

Tumultuous ride to fame

Actor Chris Pratt on his journey to fame and the part God played in it.



Chris Pratt.
(Photo RB/
Bauer-Griffin/
GC Images)

It's hard to remember sometimes the stars who grace our TV screens were not always rich and famous. Many started from the bottom, waiting tables and compulsively checking for auditions.

Chris Pratt, beloved chubby boyfriend Andy Dwyer on *Parks and Recreation* and later action hero on *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and *Jurassic World*, is one of these. In a recent interview with *Vanity Fair*, the actor opened up about his journey to the Hollywood screen – and the person he thanks for getting him there.

In Lake Stevens, Washington, as Captain of the Wrestling team, young Chris was not lacking in ambition. When his coach asked him what he planned to do with his life he recalls saying: "I don't know, but I know I'll be famous and I know I'll make a ton of money."

Many are the young boys who might give such an answer – few are the ones who actually deliver on it.

What he actually wanted to do with his life he decided only a few years later, inspired by his older brother Dan Junior (aka Cully).

"One Christmas he was in a play, a musical, and he sang, and it knocked everyone's socks off. My mom was

crying. And I was like, 'That's what I want to do.'

Chris did the thing every aspiring actor does – he waited tables and took classes at a local community college, including a theatre course, where a teacher advised him to stage act professionally.

But he never finished his first year. "It felt exactly like high school except I had to pay for it," he says, "and, for a kid living hand to mouth, that didn't make sense. So I got a job as a salesman going door-to-door."

"I was selling coupons for things like oil changes or trips to a spa," Chris says. "I was great at [it]."

And it turned out to be perfect training for a future life of audition and rejection. "That's why I believe in God and the divine," he says. "I feel like it was perfectly planned."

Chris was first introduced to Jesus in Hawaii. At the time, with no job and no prospects, he followed a friend who was living there.

"I was sitting outside a grocery store – we'd convinced someone to go in and buy us beer," he remembers. "This is Maui. And a guy named Henry came up and recognized something in me

that needed to be saved.

"He asked me what I was doing that night, and I was honest. I said, 'My friend's inside buying me alcohol.' 'You going to a party?' he asked. 'Yeah.' 'Drink and do drugs? Meet girls, and sleep around?' I was like, 'I hope so.'

"I was charmed by this guy, don't know why. He was an Asian dude, maybe Hawaiian, in his 40s. It should've made me nervous but didn't. I said, 'Why are you asking?' He said, 'Jesus told me to talk to you...'

"At that moment I was like, I think I have to go with this guy. He took me to church. Over the next few days I surprised my friends by declaring I was going to change my life."

Things did change for Chris then. At the time, he had a job at Bubba Gump Shrimp, a chain of restaurants that grew out of *Forrest Gump*.

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"Jesus told me to talk to you"

Romances couldn't fulfill me

Author Francine Rivers on her addiction and how her writing changed, from steamy romance novels to stories of unconditional love.

The last line of *Redeeming Love* makes my throat tighten and my eyes sting. The confronting themes of prostitution, sexual abuse, and violence, meddle artfully with the uplifting ones of relationship, worth, and undeserved, unconditional love in the retelling of the Biblical book of Hosea.

It is clever, it is beautiful, and it is engrossing. And it is romantic, a genre author Francine Rivers confesses she was for a long time not only expert at but also addicted to.

"We tend to frame addiction as substance abuse, but most anything that consumes our attention and energy or serves as an escape can be an addiction," Francine shares in *Christianity Today*.



Francine Rivers

"Mine was to steamy historical romances." Because who doesn't love falling in love over and over again?

Francine describes how plunging into the love lives of fictional characters became a way to avoid

facing pains and troubles.

"When I miscarried, I dealt with the grief by reading," she says.

When reading romances no longer "filled the hunger" she began plotting her own stories, combinations of her favorite genres she describes as "Western gothic romance".

Francine's first book sold with ease in the booming market.

"The early years of my marriage weren't easy for either of us; reading and writing romances kept me from analyzing why and dealing with problems," the author explains. "Something was missing, and I didn't know where to start looking for whatever was lost."

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SEARCHING FOR PEACE

BY ALAN BAILEY

IF YOU are like most people walking the streets you want peace in this world. Not just for yourself but for your children and grandchildren. Who wants war? It's hard to imagine why anyone would.

But after all the struggles this world has experienced in the past, it seems that we haven't finished fighting each other yet. A tiresome thought? Depressing? It is for many of us. We want to know when, if ever, peace will come.

NOT JUST A LIST OF ISSUES

Nations have fought over land, over people, over laws, over political systems and even without much reason at all. But these issues don't tell us the whole story; there is much else beneath the surface.

The human race is diseased. This is evidenced by the pride, envy, lust for power and twisted morals revealed by crime and war. So the issues are being dealt with by people who have a problem. Jeremiah spelt it out when he said: "Who can understand the human heart? There is nothing else so deceitful; it is too sick to be healed."

RESIGNING TO THE INEVITABLE

For most of us who are just average people with no special ability to influence the affairs of men and nations, there seems to be nothing to do but accept what comes along. Sighing and groaning will be part and parcel of life until we breathe no more and leave it all to someone else.

WHAT ABOUT A TAKE-OVER?

If someone who was perfectly

good took over this world and ran it, things would be different. Who could do that? The Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ will do it and nothing will stop Him carrying out the promise the Bible has made about it. An age of peace? Yes, there will come a period when all nations will learn war no more and will live in harmony.

MORE GOOD NEWS

The evil of the human heart is seen everywhere. Not just with tyrants and criminals but in every life. This puts us on a war footing with God. So peace with Him is of utmost importance for every individual.

The great news is that peace with God is available. An old-fashioned expression which is sometimes still heard is "making my peace with God." Now this is fine if we understand that God has done everything to make peace possible and we can add nothing to it. We simply accept it by faith. "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Cor 5:19). This happened when Jesus died in our place. He took the anger of the Father against sin in order to offer us peace.

WHOSE SIDE?

The big test of our desire for peace comes at this point. Will we turn from our own way and yield our wills to Christ? If we do, we will experience peace with God that cannot be taken away. If we don't, we are choosing to be part of this evil system around us that shuts God out and pays the very severe consequences that are attached to that rejection. What will it be?

Tumultuous ride to fame

● From page 1

One day actress Rae Dawn Chong, who reached a professional peak in 1985 starring opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Commando*, walked into the restaurant.

"She was with her producing partner," says Chris. "I wasn't even supposed to take a shift that day. But it was like I had a premonition. I always wanted to go to Hollywood. I just didn't know I was going to get there."

"You're a movie star," he told Rae Dawn Chong as he served her table. "You're cute. Do you act?" she replied.

Months later he was the lead in *Cursed Part 3*, a movie that was never released and that Chris describes as "the worst movie he'd ever seen". It didn't matter. He was in.

For the next few years Chris lived cheaply, waiting tables, taking small roles in big movies and big roles in small movies. "I was an outsider, no connections, no nepotism, nothing, a complete foreigner to Hollywood." His breakthrough came in 2002 with *Everwood*, the first time he "ever got into money, real money". He met his wife, Anna Farris, while playing her love interest in *Take Me Home Tonight* in 2007.

His next hits will be *Passengers*



Chris Pratt and wife, Anna Faris, attend the European Gala Screening of 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2' at Eventim Apollo on April 24, 2017 in London. (Photo: Getty Images)

and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*.

When Chris looks at his life he sees the divine hand of God working things out to culminate in the life he lives now, with his wife and son, Jack, as a really famous guy making a lot of money.

Just before he eats, Rich Cohen describes in the *Vanity Fair* interview, Chris gets on his knees and has everyone else get on their knees, and they hold hands, and he thanks God for the food and the life, "and he even [puts] in a word for the Cubs". ●

Romances couldn't fulfil me

● From page 1

Work, she says, became an obsession.

"If you had a choice between me and the children or your writing, you'd choose writing," her husband Rick told her one day, an appalling observation of stinging accuracy.

Their marriage falling apart, Francine and her husband relocated to North Carolina to be closer to her in-laws and were welcomed into their new neighborhood by an eight-year-old boy.

"Have I got a church for you!" he said, Francine recalls. "We saw him as a pest; he turned out to be a means of good news."

Francine says she had grown up in a Christian family and assumed that made her a Christian, but though both she and Rick had attended a church neither of them felt connected to God in any meaningful way.

At the time the eight-year-old appeared at her doorstep she was desperate enough to try anything. At this small local church they were made to feel part of their family.

She says the pastor preached the



gospel, the good news of how Jesus came to earth to pay the price for all the ways we as humans fall short, and taught from the Bible.

Francine recalls she and Rick were baptized on the same day, deciding together to give their lives to Christ.

And the first thing God did was take away her writing.

"I couldn't write anything," she explains. "Nothing made sense."

She focused on reading the Bible instead, and when she got to the book of Hosea she got a nudge to write a book of a different kind.

"One that would show the difference between what the world considers love and the unconditional, sacrificial, all-consuming love of God," Francine says. "The result was *Redeeming Love*."

And God wasn't done with her yet. Soon every big question she confronted prompted another novel—How many times do we forgive those who want our destruction? (*An Echo in the Darkness*) How do I deal with anger and angry people? (*As Sure as the Dawn*) What is sovereignty? (*The Scarlet Thread*)

The hardest book she ever had to write, Francine says, was *The Atonement Child*, because she had to face her own experience with abortion in her college years—her "heaviest burden of shame".

"God, I don't want to write that book," she remembers praying.

"I don't want to deal with that issue because it hurts so much.

"I asked these questions with trembling fear: Have you really forgiven me? If so, why do I still feel broken? Will I ever be whole again?"

"It was a very difficult year [of writing], but brought the most healing to me personally. God protected me through the process of writing in ways I could never have imagined. I am forgiven. I am free."

Francine concludes by explaining how her approach to writing has changed since those first romance novels. "Writing is a quest to find and face the Lord's perspective in every area of life, past, present, and future," she says.

"It has become a form of worship, a way to praise Him and to proclaim the gospel (the good news about Jesus).

"There will be a couple of moments during the process of writing a book when I will really feel an encounter with God. And I'll know that what I'm writing is something that He's showing me, and that's why I write." ●

Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Fleece
 - 3 Advertising text
 - 5 Curve
 - 7 Nutrient
 - 9 Incentive in a "lost" ad
 - 10 Diva's song
 - 13 Scourge
 - 14 Fairway gouges
 - 16 Joined (ropes)
 - 17 Woolly female
 - 18 Sacred song
 - 19 Winchester, e.g.

- DOWN**
- 1 Songbird
 - 2 Noise / information
 - 3 Channel marker
 - 4 Small bread roll
 - 6 Lass with lasso
 - 8 Fleshy ear part
 - 11 Spartan, simple
 - 12 Kindling
 - 15 Ponzi scheme, e.g.
 - 16 Take in slowly

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

Puzzle Level: Medium

6 3 8
4 2 9
7 5 1

SOLUTION PAGE 11

				7				
8					1		6	
	2		9			8		
7		2					1	
	5						9	
	4	1	5					
3	7				2	6		
		8			4		3	
1	6			8		7		

share your story

Do you have a story about how you came to know Jesus, that may encourage others? Send your testimony, with a colour photograph, for consideration to jodyb@challengenews.org

Getting a glimpse of hell

Art professor Howard Storm didn't believe in the afterlife or anything beyond what he could experience with his five senses, but that was before he died.

Howard was 38 years old, a successful artist, and a university professor and chairman of the art department when he had a near-death experience following a ruptured bowel.

Lying in agony in a Paris hospital, he knew he was going to die and was filled with fear because he was an atheist and didn't know what to expect. He told his wife of 20 years, Marcia, to say goodbye because he couldn't cope with the pain anymore and the hospital couldn't get a surgeon to see him until the next day.

"Then I went unconscious for a few minutes. When I opened my eyes I was standing next to the bed, fully aware of the situation, feeling alive and more real than I do now," he shares on a YouTube testimony. He got angry with his wife for not listening to him when he spoke and couldn't accept that the body lying in the bed was him, although he saw its face.

"I thought, 'This is too weird. It can't be happening. This is impossible,'" he recalls.

Then Howard heard soft voices outside the room calling him to "Come quickly. Come with us now".

Howard left the room, which he said was bright and clear, and entered the hallway, which was murky, grey, and close. He said it felt like he followed these people for a very long time, and all the time it was getting darker and the people were getting more unfriendly and aggressive.

Eventually it was pitch black and Howard was absolutely terrified and

started to resist going any further. Then the people turned on him, biting and tearing at him. He sensed they got pleasure from inflicting as

much pain and humiliation on him as they could. "There were hundreds of them, like a beehive," Howard recounts, saying he cannot go into details of what they did to him because it was too degrading.

Howard says he knew in that moment that this treatment was deserved and just, and that these people were just like him, selfish and cruel, who were now in a place of such selfishness and cruelty that they were doomed to inflict it on themselves and others forever.

"And now I was a part of it and that seemed right, like that was what I deserved because of how I had lived," he admits.

Then Howard heard his own voice telling him, "Pray to God," even though he didn't believe in God.

He tried to remember the prayers he had been taught in Sunday school because he assumed prayer was repeating a formula. "Our Father who art in Heaven... The Lord is my Shepherd... For what we are about to receive...", Howard cobbled together a prayer of everything he could remember and the most startling thing happened.

"This world [is] to prepare us to choose what we want to do for eternity"



Howard the artist



Howard and Marcia Storm

"Every time I mentioned God it was like I was throwing boiling water on the people attacking me. They would shriek and yell, swearing horribly, and back away until, eventually, they were gone and I lay alone in the dark for what felt like an eternity," Howard tells.

"Then an image came into my mind of myself as a little child in a Sunday School class singing 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'" And he realised there was a time in his life when he had believed in Someone all good and all powerful, who loved him. He realised he wanted that belief, that truth that he had lost, back.

"I called out, 'Jesus, save me!' and He came," Howard narrates, "first as a speck of light, then brighter and brighter until it would have consumed me if it had been in this world. And Jesus reached down out

of the light and lifted me up and I could see in the light that I looked like road kill, all dirty and bloody. But as Jesus touched me I was made clean and whole."

And inside Howard felt filled with love. "It is difficult to articulate. It is the best thing that has ever happened to me in my life but I can't describe it," he says emotionally.

Jesus embraced him like a child, rubbing his back, and Howard "bawled like a baby". Then Jesus carried him out of there into a world of light.

Howard was filled with thoughts of tremendous shame. "I thought of myself as dirt, garbage, filth," he recalls, "I thought: 'He's made a mistake. I don't belong here. He doesn't really want me.'"

Then Jesus stopped and said to Howard: "We don't make mistakes. You belong here".

Howard says he and Jesus talked and discussed his life and he realised that the whole purpose of his existence was to love God and to love others. Jesus said he wasn't ready for Heaven yet and had to live for God in this world first.

"Heaven is the most interesting and fun place, everyone would want to be there," Howard says, "I didn't want to come back. I thought my heart would break. I said: 'I can't live in the world alone, without You.' And Jesus replied 'We [the Father, Son and Holy Spirit] have always been there. You have never been alone. If you confess your sins, you will feel Our presence in your heart.'"

Then Howard woke up in hospital and was miraculously able to have surgery soon afterwards.

Now the former atheist is a church pastor and has written two books about his experience: *My Descent to Death* (2000) and the recently released *Lessons Learned*, available on Amazon, and sells the paintings he creates to glorify God on his website www.howardstorm.com.

With hindsight, Howard now knows: "Whether I have been near to God or running away from God, I know that the Lord has always been near to me and that relationship is what I have always been seeking.

"God has given us the physical experience of the physical experience of this world to prepare us to choose what we want to do for eternity. We were created as spiritual beings to be with Jesus in heaven forever. God is not in the punishment business, God is in the love business. People choose hell. My encouragement to you is to choose God!"

Coke addict gets her life back

Cocaine was nothing more to Trisha Henderson than an experiment, a way to at last be accepted among her peers.

At first. Then it turned into an uncontrollable prison of an addiction that had her smoking crack six days a week and left her immune, it seemed, to all types of rehab programs.

Trisha grew up with her single, alcoholic mother in Binghampton, Memphis, with no money and a herd of bullies.

"Growing up, I was teased a lot because my mom was single, and we didn't have much," she says.

"She was an alcoholic, and wouldn't work, so we suffered."

Prostitution quickly arose as an easy way to make money, and Trisha started at 18— a few years before she started on crack cocaine, because "[the other girls and I] were all outcasts, and I wanted to fit in with them."

"I started doing crack out of curiosity," Trisha says.

"It wasn't long, though, before I realized I couldn't stop using it."

She entered six different rehab programs— none of them worked. She explains it was because she didn't go for the right reasons but because she had to.

However, over time she became more and more miserable and increasingly desperate to be free from her addiction.

"I smoked crack six days a week for four years," she says. "It was so horrible."

She did enter a period of sobriety where she stayed clean and resisted her body's urges to return to her drug, but it did not last. She soon

began to drift back into her old way of life and her addiction came back with a vengeance.

Then one day Trisha met two people on the streets who told her they had come to Binghampton to share God's love with people and to help those in need.

"We started a Bible study at my apartment," Trisha recalls. Later they met in the local library so as not to upset Trisha's housemate, who did not like the idea of a Bible study being held in his home.

As she spoke to her new friends and read the Bible, Trisha began to realize she was "fearfully and wonderfully made" and that Jesus had died for her sins so she could enter into relationship with God and become free from the things that were negatively impacting her life.

"I knew God wouldn't let me stay [in my addiction]," she says.

She resumed her search for programs that could help her recover. She admits the decision to get better was not easy as she knew the sacrifices she would have to make.

"Part of me wanted to stay where I was, because that was my comfort zone," she says.

"But I knew I was going to die if I kept living the way I had been."

Any remaining doubt was eradicated as Trisha stepped into Moriah House, where she decided to enter treatment.

"I just knew I was delivered when I stepped in there," she says.

"I was like, 'Wow, thank you, Jesus. Thank you for delivering me.'"

Over her time in the program Trisha's life made a 180-degree turn. "I've learned that [Jesus] is the deliverer, and He is a restorer of relation-



Trisha Henderson realised she could be free of her addiction.

ships," she says.

"It's awesome being here. He's given me my life back."

God has also restored Trisha's relationship with her mother.

Trisha not only graduated from the Moriah House program, she went back to school for her certificate in substance abuse counseling and now helps others who are struggling with addiction.

She is also an active member of her local church and is involved with the church's recovery ministry.

"God has given me my life back," she says again. "[He] has really changed me."

Full House star won't be left behind

BY ELISHA HAMMOND

Star of the 90's TV hit *Full House* and the new Netflix reboot *Fuller House* Candace Cameron Bure was an admirable role model, successful actress, and devoted mother but says she was still "not good enough".

Actor
Candace
Cameron-
Bure.

PHOTO:
Getty Images



One of few child stars who by all appearances was left fairly uncorrupted by fame at such a young age, many would ask why she felt her life was insufficient.

"When I stood back and looked at myself, I thought, 'you know, I'm still a very good person,'" Candace says.

"I thought about other celebrities that got mixed up with drugs and alcohol, robbery and even thrown in jail. Comparing myself to those people, I thought I was a saint!"

But she goes on to explain in her webpage testimony: "While I thought I was a good person compared to other people, I saw I was a horribly bad person by God's standard."

Candace grew up in a family with strong moral principles, and they all became Christians after a friend invited them to church.

"My heart felt warm and I saw how happy my mom, brother and sister were. I decided I wanted to feel the same way," Candace explains.

She says she accepted Christ as her Saviour at age 12, two years into her role as DJ Tanner on *Full House*.

But after becoming a Christian, she says, following Jesus was merely an afterthought.

"I'd go [to church] when I had time, or when I wasn't too busy. It

wasn't my first priority anymore."

Candace began reflecting on her Christian life after reading *Left Behind* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, a fictional depiction of Jesus' return based on the Biblical book of Revelation.

"I could not understand how a pastor could be 'left behind' [when Jesus came back to take everyone who was saved to heaven] and figured the authors had probably never read a Bible!"

Through this book, she realised she had believed she could "ask God into my heart, live my life the way I wanted to (even if it was not pleasing to the Lord), and still be in Heaven when I died. Boy, did I have it all wrong."

Candace's priorities truly shifted when her brother, actor Kirk Cameron, gave her a book that explained why Jesus died on the cross.

"*The Way of the Master* by Ray Comfort changed my walk with God forever," she says. "It talks about the Ten Commandments and showed me my sin in its true light."

"I learned God was going to judge me by His (perfect) standard, not the world's standard."

"It was then that I truly recognized what Jesus had done for me. I had broken the Law and He had paid my fine."

"You can call yourself whatever you want," Candace says thoughtfully. "You can have a belief or knowledge of it; but unless you're actually moving forward in action it's really just an idea."

Candace has published two books that focus on various aspects of her spiritual walk and its impact on her career and family life.

"Giving God everything is such a critical part of the Christian walk," she wrote in her latest book *Dancing Through Life*.

Married to ex-hockey player Valeri Bure, Candace says she is glad she took ten years out of work to be a stay-at-home mom for her three children.

"Had I been focused on trying to juggle motherhood, work, travel, and my husband's schedule all in that time, I never would have developed the relationship with God I have now... as a mom, I'm so glad I didn't miss out on anything," she told *Risen* magazine.

Now back into acting, Candace is fulfilling timely roles in many family movies for the Hallmark Channel and co-hosted a US women's talk show.

Recently she has been tied up in shooting *Fuller House*, an updated 'three single mothers' version of the show that established her career.

She concludes her testimony by exclaiming; "[God] has transformed the way I think and live my life. Things that were once important to me are no longer. I can't help but share the Good News with everyone!"

"If God is real, how are you still in jail?"

Kenneth Bae shares his experience in a North Korean labor camp, and the joy and strength that kept him alive

Filling out a visa application, Korean-American Kenneth Bae pauses over the question, "Have you ever been convicted of a crime?" He checks the "yes" box.

In April 2013, Kenneth was convicted by North Korea on charges of planning to overthrow the government and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor.

Working with the evangelical organization Youth With A Mission (YWAM), he was accused of preaching against the North Korean government.

Eight hours daily of heavy farm labor took their toll on him both emotionally and physically, and Kenneth prayed every day he might be returned home to his family. That prayer remained unanswered for more than a year.

"I was given a room by myself, divided into three sections: a small living area with a TV and desk, a bedroom, and a bathroom," he tells *Christianity Today*.

"In the morning, I'd get up at six, wash, and get ready for a meal. Then I had one hour before being sent to work in the field.

"I worked in a bean field, plowing and planting the seeds. The soil was half rock.

"After a few months of this routine, I lost a lot of weight. So they would send me to the hospital, where I would gain some of it back, and then return me to the labor camp. I suffered from malnutrition, arthritis, and other complications.

"Mainly I just focused on the work I was given, whether that was working the bean field, crushing

core ash, digging a hole, moving rocks, or cleaning the road. I thought, 'I just have to take it one day at a time'.

"Thinking about my family or people back home was difficult. So I tried to

block those thoughts. Oftentimes I would just sing – different praise songs, Elvis tunes, and songs I enjoyed in high school choir."

Most of the time, Kenneth felt miserable. He says what got him through was putting on the protection of God each morning by "reading the Bible, worshiping and praying, and asking the Lord for strength and protection".

Whatever strength this ritual gave him, the prison guards noticed it, and even started asking Kenneth for advice and counsel.

"Officially, I was known as Prisoner 103," Kenneth says. "But when we were alone, sometimes [the guards] would say, 'Pastor, can I talk to you?' and we would talk about some problem at home. I would do family counseling and premarital counseling.

"They would ask, 'We are the guards and you are the prisoner. How come you look happier than us? Where does your joy come from?'"

When a human rights ambassador's visit to Korea was announced and he realized his release would soon be negotiated, Kenneth thanked the guards and sang them a farewell song in Korean.

"Don't go anywhere," one of them told him, he remembers. "We're lucky you're here. Stay a little longer, because we like talking to you."

"One day, a guard said, 'Pastor, if I believe in God like you, what's in it for me?' Another asked, 'If I want to believe in God, what do I have to pay the church?' I explained there is no price –



How will you know anything about God unless I am here?



that God wants to hear and answer our prayers, to protect us and provide for us. They had never heard anything like that before.

"At the end of the conversation someone said, 'You said God answered your prayers. But if God is real, then how are you still here?' I explained that God has different plans. 'Maybe,' I said, 'His plans include you. How will you know anything about God unless I'm here?' He said, 'That's true. I never heard anything like this before'."

In November 2014 Kenneth was released and, after tearful goodbyes to the guards, returned home.

He says the experience has made his family stronger and closer than they had been before. "I guess it's true what the Bible says, that God was working all things to our good," he says referring to Romans chapter 8 verse 28.

"God is faithful," Kenneth concludes. "We go through difficulties in life, but God never leaves us, never forsakes us. We need to let the Lord do His work, and then depend upon Him during times of difficulty, whether that's a North Korean prison or anything else. [I want] to remind people that with God there is always hope.

"God didn't forget me. He hasn't forgotten the people in North Korea. He wants us to continue remembering those who are in darkness."

Kenneth wrote about his experience in a memoir called *Not Forgotten: The True Story of My Imprisonment in North Korea*.

As well as continuing his work with YWAM, Kenneth is starting a non-governmental organization for North Korean refugees and their children to help with their educational and financial needs.

Finding the answer to everything

HAVE you ever seen a bumper sticker that says "Jesus is the answer" or heard someone say it? And maybe you thought "The answer to what – what was the question?"

In Hebrew there is a word "yasha" that means to rescue, to help, to defend, to preserve, to make free, to attain victory, to bring safety, to heal and to save – just one word that is the answer to every need we

could have.

We all need rescue from our circumstances sometimes, we all need help in times of trouble, we all need freedom from our addictions and our worries, we all need healing from either mental or physical illnesses - ie. We all seek for salvation in one way or another.

From "yasha" comes the name Yeshua. Yeshua was the Hebrew name given to the baby born in Bethlehem

in a stable, to Mary and Joseph. That name, translated into the Greek, is *Iesous* and in English it is in turn translated as Jesus.

In Jesus, God came down to earth to be our help, our rescue, our defense, our preserving, our healing, our freedom, our victory, our salvation. In Jesus, and His death on the cross for our sins and resurrection to life again, God became the answer to all our needs.

What is the greatest and deepest need in your life? Jesus is indeed the answer!



nudge
WITH KARL FASSE

Arm chair up Everest

LET me ask you a question with a very obvious answer. Would you carry an arm chair up Mt Everest? The answer is of course not, it is such a difficult climb that



climbers get rid of absolutely everything they don't need and carry only the essentials. What is true of trying to climb Everest is also a lesson in life in general. We should all ask ourselves, do I need to drag through life everything I am currently carrying?

There is a very instructive verse in the Bible that challenges us in every area. In a letter referred to as Hebrews the writer says; 'let us throw off everything that hinders.'

It may be worth considering today, what is it that I should get rid of to enable me to get on with a life means that something that counts for something. •

... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:1b-2a

Near-death leads to new life

Ex-hooker and homosexual Pam Sullivan found joy when she realized she no longer had to carry the burden of her past.

Pam worked briefly as a prostitute and served years in prison for robbery, but things really got out of hand when she found herself standing in front of a man with a gun, ready to shoot.

The man had been stalking her and making threatening phone calls to her several times a day.

"Now I don't think men should go around shooting each other willy-nilly. But if a woman shoots a man because he won't quit pestering her, I don't think it should be called a crime. More like creative thinking," she remembers thinking.

She borrowed a .22 pistol and went to his house, at first thinking she could reason with him.

But Pam felt trapped. She says the man knew people on the force, in the sheriff's office, in the mayor's office, and in the prosecutor's office.

"I felt there was nowhere I could turn to for help," she says. "And that's what he told me: 'Who would believe you?'"

"Dad always said if you're scared of something, face it. I was scared alright, and I was about to squash it right now. I told him in a calm, quiet voice I just wanted him to leave me alone, pulled out the gun and pulled the trigger."

The man charged at her, but he hit her hand just as she pulled the trigger, so the

bullet angled upward and shattered out through the top of his skull. Then he ran out of the room.

"Since it looked like the time for talking had passed," Pam says, "I made a dash for my car."

"Just as I rounded the front end and almost reached the driver's door, there he was with the biggest gun I had ever seen aimed at my head."

"It never occurred to me that if you shoot someone they might shoot you back."

The time she stood there, helpless in the face of death, seemed to last an eternity, though Pam reasons it could only have been seconds. When nothing happened, she ran to her car and got away.

Her near-death experience understandably led Pam to reflect on how she was living.

"My head would have been blown clear off my shoulders," she says. "I would have gone straight to hell."

"My thoughts concerning my life were, I'd ride it until the wheels fell off. When I knew I was going to die, I'd call on Jesus to forgive me."

"That's what I thought I was: nothing, broken"



Pam Sullivan with a Mozambican teenager in May 2015, during a three-week trip that she took to help out at Iris Ministries Orphanage in Mozambique, Africa.

"Yet when it actually came down to that moment I was so stunned I couldn't even think the name Jesus."

But even this event was not enough to make Pam fully re-evaluate. She was charged with Attempted Manslaughter and received a 10-year sentence, of which she served five and a half years.

Pam says she came out even more determined that no one was going to change who she was.

She spent ten more years in homosexual relationships, drinking and smoking crack, and only at 44 years old did she call out to God saying: "If you can do anything with my life, then please do it."

"This short conversation with God only took place in my head but He honored it as if I was at the altar," Pam says.

"That's the beautiful thing about God. He will meet you wherever you are."

She says she has been on an upward journey since then; that God delivered her from her addiction to crack, opened the door for a job, and blessed her with an apartment.

Pam says she has become a completely new person, the new creation talked about in the Bible in 2 Corinthians where it says: "Therefore if any man (woman) is in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new." •

"He washes away all our sins, all our inadequacies, all our failures—in Him we are a new creation."

"You feel like shouting yet?" she says. "For me this is shouting ground! Because all of a sudden I no longer have to be a billboard of my past. I am a new creature in Christ!"

"That's what I thought I was: nothing, broken, unredeemable."

"It turns out, only God can take nothing and turn it into something."

"Only God can take a broken vessel, make it whole again and fill it with living water. Only God can redeem the unredeemable and give them a new life in Jesus." •

Dream shakes selfish Dean

Dean Matthew Holmes' childhood was all love, care, and the good news. God was everywhere – at home, at school...

And still Dean was able to avoid Him.

He knew the right things to say, he explains, the things that would make it sound as though he believed in the same things his parents believed and had the same convictions.

He played along, and this allowed him to pursue the things he truly desired.

But Dean does not look back on that time fondly.

"I was living selfishly and striving only for my own self-gain and earthly success with total disregard for the people I hurt along the way," he says.

"Many times I used alcohol as an excuse for making poor decisions or acting like a fool."

"I was too proud to admit I was living a worldly life in pursuit of vain pleasures and soul-depleting experiences."

Though he had heard the gospel many times in his life and knew about Jesus



Dean Holmes has found an anchor in an insecure world.

dying on the cross so he could be free from what he had done wrong, none of this ever resonated with Dean.

It was not until God spoke to him through a dream that he felt a tug to respond.

"I was stuck on earth during the second coming of Christ," Dean says, recounting his dream.

"I was attempting all I could to be lifted into the Kingdom of Heaven but without Christ, any attempt was null and void."

"I tried to deny that God was speaking to me," he explains, but this denial only lasted a week. Eventually he could ignore

"I noticed a constant joy in my heart"

God's pull no longer, and Dean says he, at 21 years old, accepted the gift of salvation and Jesus as his Saviour.

"I prayed to God to take away the penalty of my sins and to lift me up into glory," Dean remembers.

"I know God answered my prayers because from that moment on I felt a peace that was beyond anything I had ever experienced, and I was blessed with the eyes to see God's work in my daily life."

Dean says he has noticed a constant joy in his heart since he allowed God into his life, so that even through times of struggle he is full of hope knowing that the same God who spoke creation into existence exists in him.

"In a world of insecurities, doubt, and uncertainty, Christ offers hope and assurance in the Kingdom of God," he says.

"God has promised to remain faithful and never forsake me."

"Jesus has faced any and all of the temptations we face, and knowing that we have such an understanding and loving Father to bear our sins and grief is beyond anything I have the ability to describe."

"Don't wait to be humbled," Dean adds. "God is alive and knocking on the door to your heart. We can never be sure of anything on this earth, so put your hope and faith in an everlasting, never-changing God, who puts your best interests first." •



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NASA scientist sees grand design

Growing up in the shadow of the Apollo missions, Space Shuttle and the Hubble Space Telescope had its impact on Dr Henry Richter who later became a key player in the pivotal years of the Space Race.

Starting out in a naval career as an electronic technician's mate, Henry Richter went on to complete a Bachelor of Science and PhD in chemistry, with physics and electrical engineering minors at the Californian Institute of Technology.

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory hired him just in time for him to witness the USSR orbiting the world's first satellite, Sputnik, in 1957.

He went on to oversee the development of the USA's first earth satellite, Explorer I, where he lobbied to get Dr James Van Allen's package (a Geiger counter) on the satellite.

His efforts paid off as this led to the discovery of the Van Allen Radiation Belts, which influence things from radio communications to the strength of the northern and southern auroras.

The company Henry worked for was soon incorporated into an agency that would take the world by storm: the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Henry went on to oversee the development of the scientific instrumentation for the Ranger program, which led to the first successful spacecraft trip to the moon.

He also worked on the instrumentation for the Mariner program, which saw the first US space missions to Mercury, Venus, and Mars, and the Surveyor program,

resulting in the first spacecraft to perform soft landings on the moon.

"It was exciting, but it was so busy we could not pay attention to everything going on around us," Henry told *Creation Magazine* about those pivotal years in the Space Race.

All the while he was working on these space projects, Henry says he kept up appearances in his church circle.

"I was a busy churchman, but I sure didn't like the name 'Christian,'" he admits.

"As the chairman of the board of a big, name-brand church, I told them that as long as I was in charge we weren't going to get one of those born-again Christians here!"

To him Christianity was just something to fill his Sundays with, until a former secretary – now his wife – showed him there was more to it than just a 'religious' life.

There was something vastly different about this lady and it led Henry to seek answers from her.

When he finally understood the difference between leading a religious life, one filled with rules and rituals, and having a personal relationship with God marked by forgiveness and undeserved kindness, things changed.

In 1969 he became a born-again Christian – something he understood better from a passage in John chapter 3 verses 3 to 5 where Jesus

says, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Having been spiritually re-born Henry started to question his assumptions about the connection between God and his scientific beliefs.

"For a long time I believed God used evolution to put it all together, but that's just not possible," he says looking back on it.

He later came across a book that challenged his thinking from a rocket science perspective, arguing that if the earth's magnetic field had decreased 5 per cent in 100 years it would have significant consequences on important factors such as a reduction in cosmic rays and an impact on the human lifespan.

After more research Henry adds that he "found a way to put the Bible and the data together".

Today he is convinced that man's attempt to explain the universe without a Creator (the Big Bang and the theory of evolution) "is

one of the biggest adult fairytales I can imagine".

This goes along with his book, *The Universe: a surprisingly cosmological accident*, currently under revision.

And he says he is not the only space scientist to think this way.

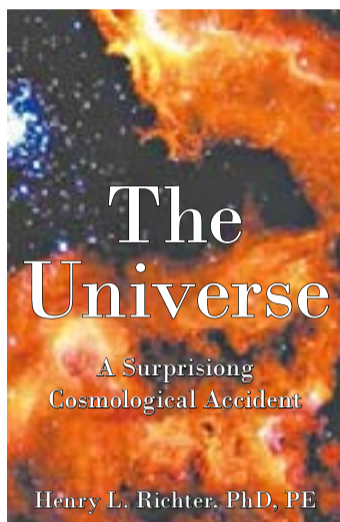
He also tells the story (validated by historians) that the first food and drink taken on the moon were some wine and a communion wafer

Buzz Aldrin had taken along with him. Aldrin also read from the Bible some of the words Jesus said at the last supper. The leader of the space program, Wernher von Braun, was also a fellow Christian believer and creationist.

Now retired, Henry gets to tell his 12 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and (at last count) four great-great grandchildren the stories of his exciting days at NASA.

When asked what he would tell the world if he had one last word to say, he says he wants people to "realize God is real, that He created you, that He created us for a purpose, and that we need to spend our lives trying to relate to that purpose."

Article used with kind permission and adapted from *Creation Magazine* volume 37, No. 3, 2015.



"I found a way to put the Bible and the data together"

Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Our great-grandfathers had more brainpower

A NEW study led by psychologist Michael Woodley (Umeå University, Sweden) has found that our 19th century ancestors were "substantially cleverer" than we are.

The researchers compared reaction times (reflex speed) as an indicator of our 'fleetness of mind' or general intelligence across the generations since the 1800s.

(Although the alternative indicator IQ is a useful measure of general intelligence today, the researchers could not meaningfully compare it directly across different eras as earlier generations usually had only limited access to education, nutrition, and hygiene, which would have boosted modern results.)

They compared modern reaction times with those measured in the late 19th century by Francis Galton (Charles Darwin's first cousin who founded eugenics (www.creation.com/eugenics)). They found that an average man in 1889 had a reaction time of 183 milliseconds, but in 2004 it had slowed to 253 milliseconds. For the average woman, too, there was a deterioration over this same period: from 188ms down to 261ms.

The researchers say this slowing in our reflexes can be equated to a loss of 14 IQ points since Victorian times. This "pronounced decline" is three times larger than previous theoretical estimates.

Along with genetic studies showing progressive mutational degradation of our human genome, with about 100 new mutations per generation (see John Sanford's book *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome* — www.creation.com/store), here is yet more evidence of our being in "bondage to decay", just as the Bible says (Romans 8:19–22).

Were the Victorians cleverer than us? Research indicates a decline in brainpower and reflex speed thanks to 'REVERSE' natural selection, dailymail.co.uk, 13 May 2013.

Were the Victorians cleverer than us? The decline in general intelligence estimated from a meta-analysis of the slowing of simple reaction time, *Intelligence* 41(6):843–850, 2013.



Do I have to believe in a literal creation to be a Christian?

BY RUSSELL GRIGG

BY "literal Creation" I mean believe that God created the world in six normal days, that there was then a real rebellion against God by an actual Adam and Eve, followed by the entry of death, suffering and becoming carnivores (eating flesh) into a once-perfect world, and that the first chapters of Genesis are a literal, historical account of all this.

So does one have to believe this to be a Christian?

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

In the New Testament, a Christian is seen as someone who does two things:

Believes that Jesus Christ (who was fully God and fully man), through His death on the Cross and His Resurrection, has paid the penalty for our sin. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Obeys the command to repent, that is, to acknowledge that one has lived and acted in rebellion against God, and to ask God's forgiveness for this. "God ... commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:31b).

Is it then enough just to believe in Jesus and repent?

Well, these two things imply that there exists a holy God against whom we have rebelled and so incurred the

penalty for doing so. But why does our disregard for God and our failure to keep His laws merit any penalty at all, let alone the death penalty?

Answer: When we read the first three chapters of Genesis, we see that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created with a holy, godly nature and they lived in fellowship with God. However, they chose to rebel against Him and so became corrupt in themselves, hostile to God, and guilty before Him. Their rebellion was an affront to the holiness of God who had created them, and it earned them the death penalty (Genesis 3:17–19), about which they had been warned (Genesis 2:17, 3:3). This corruption, hostility and guilt involved the whole human race (Romans 5:12–19), and we have inherited their death penalty (Romans 6:23), which we deserve.

It is true that one can go through the steps of becoming a Christian without accepting or even knowing the Genesis account of Creation and the Fall.

However, such a minimal belief system misses out on the logical foundation which Genesis supplies to the whole doctrine of Salvation. This leads to a shallow faith that has little root in the Word of God and so has little ability to resist the attacks and ridicule of sceptics, atheists, liberal religious leaders, or work-mates, etc.

Article courtesy of Creation.com

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VACUUMING THE PAIN AWAY

Hannah Denham's eyes are bright and she smiles bravely as she tells her story

"For the past five years I've been struggling with depression and I've actually tried to kill myself five times.

"I was molested when I was little. I've been molested four times throughout my whole life.

"I struggled with anorexia in high school because my brother used to verbally abuse me. That was really hard to work through. Overcoming anorexia is like ... insane."

Picking at fingernails covered in a coat of heavily chipped black nail polish, Hannah explains the last year of her depression was particularly bad.



She missed school and generally refused to leave her room, she spent nights unable to sleep and days wishing more than anything she could sleep so she "wouldn't have to feel anything."

After her fifth suicide attempt, which she had fully intended to be her last, she was jolted awake. She needed help, she realized, and asked her parents to send her to a mental hospital.

"I spent a week there and it changed a lot," she shares.

"But I was still so mad at God because if there was this person that was so powerful He could do anything, then He could have stopped what had happened to me."

Hannah's sister explained to her all the bad that had happened was not because of God, but because of people's choices and because we live in an imperfect world.

Still, she had to let her anger towards God go and once she did, she was able to welcome Him into her life and watch as it transformed.

"I was standing in church one day and singing to God, and I could feel Him all around me. I felt like He put this vacuum in my heart and He was sucking out the pain and sorrow — everything that had ever happened was getting sucked out of my body," she says.

"The devil used to have so much control over my life with fear because I always felt I had demons around me trying to eat away at me. I could feel those demons getting rebuked, and it was the most amazing feeling in the world."

The next step for Hannah was getting baptized. She remembers a baptism service at her church where she turned to her friend and said, "I feel like God is telling me this is the first place I'm going to tell my story."

As the pastor stopped the service for someone in the audience he felt needed to be baptized that day, Hannah and her friend looked at each other in disbelief.

"Getting baptized is a symbol of dedicating my entire life to [God]," she explains. "Because saying it is one thing, but showing it by getting baptized is so different."

"I love being around people now. I just want to keep getting closer with God." •

Clarity follows Kelsie's confusion

Kelsie Faas was married at the young age of 20, and realised that she needed all the help she could get to have a successful marriage.

She was convinced that the help she needed was to come from God but she was not sure how that was going to happen.

"As I grew up I attended church on occasions with my mother, who was a strong Christian," says Kelsie. "However, when I got married and moved away from home, I didn't know where to go to church.

"Then one day two Jehovah Witnesses knocked on my door offering to teach me the Bible. I thought that was great and accepted their offer."

Kelsie studied with them for a year and found herself thoroughly confused as to what she should believe. She realised that what they were teaching was different to what Christians believed. But she was determined to continue doing the study until she knew if they were right or wrong.

"I realised that Jehovah Witnesses suffered a lot of persecution from others because of what they believed, so I assumed they must be real Christians. So I kept praying to God to show me the truth," she explains.

"Then one night when my husband was out, I was reading one of the Jehovah Witness magazines, which stated that Jesus was the same as the

archangel Michael."

This raised some concerns for Kelsie and she was moved to pray to ask God to show her the truth once again.

"I decided to ring to ask one of the Jehovah Witness ladies who visited me to ask why they believe this. As I walked towards the phone the front doorbell rang and so I answered the door instead."

Kelsie was greeted by the local minister who lived down the road. He had heard that Kelsie had been visited by Jehovah Witnesses and wanted to have a chat with her about their visits.

"I gladly welcomed him in and shared with him my confusion over their teaching in believing Jesus to be the same as Michael the archangel," Kelsie acknowledges.

"He said, 'Let's look up the Bible,' and he turned to the first chapter of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, and verse 4 which says; '...having become much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.'"



Dirk and Kelsie Faas have been married for 48 years and have been Christians for nearly as long.

With the answer to that question settled in her mind Kelsie then asked the minister; "What are Christians supposed to believe in?"

Jesus made a way for us to come back to God

Then the pastor whose name was Geoff pulled out of his pocket a little booklet called the *Four Spiritual Laws* and began to go through it with Kelsie. The book presents four spiritual laws as follows:

Law 1: God loves you and has a plan for your life.

Law 2: We can't know that plan because we are separated from God because of our sins.

Law 3: Jesus made a way for us to come back to God by dying on the cross in our place to take the punishment for our sins.

Law 4: We come back to God by asking for forgiveness for our sin and inviting Jesus to come into our heart. "That truth was so beautiful and

simple to me that I asked Jesus to come into my heart straight away," says Kelsie. Geoff then explained to me that to follow Jesus I needed to read my Bible and pray on a daily basis. He also explained that I needed to find and attend a church that was true to God's Word. Since his church was just down the road, and he was the minister God had sent to me to help me, I started attending his church.

"That was 47 years ago and I am still going to church and reading my Bible and praying on a daily basis. I can say that God has been very good to me over the years and I'm still very happy to be a Christian," Kelsie concludes. •

A surprisingly influential book

So, you think you know nothing about the Bible and that it doesn't influence your life in any way?

Even if you have never read the best selling book in history, your Biblical knowledge might be better than you think as several common English sayings have their roots in "the Good Book".

Many people will know that the term "good Samaritan", "forbidden fruit" or the phrase "an eye for an eye" comes from the Bible; but did you know that "eat, drink and be merry" (Ecclesiastes 8:15), "a fly in the ointment" (Ecclesiastes 10:1) and "a drop in the bucket" (Isaiah 40:15) are also Biblical?

Job was the first one to "escape by the skin of his teeth" (Job 19:20), the Psalms is where we get the idea of a "broken heart" (34:18) from and Jeremiah was the first to ask "can a leopard change his spots?" (13:23).

The idea of a "scapegoat" who takes the blame comes from an Old Testament law in Leviticus 16; Pontius Pilate "washed his hands of the matter" when Jesus was brought before him and King Belshazzar literally "saw the writing on the wall" before disaster hit.

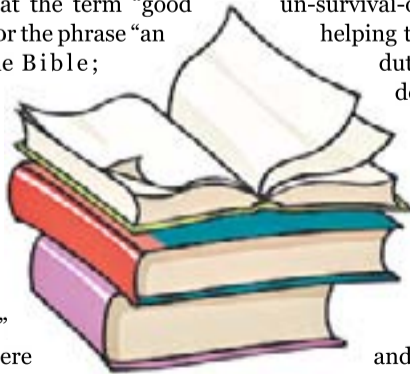
"A sign of the times" comes from Matthew 16, "in

a twinkling of an eye" from 1 Corinthians and "to put words in one's mouth" from 2 Samuel. These are just a few examples of the myriad Biblical allusions we encounter in English every day.

In the same way that Biblical phrases have peppered our language, Biblical ideas are an integral part of our Western thinking. The very un-survival-of-the-fittest idea of honouring and helping the old and the weak; the virtue of duty to others as opposed to selfishly doing what you want, or mercy as opposed to revenge; the concept of monogamous marriage; and whole counter-intuitive idea of forgiveness, all have their roots in the Bible.

If one then looks at how many of the founders of our Western universities, schools, hospitals and aid agencies were influenced by their Christian beliefs, and how many scientific discoveries and medical breakthroughs happened due to a Biblical understanding of a world made by design and working according to predictable laws, then one realises the truly profound influence the Bible still has on all our lives.

Why not find out what this ancient book is all about by reading the Old and New Testaments for yourself? You might be surprised how much of it you recognise! •



Jean Henry Durant – The Red Cross

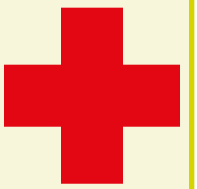
ONE of the failures of modern times is that we forget the origins of significant

institutions. Take for instance the Red Cross. This was created by Jean Henry Durant who witnessed the suffering of soldiers in the 1859 Battle of Solferino in Italy. It motivated him with four friends to start the International Red Cross.

Durant has an interesting history. He was from a banking family in Switzerland, lost all his wealth and was forced to leave his country. He lived as a virtual vagrant in Paris for many years. Eventually Switzerland allowed him home and he was later awarded the first-ever Noble Peace prize.

On his death bed he said: "I am a disciple of Christ, as in the first century, and nothing more."

A remarkable life motivated by the life and teaching of Jesus. •



Building Better Marriages

FINDING THE PATH TO 'ONENESS'

BY ROB FURLONG

THERE IS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL about seeing an elderly couple who have been married for many years still walking hand in hand with each other.

For me, it is a beautiful and symbolic way of declaring that they have taken the journey of life together and they still choose to do so.

At some point in a marriage ceremony words along the lines of these will be made: "and they shall become one flesh." It is an ancient way of describing the marriage relationship and it is filled with promise, potential and possibility.

Promise because when two people marry they begin a lifetime journey together toward "oneness".

Potential because two people come

together with different gifts, personalities, ideas, abilities and backgrounds that can be fused together to achieve what they could not do alone.

And possibility because of all the good that they may achieve together!

It is important to understand then, that oneness is not something that is immediately achieved once a couple has said "I do".

Oneness is a lifelong journey, taken together and toward which couples progressively move.

I have been thinking about this for some time and recently I came across this description by Chuck Swindoll concerning the topic of oneness. (It's always nice to find an author who agrees with you!):

"Becoming one flesh suggests a process, not an instant fact. Two people with different backgrounds, temperaments, habits, scars, feelings, parents, educational pursuits, gifts, and interests don't immediately leave a wedding ceremony in perfect unity. It is a lifelong project requiring wisdom, understanding, and knowledge ... The whole idea of mutual acceptance, giving, listening,

forgiving, belonging, and direction was implied. It is two individuals willingly blending into each other's lives, desiring to share with and thereby complete the other.

"One Flesh' also has to do with the physical aspect of marriage. The sexual aspect of marriage is essential to the marriage as much as the leaving and cleaving. The success of the sexual relationship between husband and wife is directly proportionate to the success of the other areas of intimacy in marriage — emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social."

What I am aware of though, is that many marriages do not experience this idea of oneness at all, even less are they moving towards it.

The question arises, in spite of the definition just given, what exactly is oneness in marriage?

It is certainly not some "mystical" experience that a couple has and which lifts you to a higher plane in your marriage!

Oneness is essentially a strong bond of unity that is built between a man and a woman as they grow in their love, experience and support of each other through the many changing facets of life.

Interestingly, when Jesus said that He and His Father were "one" it was the same word used to describe a couple when they become one.

In other words, oneness flows



directly out of a deep relationship of truly knowing one another.

If this is the ideal for marriage that is held up for us, then how do we get there?

It is tempting to think of oneness as the goal of marriage, but to me that reduces it to one more thing to do in life. Authentic and fulfilling marriage is not about ticking off a list of KPIs to ensure a successful relationship any more than it is about following the "10 Steps to a Successful Marriage" kind of approach.

Oneness in marriage is best seen as a journey or trip that a couple makes together over a lifetime toward a destination of security, wholeness and freedom and it will be a journey that is never quite fully reached because the couple will always be discovering something new along the way!

I describe this journey as the pathways to oneness and I will share some of these with you over the next few months!

Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 6)

BY JODY BENNETT

ONE Sunday afternoon my husband, myself, our three children and the dog were all on our queen-size bed and Adrian was rough-housing with the kids and they were all screaming and rolling about fighting and tickling. I was sitting propped up against the headboard and Carrie – the dachshund – became so upset with the noise and mayhem that she crawled behind me between me and the headboard. On one side of me you could just see her tail and on the other her nose.



I think it is very cute she instinctively comes to me for protection. If one of the children is chasing her, or Adrian shouts at her, she runs to stand between my feet, or under my skirt if I am sitting down.

I said to my daughter, "We should be like that with God, always putting Him between us and our problems."

"Why?" she said, "Shouldn't we be standing on our own two feet? Doesn't God expect us to be able to deal with things?"

And I had to explain to her, no, God expects us to rely upon Him and to involve Him in every aspect of our lives. I pray about things I've lost, parking spaces, little things that are worrying me or that I won't forget things.

That is not to trivialize my relationship with God, but to express my complete dependence upon Him. I know every breath, every heartbeat, every thought is only made possible by Him.

The Bible encourages us to "dwell in the shadow of the Most High [God]" and there "He [God] will cover you with his feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart" (Psalm 91:4).

It also says: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

Don't make the mistake of thinking that you or your problems are too insignificant for God to care about. The Bible says that not one sparrow is forgotten by God: "indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6-7).

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.

"Lord Jesus, I need You now. Please forgive me for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Saviour and Lord. Thankyou for loving me so much that You died on the cross for me. Take control of my life. Make me the person You created me to be. 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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There's an APP for that ...

PRAYERMATE PRAYER DIARY APP

THERE really is an app for everything! Are you new to Christianity and never prayed before? Not sure how to? Maybe you pray but your prayer list is too long and overwhelming? Do you tell people you are going to pray for them but then forget?

This is the app for you!

Prayermate app allows you to create your own categories to pray for - or you can use their pre-set ideas - and then populate each category with a list of people or issues you want to pray for. There is also ready-made content from various organisations if you are not sure what to pray for or how to pray.

It has specific prayers from the Bible for your spiritual growth, prayers for those who abuse you, and prayers from well-known Christian preachers and writers. It also has prayers regarding specific events like Lent or major world disasters.



PRAYERMATE™

You can also write your own prayers or save Bible verses you would like to pray as prayers, and save them under whatever category you choose.

For each item you create, you can also add a photo or PDF and several notes, which can easily be updated as prayers are answered or situations change.

The app is endlessly customisable. You can set priority prayers, see how many times you've prayed for a certain subject, change the app's colour and lock the app against prying eyes.

If your prayer list is getting too long, you can choose how many items to pray for each session. For instance, maybe you pray for two family members, three organisations, a world issue and two personal problems each time. The app will cycle through all your items so that you get through your prayer list regularly.

You can choose to auto-shuffle the lists to keep things interesting and you can choose which categories to always pray for. You can also pick one list and pray through all the items on it or export a whole list to others to pray for.

Prayer has never been so easy and having your prayerlist on your phone means you can use any waiting time or travel trip to speak to God!

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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 writer: Jody Bennett

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COURAGE, CONVICTION AND LIFE AFTER CRICKET

Former cricketer Henry Olonga had the natural talent to do many things, but it was his faith that helped him do hard things.

At 19 years of age fast bowler Henry Olonga created the double milestone of being the first black person to play test cricket for Zimbabwe, as well as being the youngest ever player to represent his country.

But when he made his debut at the famous Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) last year it was not to bowl a ball but to sing opera! He was performing *Nessun Dorma* at a charity dinner.

As Henry says, the 'game of life' is a lot like the game of cricket. "Cricket is a more unpredictable game than most sports – as the tide can turn very quickly."

And the multi-talented Zimbabwean, who is not only good at sport and music, but acts, paints, directs films and is a sort-after public speaker and published author, has seen his life take some interesting turns.

In 1994 he abandoned his athletic and rugby ambitions to take up cricket on the advice of his coach, because there was an opening in the Zimbabwean national side. However, a year later he was called for "throwing" in a test and was required to spend time altering his bowling action under legendary Australian quick bowler, Dennis Lillee.

Henry went on to play 30 Tests and 50 one-dayers for Zimbabwe, although he is best remembered for his protest in the 2003 World Cup, which brought his international cricketing career to an abrupt end.

Henry and teammate Andy Flower wore black armbands during a match against Namibia in the World Cup to "mourn the death of democracy" in Zimbabwe. They also released a 450-word statement slamming Robert Mugabe's regime, exposing

the torture, false imprisonment and starvation that occurred under his leadership.

As a result, allegedly a warrant was issued in Zimbabwe for Henry's arrest on charges of treason. Death threats followed, forcing him to go into hiding and later to flee to exile in England. He has never been back home.

Henry's courage is still admired in the cricket community.

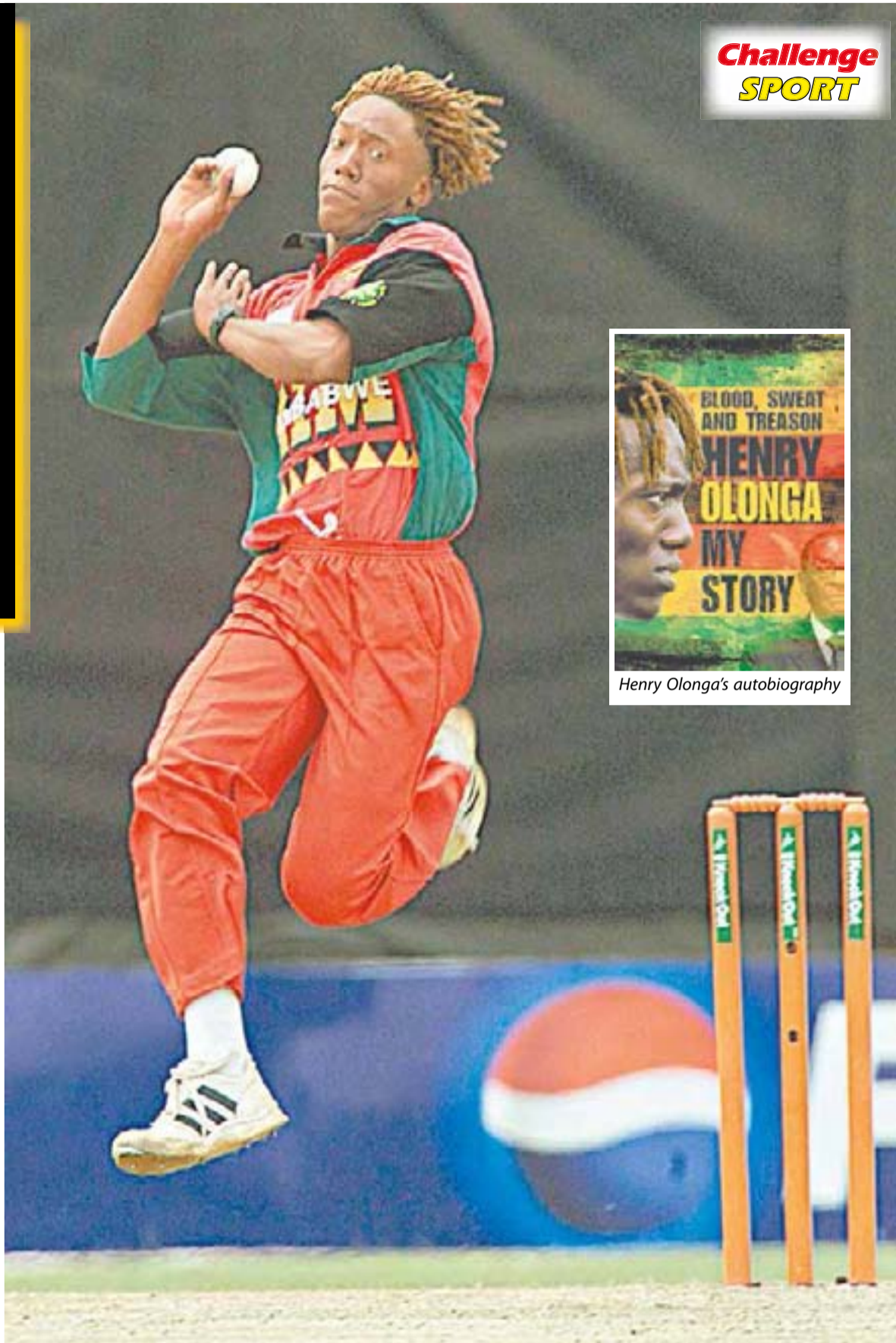
"Courage comes in a lot of different forms in sport, you've got the courage of a batsmen who faces up to fast bowling, you've got the courage of a Denis Lillee who has a bad back injury and overcomes that, but the courage to say I'm going to stand up to a leader who is notorious, I may never go back to my country, I may never see my parents again, the courage to make that sort of decision, I can't comprehend that," former Australian Test captain Ian Chappell told the ABC.

Cricket historian Mike Coward says Henry should be proud of what he did. "There are very few sportsmen and sportswomen who are remembered for something above and beyond their achievement out in the middle as it were and he will always be remembered for that," he said. "He had the courage as a young man in a very difficult environment to stand up."

That courage of conviction came from Henry's belief in a loving God who requires those who serve Him to stand up against injustice.

As a young man, Henry went through the typical search that most people pursue in answer to the three biggest questions in life: Where did it all begin? What is my purpose here? What happens when I die?

But after a brief flirtation with yoga, achievement-driven goal setting, music and other pursuits to try to find satisfaction, he turned his life



Henry Olonga's autobiography

Henry Olonga bowling for Zimbabwe during their match against New Zealand on the 6th day of the 11 nation International Cricket Council (ICC) tournament in October 2000 in Nairobi. Photo: Alexander Joe/AFP/Getty Images

over to the one true living God.

It was a night in December 1992, when he came to a point of crisis as a 16-year-old at a Christian youth camp. "I felt deeply convicted that I needed to put something right with the Lord Jesus. So I [asked God to forgive my sin (wrongdoing) and take charge of my life] and since my conversion I have been living a Christian life that has known God's blessing," Henry explains.

Henry loves to share with cheerfulness and a sense of seriousness the truth about how God has faithfully preserved and sustained him, and what God can do for all who are humble enough to call on His name. He tries to use his story and songs to point people in the direction of the good news of Jesus Christ's death on the cross for their wrongdoings, and the abundant life they can have through His resurrection from the dead.

Part of Henry's story includes the years he was plagued with back injuries. "That was one of the darkest times I have ever known," he says.

However, one Sunday while at church, he was prayed for and, although his back problems were not miraculously healed (they did resolve over time), he was given a clear direction and purpose for his life. "I felt that God told me that through sport I would have the opportunity to speak to many people, (about my Christian faith)

and that He was going to take me to many places," Henry recalls.

That has certainly proved true. Henry now lives in Adelaide with his Australian wife, Tara, and their two children, and pursues a career as a house husband, public speaker and singer. His autobiography, *Blood, Sweat and Treason*, was released in 2010.

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