

SCREEN IDOL FOUND FAST TRACK TO PEACE

Actor and screen heartthrob Steve McQueen is one of the biggest stars that Hollywood has ever produced. He was the King of Cool and a speed racing dare devil who seduced movie goers with his bad-boy ways.

At the height of his popularity, he was the highest paid movie star in Tinsel Town, who boasted a string of blockbusters such as the WWII epic *The Great Escape*, *Bullitt* and action flicks *The Getaway* and *The Magnificent Seven*.

However, despite all the power and success, McQueen only found true contentment and fulfilled desire towards the end of his life.

Born in a poor farming community, Steve was abandoned by alcoholic parents at an early age. Acting became a vehicle to escape his deprived beginnings and rewrite the script of his life.

“When a kid doesn’t have any love when he is small, he begins to wonder if he is good enough. If my mother didn’t love me and I didn’t have a father, well I began to wonder if I was good enough,” he said.

He tried to find affirmation through the big screen. Movie goers adored his charisma, sex appeal and daredevil stunts. His genius was to redefine the modern movie star, setting a new template for the action hero which endures today nearly 40 years after his death.

McQueen had an insatiable desire for speed, a love that he fed with fast cars and motorbikes. The danger fuelled his adrenalin and gave him an escape from the pressures of superstardom. He briefly toyed with the idea of becoming a racing car driver, instead doing many of his own film stunts.

As his fame grew, the star felt increasingly trapped in the glare of the public spotlight, and had to don disguises before venturing out to enjoy ordinary life.

“An actor is a very strange situation to be in. You have to be very, very careful,” he said.

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Steve McQueen during the filming of *Le Mans*. The National General Pictures release was filmed on location at the French race track with the participation of 56 of the world’s top drivers and over a million dollars worth of racing equipment. (Photo from John Springer Collection/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)

You are beloved

VALENTINE’S Day is special for those in marriages where there is a mutually enriching relationship. It is special for couples who are dating or engaged. It is special for dear friends. It is a day for gifts, chocolates, flowers, cards, and dates.

But some people would like to ignore Valentine’s Day: recent widows and widowers, those living together who are estranged, those struggling as single mothers or fathers, or anyone who, because of age, depression or infirmity, feels alone.

How can those who are celebrating look at their celebration from another perspective? How can those who want the day to be invisible, see their lives from another perspective?

The answer is contained in God’s word to us. Whoever we are, we are first loved by God at the moment of conception in our mother’s womb. This love remains a constant in our lives. The truth is: God’s love is our first valentine. So whether we celebrate openly or desire the day to fall off the calendar, we can all celebrate God’s love on Valentine’s Day.

How do we know He loves us? Well, there is a saying that you can give without loving, but you can’t love without giving. We know God loves us because He gave us the ultimate gift – He gave up His own life for us on the

cross in the person of Jesus in order to pay for our sins and make a way for us to be in relationship with Him. He gave Himself.

Not only that but look around, each day He gives us sunsets and cool breezes, good things to eat and the blessings of friends and family. As the Bible says His blessings are “new every morning, great is His faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:23

In fact, the Biblical book of James tells us that “EVERY good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17). Every single good thing you have, including every breath, heartbeat and creative thought, has been given to you by God as He pours His love on you daily – whether you acknowledge Him or not.

So why not read His love letter to you this Valentine’s Day? The whole Bible is a story of His love for us but why not start by reading the book of Jesus’ disciple John, who understood the love of God better than most and addressed himself and others as “beloved”.



Teen talk

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Fun for Kids

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BACK PAGE



ON TRACK

ALLYSON FELIX

A SMORGASBORD OF FAITHS?

BY ALAN BAILEY

SOME people eat very simply. Perhaps because they have no choice. Others have a great array of possible delights in front of them, especially at times of celebration. Decisions, decisions. What looks nice? What tastes good? What is actually good for me? Will this upset my diet? So the questions flood through the mind.

These days the whole of life seems like a smorgasbord. So much is available and accessible. Just look at the stock in a thousand shops. Think of the devices available to us and the maze of things on offer on the Internet. Take your pick—if you can afford it.

I often hear people say, when talking about beliefs, that it is a matter of “take your pick.”

It is as though we have spread before us an array of religious ideas and if one suits you, go for it. So what we believe becomes like what career I chose, or what hobby or sport I follow.

It is assumed that all are equally valuable (or valueless). How superficial is that judgement!

The idea that all religions say much the same thing and are determined by race and upbringing, is an attractive notion but is seriously wrong. The idea is usually accompanied by the belief that devotees have no evidence, nothing factual, but believe because it makes them feel better.

The truth is that religions differ enormously. Contradictions abound. Not all could possibly be based on truth. Absurdities have lived on through the ages. People have believed lies and died for them. But something surely stands out. The uniqueness of Christ. Who else could claim to be equal with the Almighty and live to prove His genuineness? Who else could claim sinlessness? Who could say that he was the Saviour of the world, die a death of the kind that was predicted and then rise from death as He promised He would? It has all happened.

No one in history comes near nor ever could. The Christian challenge is to seek the truth and follow it. Not to cover one's eyes and make a choice to be regretted. Jesus is Lord. •



Screen idol found fast track to peace

• From page 1

“I had to find a place for me to go for my own personal salvation. But if you have heat on you all the time, people constantly wanting me to live up to things they see on screen. I can't do that. I'll die.”

Fame and fortune delivered him every material blessing he wanted. So, why, he wondered, was he unhappy, driven to fill an emptiness inside? How could he have all this stuff but know that something was missing?

He retreated to alcohol and drugs, dropped out of Hollywood and took up his newfound passion of flying.

For McQueen, now in his forties, flight instructor Sammy Mason was an enigma. McQueen had wealth, a palatial home, multiple vehicles and had many relationships with different women. Yet Sammy, a former fighter pilot and war hero, with his simple family, seemed to be richer. He had an inner peace that McQueen envied.

Steve was curious. Sammy was a faithful Christian and during the many hours together in the sky, the pair talked about God. Sammy explained how he lived his life following Christ.

“Sammy and me would fly, and he'd tell me about the Lord. Flying and the Lord. I learned about the Bible. I'd listen and fly. It made sense. It made me feel good,” McQueen recalled.

Steve asked to attend church where he heard the good news about

Jesus Christ who lived and died and rose from the dead so people could be made right with God. McQueen asked the pastor, Reverend Leonard DeWitt, many questions about Jesus and the Bible to satisfy himself that the Bible was reliable and Jesus was God's Son. Then he decided to follow Jesus himself.

Those close to him noticed a big change in his lifestyle.

“One of the things I saw was a genuine sense of happiness. There was a peace. There was a calmness that had come into his life,” Pastor DeWitt said.

McQueen began making amends, donating to, and volunteering at a home for wayward boys. He would visit and encourage the boys with the story of his own transformation.

He also married his long-term girlfriend in a small, private ceremony.

“In my life there was so much, you know,” Steve said towards the end. “I had done everything there is to do. But a lot of my life I have wasted.

“I really believe that I have something to give the world, a message that I can give, something that I can teach other people about a relationship with the Lord.”

Sadly, McQueen didn't have long to share with others what Jesus had come to mean to him because he



Steve McQueen (1930-1980), US actor, as he stands at the wheel of a boat, circa 1965. (Photo by Silver Screen Collection/Getty Images)

died of cancer soon afterwards in 1980, aged just 50.

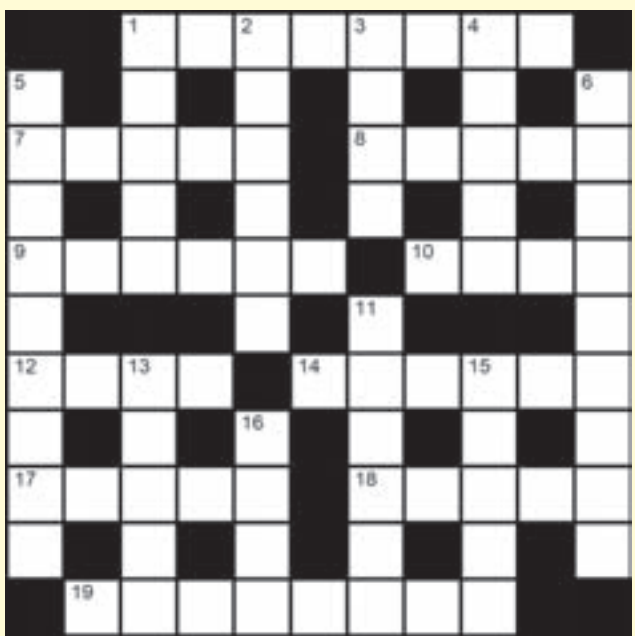
However, if he were here today, he would surely say with Jesus: “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). Fortunately, McQueen made the right choice before it was too late. Will you?

Two recent releases tell the story of Steve McQueen's search for peace with God: the movie *Steve McQueen—American Icon* and a book by Greg Laurie *Steve McQueen: The Salvation of an American Icon*. •

Crossword

ACROSS
 1 Royal girl
 7 Edible oil
 8 Rocky Balboa e.g.
 9 Takes dishonestly
 10 Baby blues
 12 Wooing floral gift
 14 Consecrated, holy
 17 Freight
 18 Like a bad fuse
 19 Does surgery

DOWN
 1 Reward for win
 2 Principles to live up to
 3 Havana's home
 4 LX to a Roman
 5 Build
 6 Head-of-state
 11 Children's pet
 13 Pancake topper
 15 Mob scenes
 16 Barren wasteland



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

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

Disrupting redesigns

BY JODY BENNETT

I HAVE been watching interior design shows on Netflix recently. I'm inspired by the creativity and cleverness of those who take nice but ordinary rooms and turn them into works of art.

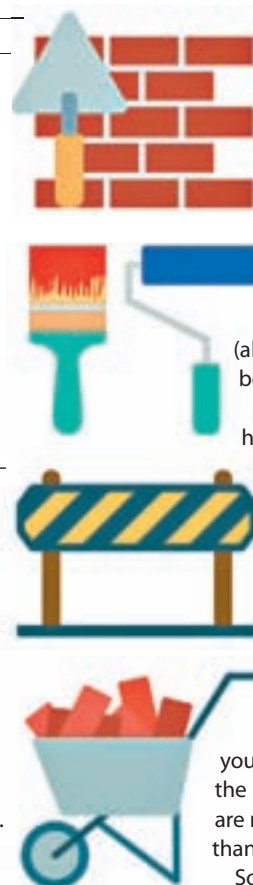
What I have noticed though is that, without fail, those rooms always look worse before they look better. The day before the big reveal, you couldn't possibly imagine how it is all going to come together.

A perfectly serviceable room is first stripped, gutted and turned into a work site before it gets new colour, new floors and, finally – usually at the last possible moment – is 'dressed' with fancy objects and beautiful pieces.

I imagine the same is true for garden makeovers, or house 'reno' shows like 'The Block'. Before things get better they get much, much worse.

So it shouldn't really surprise us that when we give our lives over to God to remake that He doesn't just move the furniture about or put a patch on, He sometimes has to gut the whole thing first. We may lose friends, even our intimate other. We may find our habits and hangouts, our language and our dress sense has to change. Some people may need to have hateful tattoos removed, change jobs or delete accounts and online subscriptions. It can be very scary and messy.

In one of the episodes I watched, when they pulled out the kitchen cabinets, they found a whole lot of rot and



rising damp – coming to Christ may expose sins in our lives that we had carefully hidden or lived in blissful ignorance of. But, like the rising damp, they need to be revealed, scrapped away and treated before a new coat of paint can go on, or they will undermine the very foundations of our new faith.

Fortunately, God doesn't generally remake our lives in three days! It takes all our time on earth to be reshaped into the image of His Son and He is gentle about doing it in sections we can (almost) handle. However, some of those changes can be very uncomfortable and challenging.

In one episode of the design show I watched, the homeowner kept second guessing the designer and wanting things toned down, but in the end when she stepped back and trusted the designer, the end result was stunning.

New Christians also have to trust the Great Designer. God's plan for our lives may seem radical and very different from what we wanted when we first gave our lives to Him, but He has the blueprint and the vision, and we have to trust the Expert to do what He does best.

As God says in the Bible “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’ (Isaiah 55:8-9)

So if your life seems a bit chaotic or looks like a bomb has hit it at this point, take heart! If you have handed it over to God, there is no mistake. There is a mood board, a plan, a grand design and He has it all in hand. Trust Him and relax while He brings about radical transformation. The big reveal is just around the corner!

Gender answer lies with God

BY RICK LEWERS

DR JOHN Whitehall is Professor of Paediatrics at Western Sydney University. He recently wrote an article in Quadrant entitled "Experimenting on Gender Dysphoric Kids".

He begins by noting that "Paediatricians with a total of 931 years' experience reported only 12 cases of gender confusion, meaning just one genuine case might be expected every 76 years. Now, each year in Australia hundreds are presenting for treatment which the ascendant orthodoxy decrees must be provided".

While not an expert in gender dysphoria, such a proliferation of those seeking treatment for it demands reflection and more so when children as young as six are involved and parental involvement is jeopardised by legislation.

The Christian worldview has historically always held body and person together. In

[IT IS A LIE] THAT THE PHYSICAL BODY IS NOT PART OF THE AUTHENTIC SELF."



the physical needs of all people. In salvation, the incarnation highlighted that Jesus Christ became fully human like us, revealing himself in bodily and knowable form.

There is no doubt in the Christian worldview that the body is integral to person and that it has dignity and honour.

Gender philosophy has moved away from the Christian worldview of embodied persons. For example, trans-activists argue that there is no connection between the body and gender identity. To quote, "It doesn't matter what living skeleton you've been born in, it is what you feel that defines you."

As one author put it, "This is a devastatingly reductive view of the body. Young people are absorbing the idea that the physical body is not part of the authentic self."

Such a view of the separation of body and person is not dissimilar to the Gnostic philosophy of the first century that reduced the body to something evil and separate from the authentic self.

The Christian worldview does not deny issues of confusion in all areas of life, including that of gender. The difference is in how the Christian and the non-Christian lives with the confusion and distortion.

Put far too simplistically, as space does not permit more, the Christian accepts by faith the body and gender God assigns at birth. Where confusion exists, the Christian trusts God to help in coming to terms with the body/person distortions.

By contrast, gender philosophy encourages a person to trust their feelings.

The treatment is not to help the person change inner feelings of gender identity to match their body but to change their bodies to match their feelings. I believe this is dangerous as feelings are fickle and when applied to children it is nothing short of abuse. Of course, to deny gender philosophy brings serious emotional reactions that need to be handled sensitively.

creation, God declared our embodied persons very good and He speaks of our bodies as His temple. In marriage, God declared that two people become one flesh.

In life, He calls on us to care for

the physical needs of all people. In salvation, the incarnation highlighted that Jesus Christ became fully human like us, revealing himself in bodily and knowable form.

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There and back again - a real transgender journey

You might think that the 1940s in the United States was a simpler age, without the confusing pressures that are facing our young people today. However, when Walt Heyer was a small boy during that era, his grandmother made him a purple chiffon dress that became the symbol of decades of gender confusion and profound mental illness.

Walt, now in his seventies, has written several books, including his autobiography, *A Transgender's Faith*, and the insights into his life and analysis of his previous lifestyle that follow are his own.

Walt was a sensitive child, who felt emotions deeply. The combination of his parents' harsh (bordering on abusive) discipline, his uncle's sexual touches and his grandmother's peculiar behaviour in dressing him up as a girl, when he was under ten, led Walt to believe that it was safer and more acceptable to be female.

At 21 he married and went on to father two children, however he continued, with the knowledge of his wife, to cross-dress. He loved his spouse and never had any homosexual inclinations, but he just couldn't get over his obsession with wearing women's clothing.

All the time though, he felt unhappy and unfulfilled. He medicated his misery with alcohol and tried to find relief through various attempts at counselling and psychology.

The family started attending church together in the late 1970s and Walt shared his struggles with the pastor, who was very supportive. In time Walt, his wife and their two children each made a decision to follow Jesus and give over their lives to Him.

For a time things, were good. Walt was sober for a year and determined to be the father, husband and man he believed God had created him to be.

But it didn't last. Walt took a new sales job that required him to drink with clients, which began a new downward spiral.

Without his sobriety, and drifting from his faith, Walt's alter-ego, now with a name - Andrea West, became too strong for him to fight.

He had breasts implanted, which he bound to hide under his business suit as he rose to great heights of success and wealth in the automotive industry. His job



Walt Heyer's transformations over the years. As one can see, the reason he was unhappy as a woman was not because he was unconvincing or unsuccessful as one.

required lots of travel, which suited Walt's proclivities as he spent many nights alone dressing up in motel rooms and hanging out with fellow transvestites in dodgy areas of San Francisco.

In 1981, things came to a head when Walt secretly went to have gender reassignment surgery, although he changed his mind at the last minute. When he disclosed his intentions to his long-suffering wife, they tried to work it out, but by Christmas of 1982, their 20-year marriage finally ended.

After the divorce, he did go through with the surgery, thinking it was the only way to end his confusion and pain, and had all his documentation legally changed to a new name, Laura Jensen, female. As a result he couldn't keep working as Walt, and was fired from his high flying job when he came out to his boss after six months. Walt was 43.

All the wealth he had accumulated was spent on alimony payments and further treatments, surgeries and hormones in his quest to fully embrace what he believed was his true identity. Walt struggled to find work, had his house and car repossessed, and was deserted by family and old friends.

However, the mental torment did not end as Laura. His drinking escalated and he started taking cocaine too, which further exacerbated his depression and other mental health issues.

"My bad choices had destroyed my identity, my family and my career. The surgeon's knife and resulting amputation had not changed me from a man into a woman. I now

knew that. The surgery was a complete fraud," he writes.

Two years post-surgery things were no better. "I was crying myself to sleep. [I realised] how selfish, self-centred and stupid I had been. ... I was destroyed by my own choices. Alcohol, drugs and surgery had rendered me useless to anyone."

And yet God's love was bigger than the mess Walt had made of his life and God, incredibly, was still able to restore him, but the journey was long and hard.

Walt lived 8 years as Laura. She found work, went into detox and counseling and after a relapse, began living a life of solid sobriety.

There were several pastors and individuals, two families and one church in particular that supported the transgender woman throughout: housing her, funding her, finding her work, loving her, counselling her and praying cease-

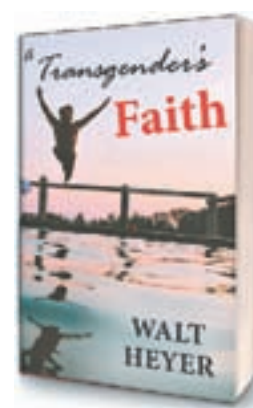
lessly for her.

For years Walt/Laura kept flipping between the two identities, feeling inauthentic and shameful as Laura but a failure as Walt. He/she was in and out of detox, and counselling, and changed jobs every time one identity got too emotionally insupportable.

However, it was only when a psychologist in 1991 finally diagnosed dissociative disorder (instead of what had previously been labelled gender dysphoria) that effective treatment and healing finally began.

Now Walt began to understand that to escape the trauma he had experienced in childhood his psyche had fragmented into several pieces. Having gender reassignment surgery, far from helping his issues, had made healing harder because it had given one of his fragment personalities undue power.

It still took five years, very intense



therapy, a powerful spiritual encounter with Jesus and a total commitment to ongoing sobriety for Walt to fully emerge.

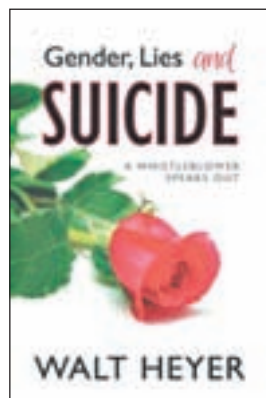
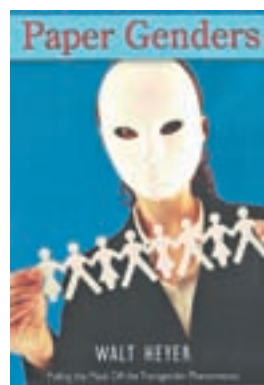
One can read the details in his autobiography, *A Transgender's Faith*, available on Amazon.

But, - spoiler alert! - the end of the story is that Walt finally did find peace as a man, and got to a point where

he was no longer even tempted to be Laura. He undid cosmetically what he could, he changed back to Walt on all his documentation, he entered into an extremely happy second marriage at the age of 56, and together he and his wife started their own successful business.

Now Walt and his wife devote their time to raising awareness about the dangers and consequences of gender change surgery. Walt speaks out against the push in certain quarters to get people to have irreversible, mutilating surgery, when they may not be gender dysphoric at all but instead have undiagnosed mental health issues and untreated childhood trauma.

Find his other books and blog at www.sexchangeregret.com.



What the Bible says:

So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27

He created them male and female and blessed them. And He named them "Mankind" when they were created. Genesis 5:2

"Haven't you read," [Jesus] replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female'." Matthew 9:4

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16

TWO STORIES OF DITCHING DRUG ADDICTION

A prescription for addiction

In 2008, Joseph Habedank, then a 23-year-old singer in a quartet, developed an ulcer on the back of his throat. "I was introduced to narcotics. It started in an innocent and legal manner – to take care of the [pain], but I will never forget the first time that drug started working in my system. I thought that it was the answer to every single problem that I had in life. Every insecurity was gone. I was [finally] comfortable in my own skin."

Thus the singer-songwriter began a five-year addiction to prescription pills.

Joseph was already familiar with addiction in the life of his brother. "He had a really serious problem with drugs having been introduced to narcotics in his early teen years. I grew up not understanding addiction, and had resentment not just toward my brother but also toward the disease," Joseph admits.



Joseph and Lindsay Habedank

He and his brothers were raised by a single mom after his parents divorced when Joseph was three. "My mom was always a very strong woman who raised me and my two brothers to be in church every time the doors opened," he shares. "She raised us to love and serve Jesus."

Just before his fifth birthday, in fact, Joseph clearly remembers handing his life over to Christ.

Years later, he got a call from his mother asking him to pray for his brother who was in trouble. "Sadly, that was probably one of the only times I remember kneeling down and praying for him," Joseph confesses. "I prayed a completely arrogant prayer, something like, 'Lord, will You take his addiction and give it to me.'"

Joseph had always wanted to be a singer and he loved music, even as a youngster. He was seventeen years old when he entered a singing try-out and was hired by The Perrys, a Southern Gospel quartet from Tennessee. He took his place as the baritone singer for ten years, until he was made the lead singer and started to gain a fan-base with his songs.

During this time, Joseph was drawn farther and farther away from his childhood faith as he focused more on his singing career, and eventually became addicted to painkillers.

In 2010, he quit for five weeks before his marriage to Lindsey. "I tried to kick it on my own ... but I never really got the education that I needed regarding addiction so I stayed off medication

for two to three months until I went back. Eventually, I was taking 10 to 12 hydrocodone or oxycodone a day," he admits.

He describes the occasional moments when, on the road with the band, he would run out of pills: "It would be hard for me to get out of my bunk in the bus and go on stage. I would be so sick. It was awful. I would be sweating. I would be sick to my stomach. I could barely move."

Finally, in 2013, Joseph was given an ultimatum by the other band members. He decided to resign and seek professional help.

After completing 30 days of in-patient treatment, then an outpatient programme, he also attended 90 support group meetings enabling him to kick the habit for good.

At rehab, Joseph recognised that he not only had a problem with narcotics, but a problem with his relationship with God. He knew that he had strayed from God and now he needed Him more than ever.

"I know how hard it is to quit, how hard it is to finally humble yourself and say 'I need help, I've got to break these chains but I can't do it by myself,'" he says. "The biggest thing that I learned is that God is not [out to get me]."

"God loves me. He knows how I have messed up. He already knew – He knows everything so He knew how I was going to fail Him and He still chose to love me. Jesus already paid for all of this. It's already been paid for. I tried my best to earn His love and His respect and His favour and yet every sin that I committed has already been paid for."

"So my view of God as a deity has changed completely," Joseph continues. "He's not just the Ruler, He's not just the King, He's the Forgiver and the Giver of life and the gracious God and a merciful Saviour. He's all those things to me now."

"Through Jesus we have this wonderful thing called salvation, this wonderful thing called grace and mercy and redemption and I'm really grateful for that."

Joseph has since composed two solo gospel albums, Welcome Home, recorded in 2014, and Resurrection, which was recorded in 2017. Both albums received several accolades.

He also has a desire to raise awareness about prescription drug abuse. "My biggest passion in life is to not only help the addicts, but to help the addicts in the church because prescription abuse is rampant in church," he tells. "It's so easy to justify it in our minds [but it is a destructive addiction nevertheless]."

The Bible has this advice for those caught in addiction or any other form of sin: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:7-10)

Coke and chaos

Stealing, prostitution and military drug rings fed Michael Thornton's addictions until death threats brought about a radical change in his life.

"I went through cars, bonds, tools, and jewellery at my mum and dad's home. I became so bad and so wrapped up in drug addiction that I reached a point in my life where I had to sell myself," says Michael.

"I became a prostitute on the streets. I began to engage in homosexuality with other men so that I could get high and keep doing drugs. This is how bad the addiction was but, I couldn't stop."

It all started with smoking a joint to fit in and find acceptance with friends at age 15.

After experiencing his first high Michael began smoking marijuana which led to cocaine, crystal methamphetamine, ecstasy, Xanax and all kinds of prescription drugs.

"I had no sense of direction. I had no sense of purpose. I really wanted a change in my life because I knew everything was falling apart," he says.

"I thought joining the military would be the most honourable thing to do, to get out of the environment I was in. I could start over and rebuild my life," he thought.

Ironically, Michael was stationed in his home town in Jacksonville, North Carolina, for four years and his old buddies and way of life came back into the picture.

"In the Marine Corps I was the local boy. I knew where all the drugs were. I knew where I could get stuff for other marines," he admits.

He took the opportunity to set up his own drug ring, dealing drugs to feed his own habit while organising for other marines to take his urinalysis tests to avoid being caught.

Then one night, Michael's drill instructor gave him a surprise urinalysis test and he was taken into custody immediately.

"My first sergeant read me my rights and then he looked at me and said, 'Thornton, I don't know how you're alive today. We have found so much cocaine in your system you should be clinically dead,'" he recalls.

They thought Michael was suicidal due to the amount of drugs in his system and he was put straight into a mental asylum for three weeks.

Despite this, Michael was determined to "go deeper" and was already organising to collect more drugs the day before his release.

He snuck off base one night to collect his order but was caught up in a drug raid and put straight into custody. This resulted in him being kicked out of the military.

"At this point in my life, I became pretty much homeless," he says.



Michael Thornton is happy to be a changed man.

"I was addicted to crack cocaine, so naturally I went into the crack houses and I got hooked up with drug dealers."

All the while he kept thinking "I've got to get out of this life" and foolishly decided to rob the drug dealer he was staying with before escaping town to start over.

His plan failed when the drug dealer found him and demanded his money back within the hour or be killed.

"At this time I didn't know who to call. I had done everybody wrong in my life, from my family to my friends," Michael says.

Michael eventually made a call to his dad and begged for help.

"My dad said, 'Mike there's got to be a change."

"And if you'll agree to get help, we're going to get you help. I'll pay the drug dealer off so tell him not to kill you, if you promise me that you'll go with me to get help,'" Michael recalls.

After agreeing to seek help with his dad, he found himself walking up the path on the way to church on

a bright Sunday morning.

"I began to remember all the things that I did in my life. I began to remember all the sin, all the guilt, all the shame, all the things that I had been carrying for so long," he recalls of that day.

"They weighed down on me like a ton of bricks. I remember getting to the point where I couldn't even breathe and I just began to cry tear after tear after tear."

"It was that moment that I looked up to heaven and I said, 'God, if you are real, I want you to answer me. I want you to fix my life; I want you in my life. If you are real, save me right here and right now'."

In that moment Michael says his life began to change and, for the first time, he felt he was not alone.

"I heard three little words whispered into my ear, 'I love you'."

"I had been waiting a long time to hear those words. I searched for love through alcohol, through drug addiction, through sex, through pornography, through all kinds of relationships and I never found it until the day when I surrendered my heart to this man named Jesus."

"That love filled my heart and transformed me."

After accepting Jesus' forgiveness and committing to a program at a Christian Recovery Centre, Michael's addictions were finally broken and he went on to marry and graduate from Bible College with his wife in 2007.

He finished a Masters degree in Public Administration/Non-profit Organisations in 2012 and passionately shares his story with others to encourage them to turn to Jesus.

"If Jesus can change my life ... He can change yours," Michael concludes with a smile. ●

I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS LIFE



Happiness hacks for a natural high

Fact: We all want to be happy, but we also all have days where we feel a little, well, blue.

UCLA PhD and neuroscientist Alex Korb has three tips to make you happier. Each practice is proven to affect your brain, getting it to release chemicals like dopamine and serotonin that make you feel a-okay, even when you're having a bad day.

1. Label negative feelings

Korb says suppressing bad feelings doesn't help one bit. Putting a label on them, though, does help. In a study, participants viewed photos of people with emotional facial expressions. Respondents' brains fired up, but as soon as they were asked to name the emotion, its power lessened.

"In other words," Korb says, "consciously recognizing the emotions reduced their impact."

2. Make a decision

It doesn't even matter that you make the right decision, just being decisive and "recognizing that good enough is good enough" does wonders for your brain and reduces worry and anxiety.

3. Hug it out

Human touch is really, really good for your brain. In fact, holding hands with someone you love or getting a massage can even reduce feelings of physical pain. Remember that next time you're out of headache pills.

Your brain will thank you! ●

Source: Morning Smile from inspiremore.com

Reggae DJ gets life on track

Rastafarian Jason O'Shea escaped the criminal lifestyle and became a world-class DJ. But, due to a traumatic childhood, he tried to end his life twice. His heart needed a healing that no amount of success could bring. Jason tells his own story ...

As a young boy, I tried to kill myself twice because of epilepsy and abuse. Both my parents were alcoholics and my mum left when I was 13. I had to look after myself, which led me into a criminal life for several years.

I've seen people killed and tortured. I've been battered, stabbed and even had a contract on my life to kill me. A heroin addict took me to derelict flats to stab me in the heart, but suddenly started apologising and stole someone's car to take me back to where I wanted to go.

God spared my life on many occasions like that for a reason, but I didn't know it at the time.

Eventually, I became a Rastafarian and stopped being a criminal. Then I heard about Les Isaacs, a Rasta turned Christian. So I went to a meeting to take the mic off him and tell him he was a fraud.

When I got there, each of the testimonies [personal stories of what God has done for people] was a bit of my life and brought water to my eyes.

Next thing I feel this hand on my shoulder. It's Les Isaac and two of the pastors asking if they could pray with me. It was like the blinkers came off [I saw the truth about Jesus for the first time].

But I didn't get rooted or grounded [in the Christian faith], and even though I was baptised [immersed in water as a sign of commitment to Jesus] I completely went off track. I was playing for the biggest sound system in Europe for several years until someone challenged me, saying: "How can you be a Christian and be in the dance hall environment?" (Drug-taking and sexual immorality were commonplace).

God arrested my heart with the image of the fisherman leaving everything to follow Jesus. I realised I had to quit,

get rid of all my records and equipment and follow Jesus. Robert Prendergast [a local pastor] who had come into my shop a year earlier, came in again and I started attending his Bible study and that was it. **STRUGGLED**

Then God led me to join two pastors who were starting a church in a poor area called Lewisham, England. Though I was running my own business, I wanted to do more church work.

I gave away my sound equipment hire company and joined a missionary course. By God's grace, that year changed my life. Being able to do ministry full-time, to reach people with the Gospel [the Christian message] continuously, is like a dream.

Lewisham is very deprived, with many needs – gang



Jason O'Shea

culture, drugs and violence, mental health problems and more ... It's not nice – people don't want to live here. But it's an area we are called to be in ... We are here to share the

Gospel, that Jesus is the only answer.

As well as reaching the community through door-to-door work, we put on a monthly family day, weekly activities

for toddlers, Tea and Topics for over-60s, weekly food distribution and youth club. We help with a small church-run school for excluded kids that's just begun in the church building, and we go into local primary and secondary schools to teach about crime and forgiveness ... before they enter a life of crime.

My wife's younger brother, Zak, a member of the church here, was stabbed to death at 15. For the last six years, she and her mum have gone into prisons as part of the Sycamore Tree project – a restorative justice course. Many prisoners say to them: "I wish someone had told me this at school ... I would never be here now."

Forgiveness comes from God, so talking about it opens doors to the Gospel in many ways. Young people put up barriers and bravado, but when they hear a powerful story like Zak's, those barriers come down and they can hear the Gospel. This is Zak's legacy; he did not die for no reason.

RELATIONSHIP SUPERGLUE AND YOU

BY JASON ISAACS

I'LL just get right to the point. When I say, "sex between anyone other than one husband and one wife is wrong" your immediate reaction is probably to argue against me. I understand why. The idea that God would create something as incredible as sex, and then withhold it from anyone who doesn't abide by a "traditional" view of purity and marriage seems unfair, old-fashioned really.

Everybody has something to say about sex... unless you grew up in a conservative Christian church, then no one said anything.

Your buddies at the bar, your girlfriends at book club, Hollywood, magazines, and websites, everyone has an opinion, but what does the Bible say? You might be surprised to know it has a lot to say actually, but this is not a research paper, so I won't bore you with a ton of references. Instead, I just want to ask you one question. One question that will cut through all the noise, and help you clarify what you believe and if you agree with God's rules for sex. You ready for the question? Here it is:

Has sex outside of marriage made your life better or more complicated?

Just take a moment and think about it before reacting. I can't answer for you, but I can answer on behalf of the countless numbers of people who have sat on my office couch or in my living room, trying to explain how their life ended up where it is.

For some, sex literally made your life more complicated because now you have a baby daddy or baby momma who drives you crazy, but you're forced to coexist for the sake of your child.

For others, sex made your life more complicated emotionally. Maybe it was a high school sweetheart, or a college party hook up, the scenarios are endless, but now you can't shake the feeling that you've given up something you can never get back. Hurt, regret, shame, and condemnation, are just some of the complicated emotions that swirl around in our head and heart when thinking about past decisions.

If the purpose of sex were strictly pleasure, it wouldn't matter what we do, but pleasure is not the ultimate purpose of sex. God created sex to be the supernatural superglue of marriage, so while the pleasure is AMAZING, the emotional implications are even more profound.

God created sex, yes, to create babies, but also to form two people into one person. He created sex so that one husband and one wife could be united together physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

I know it feels unfair, like God wants to sexually frustrate or torture you, but He doesn't. God's guidelines for sex are meant to protect you not punish you. If sex is the supernatural superglue of marriage, that means when you have sex with someone other than the husband or wife God has designed for you, you are supergluing yourself to them physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Everything seems fine as long as you're together but when you decide to call it quits, you realize something tragic, it's the same thing you realized in second-grade art class. You can't "unglue" something. Sure, you can work really hard and figure out a way to pull it apart, but it's messy, really messy. That's probably why you can't get over your high school sweetheart; it's why you struggle to not compare your spouse to former lovers. It's why you end up scrolling through Facebook looking for old flames. Sure, the sex was great, but the connection was supernatural.

So be honest with yourself. Has sex outside of marriage

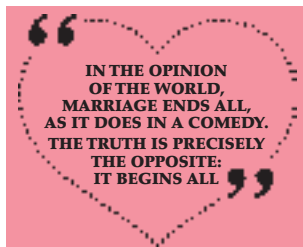
made your life better or more complicated?

It could be that in this season everything is going fine for you. You're in love and lust. The sex is great, and you're sure there will be no long-term damage to your choices now. I'm not mad at you, I am happy for you. Enjoy it! But there is a chance, what feels like a sure thing will fade, and when it does the most painful part is the memories won't fade with it because supernatural intimacy is unforgettable.

Like always, God's "rules" provide us with the best life. Having a personal relationship with Jesus changes the script of our lives. The sinful parts of us want to fight and reject His ways, but eventually, we hit a dead end and realize once again, God's way works and my way hurts.

If choices in the past have left you feeling like a failure, feeling hopeless, and disqualified from God's best, don't ever forget, God can forgive, heal, and restore you from your sexual sin. I'm not going to lie to you, there may be some earthly consequences you have to carry around with you in this life, just like all of us who have made sinful choices in the past, but a bad decision doesn't disqualify you from God's best plans for your future. All it requires is repentance, a turning away from our sin, and a decision to choose purity starting today. You can't change the past, but you can change the direction of your future. No matter how many sexual partners you've had, make the decision today, "I'm going to choose God's plan for sex, and save myself for my future spouse."

"HAS SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE MADE YOUR LIFE BETTER OR MORE COMPLICATED?"



About the Author: Jason Isaacs and his wife Andrea have been pastors of Hope City Church in Louisville KY since 2008. See more from Jason on his website and Facebook page.

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ABUSIVE BATTLE IS OVER

Married to an abusive, violent and aggressive man, Andrea Carrasco felt like her life was a total failure as she was frequently beaten up in front of their daughters.

"My husband was a gambler and we constantly had discussions over the lack of money," Andrea begins. "I believed that God did not exist because of the very painful, frustrating life I was living."

Finally, in 2010, Andrea put an end to the physical abuse when she left her husband, but the verbal and psychological abuse continued for two more years.

"He was verbally aggressive, yelling death threats at my work, on the street or any time my boyfriend and I would come home to see my daughters," Andrea says.

"The last time he was physically violent was in September of 2012 when he hit me in front of my daughters, at the doorstep of my house."

Two years earlier, Andrea had befriended a kind man named Nestor, who also was struck by her former husband on this occasion. Andrea and Nestor decided to obtain a restraining order, so her former

husband couldn't approach Andrea or her daughters. She also won sole custody of her daughters.

"What attracted me to Nestor was his respectful way of treating me, his affection without expecting anything in return. There was something about him that was different."

I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK.



On the Christmas of 2011, Nestor and Andrea visited friends who invited them to a Sunday church service. At first they went out of curiosity, but continued attending due to friendships they had gained.

In the days following that first visit to church, Andrea says that a Bible verse from Revelations chapter 3, verse 20, "followed me everywhere".

It was Jesus' words: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me."

The meaning baffled her, but as she leafed through a book entitled *On the Rock* from the church's library she found an explanation to its meaning.

"In April 2012, while reading this book, I believed Jesus' promise that He would make me a new creature



"Past abuse prepared me for counselling others," says Andrea Carrasco, pictured with husband Nestor and her daughters

if I simply asked Him to do so. I confessed that my sins separated me from God and they were the reason I deserved to spend eternity from Him,

but also believed that He died on the cross for my sins and rose again to give me eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and healing in my heart."

She wept many tears, but Andrea knew it was much more than an emotional commitment as Jesus began inwardly changing her character.

"Jesus Christ has tempered the way I speak and my attitude, to take everything more calmly," she explains.

Now married to Nestor, who is also a Christian, Andrea is grateful for her new life, saying, "I am trusting in God, who can do all things. I desire to be a good wife every day, a great mother, and give witness with every one of my actions."

In 2012, Andrea's life changed again when she received a scholarship-funded trip to a Latin American summit on gender violence.

"I discovered I was not the only one. I found women and organisations from all across the Americas who help women in these situations," she happily remembers.

On her return to her home in Argentina, Andrea launched a Facebook page "Basta de Violencia Doméstica" (Stop the Domestic Violence) and, since obtaining qualifications in violence treatment and prevention, she now manages the only non-profit organisation in Córdoba providing legal, psychological and family counsel free of charge.

"We want to have a house of refuge to assist ladies back on their feet and spend time with their children without fear," Andrea says.

"We are bringing in professionals that give workshops and teach trades in order to move on in life.

"We also let them know that only God is the restorer of life, the one that can heal heart's wounds, and makes us new creatures."

Despite all she went through, Andrea is thankful that her experiences can be used to help others. "I went through all these situations in my life, but today I can say 'thank you' because my Heavenly Father has prepared me for this purpose."

Commenting on her marriage to Nestor she says "he supports me unconditionally."

"The Lord Jesus Christ has healed my wounds and the wounds of my daughters. We have a new life and all the past is left behind – the past is only used as experience in counselling."

Trading the cartel for the cross

Former drug cartel mobster, Hector Martinez, should really be dead. His life of murder, violence and drug trafficking was monstrous. His reputation was so fearsome that even his own family lived in terror.

In the beginning he enjoyed the murder and mayhem. He liked having power over people; it fed his big ego. But after a while, he began to 'develop a conscience'.

Then his health failed him and his family abandoned him, but a doctor told him about Jesus Christ, helping Hector take his first steps from hell on earth to life for eternity.

"My father used to say to me, 'Why so much violence? Maybe it's genetics because you had uncles who were very violent'.

"My son Edward told me, 'We're afraid of you' and afterwards I could see how my wife and my children were scared of me.

"Everybody in my family feared me. That wasn't how it should be. I didn't want fear towards me, I wanted respect," he explains.

How does a man find respect when he has relied solely on abuse, threats and intimidation to gain what he wanted in life? Where is hope for a man like Hector who knows nothing about love or kindness?

Hector says he used to attend mass, recite the prayers and ask forgiveness from the priest but he felt nothing was working. Then in 2012 a doctor treating his life-threatening blood condition, looked beyond the mobster, saw his need for spiritual as well as physical healing and told him about Jesus Christ.

Hector understood for the first time that Jesus Christ provides the forgiveness he was needing. Jesus is God's Son and gives new life to everyone who decides to follow him.



Hector Martinez gave up fear and drugs and now tells others of the joy he found in Jesus.

"I should be dead for having worked for the cartel," he says. "I was bleeding in the restroom. My family had left me and I had lost 30kg of weight. I couldn't look at myself in the mirror because I saw the marks of the drugs in my face."

The medico shared with him from the Bible that Jesus Christ offers a fresh start to anyone, no matter what their past.

"Then I understood that there was a purpose for my life. Out of that group in the cartel, there are only two of us alive today. Everybody else is dead."

Hector is overcome with remorse at his shocking past but he knows that that part of his life is as good as dead.

"On one occasion I locked my wife in the closet and shot off a gun. When playing with my children, I'd put objects on their head and throw knives at them for target practice," he confesses.

"At the time maybe I blamed the

drugs. Now I know it happens when we reject God and go in the wrong direction."

Hector loves to read the Bible. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17 it says 'If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.' Hector's transformed life, which brought reconciliation with his family, is proof of this.

"It doesn't matter what drug cartel I worked for, or how many drugs I brought into the country. All that has gone away. The foundation is Christ. He is the rock and upon Him we should build," he tells people.

Jesus' forgiveness and love are free to anyone who repents [turns away from their wrongdoing].

Although Hector's life has been transformed, he still hangs out with the gangs and the cartels in the most lawless and dangerous areas of the city in order to pass on the new hope and purpose he enjoys as a follower of Jesus.

"The cartels marked me [for assassination] but I'm not afraid now because I understand how they work," Hector shares confidently on the website illbehonest.com.

The Bible explains the miracle that happened to Hector in 1 Corinthians 6:9b-11: "Do not be deceived. Neither ... thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified [set apart], but you were justified [made as though you had not sinned] in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

nudge
WITH KARL FAASE

You are still worth it

AN anonymous man shared a story online of how a simple \$100 bill changed his entire perspective on life.

A couple of years ago, the man was in rehab struggling with alcohol addiction after his wife passed away. While there, a speaker at an AA meeting pulled out a \$100 bill and said this:

"Take a \$100. Now crumple & smash that \$100 bill. Throw it on the ground and step on it, then pick it up and unfold it. Still \$100, right? It still has the same value. Just like us. No matter what we've been through, we're still worth the same as before all the bad stuff. You're still worth it."

That simple analogy blew the man away. "It's easy for me to go dark, beat myself up, and feel worthless for things I may have done or not done in the past. I just wanted to share this, since it's been so helpful for me," he wrote. "Remember you are worth it no matter what you've been through."

As Jesus told his disciples: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29-31). •

From Morning Smile by inspiremore.com

Microbiologist marvels at intricate and complex design

BY TAS WALKER

Microbiologist Dr Pierre Jerlstrom was born near Stockholm, Sweden, to a Spanish mother and Swedish father, and came to Australia when he 12. He now speaks four languages: Spanish, Swedish, German and English.

He came from a family with a very secular Scandinavian mindset where his parents “had agreed not to ‘force’ religion upon me and my two sisters, but leave it to us to make a choice when we were mature enough to decide.

“As I grew up, I realised that my mother was searching for the true God,” Pierre remembers. “She often invited Christian door knockers inside and asked them searching questions.”

Reached by the Good News

Pierre did not have much concern for God at that time. “In my early days I visited several churches, as my friends tried to share what it meant to have a personal relationship with God. However, there was little interest on my part because I was too busy adjusting to Australia.”

After high school, Pierre enrolled in a science degree. “One reason for studying science was my belief that the pursuit of knowledge would help me find meaning in life. I also did martial arts as part of my curiosity to learn some oriental philosophy. But this quest for knowledge ultimately did not fulfil my life.”

In the second year of his Ph.D. studies, a student invited Pierre to various church events. After resisting for quite a while, he started attending church meetings to find out if God really existed.

Pierre says, “I decided that if God was really true I would commit my life to Him.” After a year of listening to how peoples’ lives had been miraculously changed and carefully studying the Bible, Pierre was born again [spiritually recreated by handing his life over to God]. “I was also healed of a chronic breathing allergy a few days later.”

This impacted his whole family. “Soon after, my mother was converted, and after 10 years my father also came to the Lord and was miraculously healed from a damaged leg caused by a work accident.”

Interestingly, when Pierre’s father was a child, his Christian grandparents would often pray for his salvation. God answered those prayers.

Renewing his thinking

As a fresh Christian doing his Ph. D., Pierre still had many evolutionary ideas, as well as some new-age beliefs.

“At that time I believed that God had used evolution and deep time to create the world,” Pierre shares. “In reality, I had not really thought through the

Microbiologist Dr Pierre Jerlstrom has combined his faith and love for science into a successful and deeply satisfying career.



Dr Pierre Jerlstrom in his office at Creation Ministries.

consequences of such an impossible mishmash.”

Pierre was also being bombarded with other confusing ideas including that there were two separate creation accounts: that of soulless humans in Genesis 1, and then of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2. This accommodated the idea of ‘ape men’, which allowed the possibility of long ages between the two first verses in Genesis 1, but it did not really work.

Later, in a church in North Germany, where Pierre was doing postdoctoral research, he stumbled across the book, *The Genesis Flood*, by Whitcomb and Morris, as well as articles from *Creation* magazine and by other

creationist groups.

Pierre says, “I then realised God’s Word was fully true to the smallest detail and that long ages were not compatible with Genesis and the rest of the Bible. This realisation empowered me with confidence [in] the Bible.”

Pierre has always been intrigued by the little details of how things work, especially in biology, so microbiology and genetics were a natural step for his university studies.

In his research career in the various laboratories of Europe, Pierre became acutely aware that the intricacies of the microscopic life forms are a clear evidence for careful and complex design.

“They dramatically show the impossibility of life arising spontaneously and somehow arranging itself via random mutations into various forms over millions of years,” he explains.

Pierre’s focus in these years was a microbial pathogenesis, that is, on how bacteria cause disease. “My studies sought to unravel the mechanisms of some disease-causing bacteria, and the way they protect themselves and survive in the human host. It is now clear to me that microorganisms were not pathogenic in a ‘good’ world. Rather, pathogenicity is the result of

The Fall [sin of Adam and Eve], which brought about sickness and disease.

“Pathogenic bacteria may originally have been useful commensal microorganisms, such as the ones living on our skin and inside our bodies. After The Fall, they may have undergone mutation and gene loss, or acquired genetic information from other bacteria.

“Deleterious changes in the human genome and in the environment may also have prompted the emergence of pathogens.”

I REALISED GOD’S WORD WAS FULLY TRUE TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL



Pierre continued his post-doctoral work in microbial pathogenesis in Germany and later vaccine research in Sweden. However, his growing interest was to reach out to other researchers and students with the Gospel [the good news of Jesus coming down to earth to save us].

As a result, several students turned to Christ during his time in Sweden.

A career change

Around that time, Pierre visited the CMI (then called Creation Science Foundation) offices and, encouraged by what he found, applied for a position with them and soon started working as a staff scientist.

In mid-1998, Pierre became the editor of *Journal of Creation*, a role he finds most fulfilling. “I have been able to help fellow Christians dispel non-biblical ideas. *Journal of Creation* is a venue where creationist scientists can present and debate their ideas and models. It has also allowed the publication of ground-breaking research that would otherwise be censored by secular journals because of the creationist implications.”

The Bible	Science Then	Science Now
The Earth is a sphere. Isaiah 40:22	The Earth is a flat disk	The Earth is a sphere
Innumerable stars. Jeremiah 33:22	Only 1100 stars	Innumerable stars
Air has weight. Job 28:25	Air is weightless	Air has weight
Each star is different. 1 Corinthians 15:41	All stars are the same	Each star is different
Light moves. Job 38:19-20	Light is fixed in place	Light moves
Earth free-floats in space. Job 26:7	Earth sits on a large animal	Earth floats in space
Winds blow in cyclones. Ecclesiastes 1:6	Winds blow straight	Winds blow in cyclones
Ocean floor contains deep valleys and mountains. 2 Samuel 22:16; Jonah 2:6	The ocean floor is flat	The ocean floor contains valleys and mountains
Blood is the source of life and health. Leviticus 17:11	Sick people must be bled	Blood is the source of health and life
Creation made of invisible elements. Hebrews 11:3	Science is mostly ignorant on the subject	Creation made of invisible elements (atoms)
Oceans contains springs. Job 38:16	Oceans fed only by rivers and rain	Oceans contain springs

Believe it or not

‘Flowing blood’ found in frozen mammoth

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

RUSSIAN scientists have recovered blood from a woolly mammoth so well preserved that hopes of obtaining viable DNA for ‘cloning’ the extinct species have surged again. The blood was in ice cavities below its belly and flowed freely when these were broken with a pick. The find was announced by the expedition’s head, Dr Semyon Grigoriev, chairman of the Museum of Mammoths at Russia’s North Eastern Federal University.

This mammoth is believed to be 10,000 to 15,000 years old. This is still the most common sort of timeframe given for mammoth extinction, despite long-standing secular suggestions they survived until around 4,000 years ago.

Of course, a post-Flood biblical Ice Age scenario for the freezing (see www.creation.com/mammoth), less than 4,000 years ago, seems much more believable in the light of this find.

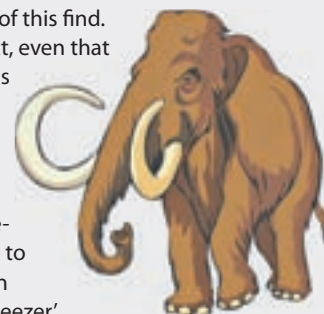
In fact, even that seems a long time for something to last in the freezer.

The fact that the blood remained liquid even at subzero temperatures in the lab has revived discussion about mammoth blood containing special ‘antifreeze’ proteins.

This is of course not as sensational for creationists as the discoveries of flexible soft tissue, nucleated cells, identifiable protein and even DNA from (unfrozen) dinosaur fossils supposed to be at least 65 million years old. But it is one more thing that helps bring home the reality—namely, that the whole creation is really much more ‘fresh’ than we have been led to believe.

♦ Mammoth found with flowing blood, news.ninemsn.com.au, 30 May 2013.

♦ Can a mammoth carcass really preserve flowing blood and possibly live cells?, nature.com, 30 May 2013.



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

CHECK LIST FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE

BY ROB FURLONG

So I Married an Axe Murderer is a comic film from the '90s that underlines the pitfalls that can beset a couple who have fallen in love.

Charlie, the main character, has a problem with commitment but when he meets Hilary (a butcher), he is swept off his feet and so he proposes to her.

But as they plan their marriage, Charlie becomes increasingly suspicious of Hilary, discovering that she has been married three times before and that each of her husbands died mysteriously on their honeymoon!

Charlie's paranoia becomes rampant and he increasingly asks himself, "Can I trust this girl? Am I marrying an angel...or an axe

murderer?"

February is the month when love is celebrated and according to one survey, Valentine's Day is the second most popular date for marriage proposals, after Christmas Day!

But how do you know that the person you intend to spend the rest of your life with is the right one?

You may not be faced with Charlie's dilemma in the previously mentioned film, but what characteristics should you look for in a successful relationship?

Dr Neil Clarke-Warren, a US Psychologist states that there are ten characteristics in a healthy relationship that can predict both a positive and successful future for marriage:

- **You are each other's best friend.** You both truly enjoy each other's company and in successful marriages, friendship is seen as the most important ingredient of all.
- **You both communicate naturally and freely.** There is a feeling of safety when sharing because you do not judge or put each other down.
- You have shared spiritual values.

And you are both deeply committed to them!

• **You both regard marriage as a lifetime commitment.** Successful couples are devoted to a permanent relationship.

• **You are able to work out conflict and disagreements positively.** You do not allow issues to continue to simmer or be swept under the carpet.

• **You laugh together.** You both share a good sense of humour and can see the funny side of life!

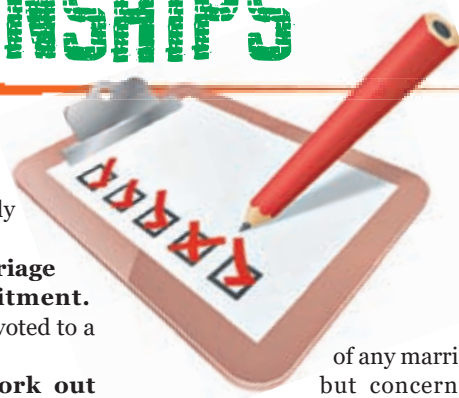
• **You feel genuinely cared for by your partner.** You truly know each other and you love each other, warts and all!

• **Your family and friends are genuinely supportive of your relationship.** The people in your life who know you best are confident about the relationship and are accepting and caring of both of you.

• **There is a "spark" of romance between both of you much of the time.** But above all that, you are both comfortable and content with each other most of the time.

• **Your relationship feels sane, safe and stable.** In other words, you have a sense that you both fit together well at many levels and there is a strong feeling of trust, intimacy and safety between the two of you.

Dr Clarke-Warren is clear that no "list" can ever guarantee the success



of any marriage but concerning the above principles

he does point out that:

"If all of these are present in the dating relationship then the chances for a happy, healthy marriage are great."

A very wise person once said, "Marriage is not so much about finding the right person as it is about being the right person."

It's a sound piece of advice. Should we be concerned about the characteristics of the person we are thinking of marrying?

Of course! But it is also worth reflecting on the kind of person I am as well.

What sort of person am I becoming? What sort of person do I want to be?

These are good questions to ask ourselves because they challenge us to grow into more mature and caring people who are able to contribute to long lasting and successful relationships.

Incidentally, things turn out well for Charlie and Hilary, but if you want to know how, then you will need to see the movie!

Happy Valentine's Day!

Ask Y Peter Meadows answers your questions about God.

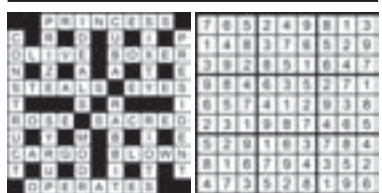
Isn't religion the biggest cause of war?

A GOOD place to check is the vast *Encyclopaedia of Wars* in which Philip and Axelrod detail over 1,700 past wars. Of these they rate only about 120 as down to religion – less than seven percent. Knock out those fought in the name of Islam and the percentage drops by over half.

More than that, religion played no part in the wars that claimed the most lives – some of which were led by those committed to, and driven by, their own atheism. In round numbers this includes Joseph Stalin responsible for 40,000,000 deaths, Mao for 38,000,000 deaths, Lenin for 4,000,000 deaths and Pol Pot for 2,400,000 deaths.

The evidence of history is clear. Religion is far from being the main cause of war. Instead, it is people who cause wars – religious and not. Which points to something being wrong with the human condition. Something that needs fixing.

Jesus came as a peacemaker – giving His life to make peace between God and us, and teaching love and forgiveness. Far from Christianity being a major contributor to the carnage of history, it offers the only solution to conflict the world so desperately needs.



How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

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

ADMIT

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

BELIEVE

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

COMMIT

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box



I have prayed this prayer.

- Please send me:
- Bible
 - Some 'starting off' literature
 - Information on a helpful church

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



I would like to think about this.

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

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985 / Fax (08) 9453 3006 or email info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Lessons from a golfer - part 5

BY PETER BRAIN

LET me share the final installment of my 18 thoughts on golf and life – one for each hole (and one for the 19th hole!), in the hope that they might help you.

16. A friend of mine dropped the line "my second cousin is Jack Nicklaus!" He quietly added, "And it has not helped my golf one little bit." People sometimes think I will be OK when I die because my mother was a Sunday school teacher or my cousin is a preacher. If my friend played golf with Jack Nicklaus it would not make him a top golfer, though, if he was humble enough to ask for help he would probably pick up some helpful hints. Every person must prepare to meet God for him/herself. Others can help us understand but we must be humble enough to ask Jesus for forgiveness.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

... And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9,11

17. But what is sin? Does it matter? Let's liken it to the par three 18th with a carry across gully and creek, deep bunkers on both sides and scrub through the green. You are one over for the round. Does it matter if your shot falls short into the creek, slices or hooks into the deep sand bunkers or goes too far into the scrub? Of course it does, since you wanted to birdie the hole and play your first ever par round. Sin is where we fall short of God's standards, deviate from the way that pleases Him or go too far in our dealings with others. But we all do! That is why it is good to know that **Jesus has played the perfect round.**

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. ... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:22-24

18. Imagine for a moment that you are walking to that 18th green your friend whose tee shot is just a few centimetres from the pin tells you that he will play your

shot from the bunker and you can putt his ball. We all know that in golf it cannot be done – in fact you would both incur a penalty. But in life, the One who makes the rules says that this is the only way it can be done. When God the Son came He became the penalty for our sin when He died on the cross. The sacrifice He made was for us. His death is like a cheque made out to our account, but we need to deposit it if it is to be of any value to us. We can become His friends and He our **partner on the fairways and hazards of life** when we are humble enough to say to God:

1) Yes I need forgiveness, 2) I am sorry for my sin, 3) Thank you taking the penalty for me and, 4) I will let you call the shots from here on in.

Then when we have to face God, He will accept Jesus' perfect score card in place of ours. My wife tells me that "golf is a good walk spoilt!" At the end of the day, golf does not matter, it is a matter of choice and preference. But a life lived with Jesus as Lord will never be spoilt. There is nothing surer than that.

For 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

19. What's next?

- Read the Bible. This is the best way to get to know God. It is full of wise advice and the rules to live by.
- Talk to your new Lord, Friend and Saviour about your life (pray).
- Join a church and find some partners who will help you play the game of life. Church is like the practice green or taking lessons. It is not the main game but it will help you play consistently.
- Tell your friends about your new Partner.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, 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 author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3





Allyson Felix of United States (second from left) competes against (L-R) Bianca Williams of Great Britain, Marie Josee Ta Lou of Ivory coast, and Finette Agyapong of Great Britain in the Women's 150 Metres race during the Great City Games last May in Manchester, England. (Photo Nathan Stirk/Getty Images)

LIFE ON TRACK

In the year 2017, 31 year old Allyson Felix became one of the most decorated track and field athletes of all time with 25 Olympic and world championship medals, 17 of which are gold.

At 18, Allyson was the world's fastest teen girl, finishing as a silver medallist in the 200 metres at the 2004 Summer Olympics. In doing so, she set a World Junior Record over 200 metres with her time of 22.18. She went on to compete in the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympics, winning a total of nine medals, six gold and three silver.

Allyson began to discover her athletic talents after she tried out for track in the ninth grade. Just ten weeks after that first tryout, she finished ninth in the 200 metres. In the coming seasons, she became a five-time winner at the CIF California State Meet. In 2003, she was named the national girls' High School Athlete of the Year by Track and Field News.

All that success can create a lot of expectation that puts an enormous pressure on a young athlete but Allyson, who grew up in Los Angeles, as the daughter of a pastor father and a mother who was an elementary school teacher, says she has a secret source of strength.

"Faith [in Jesus] leads my life," Allyson explains. "I definitely feel like I've been blessed with this [athletic] gift, and so that's something that helps me to see the bigger picture. It's so easy to get caught up in winning everything and just the

grind of what professional sports is, but it definitely helps me to kind of pull back and see that there's a greater purpose."

"I always looked up to my mom and dad," Allyson says. "They are such strong examples of faith. They have lived it day in and day out. It is so encouraging to me. The same goes for my older brother, Wes—I was always chasing after him and wanting to be like him. So we've always had a very close-knit family.

"I came to know Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour at a very young age," she told the L.A. Times. "Ever since then, I have continually been striving to grow in my relationship with God. I was nowhere close to the perfect child. I had my share of difficult times along with some disappointing choices that I made, but thankfully, God never stops loving me."

Allyson began to discover her athletic talents after she tried out for track in the ninth grade. Just ten weeks after that first tryout, she finished ninth in the 200 metres. In the coming seasons, she became a five-time winner at the CIF California State Meet. In 2003, she was named the national girls' High School Athlete of the Year by Track and Field News.

"I never expected to be a professional athlete," Allyson admits. "I had to really trust God and His plan for my life. We always have our own idea of how our life is going to go, but we really have to follow the Lord's will."

Allyson shares that "my parents have been very supportive of my career. My mom is great and I make sure we pray together before every race. She helps me put everything in perspective and reminds me of the real reason I run."

That does not mean things are always easy. The year of 2016 was one setback after another, from the loss of Allyson's grandfather to a sidelining hamstring injury that left her unable to compete for a spot on the women's 200 metres team. By missing the 200 metres qualification, Allyson had to surrender any hope of running for gold in Rio.

"Those times were difficult," she says. "I think a lot of times you want faith to be the answer to everything, and it's still a struggle to get there, you know? There are very real moments that are hard, but I think that it helps me to be able to learn the lesson that there is a purpose, a reason why maybe that happened, and it can create something in you and it might be preparing you for something better in the future."

Allyson is no stranger to the rigours of Olympic competition – and no stranger to the winner's podium.

"I have learned that track does not define me, my faith defines me," Allyson declares boldly. "For me, my faith is the reason I run. I'm running because I have been blessed with an amazing gift that God has given me. It's all about using it to the best of my ability."

Does the thought of competing in front of so many people intimidate Allyson?

"Not at all," she says. "But if I do become anxious, I recite Philippians 4:6-7: 'Do not be anxious about any-

thing, 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'.

"That verse always [encourages] my heart when I am dealing with any kind of pressure," Allyson shares joyfully. "Throughout the struggles of life, my faith calms my heart. I try to stay in the [Bible] and I pray a lot, just talking to God. He provides my strength and wisdom. I know my talent is from God. And that's my purpose: to run to glorify Him." •



Allyson Felix attends the 2017 USATF Black Tie & Sneakers Gala in New York City. (Photo Mark Sagliocco/Getty Images)

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