

HAVE AN EXIT STRATEGY

BY TERRY GEORGE

A young photographer was flown into the desolate area of Alaska to photograph the wild beauty of the tundra and mountains. He had armed himself with a number of cameras, 500 rolls of film, several firearms and ammunition, nearly 700 kilograms of food and supplies, tents and other provisions.

The first few months of his diary were fascinating as the photographer recorded the amazing wild beauty of the regions he was passing through. However as the months rolled on, the recordings started to take on a more concerned aspect that finally turned into panic and desperation.

The photographer died in a lonely valley near a small lake, on his own, 200 kilometres from any major township.

It was a tragedy because although the photographer had made careful preparations for his trip and tried to plan every aspect, he had made no provision or plan of how to get out afterwards.

How could anyone be so foolish?

It is very hard to imagine that in all the excitement of preparing for the trip, the photographer had overlooked the most important thing of all – how to get home.

Whilst many of us would think how foolish that was, what is more concerning is – how many of us are taking the time to ensure our safe passage from this life to the life to come?

Yes, although our body is mortal and will eventually die, our spirit (or soul) is immortal and can never be destroyed. It will exist for eternity and that is the dilemma facing us.

The question is, "Where will our spirit reside for eternity?"

As we celebrate Easter year after year, we are given a constant reminder of this question. Christians remember that God, our Creator and Father, has given us a pathway back to Him through the amazing sacrifice and gift that only He could have made.

Whilst He is a God of justice, righteousness and holiness, He demands all who cannot live to His standards (every one of us) be judged by Him and then face the consequences.

The Good News however is that God is also the source of all love, compassion, forgiveness and care and as such, has put into place a plan that will allow us to find our way home to Him.

Over 2000 years ago, in a small stable a baby was born in the

Just where on earth is all this headed?!



This Easter you may be feeling less new beginnings and more bedraggled bunny costume, wondering what the world is coming to and how this is all going to end. Take heart, the Good News of the story of Jesus offers you some very practical hope.

humblest of circumstances. This baby grew up to change the world forever. This baby was God's Son Jesus. Despite all the attacks and false

allegations He had to face, Jesus never once betrayed His Heavenly Father and as such, was not guilty of any sin. This made Jesus the perfect

sacrifice to satisfy God's justice, righteousness and holiness that He demands from all of us when we face death.

None other than Jesus has lived to God's standards. In fact God stated in the Bible "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). So under our own standards we are just as foolish as the photographer.

We pass through life as we know it, pursuing all the pleasures and good times without giving much thought to where we are going to end up. We spend most of our time chasing a safe and comfortable living instead of focussing on how to live. Easter reminds us that when Jesus went to the cross, although He was blameless, He carried all of our imperfections and brokenness with Him.

Good Friday is the day we remember this and acknowledge Jesus' amazing sacrifice on our behalf. Many say that they didn't ask Him to do anything for them and that is true. However Jesus still made the sacrifice so that if these people ever wanted to accept God's gift they still can.

Sunday is the day we rejoice with Jesus in that God raised Jesus from death and all who believed and will believe in Him in the future can be forgiven and enter into God's presence in a place the Bible calls Heaven. That is the amazing sacrifice and gift we have been given.

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A really Good Friday for Aaron

BY JANICE TEO

Aaron Pryce began taking drugs when he was 15. His older sister was already an addict and he wanted to try it too. His first experience with heroin was almost his last as he became violently ill. To his lasting regret, he persevered and was hooked after his second try.

Soon he was taking drugs every day and at 15 was asked to leave school.

By the time Aaron was 20 he was robbing stores and selling drugs to maintain his addiction.

His devastated parents tried everything to save both their children. They sent them to rehabilitation and mental health programs but nothing helped.

Aaron grew despondent. "I didn't care about anything. I had no hopes,



no dreams, and no remorse. I felt dead inside. I was so tired of my life and of the running. I turned myself in to the police."

Good Friday, 2004 changed everything. Aaron was in his cell contemplating a bleak future when he picked up a letter from Keith, a chaplain he met at a rehab program who wrote regularly to the troubled addict.

At the end of the letter was a Bible verse – Romans 8: 38-39: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Keith had written many letters over the years, always ending them with a Bible verse which may as well have been writ-

ten in hieroglyphics for all the sense they made to Aaron.

But that day was different. "Those words – that nothing could separate me from God's love – made sense for the first time ever," he marvels.

"I cried out to God 'If you're real you're gonna have to do something radical. I don't want my life anymore.'" He was shocked by the immediate answer he got: "You might not want your life, but I do, and I want all of it."

The dam broke and Aaron, who says he had bottled up all emotion, cried long and hard. When he finished, he felt overwhelming peace and love. "I had a supernatural interaction with God and it was the most cathartic thing I'd ever experienced.

"He wanted all of me, not just the good bits. It blew my mind and I told Him He could have me."

As life-changing as that moment was, Aaron admits it wasn't plain sailing after that. "The truth is I struggled to assimilate into normal life. One week I'd be good, the next I'd be smoking dope!"

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Fun for Kids

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BACK PAGE



GOOD GUY
BUBBA WATSON

A really Good Friday for Aaron

• From page 1

“When I got married I was a 25-year-old man who had never paid a power bill before! Success in the Christian life is not overnight. It’s built on the daily walk, the daily surrender.”

He met his wife Kristy, in church. Their early life was so rocky that she left him for a short time – she came home one day to find her husband face down in the driveway being put into handcuffs.

“Eventually I put boundaries in place,” he explains. “But the backbone of my change was that interaction with God in prison – and that Bible verse.”

Six years into their marriage, Kristy had a terrifying health scare. She lay down for a nap one afternoon and almost never woke up again. Out of the blue she had developed a raging fever and her vital organs began to shut down. She had to be rushed to hospital and hooked up to life support. Doctors later advised Aaron to turn off the ventilator. His heart in pieces, Aaron agreed.

Then ... an eyelid flickered. Kristy’s hand moved. She raised her arm. She opened her eyes, looked around and pulled out the tubes in her mouth. She turned to an incredulous Aaron – “put ... the ... water jug back ... on the napkin,” she whispered hoarsely. Aaron rejoiced – “I knew there and then I got my wife back!”

Aaron says what sustained him at



Aaron Pryce and his wife Kristy.

that time was that God had shown him that he and Kristy would be in ministry together.

“As I prayed, I clung onto that promise. Her miracle healing changed me, changed our relationship. It healed a lot of the hurts.”

Aaron knows he doesn’t have all the answers. His mother, who became a Christian six months after he did, died of cancer despite much prayer.

His sister, who never overcame her addiction, died of an overdose in a train station toilet block.

“I just know that God is in control.

Am I only going to follow Him in the good times or do I trust Him through the bad times as well? It’s all or nothing.”

Aaron and his father have reconciled; in fact his dad paid for Aaron’s Bible College tuition.

The boy who left school in Year 10 is now the Senior Pastor of a Perth church and speaks internationally. He runs a mobile shower truck service for the homeless as well as a charity called The Champion Project.

“I was very fortunate I got saved the way I did,” he muses. “I didn’t have any ‘church background’ or preconceived ideas. It was just me, Jesus and a Bible. Till today I take the Bible at face value – it’s my blueprint and I believe everything in it.”

As for his drug habit, he says he has no idea how he kicked it. “The desire just pretty much fell away from me. I did go back and forth and relapse a couple of times but at some point God simply took the desire away.”

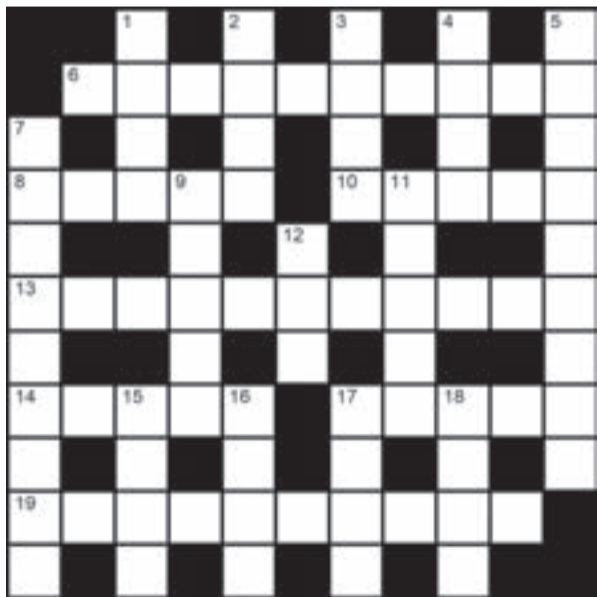
Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 6 Disbelief, doubtfulness
- 8 Insert, as copied text
- 10 Eyrie builder
- 13 Australian bird
- 14 Bandage for an arm
- 17 Animal products abstainer
- 19 Florida reptiles

DOWN

- 1 King-topping cards
- 2 Fencing weapon
- 3 Donate
- 4 Sonar’s sound
- 5 Symbol meaning “and”
- 7 Mouthpiece of an organisation
- 9 Arcade game insert



- 11 Give a thumbs up
- 12 Flow out like the tide
- 15 Same thing as islet
- 16 One-liners, jokes
- 17 A vote that blocks a decision
- 18 Harmful microbe

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



“Mr Crusoe, I’m concerned about this 20 year gap in your resume.”

3	2		4							
6			5					3		
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The piccolo’s performance

SIR Michael Costa was conducting a rehearsal in which the orchestra was joined by a great chorus. About halfway through the session, with trumpets blaring, drums rolling, and violins singing their rich melody, the piccolo player muttered to himself, “What good am I doing? I might just as well not be playing. Nobody can hear me anyway.” So he kept the instrument to his mouth, but he made no sound.

Within moments, the conductor cried, “Stop! Stop! Where’s the piccolo?” It was missed by the ear of the most important person of all.

It’s much the same way with the use of our gifts and abilities. Whatever our part in life is, great or small, it matters. The performance isn’t complete until we do our best with what we have, and God the Great Conductor is listening for our contribution.

– Richard De Haan

Have an exit strategy

• From page 1

The exchange of Easter eggs combined with symbols of chickens and rabbits indicate New Life – exactly what we receive when we ask Jesus into our lives.

Obviously we are not talking about physical new life but a spiritual one as we are now a new person inside. Accepting Jesus doesn’t necessarily mean we still won’t make mistakes, go our own way on occasion, feel sad and depressed etc., however it does mean we have a power inside of us to call on when we are facing tough times.

We are not perfect but we are now given access to a loving Father God who understands us and has promised to always be there so we can find our way home to Him and His forgiveness.

That is the gift we remember at Easter. That is the gift Jesus Christ won for us on the cross.



What’s Easter all about?

EASTER isn’t just another holiday for doing DIY or taking an early break to somewhere sunny.

It’s the most important festival in the Christian calendar – more important than Christmas. In fact, the whole of Christianity stands or falls on the truth of Easter...

What Happened?

On the first Easter Sunday, almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus came back to life (was resurrected) after being brutally killed on a cross.

What Was the Point of It?

The resurrection was the final proof that Jesus was who He claimed to be – God Himself in human flesh, with the power to defeat death.

That’s why Easter is a celebration! Death isn’t the end. For those who believe in Jesus, an eternity of life full of joy and free from evil, suffering and pain awaits.

Why is Good Friday Called ‘Good’?

That’s a good question! It’s the day Jesus was tortured, crucified and died, so it was a horrific day for Him, but it was good for us. Why? Because Jesus died to get us off the hook for all our

bad thoughts, words and actions – our ‘sins’. There is a punishment in the next life for all we’ve done wrong in this one, but God doesn’t want us to suffer that. So what did He do?

He came to this world as Jesus to take one big punishment for all our sins. Jesus was innocent, but was our substitute. He died so that we escape our punishment AND get eternal life after we die. We can ensure that is true for us by...

1. **Believing** – simply believing that Jesus is God, that He died for us and that He is alive today.

2. **Accepting** that we have ‘sinned’ and asking God to forgive us for all our bad stuff.

3. **Inviting** God into our lives to help us live how He wants us to live in the future.

See For Yourself

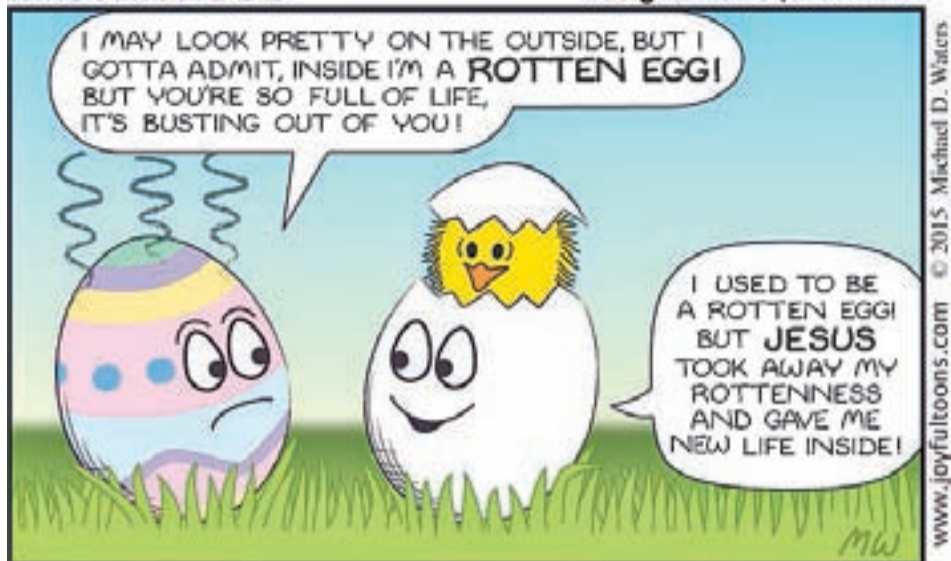
You can read about Jesus’ death on the cross (crucifixion), His burial and resurrection (rising from the dead) for yourself in the Bible. See Matthew 27:27 to 28:8; Mark 15:16 to 16:19; Luke 23:26 to 24:35; and John 20:30 to 21:25.



Last year’s Easter edition of Challenge attracted all sorts of different readers! Here is Kylo studying it with interest.

EASTER EGGS

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. — JOHN 20:31 NIV



STORIES OF THE BRAVE AND BOLD

Mum of 7 attacked on Easter Sunday

A mother of seven children in eastern Uganda suffered serious wounds and is cut off from her family after her husband and other Muslim relatives attacked her on Easter Sunday last year for putting her faith in Christ, sources said.

Salimati Naibira, 37, of Bukoba B village, lost consciousness after her husband cut her with a dagger known as a Somali sword in the thigh and back on April 4, 2021 as she attended a worship service for the first time in the area, she said. She had converted from Islam to Christianity three days prior to Easter.

Salimati said she was on her way to the church service when she met her brother-in-law, who asked her where she was going. He likely became suspicious after she told him she was going to visit a friend, she said.

One hour into the worship service, she saw through a window that her husband and other relatives were approaching.

"I saw my husband, brother-in-law, and some family members enter the church gate shouting 'Allah Akbar' ['God is greater']," Salimati told *Morning Star News*. "The church members took off from church worship to save their lives."

The Muslim relatives entered the church building with sticks and the Somali sword. The pastor and some church elders tried to protect her but were overpowered, and the assailants forced her into a van and drove her to a nearby forest.

"They started beating me with sticks, then my husband cut me with the Somali sword at the thigh and the back," she said. "I regained consciousness only after several hours."

A passing herdsman found her lying in a pool of blood at about 3pm and he and others took the still unconscious Salimati to a clinic in nearby Kityerera town.

On April 5, hospital staff members managed to make contact with a Christian friend of Salimati, and on April 8 she picked her up from the hospital.

A week earlier, she had been visiting the friend's workplace in Kaluuba town, telling her how doctors had not been able to give Salimati any relief from heavy menstrual bleeding for four years, she said. A Christian evangelist arrived, told her about Christ and asked if he could pray for them, Salimati said.

"I shared with him the fear which had

tormented me of the flow of blood that had troubled me for four years," she said. "He said that Jesus is a healer, and that with Him all things are possible. As he prayed for me, I felt something like an electric power touched my body."



Salimati after she was attacked.

Hearing that God's love was revealed in Christ's sacrifice for sins, Salimati received Him as Lord and Saviour, she said. The evangelist told her to visit any nearby church for fellowship and to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday, April 4.

"Before leaving my friend, I was full of joy," Salimati said. "At night I got a dream of watching a film of Jesus crucified on the cross."

She awoke with a feeling of excitement and the issue of blood stopped! Jesus healed her!

Salimati said she does not see how she can gain custody of her children, who range in age from 4 to 17 years old. She said she cannot return home.

"I hope my children are safe," she said.

The assault was the latest of many instances of persecution of Christians in Uganda that *Morning Star News* has documented.

Uganda's constitution and other laws provide for religious freedom, including the right to propagate one's faith and convert from one faith to another. Muslims make up no more than 12 percent of Uganda's population, with high concentrations in eastern areas of the country.

— Morning Star News via godreports.com and used with kind permission.



Ronnie and Melissa Faisst

Miserable model's major makeover

As a model appearing on magazine covers and posters, Melissa Faisst was living the glitz and glamour lifestyle. But no one could see the turmoil inside her.

In a video shared on her YouTube channel, Melissa says she remembered feeling like she needed to be something else or live up to something in order to be loved.

"I didn't really feel like I could be myself, I didn't really feel like I was good enough," Melissa remembers. "So my entire childhood I was trying to be somebody else."

Melissa tried to be a good student and excel in school activities and sports in an aim to feel loved but she still didn't feel accepted for who she was.

In high school she met a boy and thought she had finally found the love she had been longing for. They moved to California together but he became abusive.

"It kind of just reaffirmed that lie that I'd been living under my whole life – 'you're just not good enough, it's your fault, you need to be something different'," Melissa explains.

When Melissa discovered her boyfriend had been cheating on her, she was devastated. She vowed she'd never love again and instead she would aim to become the most beautiful and the most famous woman ever so that nobody could ever hurt her again.

"So that became my drug and I ran after it wholeheartedly," Melissa says.

She developed an intense eating disorder and threw up about 20 times a day.

"I was an alcoholic, I was drinking myself to sleep every single night," she remembers. "I had self-hatred. I had depression. I hated my life, but as long as I was beautiful and as long as I was successful, that to me was all that mattered."

Still searching for acceptance, Melissa turned to the modeling industry, where she achieved almost instant success.

But although she looked good on the outside, on the inside she was in a prison.

Then she was approached by *Playboy Magazine* and the offer was appealing.

"It's a lot of money, it's a lot of exposure, and it's like instant fame," she says.

However she also wondered what her future husband would think if she went through with it.

As she was wrestling with the decision, she started thinking about where her life had ended up. She used to be a great student at school and now she was considering signing up for *Playboy*.

"I tried to remember the last time I was happy," she says. "And I actually remembered that it was when I was a kid and I went to church, and when I thought God still loved me. At this point I had sinned so much, like I was just in a life of sin, and

so I thought, surely God is done with me. But something within me was saying that was the last time I was happy."

Melissa found a church to visit and it happened that they were having a young adult retreat that weekend.

"I just felt like I was supposed to go," she recalls. "So I went and on the second day of the retreat they were having this thing called 'God time' where you get out a journal and you get out a Bible and you would talk to God and then you would hear what He had to say."

Melissa opened up a Bible and turned to the book of Hosea.

"Hosea is a prophet and God tells him to go and marry this prostitute," Melissa explains. "So he marries this prostitute and he loves her but she keeps cheating on

him over and over again. And Hosea goes back to God and says, 'God my heart is breaking! My wife is cheating on me!' And the Lord says, 'Hosea, I want you to go and keep loving your wife, because that's how I love My people who keep running away from Me. Though they don't love Me back in this moment, I keep loving them.'

"And I remember it just struck me like, 'Lord, I am that prostitute! I have turned my back on You and I have just gone after every other

lover, everything to bring me comfort, bring me satisfaction, bring me happiness. I'm looking in all of these other things and I have forgotten You God!'"

Melissa said later that night, people were invited to come to the front if they wanted prayer and something within her told her to go. A lady prayed for her and told her: "Everything you've ever been told in your life is a lie! You are beautiful, you are wanted, you are precious to the

Lord just the way that you are."

Melissa realised all the times she didn't feel good enough, God loved her exactly as she was. She started sobbing as years of pain were broken off her.

"Literally in a moment, I could feel my eating disorder getting broken off of me, self-hatred, depression, alcoholism, in a moment I got delivered of all of those things," Melissa says.

The next morning she felt completely different and experienced joy and freedom for the first time.

"I felt as if finally I had found me and I had found my purpose, and my purpose was just being His and knowing who I was in Him," Melissa says.

After leaving the modeling industry, Melissa became a missionary.

She is married to former freestyle motocross athlete Ronnie Faisst. The couple runs an online Christian ministry and Melissa has a podcast called *Mornings with Mel*.

I COULD FEEL MY EATING DISORDER GETTING BROKEN OFF OF ME



New Miss USA has done it tough

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Not everything was beautiful in the new Miss America's early life.

When Asya Branch was 10, her father was arrested at home for involvement with an armed robbery. Little Asya watched, terrified, from the car as her dad was hauled away.

"That day our lives changed forever," Asya told the *New York Daily News*. "We had a beautiful home and a great life. When they found out that my father was in prison, people looked at us differently. That was a critical stage in my life and it ended up changing me. I felt this overwhelming shame."

Three things followed this event. Asya and her family lost their farm home as the

bank foreclosed. She felt alone and abandoned. And she grew closer to Jesus.

"My father's incarceration played an enormous role in my life and helped me develop characteristics I never imagined. It taught me responsibility at a young age and to count my blessings," Asya said on Mississippi Pageant. "But most of all, it strengthened my personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

Asya was born the sixth of eight siblings to her parents, living in Booneville, Mississippi at the time. Before stepping into a wayward life, her dad was a retired military veteran. Her mom was a teacher's assistant. She was a gregarious kid who spent her days entertaining family members. If no one was around, she would bury herself in a book.

Asked what one book she would take to a deserted island, she answered unequivocally: "My Bible, not only for the quality reading but for inspiration and guidance in the circumstances in which I would find myself."

A self-described "daddy's girl," Asya said there was no one to help her through the trying times of losing her dad to the prison system. Her father, she says, had tried to help a drifter by taking him in. But that young man had committed an armed robbery, and for trying to help a needy soul, her daddy paid a high price.

"There were no resources nor advocates available for me," she says. "People don't recognise the hardships I have faced in my life because I have learned to be strong through



Miss USA Asya Branch at Runway Of Dreams Foundation NYFW 2021 on September 9, 2021 in New York City. (Photo by Monica Schipper/Getty Images for Runway Of Dreams)

my circumstance, keep a smile on my face and lean upon the Lord." (Asya is advocating for prison reform and even spoke to President Trump about it.)

"Initially, I struggled with my self-worth and closed myself off, praying for answers about why this happened," she wrote in Guideposts. Realising eventually that "maybe God is teaching me to be independent and grateful."

In desperation and loneliness one night, she cried out to Jesus and renewed her relationship.

"It was seen by me in one of my nightly devotions," she says.

"I had become overwhelmed, discouraged and had begun to give up when I had a personal, spiritual encounter with God where He spoke to me and let me know

He was still working on me and had incredible plans for my life and I could not give up."

After taking summer classes at Harvard University, the now-22-year-old graduated from Ole Miss with a degree in broadcast journalism.

She has launched a line of beauty products called Branch Beauty and was crowned Miss America on 9 November, 2020 in a Covid-delayed pageant.

"Having the backbone and financial base of our family stripped away through incarceration and arrest left me hurt, confused, scared, bullied, and withdrawn," Asya said.

"Now, I am boldly working to help other children who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances to fulfil their greatest potential and realise they have an uninhibited future." •

I STRUGGLED WITH MY SELF-WORTH AND CLOSED MYSELF OFF



Question caught eco warrior by surprise

BY HARRIET COOMBE

Nine years ago Chris Kearney was a backpacker travelling around New Zealand on what he called 'an Irish man's voyage of discovery'. He was a dreadlocked hippie travelling in a campervan, using drugs and exploring spirituality when, one day, a conversation stopped him in his tracks.

"I'd got a bit disillusioned with life in Ireland and wanted to explore life and essentially find myself," Chris remembers. "I bought an around the world ticket and I was going to stop somewhere once I found a place to be, find a wife, settle down and have a surf yoga café."

His first stop was New Zealand but he quickly ran out of money and found a job with Greenpeace.

"They put me in a campervan and I got to travel around the whole North Island to a different town every day campaigning against fishing techniques and things like deep-sea oil drilling," he explains.

One day he saw an older woman coming out of the bank and ran alongside her as he gave her his pitch. The woman, whose name was Jeannie, signed up for a \$20 a month donation.

"We ended up having this amazing conversation but most of it was me just passionately going on about the risks of deep sea oil drilling because I'd fallen in love with New Zealand and I felt this is was the place I wanted to settle down ... I was vigorously pouring all my energy into saying how dangerous this was and she suddenly pulled me up and said, 'Chris, I donated in the first few minutes. You have this amazing passion and energy but you're going to burn yourself out if you keep going at this level of intensity.'"

Jeannie said Chris reminded her of herself when she was younger. She too used to live life at a hectic pace and then burn out and be in a really bad headspace. She said she had to manage her energy levels and learn to relax. Her words hit home for Chris as for the past 10 years he would have months where he felt like he was on a high but it would be followed by a big crash a month later.

"I'd get to the place where I actually had suicidal depression," Chris admits. "I'd have horrible thoughts going through my head."

He said that although he was confident, outgoing and had many friends, he didn't know how to communicate what was going on in his life. Jeannie then asked him what he believed in spiritually.

The question caught him off guard. He shared that he had grown up with a strict religious upbringing but no longer believed – he just tried to be a good person and live life to the full. Jeannie gave Chris her contact details and encouraged him to get in touch with her if he was back in the area, as she had had backpackers stay with her before.

The next day as they were driving on to the next town Chris told his friend what had happened. His friend shared that he was into the New Age.

"Growing up in a conservative family in Ireland I'd never come across this sort of individual," Chris shares. "I wanted to know more about spirituality and what's out there."

Over the next 10 weeks as they were travelling around New Zealand, his friend shared more about the New Age, meditation, tai chi and yoga. Chris started meditating and experimenting with manifestation.

"I was grabbing hold of all of this power and felt like I was being enlightened to a whole new way of life," he



Chris with his wife Nikita and son Issachar.

says. Chris stayed in touch with Jeannie and wrote to her about the experiences he had been having. She encouraged him to be careful and said he could be opening doors to an element of darkness he was not aware of.

"When she said that I felt something in my gut and I thought it was probably a good idea to meet up with this lady again considering this journey began with her," he says.

So Chris went to see Jeannie. She took him to a beautiful waterfall in Taranaki National Park and he shared his recent experiences with her.

Jeannie encouraged Chris to go off by himself to the waterfall and ask for the truth. He walked away and did as she said.

"Immediately I heard this voice in my head so clearly saying 'God is the truth, Jesus is the truth' and with that this powerful rush of energy flooded over my body," he says.

"I felt this amazing sense of freedom and burst out laughing. I was so excited yet a bit weirded out and confused as I walked back to Jeannie and I said, 'Did you know Jesus was the truth?' She said, 'Of course, I'm a Holy Spirit-filled born-again Christian.'"

Jeannie then shared the Gospel with Chris – that God loved him so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for him.

"I experienced Jesus' love and I made that decision in that moment to give my life to Jesus and said, 'I am following You for the rest of my life'," Chris says.

The next day Jeannie baptised Chris in a river.

"Since then I've been living a life that is following Jesus," he says. "He's healed me completely of depression and suicidal thoughts into a place where the joy of the Lord is my strength and he continues to faithfully minister to me each day."

Now Chris lives and works in Perth. He is married to Nikita and they have a son.

"If I look at where I was, to where I am now, there is a sense of identity, calling and purpose," he says.

"I'm not continually searching and confused. When hard times come, I know how to deal with them, and I know where my strength and my security come from." •

I KNOW WHERE MY STRENGTH AND MY SECURITY COME FROM



Chris in his dreadlocked hippie days.

YOUTH TRUTH

Where true love is found

BY CAROL ROUND

IN the early 80s, a popular Country Western song became one of the soundtracks for the movie, *Urban Cowboy*. The song, *Lookin' for Love*, expressed the song writer's feelings with these lyrics: "lookin' for love in all the wrong places."

The song's lyrics refrain "lookin' for love in too many faces, searchin' their eyes, lookin' for traces of what I'm dreaming of..." is all too real for those dreaming of perfect love.

Don't we all dream of being loved by someone special? We search for it. Pray for it. Seek it on dating websites as well as in the real world of venues designed to attract a significant other.

Relationships are complicated. There's no doubt. Just check the statistics for divorce. Two of my relatives have been married multiple times. One is on her fifth marriage. The other is on his sixth. For almost 19 years, I've been single.

After my 28-year marriage ended in 2001, I only came close to remarrying once. What I've learned during my almost two decades of singleness is how much God loves me and wants the best for me. When I married at age 19, I was naïve, under the impression many of us have, that "two halves make a whole".

In relationships, that doesn't work. When two people with emotional baggage—scarred and insecure—drag it with them into a relationship, those problems are actually intensified. It takes two whole healthy people to make one happy healthy whole relationship. Psalm 147:3 reveals what we really need is God's help to heal. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (ESV). We must seek wholeness in the love of a Heavenly Father. There's an expression, "You can't give away what you don't have." If you don't love yourself, your insecurities will lead to seeking someone else to make you feel 'fulfilled'. And that is a burden too heavy for any one person to carry.

We can only love well—giving and receiving love in all our relationships—when we've reconciled ourselves to a loving God. His love is sacrificial, perfect, pure, faithful, unconditional, lavish, forgiving, lasting, hope-filled, all-encompassing, enduring, redeeming, gracious, and so much more. God is love. And God's love is the only love strong enough to hold all our needs and expectations. I grew up in the church. However, I was in my late 40s before I encountered the Living God and began to understand the meaning of "true love." True love is not based on us. It's not based on our abilities or striving to be good enough. You can't earn true love. It is given freely. God's invitation is open to all who are looking for authentic love—a lifetime love that will not fail.

God's love knows no boundaries and has no limits. There's also no place too deep that His love can't reach us.

How can we discover God's amazing love? By seeking Him in the pages of His love letter to us – The Bible.

Pursuing God leads to wholeness and true love in His outstretched arms. Romans 5:8 is a reminder. "God showed His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

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EASTER JOY FOR JORDIN

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 of 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



Jordin Sparks with husband Dana Isaiah (Photo by Vivien Killilea/Getty Images for Smile Train).

INSET: Jordin after winning *American Idol* Season 6 in 2007. (Photo by Lester Cohen/WireImage).



and torn," Jordin says 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 this year, her stepfather died from a stroke and, 15 months before that, 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 abandoned 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 Isaiah 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.

How good is your spam filter?

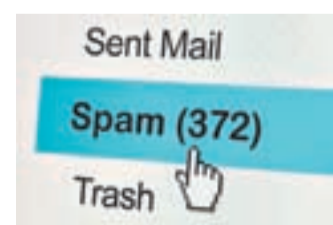
IN a Crosswalk devotional, Ryan Duncan asks, "Is Satan spamming you?"

He goes on to write: "This stock is about to take off! ... 'You won't believe this Miracle Pill! ... 'Hello, I am a Nigerian Prince' ... These are only a few of the emails that have ended up in my spam folder. We've all received them, those obnoxious messages that try to trick you into sending money or personal information to some unknown source. All spam email follows the same design. First, they open up by preying on a person's fear, insecurity, or general discontent. After that, they propose a simple solution, an easy win for the reader, which convinces the reader to put their trust in something very untrustworthy."

"Thankfully, most computers now come with software to filter out the phony emails. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for everyday life. I've found Satan

often uses the same tactics as these spam mails whenever he wants to attack a human being. First, he takes advantage of your worry, your self-image, or something else in your life. Then he offers you something that might fix the problem, but in truth, only makes things worse."

Satan will prey upon your natural tendencies to compare yourself to others and causing you to dwell on what you lack, encouraging you to feel envy, jealousy and covetousness. Then he will tempt you to sin to get what you want, in what looks deceptively like an easier way. For instance, Satan might tempt you to shoplift to get something you can't afford, throw up to get thin, become sexually immoral to



get or keep a partner, or get drunk to forget your problems.

The equivalent of a spam filter in life is to read the Bible daily. This will help you to discern the lies from the truth, and to understand that

most good things take time and effort to achieve, and any quick fix offered is bound to be a scam. The books of Proverbs and Psalms are especially helpful for this. Proverbs even says in chapter 1 verse 4 that this is what it's for: "To give prudence to the simple, to the young man (or woman) knowledge and discretion."

Don't fall for Satan's schemes and end up filled with regrets and shame – equip yourself with God's anti-hacking tools (Bible reading and prayer) now!

YOUTH TRUTH



Dakota Rhodes experimented with New Age practices such as tarot cards but had a life-changing experience after scrolling through TikTok one day.

Encounter ends New Age addiction

Singer/songwriter Dakota Rhodes has had a passion for singing since she was a child and now has a successful YouTube channel with more than 350,000 subscribers and almost 15,000,000 views.

Now 24, Dakota recently posted a video talking about an encounter she says changed her life forever.

Growing up, Dakota's family didn't attend church regularly but they did believe in God and when she started experiencing anxiety attacks, she prayed. But she says her prayers were very focused on herself and she prayed for things to happen according to what she wanted in life, not what God's will was for her life.

"I think that's where I ended up hitting a lot of roadblocks in my life because I was trying to make pieces fit where they never fit," she says.

As she grew older Dakota started experimenting with New Age practices such as tarot cards.

"I wasted a lot of time on tarot card videos because I was looking for answers that I could get immediately... it almost became like an addiction in a way," she admits.

But everything changed in 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic started. One day Dakota was scrolling on TikTok and a lot of videos that popped up were Christian-based. She started worrying about whether she was a Christian or not.

So she began to pray to God and express genuine sorrow for her sins [admitting wrong-doing and renouncing it].

"As I was repenting (turning from my sin) I just let everything just kind of wash out of me," Dakota explains.

"All of a sudden I felt this presence... I had my eyes closed and in my mind's eye I saw Jesus standing to the right of me. Then it felt like He wrapped his arms around me and gave me a hug from behind. I started

crying because it was so overwhelming. He took the breath out of my lungs and filled it with His Spirit."

She also heard Jesus speak to her and she felt so overwhelmed she nearly fell to her knees.

"I cried for like 24 hours because it was just so much to take in," she recalls. "I didn't sleep at all, I just I cried the whole night. I got up super early in the morning to tell my mum and I couldn't make it through one sentence without breaking down because it was just so much."

Dakota says the experience has changed her forever.

"Now I take all of my problems and questions and everything in life directly to Him," she says.

She also reads her Bible every day and has seen many answers to prayer in regards to her singing career.

"I've seen God move more mountains in my life in these few months than I have in all of my years," she says with a smile.

She hopes her encounter with Jesus encourages others to seek and find Him.

"Even if it's just starting out with a prayer, even if you read one Bible verse a day – that's what I started with... The amount of love that I have for Jesus is unexplainable," she says.

Dakota says God is always reaching out to us and she encourages others to meet Him halfway and grab His hand.

Finding a Father's love

"I was going to go to Vegas with some mates and have one last hurrah," Austin, aka Aussie, says of his 21st birthday plans. It should've been a time of joyous celebration.

Instead, depressed and drug addicted, he had decided, "I was just going to go so hard that hopefully I would just die. I didn't know how – maybe I'd OD or shoot myself. All I knew was that I wanted to go to Vegas and die there."

Sharing his story on the Gifted by Grace YouTube channel, Aussie shares that he grew up in Australia in a comfortable home. Then his parents divorced and re-married. His mother, a committed Christian, brought him to church and Sunday school but Aussie was not interested in God.

How could a Father in Heaven be there for him when his own dad never was?

"I used to see the other kids at school and their dads coming to pick them up and I used to wonder where my dad was," he says sadly. After his father remarried, he got more involved with Aussie and his brother.

Shuttling back and forth between houses every few weeks soon became normal. The environment in his dad's home was very different to his mother's though. Aussie clearly remembers being introduced to alcohol as a six-year-old by his father.

"He poured beer into an empty Vegemite jar and gave it to me. I was like, 'Aye, sweet.'"

"Then I saw my dad smoking and wanted to try it," he says. "By the time I was 11 I was smoking heaps of weed and watching pornography. Being exposed to those things at such a young age twists your head a bit."

By 15, Aussie confesses he was "a full-blown stoner." He was constantly drinking and smoking, even at school, and experimented sexually – all the while still going to church. "I was sitting on the fence," he admits. "I didn't really know what I believed."

At 16, Aussie made a decision: "I made up my own mind and went with the party lifestyle."

It cost him his mental health and happiness.

The uncontrollable rage and lows that followed the drug-induced highs wrecked Aussie's life.

Scared his family was suffering because of him, he left home and moved in with his drug dealer. "Before I knew it, I was hooked on meth, smoking it every day."

At some point Aussie realised the path he was taking could only lead to trouble. So, at 17, he quit drugs, moved back home, and started going to church again – but not for the right reasons.

"You start singing and you get this head rush. And you didn't even need drugs to get it. I was just like, 'I love this.' I got to the point where I was only rocking up in church for that – I didn't care about anything else, I just wanted to feel good."

Eventually the "high" of going to church wore off and Aussie stopped going. He was back on meth within a week.

"I was a junkie – if it didn't give me



Austin was drug-addicted and depressed and had hit rock bottom.

anything, I didn't want it."

He moved back home and his life spiralled out of control again.

"I was confused, angry, I lashed out at people," he explains. "I just got really depressed."

He got a job at a café and was walking home after work one afternoon when he was viciously attacked by a man with a hammer. The blow to Aussie's face shattered his cheekbone. The assailant grabbed his cigarettes and took off.

"A bit higher up and I would've died on the spot," Aussie says.

Even this near-death encounter did nothing to shake him out of his poor choices.

"I got a lot worse. I ended up with post-traumatic stress from the attack. I was doing heaps of drugs and drinking every night to cope. I was constantly

convinced someone was trying to kill me."

One night, after coming down from a high, Aussie didn't know what else to do but pray. "I ended up on my knees in the backyard crying, looking up at the sky, and praying. I just said, 'God, I need your help – if You're there, if You love me, I need help.'"

The doubts he had before – "How could God love me? Why would He help me?" crept back into his thoughts. "My perception of myself and my past and all the things that I had done was pretty poor. I thought

I didn't have anything going for me. I just buried myself and put on this mask. It got me very lost. I was so broken."

His mother sat him down and talked him through his options.

"She told me she couldn't watch me destroy myself any longer and that I could either die on the side of the road, or call Shalom House. So I called Shalom."

At the time of the YouTube video's release, Aussie had been in the Perth-based Christian rehabilitation centre

for over 18 months – the longest he had ever been sober since he was a child.

"My life has changed dramatically," he smiles. "I gave my life to Jesus and so many things changed. I got my family back, my old friends back, and the other day my dad

was asking me questions about the Bible and now he's reading it! It's all God's grace (undeserved kindness).

"I don't want to wear a mask anymore. I've learned to love myself. Rather than try and forget my past, I look back at it and take it as lessons and I have to grow from that. God uses us in ways we can't even imagine. Without Jesus, I wouldn't be here. I should be dead with the amount of drugs I used to do. But God's got plans for me, to use me somehow in some way. God's the daddy I never had."

I WAS DOING HEAPS OF DRUGS AND DRINKING EVERY NIGHT TO COPE



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Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Killer chimps



SINCE evolutionists claim chimpanzees are our closest living relatives, it's not surprising that they would look at primate behaviour for clues to human behaviour. When evidence started to come in that chimpanzees routinely engaged in warfare and killing of their own kind, some were obviously tempted to see in it an explanation for aspects of human sin.

A common evolutionist response has been to deny this is natural behaviour and to blame it instead on human interference with the animals' natural habitat.

Several factors likely drive this for evolution-believers. One may be a simple reluctance to think that we have an inherited propensity for evil. The idea that mankind is 'inherently good', which defies real-world experience, is a persistent theme in denying humanity's need for a Saviour. For evolutionists concerned with social harmony, there is also a fear that if we are seen to have 'killer apes' in our ancestry, we might give up trying to modify our behaviour.

Alongside this is a longstanding belief that doesn't deny human evil so much as it denies that nature is fallen, as Genesis 3 tells us it is. Nature is romanticised; the 'natural' world is all 'good', and only humans mess it up.

Now a substantial research project, published as a letter in *Nature*, seems to discredit the romantic views.¹ The study, by an international community of over 30 scientists, "gathers data from some 426 combined years of observation, across 18 different chimp communities."² It finds human activity had "little effect on the number of killings"—a total of 152.³ The kill rate goes "up and down as a simple consequence of competition for scarce resources."

In an accompanying commentary, Prof. Joan Silk of the University of Arizona seems concerned that her fellow evolution-believers might take the 'killer chimp' findings to justify human violence. She says: "We have the ability to shape and alter our behaviour in ways that they [chimps] can't." Exactly. Which is why, despite our inbuilt Adamic propensity to sin, we are accountable to our Creator for our wrongdoing.

References and notes:

1. Wilson, M., et al, Lethal aggression in Pan is better explained by adaptive strategies than human impacts, *Nature* 513(7518):414-417, 2014
2. Webb, J., Murder 'comes naturally' to chimpanzees, *bbc.co.uk*, 18 September 2014. Quotes hereafter are from this.
3. Bonobos or pygmy chimps, long known to be more peaceful, have far lower 'kill rates'—one for 92 observer-years over four communities.

Holding onto hope while suffering

BY JANICE TEO

How do you live with four incurable diseases? Singaporean Simon Lim can tell you – he's been doing that for more than 35 years.

The 56-year-old is battling lupus, blood cancer, low immunity syndrome and needs a kidney transplant because his are functioning at only 18 per cent.

On top of that he has had shingles followed by postherpetic neuralgia (painful nerve damage).

He suffers from 'moon face' the common side effect of taking steroids to treat his many conditions, and lives with painful blisters and rashes.

So how does Simon live in these circumstances? Incredibly, with joy and hope. How? Because 35 years ago, when he was at one of the lowest points in his life, he encountered Hope in, of all places, the toilet of his small flat.

Simon was 21 at the time and was just about to enter university when the lupus flared up, attacking his brain and causing frequent seizures. He developed ulcers in his mouth and throat, which made eating and drinking painful. The disease assailed his kidneys, prompting doctors to tell him he would be on dialysis in two years. At one stage, he couldn't recognise his parents.

His symptoms became so bad he had to pull out of university. This plunged the high-achieving, competitive student into deep despondency.

One night in July 1988, Simon was sifting through some get-well cards when he found three from the same person.

She had written the same message in all of them: "Jesus loves you, Jesus can heal you, Jesus is real."

Simon really doubted that. He knew nothing about Jesus but he had nothing left to lose, so he prayed: "If You really are real, please show me."

He waited for half-an-hour hoping at least for a thunderclap or two, but nothing happened.

Feeling he had lost his last hope, Simon cried himself to sleep. He woke at 3am to go to the toilet.

"When I entered the toilet, I became very giddy," he tells *Chal-*



ABOVE: Simon with his wife, Ai Ling, on their 18th wedding anniversary.



INSET: Simon with his daughter Eshet Chayil. Simon suffers from "moon face" due to taking steroids to treat his many conditions.

lenge News. "But just as I was about to fall, I saw a man standing in front of me. He was very bright, dressed in white robes but I couldn't see his face.

"Then this man started to speak to me - in Cantonese! He used my Chinese name - 'Ah Thye, Ah Thye, don't be scared. Calm down. Sit down.'"

He says he fell asleep. When he woke up, it occurred to him that he got the thunderclap he'd been hoping for when he prayed a few hours ear-

lier. "So I said 'Jesus, I know that was You. Please heal me and I will serve You all the days of my life'."

After that encounter Simon reports his health improved.

"My lupus was brought under control and my kidneys stopped deteriorating – they functioned at 30 per cent for the next 32 years."

In 1990 he became a full-time pastor and remained one for 12 years. In 2002, he got married and five months after that the couple became pioneer missionaries at the China-Myanmar border.

The birth of their daughter was another story for the books. Told they could not have children naturally

because of Simon's poor health, they were directed instead to IVF.

Simon refused, saying he believed God would give them a child naturally. True enough, his wife Ai Ling conceived naturally in 2004. Their remarkable story even made the local press and a TV documentary.

But tragedy struck again when the couple was told their daughter had a 75 per cent chance of being born with Down Syndrome. Doctors recommended an abortion.

Simon remembers feeling shattered at the news. "But we refused the abortion. We told the doctors we would keep her as, Down Syndrome or not, she was a gift from God.

"Lo and behold, our daughter was born in November 2004 absolutely perfect with no health complications at all! We were able to go to China as missionaries."

It would be nice if this whole story could be tied up neatly in a bow to say Simon has been completely healed, but that is not the case.

In 2007 while in China he suffered a relapse of the lupus. He was put on strong steroids which triggered 'moon face', a side effect that causes the cheeks to swell. There were painful eye infections.

Then he contracted tuberculosis and infected both his wife and daughter. As a result they were recalled back to Singapore.

Today Simon is the pastor of a church in Singapore which opens new churches among indigenous communities in China.

His health mountains remain Everest-like. He needs a kidney transplant; his wife Ai Ling will be his live donor. But the operation has been delayed because of Covid-19.

Yet through one ordeal after another, Simon's faith has not wavered.

"I have never thought for a moment that I have the right to question God," he asserts. "Yes, I feel helpless much of the time, but never hopeless.

"Before I met Jesus, I was dying without hope. He saved me so I owe Him everything; He owes me nothing. He has only done me good."

While he does pray for healing, Simon says his faith is not based on his physical wellbeing.

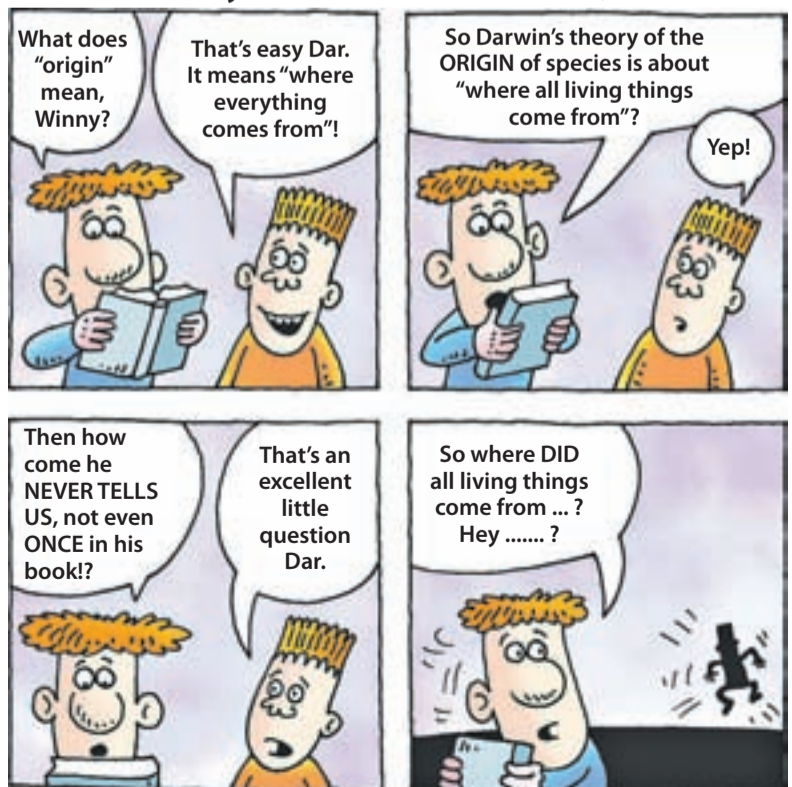
"If our hope is based on healing, it is a sure suicide of faith. God is my hope, not His healing.

"In the words of the song, 'I do not know what my tomorrow holds, but I know who holds my tomorrow.'"



Dar and Winny

by Richard Gunther



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

HOW TO EXPRESS ANGER APPROPRIATELY

BY ROB FURLONG

“THE anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

So wrote James the Just, a prominent leader of the first century church. It’s an astute observation. Think of the times you have expressed your anger inappropriately and it has led to damaging accusations, criticism, and silence.

Thankfully, James was a practical man and prior to making this statement, he provides three steps to encourage us to express our anger in an appropriate way.

Step One: Be quick to hear.

Are you familiar with the old quip, “God gave us two ears and one mouth – which one do you think He wants you to use the most?”

When we feel threatened or under attack, our predisposition as human beings is to jump in quickly and defend ourselves, rather than listening to the other person. This inevitably leads us to making assumptions about what the person is saying or is

going to say, resulting in frustration for both parties: one is left feeling unfairly misunderstood and the other, personally criticised again.

All of this can be diffused quite easily by simply taking the time to *listen, really listen*, to what the other person is trying to communicate.

Step Two: Be slow to speak.

This follows on naturally from the first piece of advice. There comes a time when you will need to speak, but even then, James says, “*Don’t jump in too quickly!*”

James is encouraging us to be *thoughtful and reflective* about our responses to what the other person is saying.

Have you ever said something which you later regretted?

I remember many years ago, early in our marriage when Karen and I were having an argument. At one point, Karen said something that really got under my skin – I cannot remember what it was – but I do remember it was quite close to her birthday and I blurted out angrily at



her, “*You don’t deserve a birthday!*”

I regretted it instantly, especially when I saw the wounded look on her face. Chuck Swindoll once said, “*I have never regretted a word I did not say, but there are many I regret having spoken!*”

Learning to take time with your answers – being slow to speak – is a great discipline to cultivate and an excellent tool in helping you to keep a lid on your anger.

Step Three: Be slow to anger.

I know you are most likely thinking that this is easier said than done, but honestly, if you begin to apply the first two principles consistently, the third follows quite naturally.

The book of Proverbs puts it this way: “A hot tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger *pacifies contention.*”

Ever noticed how angry outbursts usually produce the same response in

others? You often see this at protest marches. Two sides oppose each other, there is a lot of angry yelling back and forth, with no one listening to each other and all too often it descends into physical violence.

But when someone takes the time to restrain their anger, even in the face of extreme provocation, it is like oil being poured over troubled waters. The situation begins to calm down and order is restored.

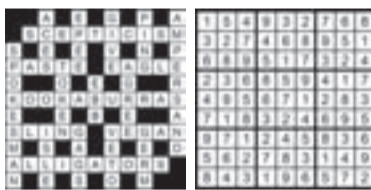
We see these three principles played out in the life of Jesus when He was betrayed and crucified.

When He is falsely accused by lying witnesses that He would destroy the Temple and rebuild it three days later, *He remains silent.*

When it does come time to answer His accusers, He replies wisely and thoughtfully: “*I have spoken openly to the world.*”

Finally, in the face of mocking abuse as He dies, He declares, “*Father, forgive them.*”

God’s righteousness – the gift of salvation for the whole world – is achieved while a world rages against Him. Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger *will* achieve right relationships – with God and others. ●



Want to explore more?

Here are some **free**, helpful, Christian online resources:

Online Bible - Olive Tree app (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - Bible.is app , or Youversion Bible app	
Christian radio station - CBN radio app (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app	
Christian movies - New Faith Network app (7-day free trial)	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - the Bible Project on YouTube .	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app	
Comic book Bible online- goodandevilbook.com	
More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online	

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

What? Salvation is an eternal relationship with God – now on Earth and, after we die, in Heaven.

The Lord Jesus says: “I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in Me has eternal life.” John 6:47

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Who? Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

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

Why? Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

How? The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:8b-10

Ready to change your life forever? Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude – which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.

Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn’t, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank You that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You – I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Saviour and my Master. Amen.

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a Christian that you know or email us at info@challengenews.org
2. Use the resources in the green box on this page to find a Bible to read and more information regarding Christianity.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don’t need a formula.
4. Find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

AS A NEXT STEP :

I have prayed this prayer. Please send me: Bible Some ‘starting off’ literature Information on a helpful church

** Please tick and write clearly **

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email address _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985
info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Lesson from a sausage dog - part 22

BY JODY BENNETT

YOU have probably heard the expression “puppy dog eyes”. My sausage dog Carrie is an expert at that expression! It is a look that combines love and need in equal parts. My dachshund will sit and stare at me beseechingly while I am eating something or when she feels I have been at the computer too long.



She doesn’t have to make a sound or move, just those eyes staring at me adoringly are so hard to resist. She is, at once, peaceful and expectant. I know what she wants without her making a sound – dog eyebrows can be incredibly expressive!

And invariably I give in and share my food, or put aside my work and take her for a walk.

I thought of that today when I read Psalm 123:2: “*Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us.*”

Just as my dog stares adoringly at me, knowing that every good thing she gets comes from my hand – like pats, food, treats, walks and scratches – so, when we invite God to be our Master and Saviour, we realise everything good in life is from Him, and we can look to Him to meet our every need.

Keeping our gaze fixed on Him is not an act of nagging – although it very well may be in the case of Carrie! – but it is an act of trust and adoration.

You might ask, how do I keep my eyes fixed on an invisible God? Well, I’m talking about the eyes of our heart, so we do it spiritually – by reading the Bible, God’s Word, and praying (talking to Him). By constantly reminding ourselves that we are dependent on God, that He is our loving Dad and that He is the Giver of all good gifts. That helps us to remain content as we petition God to meet our needs, and yet hopeful and expectant of the answers.

Our Master knows what we want (and whether it is good for us) – much more so even than I am able to guess my dog’s needs – and the Bible promises that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6) ●



Bubba Watson plays his shot from the third tee during the first round of the QBE Shootout at Tiburon Golf Club on December 10, 2021 in Naples, Florida. (Photo by Cliff Hawkins/Getty Images)

GOOD GUY NOW GOD'S GUY

Little Gerry Watson, whose Dad called him Bubba, dreamed of being a champion golfer while growing up, and the now 43-year-old has more than fulfilled that dream with 12 wins on the PGA Tour, including two Masters. The left-hander has also represented the US at the Ryder Cup, the Presidents Cup and the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Successful, happily married and raising two children; Bubba owns a mansion that once belonged to Tiger Woods and several local businesses. However, life has been far from plain sailing for the well-known US player.

He and his wife were unable to have biological children and their first attempt at adoption fell through. Eventually they adopted a son, Caleb, in 2012, and a daughter, Dakota, in 2014, having delayed due to various family issues, including the illness and death

of Bubba's dad in 2010 from throat cancer.

Bubba grew up in Bagdad, Florida, as one of the good guys: "Didn't cuss, didn't cheat, didn't steal, didn't lie, didn't drink, didn't do drugs," he told *Baptist Press* in 2012. "I was doing the right things but I didn't know what that meant."

In his senior year in high school, twin girls, from the house directly behind his, invited Bubba to their youth group. He went, and found a place where he belonged.

"The girls asked me to go to church," he said. "And after a few times going I realized this is what I wanted to do. This is truth here. And I gave myself to the Lord."

But it wasn't until 2004 that Bubba became serious about his commitment to Christ at the University of Georgia. He began dating Canadian Angie Ball (a basketball player) and the two began serving God as a couple.

"We wanted to be Christ followers," Bubba said. "We wanted to do the right thing. We started turning to the Lord for our decisions."

The couple married in September 2004 and were each baptised [immersed in water as a sign of dying to their old lives] the day after Christmas: "I would say 2004 was my true time of becoming a Christian and shaping me into the man I am today," Bubba told *Baptist Press*.

Outspoken in his proclamation of faith on Twitter, Bubba received complaints about his 140-character witnessing tactics, but his response was simple: Feel free to unfollow, but the talk about God isn't going away.

Some 100 people quit following him and other Christian haters bombarded him with "bad stuff" but Bubba responded with kindness.

Included in his Tweets are things like: "God made everything & saved us from our sins & gives us hope and gives us eternal life! #Godisgood";

Bible verses, and comments like "Most important things in my life – 1. God 2. Wife 3. Family 4. Helping others 5. Golf"

But the "years and years of buildup" of various stresses and seeing all those hurtful and negative comments about himself on social media slowly chipped away at Bubba's mental health and in 2017 he hit rock bottom, nearly giving up his career and losing hope for life.

"I was letting my job dictate how I feel. And I was losing weight. So I went to the doctor. I was having stomach pains, all these ailments were going on. But the doctor said, 'There's nothing wrong with you,'" Bubba details.

The unexplained 15kg weight loss was especially alarming. "When I looked in the mirror, when I saw 74kg on the scale, I envisioned my dad and envisioned me dying like my dad," Bubba admits.

"I fell to my knees in 2017, and I said, 'Lord, take me,'" he recounts. "It wasn't that I wanted to end my life. It was that I didn't want my family to go through what my mum went through – what I went through – with my dad."

He remembers fearing he wasn't good enough and wasn't well liked. He described his feelings to CNN's Patrick Snell as being the "darkest of the dark at that moment".

Bubba says his faith and his wife helped him return to a better place psychologically. He realised that instead of expressing his troubles he had been internalising them, which was leading to the stomach pains and weight loss.

"Being able to speak to [Angie]

and tell her my deepest, darkest secrets and let her know what I was going through and let her know that I was scared ... that was a hard thing to do," Bubba remembers.

Since then, he has learned to prioritise communication. He battled the stigma that men shouldn't talk about their emotions and feelings, learning that it was okay to speak to

his family, friends and colleagues about the good and bad moments in life.

That, Bubba explains, ultimately led to his writing a book – *Up & Down: Victories and struggles in the course of life*. He'd been

approached for years to write about his successes on the PGA Tour, but didn't feel like he could achieve anything in sharing his story. It was after that "dark time", that he realised he was ready to introduce his fans to "Bubba, the person".

"I know from experience that by talking about it and discussing it, [the book] helps me, but hopefully

in return, it helps other people," he told *PEOPLE* magazine.

Besides despair and fear, Bubba has also dealt with anger during his time in professional golf.

He used to be so worried about his performance that it would become all consuming.

"I was so wrapped up in 'Why am I not winning?' It created frustrations in my head and in my life."

Things got so heated on the golf course at one point that caddie Ted Scott finally gave him an ultimatum. "You're going to have to change, or I'm going to quit," he told Bubba.

Now the golfer plays what has been called "Bubba Golf," which puts a heavy focus on just having fun on the course.

The lanky athlete credits his caddie, his trainer Adam Fisher ("Fish") and Angie, who are all strong Christians, as those who helped him most in changing his attitude.

"I want it to be defined as a good man that tried harder every day," he said. "Not just in golf, but off the golf course, [I want] to be a light for Jesus."

[I WAS IN] THE DARKEST OF THE DARK



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