours and masses that had been on the previous x-rays and scans were gone. The cancer had miraculously disappeared.

Later his mother was washing dishes after her healing and she heard a voice that said, "You asked to know the truth before you died." "Yes, I did," she replied. The voice continued: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Jackson said his mother then went to the Bible and found that verse in John chapter 14 verse 6 and realised Jesus had said those words and was the true God. Through that, Allen's parents ended up giving their lives to Jesus Christ and becoming "born again" Christians.

Allen recounts: "The temperature in the home changed so much that I walked into the kitchen and said 'what happened to you all?' I was eight."

"They told me and I knelt on the kitchen floor and became a Christian. My faith didn't start inside a church or with a sermon but with life change."

Then the family moved to Tennessee and began a Bible study in their home, welcoming mainly those who fell through the cracks and weren't really welcomed into more traditional churches. From those small beginnings

World Outreach Church was born.

Allen said he didn't have a high view of formal church growing up because he found it stuffy and ritualistic.

"I didn't like ministers," he recalled. "This was 30 years ago when pastors wore black robes and were always serious and I liked to laugh and I thought, 'I can't do that.'"

When his parents told him they were starting a church, he already had a plan for his life, which in no way included becoming a minister but a doctor. However, after Allen graduated from college he went for a summer to the Philippines on a Christian mission and realised how much positive impact he could have on people's lives by sharing the good news of Jesus with them, being exactly who he was, not some stuffy stereotype.

So he agreed to come and help at his parents' church while he pursued graduate education. He cleaned bathrooms, mowed grass and preached when they needed him to.

But he admits the transition was hard.

"Up until that point I wanted God to do my will. I didn't want to be blatantly immoral but I wanted God to be busy fulfilling my dream. I had a plan and I had wanted God to bless it. I knew what sort of income and status I wanted," he said. "So I was cautious and I said 'God I'll do your will' and I didn't know what that meant because I was forfeiting control and it felt like I was stepping into the darkness."

Allen took over leadership from his dad in 1987, when the church had around 200 members.

Allen's aim was to love God and love people, "everything else was a mystery, I had no idea what that would look like", he admits. The church was initially successful but gradually, starting with a change in Allen himself, the church began to change and grow.

"What I found out was that I can be as intentional in following God as I had been intentional at finding a medical diagnosis."

His new book, *Intentional Faith: Aligning Your Life with the Heart of God*, outlines his 100-day plan to live more intentionally for God and is aimed at people at all points on the faith journey.



Allen Jackson

# I hate your guts, Mum!

BY DENISE RHODES

“I hate your guts and I hope you never come back,” Dean Smith spat at his mother, pushing her. “I hope I never see your face again.”

And he never did.

Dean was 15 and those words spoken in frustration and after years of neglect, came to haunt him when his mother was found dead the next afternoon in bushland behind their house.

However, until he was about eight, Dean had had a happy upbringing with his younger brother and sister. He remembers his mother as a good Mum who loved spoiling them and who made sure they never went without. Then the birth of Dean’s second sister changed their world.

His mother struggled to cope and wasn’t sleeping well. A well-meaning neighbour offered her some tablets to help, but tragically, Mrs Smith became addicted to them.

“The tablets changed her in her mind; she wasn’t the same person after she started taking them,” Dean recalls, “Then she

started drinking every night and became an alcoholic. Dad would come home from work and find her wasted and there would be arguments. This went on for years.”

Then, on the night that things came to a head, the family told Mrs Smith how much they hated her and what she was doing to the family, and that they’d be better off without her. She left the house – on foot. Five minutes later, Dean’s father asked him to go and find her. He caught up with her as she staggered down the road. Embarrassed and angry, he uttered those words that he would ever after regret.

By the next day, his mother hadn’t returned and although his father called a few friends, they couldn’t find her. That afternoon they found her dead – with half a bottle of vodka beside her.

After that’s Dean’s life was never the same. “I just felt so guilty. I was the last one to see her and I could have brought her back again, but I just abused her even more. I had all this guilt and shame that it was my fault my sisters and my brother didn’t have a mum anymore.”

To numb what was

going on inside him, Dean started drinking and taking drugs. “I didn’t care what I took because I didn’t care what happened to me.” Even a trip around Australia with a cousin didn’t break his destructive lifestyle and he became more and more depressed.

## IT WAS LIKE GOING FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.



heard about how he was living and put him in touch with a Christian girl she had met in America.

“My cousin gave her friend my number and this girl would ring me on weekends and tell me about Jesus. I always thought there would be a God somewhere, but I didn’t know anything about it. She explained a fair few things to me for about six months and even invited me over there.”

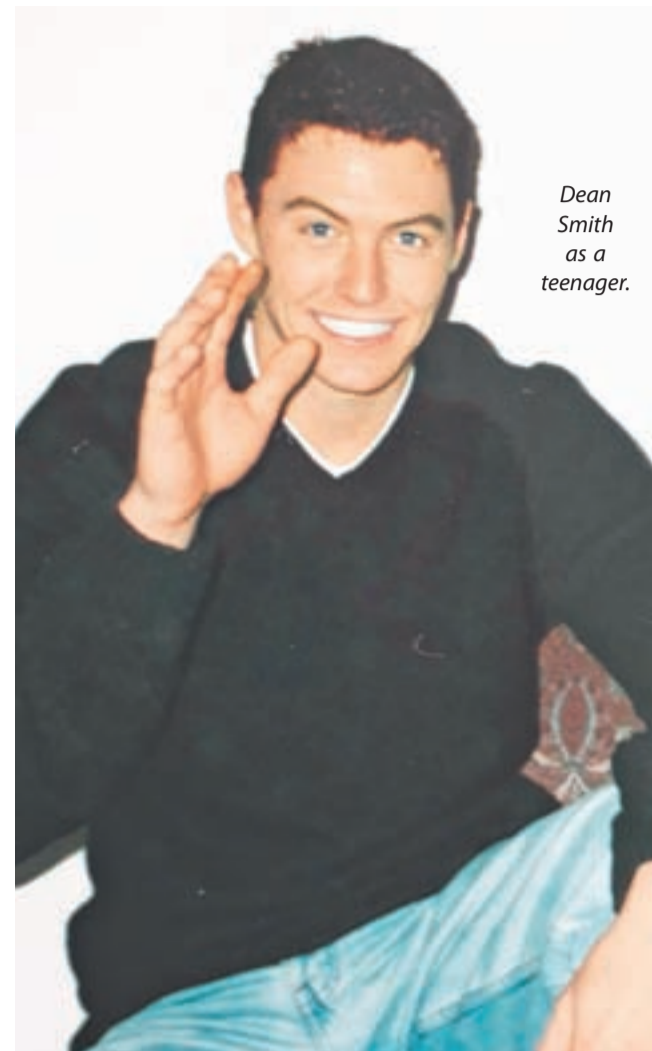
Dean found it interesting to hear about God, but didn’t change his lifestyle. However, a narrow escape when he crashed his car into an electricity pole after a night of heavy drinking, was a huge

wakeup call. After crawling out of the wreck under live wires, Dean knew things had to change. He booked a ticket to the States to see if “all this Jesus stuff was true”.

While staying with the girl’s family, they explained the Gospel to him in a way he could understand. He attended their church and says: “It seemed like everything the pastor said was directed at me. I gave myself to Jesus and turned away from my sin. It was like going from darkness to light. I saw things differently. I realised what Christ did on the cross and I was so grateful. I got up from there and I felt like a new person. Everything was washed new and I didn’t want to do any bad things again.”

Dean wanted everything God had for him and asked God to fill him with the Holy Spirit (invisible presence of God). The family prayed with him and he felt this power was resting on his head and shoulders. “I didn’t know what was going on, but all the shame and guilt that I had in me was completely gone. I felt set free. It was the most amazing thing that ever happened.”

After his visa expired, Dean



Dean Smith as a teenager.

went to England and became involved in prison ministry. He also met his wife Bec and now they have four beautiful children.

Now living in Australia, Dean is quick to acknowledge God’s blessing on his life. “I

don’t deserve any of it, but He is good and gracious. What God took away from me as a young boy – a stable family home, God has restored to my own family. I am grateful that I can bring them up to follow God.”



Dean Smith and his wife Bec.

## Delivered from anorexia

Tamlyn Trefz spoke to Katy Macdonald at This Life online.

Tamlyn Trefz had an amazing, grounded childhood: I’m an A-type personality so I do remember feeling anxious at times, but not because of my home. My family was loving and stable.

At 15, on a Christmas holiday staying with my cousins in Durban, I entered a dark world. After a day of mouth-watering food and dessert, someone took a photo of my cousins and me.

My body was developing from that of a young girl to one of a young woman and I had a bit of puppy fat. Now when I look at that photo, I see a gorgeous, full-of-life young lady. But I remember going into the bathroom that evening and as I stood in front of the mirror, a voice popped into my mind. It told me I was fat, not slim like the other girls I knew.

I wish I’d never listened to that voice. The lies that entered my mind that evening. Oooh, the lies, the words, the chains.

My figure consumed me

I felt unacceptable. I started ‘eating healthier’, which really meant cutting down on food. And over-exercising: kickboxing and dancing in addition to school sports. My figure consumed me, literally every thought and every action. I tried vomiting a few times but it set my throat into spasm so I gave that up. Nonetheless, slowly, the weight started to fall off me and over a period of a year I became skeletal. The more people said to me that I was looking skinny, the more this ‘fed’ me.

My weight was incredibly low, it sends chills down my spine to think just how low. I stopped menstruating, my hair grew thinner, and one day my friend grabbed my hand and pointed out the fine hairs growing on my arm, a protective measure the body uses when it is too thin. The fat I saw was invisible to everyone else, every bone protruded through my skin, but I simply saw fat. I just couldn’t get out of this headspace.

I used to tell my mother how fat I felt and she used to say, “We need to get you right

and happy about yourself, you can’t go through life not being happy with your body.” But while my family was the kind of family you dream about having, we had another family member going through their very own dark valley and I think this obscured the extent of my problem.

One morning, after a tummy bug, I got up early feeling shaky and craving food. I made some toast and honey and on the way back to my bedroom, passed out in the passageway, hitting a vase as I fell. My family found me out cold in the passageway with huge blades of glass around me. That really scared me.

After watching a movie one Saturday morning about a girl who had an eating disorder, I suddenly realised that I could see myself in her. I started eating again and put on weight fast because my body had been so starved. I still had days of feeling not comfortable in my own skin and kept trying to push through, hard as it was.

One day on the treadmill at the gym, I felt a whisper in my heart saying, “You need to tell your mother the whole truth.” This was a pivotal moment. There’s a saying in the Bible, “The truth will set you free” and it’s quite amazing. I believe this is when my healing started. I shared with my mother what I had been going through for the past couple of months and it brought such freedom. I started being able to leave my eating disorder behind me. I’m so grateful.

I encourage anyone reading this who’s struggling with an eating disorder to tell the truth to someone.

Whether you’re overeating or undereating, it’s such a secretive thing. You know what you’re doing isn’t right, but you don’t know how to break it. I would say, don’t stop talking, find someone you can trust.

Coronavirus has opened up the focus on mental health issues and I hope there’ll be sustained awareness that it does not define who you are. If people can open up about what they’re going through, they’ll save themselves a lot of wasted years.





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# Let down and losing hope?

"IF I were to name the emotional condition accompanying the aura created by this pandemic, it would be disillusionment. It wasn't caused by Covid-19, but it has been highlighted amidst a culture rooted in the kind of expectations impregnated with disappointment. Long before Covid-19 came along, this intimidating truth has lurked: Life doesn't work the way we think it does. Covid-19 simply forced us to confront some suspicions that we already contended with:

- Sometimes the hardest working person doesn't get their dream
- Sometimes the most loving person doesn't keep their family together
- Sometimes the best leader lets us down

The only difference now is that we have something to blame: Covid. But I know from my experience, blaming Covid doesn't meet my internal need for justice, because who can we blame for Covid? This question isn't intended to take you down the usual rabbit hole of conspiracies. It is to demonstrate this: assigning blame doesn't resolve the internal loose ends that can't work out why things didn't happen the way I thought they would, or should...the way that makes sense."

So says Melanie Saward, who has recently written a book on the subject.

She defines disillusionment as: when a person perceives a conflict between their ideals and reality, that cannot be unseen. The turmoil stems from the pain and frustration involved in trying to reconcile this discrepancy, particularly when this ideal has occupied an infallible foundational status.

She points out that disillusionment is different from offence, or disappointment or hurt or discouragement. With offence, for instance, there is a definite offender, who is to blame; and a definite course of action to take - forgive and reconcile. And while disillusionment

can involve disappointment, hurt or discouragement, it is far deeper and more profound: it is a shaking of our very foundations of understanding about how the world works.

Disillusionment is the point where our feelings, beliefs and assumptions, hit the brick wall of reality. When our expectations are not met and we are unclear how to move forward. When everything else we believe is brought into question too.

Examples would include: When a respected leader is found guilty of gross immoral behaviour. When our children go astray after we have done everything right, according to all we've believed. When a relationship that we are deeply invested in goes south for no obvious reason. When innocent people die. When our prayers are not answered. What do we do with these inevitable cracks in apparently realistic expectations? In our sense of rightness?

Well, that's precisely the point of Melanie's latest book: "Disillusioned, When You Get Lost Following Jesus."

There may be a purpose to disillusionment. But you aren't going to find it in the courts, the media, or in a feel-good podcast. It's found in the pages of the Bible, demonstrated in the lives of Biblical characters. Disillusionment is meant to shake our foundations, so that only that which is real remains. It is meant to push us deeper into the arms of God, just as the Bible characters discovered in the face of exiles, oppression, injustice and persecution.

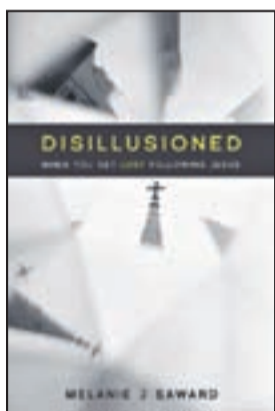
As Melanie warns, disillusionment can have three main outcomes:

- It can make us suspicious and distrusting, wary to believe anything now that something we trusted in proved false.
- It can leave us frustrated, resigned to a world where things don't make sense and nothing is knowable. Stuck emotionally and spiritually, trying to drown out the disconnect with addictions and entertainment.
- Or it can send us on a journey to look for answers. If what we previously believed was not the truth, then what is?

Melanie encourages her readers that there is hope. The Truth is indeed out there, and His name is Jesus. When we come to Him, His teachings become the solid foundation and worldview through which all our other information gets processed. Then, Melanie counsels, one needs to:

- recognise the disillusionment for what it is and consider how it is influencing our choices
- mourn the loss (of time, relationship, effort, certainty etc.) associated with our disillusionment, and
- confront our disillusionment head-on.

For further understanding of how to do that, read Melanie's book, available online and at Christian bookstores.



Melanie Saward



Thanks, Doc!

To celebrate Easter, Greek pastry chef Marios Papadopoulos created the "Coronavirus doctor chocolate bunnies" with face masks, vaccines and a little Covid-19 virus, to honour all those fighting the pandemic on the front line. His idea was that humour would raise people's spirits. (Photo by Nicolas Economou/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

# 'Vanishing' guides helped him off the streets

Anthony Delgado lived on the streets of Atlanta, Georgia, panhandling to feed his drug addiction. One day, a man and woman told him he should go to the VA hospital. He followed them, flinging the bus station door open roughly and drawing the attention of some police officers standing outside.

The police told him to calm down and he said, "I'm sorry officer, I was just trying to catch that couple going out the door." But the police said they didn't see anyone. Others nearby hadn't seen the couple either.

He started begging for money again but developed chest pain. A man stopped to help and gave him a token for a train ride to the hospital. When Delgado stepped onto the train and turned around to say "thank you", the man had vanished.

Delgado made it to the hospital, joined a rehab program, and got help from a pastor. He told the minister the story of the vanishing couple and the man who gave him the train token, and the pastor replied, "Believe it or not, there are angels."

Delgado gave his life to Jesus, got a job and then, after a church service about obedience, took bags of bread to the spot where he used to sleep on the streets. Within 45 minutes, all the bread and pastries were gone.

"As I was driving back, I started crying," he said. "Thank you, Father God, I found my purpose in life."



Now Delgado has seven employees, two buildings, 17 freezers, and two trucks in the organization he founded, I Care Atlanta, Inc. His non-profit feeds hundreds of people a day and distributing up to one ton of food per day. The organisation also has a GED training centre and a financial planning centre.

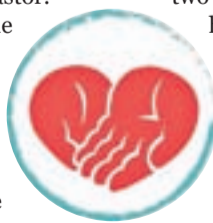
During the holidays, they've been distributing new toys to kids and holding food drives.

Delgado told a reporter, "Our program is different to other programs because we go out to where the people are, places where nobody else will go. When you see the need out there it takes your breath away."

"We all need to help each other. We're in a bad state right now with

Covid-19 ... Open your heart. Help your neighbour. Don't be selfish."

He says on his website: "I was in prison for five years, on crack for 12 and an alcoholic. I had everything going against me but God saw fit to lift me up."



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Published 11 months of the year by Challenge Literature Fellowship (ABN 98 206 125 814) in association with the international family of Challenge newspapers.

Editor: Carl Carmody. Staff writers: Jody Bennett, Janice Teo, Ainsley Gaebler

**PRICING:**  
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Challenge Literature Fellowship,  
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# Mathematical beauty

BY CARL WIELAND AND RUSSELL GRIGG OF CMI, TOGETHER WITH FRED WILSON FROM ICR

What on earth do rabbits, the Parthenon, mathematics, sunflowers, art and pinecones have to do with each other? They are all interconnected in a fascinating way, giving evidence of a beautiful, not yet fully understood patterning in the world.

Italian mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci (rhymes with 'Archie') (c. 1170–1240) theorized about the rate of multiplication of breeding pairs of rabbits beginning with one pair. He reckoned that the way in which the numbers of pairs would increase followed a mathematical progression in which each number after the first two was the sum of the two preceding numbers. That is, 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, etc. ( $3+5=8$ ,  $5+8=13$ ,  $8+13=21$ , and so on). This has become known as the Fibonacci series.

If you look at the seeds in the head of a sunflower or daisy, you will see that they are arranged in two sets of spirals, one set running clockwise, the other anticlockwise.

Count the number of spirals going in one direction, and the number going in the other. You will find that these are always two numbers which are next to each other in the Fibonacci series (e.g. 8 and 13). A similar arrangement is found in the way pine cones are constructed, in snail-shell spirals, animal horns and in the arrangement of leaf buds on a stem.<sup>1</sup>

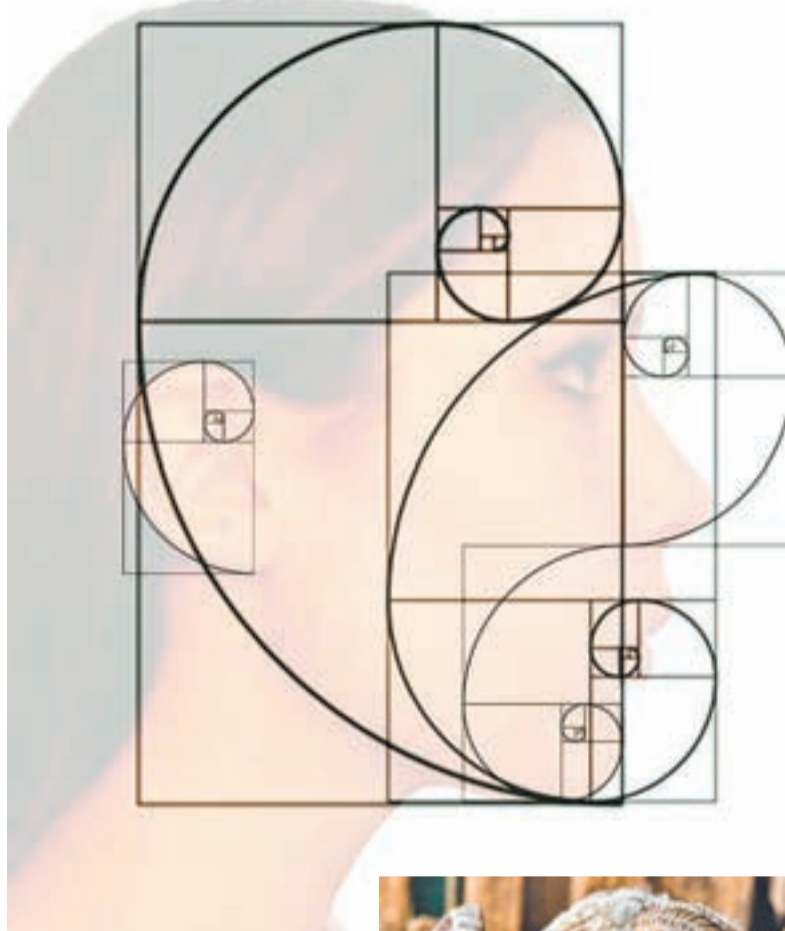
This spiral is visible in things as diverse as: hurricanes, the cochlea of the human ear, sea-horse tails, growing fern leaves, DNA molecules, waves breaking on the beach, tornados, galaxies, the tail of a comet as it winds around the sun, whirlpools, seed patterns of dandelions, and in the construction of the ears of most mammals.

Computer modelling<sup>2</sup> has apparently shown that the way in which a group of circles of varying sizes is most efficiently packed is in a series of spirals that have this Fibonacci patterning—but no one yet seems to know why.<sup>3</sup>

## Pleasing to artists

The so-called Golden Section (or Golden Ratio), known to most artists and architects, is also related to Fibonacci patterns.

Phideas, the Greek sculptor, and others in ancient Greece and Egypt often used this ratio in designing many of their works of art. Because this ratio has been found to be remarkably pleasing to the human



eye, it produces what is called a Golden Rectangle. If the short side of the rectangle is 1, the long side will be 1.618. This rectangular shape was close to the pattern used in the designing of the Parthenon of Greece and for many of their numerous pictures, vases, doorways, windows, statues, etc., and even for certain features of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. The United

Nations building is a golden rectangle. Many of the things you use are (approximately) patterned after the golden rectangle—credit cards, playing cards, postcards, light switch plates, writing pads, 3-by-5 and 5-by-8 cards, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Statistical experiments have shown that 'people involuntarily give preference to proportions that approximate to the Golden Section.'<sup>5</sup>

When we take the Fibonacci series (ignoring the zero), dividing each number by the one before it gives: 1, 2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.625, 1.615, 1.619, 1.617, 1.619, 1.617, 1.618 and so on ad infinitum. After the first few, the numbers keep hovering around 1.618. To three significant figures, they stay precisely on this Golden Ratio of 1.62 indefinitely. No one yet seems to know why dividing these Fibonacci numbers should give proportions which happen to be pleasing to the eye.

Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Van Gogh, Vermeer, Sargent, Monet, Whistler, Renoir, and others

employed the golden proportion in many of their works. They would "take a blank easel and divide it into areas based on the golden proportions to determine the placement of horizons, trees, and so on."<sup>6</sup> Why the golden proportion? Art forms can be either of static or dynamic symmetry. In static symmetry the lines have definite measurements whereas in dynamic symmetry it is the proportioning of the areas that is given emphasis. It implies "growth, power, movement. It gives animation and life to an artist's work . . . rather than the effect of stillness and quiet"<sup>7</sup> of static symmetry. This is the appeal of the golden proportion.

Returning to living things, we also see that when you count the spirals on a sunflower hub one way, then the other way, dividing the larger number by the smaller gives this same Golden Ratio.

## Unexplained link-ups

Why should there be all these fascinating and unexplained linkups between things which are mathematically beautiful and things which are beautiful to the human eye? And why do these in turn link up to number patterns found in living things?

A mathematician, when interviewed on television in relation to some of these matters said:

"I personally believe there is some greater deity that's organized it. Everything is too cleverly organized, as far as I'm personally concerned,

to have just happened by happenchance. . . . yes, I think there is some power behind it all, but what it is I have no idea."<sup>8</sup>

These shapes, numbers, spirals,

and the divine proportion are ubiquitous in their presence throughout all of creation. Although absolute perfection is not found in all of these (due to the effects of Adam's sin), their very presence virtually everywhere and in everything argues against their having occurred by blind chance or evolutionary processes. The only rational conclusion is that the Creator of the universe is a personal, intelligent Being, who created these things as a visible fingerprint of His invisible, yet personal existence. This great, wise, powerful, creative, and sovereign God of creation is the One revealed in the Bible, of whom it can be said, "Great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend" (Job 37:5). He is worthy of worship. And what is His name? The Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). •

## References

1. Encyclopædia Britannica 7:279, 1992. Apparently, Fibonacci numbers also feature in the genealogy of descent of the male bee, but no details are provided.
2. This was stated without detail on a Quantum television program, screened by Australian Broadcasting Commission, November 13, 1991.
3. New Scientist, April 18, 1992, p. 18. Also Physical Review Letters 68:2098. French physicists have built a physical model which seems to show that such 'Fibonacci spiralling' is a result of the system's keeping the energy required for the growth of its parts (for example, the seeds) to a minimum.
4. Trudi Hammel Garland, Fascinating Fibonacci, Dale Seymour Publications, 1987, p. 19.
5. Ibid., pp. 34, 36.
6. Dividing any line (AB) by a point (C) such that  $AB/AC = AC/BC$  will ensure that these fractions equal the golden ratio, no matter how long the line.
7. The Oxford Companion to Art, Ed. Harold Osborne, First Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.489, 1978.
8. The speaker was Dr Michael Gore of the National Science and Technology Centre, Canberra, Australia (Ref. 2).

This article includes paragraphs from an article by Fred Willson M.S. found on the website of the Institute of Creation Research.



Believe It or Not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

## Storytelling vs evidence

A PAPER in the journal Investigative Genetics has dropped a 'bombshell': Patterns of genetic diversity which indicate population movement may not be as ancient as previously believed, but instead can be simply explained by recent events.

This conclusion was reached after genomic analyses of people across the Netherlands showed the Dutch population could be separated genetically into four geographic groups.

The researchers acknowledged that their results could be explained by invoking movement of ancient, Paleolithic-Neolithic humans, in line with prevailing academic long-age views.

However, they stressed that their data also is in line with the movement of people within the last 70 generations of modern Dutch, "for which there is a wealth of archaeological evidence".

Leader of the study, Professor Manfred Kayser of the Erasmus University Medical Centre in Rotterdam, said the results "highlight that future population history studies need to take into account recent demography before assuming all genetic variation observed is due to ancient events".

Wise advice. Note that, it is not the evidence that is in dispute, but the interpretation of it.

Why would you bother with 'Paleolithic-Neolithic' fairytales when '70 generations of modern Dutch' adequately explains the genetic findings? This also fits the Biblical perspective that we are now on average about 200 generations removed from the first couple, Adam and Eve. •

• Archaeological genetics: it's not all as old as it first seems, *biomedcentral.com*, 20 May 2013.

• Clinical distribution of human genomic diversity across The Netherlands despite archaeological evidence for genetic discontinuities in Dutch population history, *Investigative Genetics* 4:9, 2013.

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# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## IS YOUR BODY LANGUAGE CONTRADICTING YOUR WORDS?

The experts tell us that 70% of what we communicate to each other is non-verbal. This means when we are talking with people, they are going to be paying a lot more attention to the messages they are receiving from our body language than to what we are saying.

We know this fact to be true because we have all been on the receiving end of "conversations" where a person's body language has spoken loudly and clearly!

Ever been in an important work meeting where one of the participants sits through the entire time with their arms tightly folded and a scowl etched across their face?

Or tried to communicate an important point and find yourself wagging

your finger vehemently as you seek to drive it home? (My wife has occasionally needed to draw my attention to the fact that I am doing this!)

In both situations, the body language may not intend to convey negativity – the person with crossed arms may just be cold – but the potential for it to be taken negatively is huge.

It is important, therefore, to watch our body language when we are with people and it is an important skill to develop as we seek to be truly present with them.

Jesus was a master of this skill. On one occasion, a man came to Jesus, asking Him to heal him from his leprosy.

In the society of which Jesus was a



part of, lepers were true outcasts. They were not allowed to live inside a city protected by walls and although they could attend a synagogue service, they could only do so by sitting behind a

screen that kept them isolated from the rest of the congregation. As you can imagine, such regulations further drove home the sense of rejection these people felt.

Thus, in responding to the man's request for healing, Jesus does something incredibly significant – He reaches out and touches him! This was unheard of in those days – people did not go around touching lepers – but in this simple act Jesus conveyed to this man, by His body language, love, and acceptance.

The words of Jesus brought healing to the man's body – His non-verbal language brought healing to his soul. It is the same with us.

We can listen carefully to another, working at being present with them, but inadvertently be sending a negative message via our body language.

When our spouse, child or friend is pouring out their soul to us, sometimes an arm around the shoulder, a

squeeze of the hand or a gentle smile of compassion will convey far more than our words ever will.

They say, "I am not just listening to you; I feel your pain and I am with you."

This does not mean our words do not matter – they most certainly do.

I think again of Jesus on the first Good Friday, dying for the sins of the world.

In the middle of His pain and suffering, He demonstrates incredible compassion for those around Him.

He knows His mother, Mary, is there and as she watches the death of her son, "a sword is piercing her heart." With amazing love and tenderness, He turns to His dear friend John and asks that he take care of her.

"Woman, behold, your son! (John), behold your mother!" (John 19:26,27)

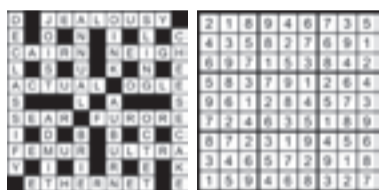
The depth of love conveyed by Jesus here is staggering. Right to the very end He is supremely present with people, in words and actions, placing their needs ahead of His own.

This is truly the essence of what it means to be present with people, verbally and non-verbally, by humbly seeking their good first and foremost.

Our words are important when being present with people, but so are our actions.

Keep this in mind over the next month and put them into practice.

And remember...try not to wag your finger!



## How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

We read in God's word: "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)

**OUR PROBLEM:** Separation from God  
"Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God's standards are perfect" (Romans 3:23)

ADMIT

**GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION:** Jesus died on the cross  
"God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)

BELIEVE

**OUR RESPONSE:** Trust Jesus by receiving Him  
"To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)

COMMIT

Here is an example of how you can pray.

Dear Father in Heaven. I come to you now because I want to be saved. Please, forgive me of my sins. I believe that you sent your Son Jesus Christ to die for me and that you have raised him from the dead. I now ask Jesus Christ to come into my life as my Saviour and Lord. Take control of my life. Please make me the person You created me to be. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen

The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in me has eternal life." (John 6:47). He gives life of a wonderful quality that continues forever.

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box



I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

- Bible
- Some 'starting off' literature
- Information on a helpful church

If you have NOT prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box



I would like to think about this.

Please send me:

- More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.
- I have a problem (see attached letter)

\* Please tick and write clearly \*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Age and occupation (it helps) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Looking for the little green men

BY PETER BRAIN

EVERY decade or so, we hear of researchers who are investing their lives in the quest of life 'out there'. I can understand the fascination that the question of extraterrestrial life brings, but wonder what we would do if we discovered that there was?

Perhaps it would give us all something else to fear or feel we had to conquer, since our past track record would suggest that this is what we tend to do toward others we're not certain about. On the other hand we may be tempted to deify them. This is a distinct possibility, since I've heard a justification for such research is, that it would help us understand either our origins or purpose on this planet.

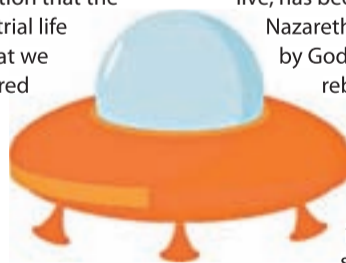
To be frank, I find it all somewhat amusing and certainly surprising. I find it surprising in that with all the scientific evidence pointing to earth being the only planet capable of supporting life, the venture should not be properly styled scientific. In terms of finding out the origin and purpose of life, it involves an unscientific rejection of the evidence of observation and revelation which affirms a Creator, a Sustainer of our universe and a God who has in fact invaded our territory in the person of Jesus the Son of God.

We can be certain that if there were life in other galaxies it would not add to our knowledge of God, our origins and our purpose for being here. That this earth, the planet on which we live, has been visited by Jesus of Nazareth, loved and sustained by God and invited to cease

rebelling against God's rule is, on an honest reading of the New Testament, difficult to refute. Once this is affirmed, our search for meaning

and purpose is over. Our lives find their purpose in knowing, loving and serving the God who created us; all of which has been lovingly revealed and recorded for us in the Bible.

Our goal is not really to live wondering if there is life out there but discovering how we can serve the life close by to ourselves. In the words of Jesus, we are 'to love our neighbour as ourself'. My difficulty is that this is a big enough call on me as well as being an obvious opportunity that is within my grasp and horizon. God, who has made us and given us a scientific mandate to work the ground and discover and enjoy His creation has done so not that we might through speculation move away from Him or, through seeking that which cannot be seen, ignore the needs of those all around us who can be seen (and served).



## Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 11)

BY JODY BENNETT

BECAUSE our little dog, Carrie, gets such terrible skin rashes, sometimes I have to give her a cortisone tablet, or an anti-histamine.

She is pretty good about taking tablets; she rolls on her back and I open her mouth and put it as far down her throat as I can, then I rub her neck to make her swallow. Usually this works.

Sometimes though, she moves the tablet to the side of her mouth and then spits it on the carpet when I am not looking!

I try to make the whole process as painless as possible but maybe she does not realise (she is a dog after all!) that the ordeal is not a punishment but is ultimately for her benefit - I am trying to stop her being so itchy!



It made me think that sometimes I behave like this when God tries to give me a dose of His good medicine in the form of a bout of sickness, an unanswered prayer, a difficult relationship.

It might taste bitter to me at the time and feel uncomfortable to take. I fight against God and want to spit the situation out. I might think it is some sort of punishment, but perhaps if I could only see from God's perspective, I would realise that ultimately it is for my benefit and will be a blessing to me. A short inconvenience for long-term rewards.

I do explain to Carrie what I am doing when I give her the pills but she has no framework in which to understand me. Likewise, as a mere mortal bound by time and space and filled with my own selfish perspective, I probably would not understand what God was doing, even if He explained Himself.

Like Carrie, I just have to trust my Master and know that because my Master loves me and is the giver of good things, whatever He gives me must be the best thing for me at the time.

Trust God, He is not being cruel but infinitely tender in His dealings with you.

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ... No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:7,11



Cody Garbrandt (left) punches Raphael Assuncao of Brazil in their bantamweight bout during the UFC 250 event at UFC APEX on June 6, 2020 in Las Vegas, Nevada. (Photo by Jeff Bottari/Zuffa LLC via Getty Images)



# FIGHT TO SURRENDER ALL

It was still early in the night but UFC fighter Cody Garbrandt had had enough of the party he was at and slipped quietly away. He was in deep depression; his dreams lay in tatters.

It was time to end the suffering. “I don’t know if it was drug-induced,” he says quietly, his voice trailing off as he considered his emotional valley. “I decided to take my life that night.

“My friends and I would get some cocaine and party. I don’t know if it was that but I was tired of going out and doing the same thing over and over. I mixed with the wrong crowd going out partying, drinking, just living life recklessly with no care because I lost something that I loved.”

What Cody loved was fighting. Specifically, Mixed Martial Arts, or MMA. But he had been dissuaded from pursuing it as a career because nobody believed he could make a good living from it. So he went to college but that didn’t suit him.

What he really wanted to do was fight. “Out of the womb, I was fighting over the bottle,” Cody jokes about his brother Zach, who is 11 months older.

“My brother was always bigger, stronger, faster, and meaner than me, so that’s why I was always quick to fight: I had something to prove. We had some pretty violent fights.”

Once Cody grabbed a knife and nearly severed Zach’s finger. Another time, his brother punched his ear so hard, it swelled and became a “cauliflower ear.” The fighting got so bad that his mother signed the brothers up for wrestling at school to stop them from killing each other.

Wrestling became Cody’s life. He became state champion but got injured and lost several competitions. “When I couldn’t win, I felt unaccomplished and started hanging out with the wrong crowd,” he grimaces. “I started doing some drugs and partying; I felt like my road was running to an end. I was in a very, very dark place.

“Fighting was my family’s ‘normal,’” is how Cody puts it. “As far back I remember a fighter is all I wanted to be. My uncle was an amateur boxer. My grandfather boxed. My father was non-existent in my life but I knew he was a boxer too. So all I knew from an early age was fighting.”

But now that dream was in ashes. As he struggled with the depression, it became clear that Cody was in the biggest fight of his life - and there would be no comebacks if he lost this one.

That night, when he left the party

early, he was moments away from hanging himself when Zach burst into his house.

Zach had received a text from one of Cody’s friends telling him Cody had left the party early and they were concerned.

“I’ve never been so grateful for Zach, he came and busted down the door and gave me the biggest hug,” Cody says. “He told me everything was going to be alright.”

This was the turning point for Cody, where he redirected himself back to his Christian faith - and his professional fighting career, which reached its zenith in 2016 when he became the UFC bantamweight champion.

He had first found God through his uncle. Cody’s uncle, who had been sentenced to life in prison when he was 15 and acquitted 23 months later, had an epiphany in prison. “He told us all how he felt a pressure come off his chest and gave himself to the Lord there and then.

“He’s the one that led us to God and led us to going to church and having a relationship with the Lord.

“So I had that belief in a higher power, and I came to the realization it was the Lord that I was talking to.”

Injuries forced Cody out of com-

petition in 2020. Another blow came in August last year, when he tested positive for Covid-19. He is still recovering from the infection but is reportedly eyeing competing for the UFC’s flyweight title in March 2021.

Admitting he had strayed from God, Cody says: “I think I just let doubt fill my head. I was afraid to talk to Him, I was ashamed. I’m forever grateful that Zach was there to snap me back into reality.”

It sealed the bond between the brothers. “We began attending church together. It was nice to be there with my big brother, worshipping God and growing toward Him.

“I’m constantly reminded of how far I’ve come,” Cody remarks. “I’ll be

the first to admit that I’m a work in progress, but I understand that God has me right where He wants me. I will not be defined by my past.”

His confidence is in knowing God is with him and has always been with him.

“I’m forever grateful for a lot of the losses, setbacks and delays that God gives me in my life because I learn from them, I grow from them—in all levels of my life, spiritually, physically, mentally.

“Surrender is a foreign word to many fighters. It was definitely a foreign word to me. But there’s a time and a place that you do need to surrender. I’m always thankful that I’m able to surrender to Jesus.” ●

## THERE’S A TIME AND A PLACE YOU DO NEED TO SURRENDER



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