

Artist in the Master's hands



Bindi Cole Chocka with some of her work. Photo by: Megan George

Marilyn Manson said: "I think it's the pain and suffering that drive you to become an artist." If that is true then it is no wonder that Australian new media artist, photographer, writer and curator Bindi Cole Chocka has such an impressive resume.

Chocka's work has been exhibited in numerous museums and art galleries around the world such as the Museum of Contemporary art in Taiwan, the MOCADA in New York and the National Gallery of Australia.

In 2010 she was named one of Melbourne's Top 100 Most Influential People by *The Age* newspaper.

Looking at the articulate and polished 44-year-old today, it is easy to imagine her life must have been, if not one of privilege, then certainly of little hardship.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Raised by a mother who was a prostitute, a stripper and a drug addict, life has put Bindi through

the wringer so hard she almost never made it to her 25th birthday. Ironically, it was also her mother who gave Bindi her first camera, unknowingly setting the stage for her daughter's future success.

Sentenced to four years in jail in London in her early 20s for selling drugs, Bindi should never have reached the heights she has.

When she was a child, her mother would sometimes bring her to the strip club where she worked.

"I saw and experienced many things a young girl never should," Bindi says. "At the time it seemed normal to go with my mum to work at a strip club but as I grew up I realised the detrimental effect it had on me."

When she was eight, Bindi was removed from her mother. Too young to realise it was for her own protection, she blamed herself and nursed that rejection for decades.

For the next few years she was shunted to-and-fro to other relatives. She was severely neglected as well as physically and sexually abused.

At 13, Bindi was reunited with her mother – who promptly introduced her to marijuana and alcohol. Three years later, her mother died of cancer.

By this time, Bindi was hopelessly addicted to drugs and alcohol. Her mother's death traumatised Bindi and sent her into a freefall of self-destruction. Drugs, drink, abusive relationships, crime and wanton sex. This future artist's life was not a pretty picture.

"I carried such a sense of shame that I believed I was physically repulsive," she shares on her YouTube channel. "I completely lost my smile. I carried everyone's rejection

and it turned into an intense self-hatred.

Hoping for a fresh start, she scraped together her money and flew to London – where she found a drug dealer the day she landed.

London did little to improve Bindi's life. "Within a year, I weighed 42 kilos, overdosed regularly, been defibrillated back to life multiple times and going into drug-induced psychosis regularly.

"I knew I was going to die. I could sense death upon me. I knew one

more overdose and that would be it."

Bindi used to love mocking Christians when she was about 13. She would paint '666' on her forehead and leap out from behind corners and hiss at groups of Christians handing out flyers in her neighbourhood.

But now, in her hour of greatest need, the God she had mocked reached out to her. Through the fog in her head she heard something – a voice in her heart that kept saying the same thing: 'Call out to My Son, call out to My Son, call out to My Son.'

"It was repetitive and it was relentless," Bindi remembers. "So I

did it. I called out 'Jesus help me!'"

Within a week she was arrested and sent to prison – where she began her journey out of darkness.

"The day I began my prison sentence I was at the lowest point in my life," Bindi recalls.

"But the very moment I walked into my cell it was like God was right there, waiting for me. I experienced a peace and a love I had never experienced. I knew there and then I could stop running.

"It was life-changing. For the first time ever I knew I was deeply and profoundly loved. Within a month I gave my life to Jesus."

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A VOICE SAID: CALL OUT TO MY SON



IS HEAVEN FOR ME TOO?

BY JODY BENNETT

Grace. You might know it as a girl's name or a prayer at meal times, but that is not the amazing kind of grace I want to talk about here.

Grace is a Biblical concept that basically means getting something we don't deserve (sometimes paired with the term mercy, which means not getting what we do deserve). For instance, getting a promotion when we deserve to be fired, or getting a prize when we deserve a fine.

Christians talk about the grace of God in terms of us receiving His undeserved, free forgiveness which is not earned by moral living, but accepted as a gift, through faith.

John Newton, the man who wrote the well-known hymn *Amazing Grace*, had been a slave trader before he became a

Christian and understood well how mind-boggling it was that a holy, righteous God could wipe away all his sins and the atrocities he had inflicted on his fellow men and 'wash him white as snow'.

In more modern times there exists an even greater poster child for the 'amazingness' that is the grace of God – serial killer Jeffery Dahmer. Also known as the Milwaukee Cannibal or the Milwaukee Monster, Dahmer killed 17 men and boys from 1978 to 1991. He was also guilty of rape, child molestation, necrophilia, cannibalism, torture and dismemberment.

Beyond redemption? Not for God. Dahmer, sentenced to 16 terms of life imprisonment, became a Christian while he was in prison.

In the book *Dark Journey, Deep Grace*, minister Roy Ratcliffe details how he came to learn of Dahmer's conversion in prison, how he baptised 'Jeff' as he refers to him and then had regular Bible studies with him until Dahmer's murder by a fellow inmate seven months later.

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HISTORY MAKER

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The notorious face of Jeffery Dahmer

PARADISE FOUND

BY ALAN BAILEY

HAPPINESS is surely a universal pursuit. We all want it. I cannot imagine anyone leaping out of bed in the morning and saying "I hope this is going to be a really unhappy day."

Contentment is a goal but sometimes it acts like a mirage. It's just up ahead, or round the corner, soon to be realized – but ah, notoriously elusive. Just when it seems to have arrived, something happens to spoil it.

I'm not alone in thinking that life brings up too many troubles. Relationships go sour, finance is a headache, people disappoint you and all combine to bring your feelings downward.

Repairing situations, looking for improvements and hoping for better luck seem to be the stuff of life. Nevertheless, the years roll on and there is more and more of the same awaiting.

If one's personal situation is hovering around the good mark, the news of what is happening to others will disturb our peace. Day by day we hear of crime, war and poverty. Throw in some natural disasters. Once again the ideal we long for goes missing.

The notion of undisturbed bliss has long been the dream of human beings – in the next life more than in the present, perhaps.

Notice how comments are made when notable people die, assuming the departed are in heaven, looking down on us. Yes, even in a secular and materialistic society, men and

women hope for a release into paradise when death comes.

However, this also may be an empty dream, a wistful longing based on nothing. We need a voice of authority to tell us the truth. Here we have hope. Someone has shed light on the subject. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us about a heavenly home which outlasts all else.

The place where God is; not found somewhere in the natural universe, but in another realm. A place where no disappointments will occur, where more than all we could wish for will prevail.

But notice this. We are shown in the Bible that no sin, nothing evil or defiling will enter there. Certainly none who refuse to believe God's word and who go their own way in life will be included. God, who is holy, can have nothing that is contrary in His presence. In other words, as we are, we are not worthy.

How good that Jesus pointed the way for us. He is the way, the truth and the life. We come to God through Him. Because of His suffering death on our behalf, our sin and unworthiness have been dealt with. A door has been opened. On our part there needs to be a change of mind, turning from our own way and trusting Jesus as our Saviour.

This is God's plan as revealed in the Bible.

Christians can confidently look forward to the realization of unbroken joy up ahead. *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

Artist in the Master's hands

● From page 1

She says prison was a window of opportunity. She detoxed, completed a rehab program and joined Alpha, a Bible study group.

"Prison is not necessarily a physical place with walls, bars, windows and locks," she says. "A prison can be internal as well. People are held behind bars of loneliness, fear, pride, shame, and addictions."

Bindi only served two years of her four-year sentence and returned to Australia when she was 26. Set free from her demons thanks to the healing love of God, she was studying within a year. Within five years her work was in the National Gallery of Australia.

Then things began to unravel again. Bindi says when she left prison, she stopped going to church, praying and reading the Bible.

"The art world is very secular; it glorifies darkness and hates Christianity," she says. "I stopped walking wholeheartedly with God."

"I lived as an undercover Christian because I was so afraid of what people around me would think, afraid because I was the very thing I used to mock as a child."

"I tried self-help, Buddhism, New Age. They did nothing for me. Life without God, even with all my success, was completely empty."

Seven years after her release, she



called out to Jesus again. And again, He met her at her point of need. This time she surrendered completely to God.

"God showed me the ways I had hurt Him and others," she says. "I stopped thinking of myself as a victim. I stopped blaming everyone else and took responsibility for my part. This was my point of true repentance. I asked God for forgiveness and I got it, freely without debt or cost."

Bindi has not looked back. Even her art has changed.

"I felt God spoke to me about some of my artwork," she reveals. "I felt He didn't want me to show certain pieces any more. So I destroyed about 25."

"I now pray before I make anything. Sometimes God gives me inspiration, sometimes He lets me do what I want. My heart now is to make work that will stand for eternity. That's my benchmark."

"Now I only want to make art that God would hang on His walls." ●

Examples of Bindi's art.

The cross-shaped piece is called *Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* and is on display at the National Gallery of Victoria.



Crossword

ACROSS	9 Pistil top	16 Uncooked	DOWN
1 Surgical inserts	11 Footpath edge	17 Polar covers	1 Printer's need
6 Ungraceful	13 Rainforest creeper	19 Compassion, pity	2 Clear liquid part of blood
7 Focus upon a target	14 Take the covers off		3 A military assistant
			4 Acrobatic swing
			5 Jewish festival
			8 Prepare for war
			10 Statement of fact (2,2,3)
			12 Design or create
			15 Speech problem
			18 Whichever you like

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

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

IS HEAVEN FOR ME TOO?

● From page 1

Roy is utterly convinced that Dahmer's conversion was genuine and that his repentance and remorse for his crimes were sincere.

He said one of the most surprising reactions he received when telling people of Dahmer's conversion was the response: "Well if Jeffery Dahmer is in heaven I don't want to go there!"

This phrase reveals two major misunderstandings regarding grace.

The first is that grace leaves us as we are. It doesn't. The grace of God is grace because it totally revolutionises our thinking and desires. It changes us from the inside out. Christians talk about being 'born again' to convey the concept that they are totally new people, with different goals, motivations and passions. Christian baptism symbolises dying to the old self and rising up as a new creation. Grace makes us more like Jesus.

The Jeffery Dahmer in heaven is unrecognisable from the criminal he was here on earth. All the hurt and abuse that made him what he was is healed; all the wrong choices and evil desires are gone and the internal spirit of Jeffery Dahmer, which was a dead, shrivelled thing before his conversion, is now alive, whole and free.

The transformation from spiritual death to life came about for Dahmer because a woman called Mary Moll read of his crimes in the newspaper and decided that if anybody needed Jesus it was this mass murderer, so she sent him a Bible correspondence course in prison. Others, including his Christian father, also sent Jeffery reading material and Dahmer gradually began to realise that despite what he

had done, God was offering him eternal life if he would just repent (turn away from his evil ways).

The second major misunderstanding most people have about grace is that we don't need as much of it as Dahmer did. We think that our sins aren't all that bad and that somehow we deserve heaven more than a cold-hearted killer or a homosexual rapist.

The truth is we don't.

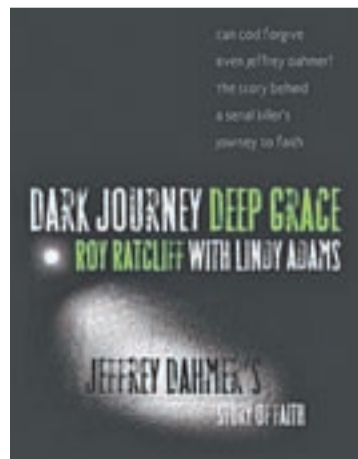
Grace is grace because none of us deserve it. None of us could earn God's forgiveness if we had a million lifetimes. 'Small' sins – lying, pride, selfishness, unkindness, lust, theft, blasphemy, pornography etc. – deserve hell just as much as Dahmer's did.

That is a bitter pill to swallow but until we understand how offensive our sins are to a holy and righteous God, we cannot truly appreciate how very amazing His grace is towards us.

On the other hand, you may have done some atrocious things that you think disqualify you from ever turning to Jesus. Jeffery Dahmer is proof that NOTHING is too awful for God to forgive, you just have to be humble enough to ask.

The only way to heaven for any of us is through acceptance of the life and death of Jesus Christ on our behalf – His grace (forgiveness and imputed righteousness we don't deserve) and mercy (not receiving the punishment of hell that we do deserve).

At Dahmer's funeral Roy said: "Jeff turned to God because there was no one else to turn to, but he showed great courage in his daring to ask the question, 'Is heaven for me too?' I think many people are resentful of him for asking that question. But he dared to ask and he dared to believe the answer." Will you? ●



Can ya believe the news about Kanye?

One of the Kardashian clan becoming a sold-out Christian seems as unbelievable a plot twist as those soapy stories of people coming back from the dead with amnesia and a secret twin!

However, it seems that Kanye West has indeed undergone a radical spiritual transformation. His spiritual mentor, Californian pastor Adam Tyson, attests to his sincerity.

"Kanye would say he knew about the things of God. (His father was a faith-based marriage counsellor and he grew up around Christians.)," Adam explained.

"[Kanye] said he was running from God. The first time I talked to him the first Sunday in June (2019), he told me, 'I got radically saved five weeks ago.' I said, 'Kanye, what happened five weeks ago?' He said, 'I was just under the weight of my sin and I was being convicted that I was running from God, and I knew I needed to make things right, so I came to Christ. I came out of darkness into the light.'"

Kanye had attended Adam's church three times before he asked to speak to the pastor.

After that they met together on a weekly basis for a few hours each time, said Adam.

The first time, "I spent about three hours just going through the Gospel, making sure he understood clearly about the atonement [sacrificial death] of Jesus Christ: that God is holy, that we are sinners, that Christ came to die in the place of sinners, that by repenting [confessing and turning away from our sins] and believing in Him, we can have eternal life," the pastor explained. "And Kanye was like, 'Hey, man. I told you I've been radically saved; I believe that message and I wanna get that message out to the world.'"

Soon thereafter, Adam started leading a Bible study every Tuesday night, where, in addition to Kanye, anywhere from 20 to 50 people would attend. The minister preached a brief message and then opened the floor for questions.

The Bible says that we should judge what a person says they believe by the 'fruit' in their lives – does the why they are living, match up with their speaking? Adam says he has seen a lot of good fruit in Kanye's life.

"He is no longer continuing in some of the sin patterns that he was before he came to Christ," Adam said. "Right now, every day, he is living and walking with God, so from what I can tell, there's no reason for me not to encourage that and be a part of that. I've spent enough hours with this man to know that God is at work."

An example of this "fruit" is, for instance, that Kanye reportedly is no longer making "secular" music. His latest album, *Jesus is King*, which made Billboard history by taking all top 10 places on both the US Christian Songs and Gospel Songs charts, is profanity free and full of Biblical references. It has sparked an unprecedented interest in God and Christianity among Kanye's fans. The American Bible Society offered free Bibles to any who wanted to learn more, and ended up giving

away over 8,800 copies!

Kanye's faith has also affected his family. His wife, Kim Kardashian told *The Cut* that she has had an awakening about her wardrobe choices since Kanye "voiced that sometimes too sexy is just overkill and he's not comfortable with that."

He is also more careful about what influences his children now, taking TVs out of their bedrooms and not letting 6-year-old daughter North wear makeup. Other evidence of his life-change is that Kanye wants to help the less fortunate by building low-cost housing, Kim told *The Cut*, and that he is sharing his new-found joy and hope unashamedly at conferences and in prisons.

In one of Kanye's Sunday Service events, Adam Tyson was asked to preach a short sermon, where he pulled no punches. He challenged the audience as to whether they really knew who the God of the Bible was or whether they imagined He was just a 'grandpa' who was out of time and power; or a sheriff who was out to get them and punish them; or a genie, who they could just demand good things from.

Instead, said Adam, God is unchanging, full of love and mercy, and doesn't always give us what we want but what we need.

We need to see God as He is - Holy, Holy, Holy.

He is far beyond our understanding, absolutely perfect and there is nobody like Him. Because, when we see who He is, we see that we are sinners, whose hearts are bent on doing wrong.

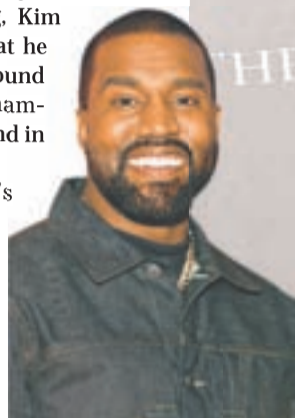
The Bible says the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

When we see those two things, that God is holy and we are sinners, then we are faced with a choice, said Adam, we can run from God or we can repent (turn away from our sin) and run to God. Then God will forgive us and say "your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for" by the blood of Jesus.

If that is the message that Kanye West has believed, then regardless of who he is or what he's done, Jesus had indeed forgiven him. And God offers the same gift to all of us.

Eternity News reported that Australian evangelist Steve Chong ended up at one of Kanye's services in Los Angeles and was blown away, posting, in part: "This was one of the most Jesus-centred, outreach-focused, faith-filled response gatherings I have ever been to. It was surreal to see a full stadium of paid concert goers, listening to three (!) super clear messages from Scripture with worship that pointed to Jesus not a man."

Chong concluded: "Is it a phase? Is it real? Is it church? For me, doesn't matter, Christ is preached and I just saw a lot of lost people found! Will never forget this." ●



Kanye West and wife Kim Kardashian West attend the 2019 FGI Night Of Stars Gala at Cipriani Wall Street on October 24, 2019 in New York City. (Photo by Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images)

Rescued from a cycle of drugs, crime, prison and despair



Valeria's story is part of an initiative by Eternity Church, based in Mirrabooka Perth, to share how Jesus changes the lives of real people in their congregation. For more inspiring testimonies, go to wherewillyouspendeternity.com.au

Growing up in a broken home with many troubles at school, I found it difficult to achieve much. Running away from home at the age of 14, drinking, doing pot and then injecting speed at 15, I spiralled into addiction and prostitution.

I fell pregnant with my beautiful daughter, but because of my drug lifestyle, my mum took custody of her. Drugs, crime and violence surrounded me.

After coming out of prison for the third time, I started going out with a man who was violent. I went back to drugs, committed crimes and I would often fear for my life. I ended up falling pregnant and had twin boys and then another son. Because of my lifestyle, my four children were taken away from me.

In 2013 I was sent to prison for the fourth time. I was

angry, I hated the world and I hated myself. Every time I left prison, I would have good intentions. I wanted to do the right thing. I wanted to break the cycle I was in but I just didn't know how.

I first heard about Jesus in 2013 in prison. This is when I first started to read the Bible and pray.

Another prisoner encouraged me to join a fitness program. Little did I know that this program would eventually change my life. I heard the facilitator share her story of beating addiction through a personal relationship with Jesus. I went to church with my mentor and there I felt God saying to me that I needed Him if I wanted to turn my life around and so on September 7, 2014 I committed my life to Him. I asked Jesus for His help and forgiveness, to be my Saviour and my friend.

For so many years I lived in bondage to addiction, crime and violence but in Jesus I finally found hope and freedom.

I made a promise to myself that if I were ever to get my life together, I would use it to help other people.

After I was released from prison I joined a mentoring program. Like many women leaving prison, I had to face my fears and address my unemployment, lack of education and the worry of not being able to pay the rent.

However, my mentors taught me "the fight in me must be greater than the fight against me" and I refused to have a victim mindset. Against all odds, I began to fulfil the dream in my heart to help others.

I graduated from the Yellow Ribbon Project mentoring program and went on to complete the Teen Challenge program. Despite my learning struggles, I have gone on to study and have achieved a Certificate 4 in Community Service Development and a Certificate 4 in Leadership/Ministry. I recently became a Street Chaplain and I also coordinate a Community Eats dinner through my church every fortnight for people in the community who are doing it tough. I also get the privilege of sharing my story in schools.

I also have now got a job as a retail supervisor in a busy supermarket and I am happy to say that I no longer rely on government housing.

My greatest achievement and biggest miracle of all is that my case with the Department of Child Protection, which was initially an 18-year order, is closed and I now have full custody of my son and full visitation rights to my other children.

I am so thankful to God for helping me and my family back on our feet.

I will continue to be focussed on building a better tomorrow and seeing other people receive their second chance just like me. ●

'Damaged soul' now helps others

Brent Bishop's life "started pretty rough." Aside from having a mentally ill mother and an alcoholic father, he was "in a very dark place." He started stealing, lying and running wild. By the time he was twelve years old, he was doing a two year sentence in a boy's prison where he was sexually, physically and mentally abused.

"I was a lost little boy full of hurt and hate with no one to explain what was happening," Brent says. "No one cared about me so why should I care about anyone else?"

Brent remembers, when he was young, his mom taking him to church and teaching him how to pray.

Once, when both his parents were sick, Brent prayed to God and asked Him to make them better. "When this did not happen, I thought no one cared about me, not even God," he admits. "I could not understand why Mom did not love me anymore and why Dad would sooner get drunk than spend time with me. Even this wonderful God that Mom talked about had turned His back on me."

At the age of 14, when Brent was released from prison. He went to live with his grandparents but "even with all the love [they] gave me, I still had a problem that I did not know was a problem. I was angry and was in pain."

Brent started drinking shortly after he was released and just about everywhere he went he would get into fist fights. "I had such a reputation of being tough and mean that other boys would cross the street just so they would not have to come into contact with me."

When he was 16, Brent fell in love with a girl and they married at the age of 18. They had "dreams of a nice house with a white picket fence, some children, a good job, a car, a new life, a way to start over."

However, "the problem was that I had a damaged soul that had never been healed. All the abuse was still inside of me waiting to get out. The perverted sex that happened in the institution corrupted my soul and I became a runner, addicted without knowing it."

In the year 1980, Brent and his wife walked down to the front of a church and accepted Jesus as their Saviour. "It's too bad I never made Him my Lord at the same time," Brent admits ruefully, acknowledging a mistake that many people make – wanting good things from God without turning their lives over to Him.

For the next three years, things were good, "but then I drifted back to my old ways and things got a lot worse. Needless to say our marriage did not last. I was back drinking, doping and chasing women, money, and fame worse than I ever did before; hurting a lot of people who did not deserve it, including my children. I was on the road to nowhere and getting there fast."

After Brent and his wife divorced, he met "a lady who I did not want to lose. She made me want to be a better man. I knew I had to change if I wanted to keep her so we started going to church. We met a pastor who had served 15 years in prison and

was the founder of a prison ministry called Cons for Christ. He started working with us. After 25 years, I am still happily married to the same woman."

One morning, while Brent was taking a shower, he longed for a deep connection with God and prayed to Him. "As I was getting out of the shower, naked and dripping water, it felt like this wonderful warm oil came down over me and pushed me to the floor."

"As I lay there I felt a love that I had never experienced before that filled my entire being and started purging all the pain, shame, unforgiveness, anger, restlessness, and feelings of failure out of me. I began to weep

for what seemed like an hour, even though it was only a few minutes. I stood up feeling like a 1,000 pound weight had been lifted off my shoulders."

Brent proclaims that "a feeling of boldness came over me. My relationship with Jesus became real and

alive. I was truly free and was so thankful [for it]. So, I asked God what He wanted me to do."

Brent wrote a book called *All Fired Up* which tells his inspiring story. He took it into the prisons and shared the Gospel [the good news of Jesus saving us from our sins] with the inmates. He has done prison ministry all across Canada, Jamaica and several US states, as well as Kenya.

"I asked God to allow me to witness just one salvation," he smiles. "But He allowed me to witness thousands ... I have been to Africa four times. I have witnessed the power of Jesus Christ set thousands free and restore hope where there was none."



Aside from ministering to the inmates, Brent and his wife have also met the needs of the prisoners' children.

"When a woman goes to prison in Africa, their children go with them. Also when a lady goes to prison she is issued nothing but a sack dress, and maybe a blanket, no soap, no tooth brush, no toilet paper, and nothing for her children.

"God put it on our hearts to help these children, so we started a milk program where folks could sponsor a prison baby for \$20 per month. This would supply a prison baby with milk for a month and feed a street child four times in a month. We are now supplying milk to six prisons - 212 babies - and feeding 100 children.



ABOVE: Female inmates with their babies in a prison in Kenya.
TOP: Brent praying for male prisoners in Kenya.

"We also visited 40 widows, ex-offenders who are living with 60 children, sleeping on mud floors. We have raised enough support to build them a building large enough that is now under construction. Praise God, where there is no way He will find a way.

"My life is awesome! I never would

have believed this possible 10 years ago," he smiles, "But look at what God can do with anyone who will step out of their comfort zone."

If you would like to help support these prison babies and street children, contact Brent at brent@prisonchristianministries.com or www.prisonchristianministries.com.

FROM PROPERTY INVESTMENT TO PRISON, TO THE PULPIT

Prison was the last place Trish Jenkins expected to find herself.

She was a Christian, a successful business woman with a multi-million dollar portfolio, a loving wife and a mother to three little girls.

But in February 2009, she left her home and her family and moved in with murderers, drug dealers and the worst of humanity, confined to a dank prison cell.

So, how did it happen?

A successful property investor, Trish diversified into stock market investing and found herself unwittingly working for a fund manager who was a con artist, and eventually she was found in breach of the Corporations Act.

She wrote a book about her experience, to ensure others don't fall into the same trap, called *Dangerous Wealth: What Every Successful Woman Needs to Know to Avoid Being Ripped Off!*

She had been naïve but that wasn't going to save her from an eight month prison sentence.

The day of her sentencing was one of the hardest days of Trish's life. When her seven-year-old twin girls arrived home, bursting to tell mummy all about their first day at their new school, she wasn't there. Her first phone call home from prison was heartbreaking.

But God had put a Bible verse, Romans 8:28, on her heart:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

In the darkness of prison, it felt like a haunted house, rattling with lost souls and hopelessness. Yet, here Trish maintained her personal relationship with God which helped her overcome fear and depression.

Deprived of humanity, for Trish the weekly chapel service was a bright light shining out into the darkness and overcoming it. The atmosphere was so different and the worship was like medicine, soaking through her skin, to her



Trish Jenkins

core and filling her up.

The prison chaplains had a humanizing effect on the prisoners. They reminded Trish of her own humanity and that she did have value, even in this place where she felt worthless. To Trish, and many others around her, the chaplains were a lifeline.

Even though she was in prison, Trish found freedom by talking to other prisoners about God and what He had done for them by sending His Son to die for their sins.

Toward the end of her sentence, Trish's resilience was low, the drain of prison life weighed heavily on her, but the prison chaplains were there for her not just looking after her spiritually, but also helping to improve her emotional and mental health, reminding her that she mattered and God still had a plan for her life.

One particular female chaplain would often show inspiring movies that would lift Trish's spirits

and spur her on. Most importantly, the chaplains gave her hope, which is a powerful force.

On her first day home, after months of confinement, Trish spoke these words to her Heavenly Father: "I don't know what you can do with this life now, God. Yet I will trust you."

God heard her prayer and today Trish is a minister and powerful speaker. She has written another book called *Treasures of Darkness: A Prison Journey* about the powerful lessons she learnt while 'inside' and how they can transform your life, wherever you are.

Find out more about her life and work at www.trishjenkinsfaith.com

This story first appeared in *The Inside Story*, a publication of Carinity. It is used with kind permission.

Wicked star wicked no longer

Amanda Jane Cooper is a Broadway star and TV actress who made her way up the ladder from guest starring in shows such as *Glee* and *Bones* to the longest running lead act in the Broadway hit *Wicked*.

From her beautiful looks to working alongside the most famous people in Hollywood, Amanda seems to have the perfect life. However, she has recently talked about the secrets and struggles she has dealt with inside the industry.

"I don't think I ever really believed that it was possible to be totally free [from my addictions] but I learned later that I was wrong," the fresh-faced star says in a YouTube clip from White Chair Films. "I didn't have an understanding of who I really was. I didn't know what made me matter."

During her studies in acting and musical theatre, Amanda constantly looked for affirmation from others around her. "Success started to slowly become my god and I said, 'Oh, ok. If I can achieve this role or something, then I'll be enough.'"

Out of nowhere Amanda developed an eating disorder and remembers the first time she forced herself to throw

up. "I ate this dessert and something in me was just like, you have to get this out." She pushed herself so hard she burst a blood vessel in her eye; but that was only the beginning of her disease.

"I had this hatred and judgement of my body," she tears up. "I felt like I had to make my body a certain way. Basically, I would starve myself during the day and then binge at night. Feeling lost about my body, I started becoming careless with who I shared my body with."

After graduating from university with a Bachelor's Degree, Amanda went to New York to pursue her dream of acting but she admits that things did not feel right. "It was hard because I had all these secrets. I was so confused. It was like I have everything. Why is everything not okay?"

Then she moved to Los Angeles and the pressure on her to make it big and be successful there proved to be a heavy weight.

"I was exhausted by everything," she says. Her coping mechanisms were her porn browser and shoplifting. "I was addicted to porn. It was something that I felt like I needed just to go to sleep. I shoplifted to feel something – why am I not okay? I have got everything. Like, what else?"

Fame and fortune had sent Amanda into a dark tunnel of emptiness, depression, and fear.

"Binged, starving, hurting myself, crying, sad – I hate you. This war inside me was just ravenous," she remembers. "It almost became a place of comfort because dealing with the pain was less scary

to me than the pain of what it would take to change."

Ironically, it was during a Hollywood wrap party that Amanda met Alice Isaac, who introduced her to Jesus Christ.

Amanda had heard about a Jesus in her childhood but did not know much about Him or understand how to have a personal relationship with Him.

"Something about Alice was really safe and for like 45 minutes, I just poured out my life to her," Amanda remembers, "And she loved me back to life. She was my mentor and the hands and feet of Jesus."

Amanda was enthralled with the Gospel message, "To think, wow, there's a God who sees me and knows me and loves me despite knowing all about me. My soul just knew this is what I needed. I need a Saviour. I can't do it for myself."

"I had to say 'yes' to God! He changed my heart," she says about the day she repented [turned away] from her sins and gave her life to Jesus.

"I started in counselling and that root thing that made me seek out all that attention, act out in all those different ways, and put myself in really, really dangerous situations – God just took that desire from me.

I have come to a point of freedom – of healing."

Amanda has decided to abstain from sex until she is married, a decision she describes as "super life-giving." Very recently, the 31-year-old got engaged and the memorable day was documented on her Instagram page and Twitter feed.

"When I tell you he is better than anything I prayed for, I mean it," she captioned a sweet picture of herself and her fiancé Andrew Bell. "I am so grateful to Jesus for this love story unfolding!"

Today, Amanda is in a better place. She has overcome her addictions and eating disorder but knows she could not have done it alone. "Everything is different. It's crazy, the redemption, where God's allowed me to help other people who might be experiencing some of the same things. [Finally], I am at peace.

"Because of Jesus, because of God, my identity is as His daughter; and my worth, no matter if I'm in a princess gown or if I'm in my sweat-pants or if I'm high achiever or going through it, I can be sure that I am loved, forgiven, seen, known, free."



Jessica Vosk and Amanda Jane Cooper celebrate "Wicked" 15th Anniversary at The Empire State Building on October 30, 2018 in New York. (Photo John Lamparski/Getty Images)

Message from a millennial martyr

As a teenager, Kayla Mueller was very involved in human rights activism and humanitarian aid. Her love for others took her to work in India with Tibetan refugees, to the Middle East to help Palestinians and to Israel to help refugees from Africa, besides assisting aid projects at home in Arizona, USA to meet the food, education and medical needs of the less fortunate.

Then in 2012, at 23, Kayla started working in southern Turkey helping Syrian refugees. On August 3, 2013, she travelled to the northern Syrian city of Aleppo together with a Syrian resident, a contractor hired to install some communications equipment at the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Aleppo.

The hospital staff, however, were shocked at Kayla's arrival and fearful for her safety. They tried to get her to the bus station to get back to Turkey but the car she was travelling in was ambushed and Kayla was kidnapped by ISIS.

Thus began an ordeal of 18 months in which she was repeatedly tortured and raped, and then finally killed in 2015.

Other captives held with Kayla, who were later released or escaped, reported that she was full of strength and compassion, always concerned for the safety of others.

On one occasion, she refused to join a group of women attempting to escape because she knew her presence, being American, would jeopardise their safety. The group made it to freedom.



Kayla Mueller

death, her family quoted from other letters she had written:

I find God in the suffering eyes reflected in mine. If this is how You are revealed to me, this is how I will forever seek You.

I will always seek God. Some people find God in church. Some people find God in nature. Some people find God in love; I find God in suffering. I've known for some time what my life's work is, using my hands as tools to relieve suffering.

Kayla discovered the truth that God inhabits suffering. She encountered God there and did not shrink from the danger of joining God there.

In February 2015, Charlotte Alter of *TIME* described Kayla Mueller as an ideal role model for Millennials, citing her selfless desire to end suffering, her activism, and her humanitarian aid work, and praising her desire not to be seen, but to genuinely help people.

Suffering is all around us, often residing quietly but powerfully within people we encounter every day. Rather than asking why we or others endure hardship, perhaps we should be asking what God wants us to do about it and how He is revealing Himself to us through the pain.

As He did for Kayla, God offers each of us the compassionate, indestructible love of Christ and His superhuman ability to shine and grow in the midst of suffering, if we will just rely on Him.

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Missionary needed her own message



Charo Washer

Charo Washer thought she was a good person. She did all the right things, she went to church, read her Bible and did good deeds for others, but one day realised with a jolt that her heart was just not in it.

Charo, the oldest of four sisters, was born in Peru and raised in a religious home. When she was 14, she was attending a Christian school and was asked if she wanted to commit her life to Jesus.

"I simply prayed a prayer," she recalls. "I didn't have any form of repentance [turning away from sin] in my heart and I didn't have any hurt in my heart for my sin."

Charo was active in her church, youth group and Bible studies but admits she did not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

"I just grew up in my own imagination of what was right and wrong or just catching a little here and there from preaching. There was no true desire to read the Bible, which was another thing lacking in my life."

She talks about her friends at the time and how they regularly discussed their walks with God, but she says her heart was not in it.

"I had a lot of good friends, and mostly I just hung around with missionaries' kids. My friends were Christians, so it was easy to dress like a Christian, it was easy to look like a Christian; it was easy to go to church. We didn't go drinking or this or that because nobody did. So it was pretty easy for me to fit into that mould."

At 16, Charo felt God calling her to work with missions. She met Paul Washer in Peru when they were both doing missionary work. They got married four years later.

However, Charo noticed some things in her life that were not good. "I would see things in my heart that were wrong and just go, I need to get a grip and do this. I would just beat myself up all the time," she says.

"I wondered, why is it so hard for

NEVER TOO OLD TO START AGAIN

BY ANNE LIM (ETERNITY NEWS) (ABRIDGED)

Friends from North Sydney Ray Turner, 82, and Chris Lawes, 75, were very proud of each other when they publicly declared their faith in Jesus recently.

This heartfelt proclamation was at a confirmation service held at an Anglican residential care facility in Sydney.

In front of about 50 people at Farrer Brown Court, Ray and Chris' confirmation was an emotional occasion, not only for them but also their families.

Ray only became a Christian recently. He came to Farrer Brown Court six months ago with a lot of questions about Christianity. He believed in the historical Jesus, but he did not believe in Christ's resurrection or the afterlife.

The former printer from Tipton in the English Midlands says he lost his childhood faith as an 18-year-old soldier when he was posted to Hong Kong for two years on national service.

While there, he witnessed riots and other traumatic sights such as a baby being dropped from a balcony and left lying in a gutter dead for three days. He also saw a taxi being burned with the driver inside it.

"I started to see things from a different perspective," Ray told *Eternity*. "All the things I saw killed my faith."

"I just saw no hope at all. There was just this life and we'd made a mess of it. And I just couldn't relate to God letting those things happen."

Ray, whose son and daughters have been praying for him for years, says he still lived his life as a Christian – but without actually believing in it. That was until a few months ago when he caught himself in a discussion with a resident at Farrer Brown Court and arguing that there was a God.

"And I thought, 'This is ridiculous – how can I say I don't believe when I'm arguing for it?' That was quite a good moment."

Ray then did a *Chris-*

tianity Explored course with chaplain Marty Symons, seeking to understand questions such as what happens when we die.

While those sessions were helpful, he only invited Jesus into his life when he heard a sermon on John 14:2 – "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?"

"Things just fell into place. It just seemed to gel," says Ray. Soon afterwards, he went up to Marty and said, "I've become one of your guys."

Since then, according to Ray, Jesus has given him peace.

"I've found relief. When I came here, I was meant to come for two weeks respite."

"They showed me around and the kids couldn't believe it [because] I just said, 'Oh, this'll do me, I'm stay-

ing here.' And why I don't know – it just felt right for me; and my son couldn't believe it, my daughters couldn't believe it," he says about deciding to settle in a retirement community established by a Christian charity.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, IT ALL MADE SENSE TO ME.



"I feel quite happy about all the way things are going now and I'm just looking for work! I need something to be active. And I still beat these lot at golf!"

Fellow resident Chris, 75, has also experienced a spiritual transformation since he started studying the Bible with Marty. Chris, who is in a wheelchair, may be failing in body but his faith is growing stronger by the day.

Another migrant from England, Chris grew up in a Christian family in Hayes, Middlesex. About 20 years ago, he went on an extended holiday through Europe.

On his way home, Chris got off the plane at Bangkok to stretch his legs.

"I collapsed and I had a stroke," Chris explains to *Eternity*. "I ended up in Bangkok Hospital. Eventually they put me on a plane and a doctor came back with me to Australia and when I got back, I had to learn to walk again and to talk."



Friends Ray Turner and Chris Lawes (right).

This was when some good friends invited him to church and he happily went along.

"I went there for several months and one day, all of a sudden, it all made sense to me. I felt an inner warmth go all through my body and a light clicked on in my head. I became the most firm believer you could ever ask for."

When his disability became too much for his wife Stella to handle on her own, Chris moved into Farrer Brown Court.

"When I first arrived here there was no chaplain at all," he remembers.

"We were without a chaplain for two or three years and we felt like lost sheep without a shepherd. And then all of a sudden along came this fella, Marty Symons. We shook hands and he said, 'There's church every Sunday' and I religiously went to church every Sunday – and I joined the Bible study, which was the best thing I've ever done."

"Marty's knowledge of the Bible is astronomic and he managed to fill in the gaps that were there. It all made so much sense that there is a God and there is Jesus and, if we're following in Jesus' footsteps when we eventually fall off our perch, we know where we're going to go."

"I have the key to heaven and I seriously believe that one day I will go to heaven and see my mother again because I know she was a strong believer."

Chris says he soon got to the point where he wanted to declare his faith in Jesus in front of everybody at a confirmation service.

"It was an awesome day. And now my belief is so strong ... I want so desperately to help other people who haven't yet found the Lord."

Marty says he has seen a big change in Chris over the past three years. "Chris doesn't miss a Sunday, he doesn't miss Bible study, he's there every week and he goes around and talks to people about Jesus all the time."

Marty concludes: "It's never too late to ask Jesus into your life. No matter what you think you've done or the guilt you carry, there is nothing that Jesus' blood cannot wash clean."

This article first appeared in the Bible Society's *Eternity News* and is used with kind permission of the author.

me to forgive? Why is it hard for me to stop doing this, or not do this? It was just struggle and struggle, and I felt like I was getting worse, that I was just even struggling to appear godly."

For a while, Charo was able to sweep these feelings under the carpet. "There was always an excuse for what was going on in my heart to make me feel better," she says.

Then one day, during an outdoor church service, Charo saw a prostitute walking up and down the road.

"I remember looking at her and thinking, 'I'm no better than her! It's so easy to look pretty and 'churchy,' but the heart—God can see the heart.' God opened my eyes at that point."

Soon after this incident, Paul

preached a sermon on how to know if one is really a Christian.

"I finally had to admit to myself I was not a Christian," Charo confesses. "I struggled so much and just literally had no life, no desire to do this. Even in Peru, when I was a missionary."

"I was simply doing empty works, living on autopilot, and 'doing the right thing,' she admits. "But there was no love for God in me, only a sense of duty. However, by God's mercy, He allowed me to run out of every ounce of strength. He showed me my sin and my need for Him."

God had touched her heart and convicted her of her need for a genuine and personal relationship with Him. That night, after a long discus-

sion with Paul, Charo sat down and read the book of 1 John in the Bible.

1 John 1:8-10 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

Charo says that night she prayed: "God, I really am at the end of my rope, I really don't know how to be better, because I can't be better. I don't know how to do any of this, and I don't have the power, I don't have the desire to do it. I just cried out, 'God save me!'"

Since then, her life has completely changed and she is filled with joy.

She said it was amazing how she had been a missionary for 12 years before God opened her eyes and showed her who she really was. "I just praise Him and thank Him for that."

Paul and Charo have been married for more than 20 years and have three children. They live in the United States, where Paul is a well-known preacher.

Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it. - Charles R. Swindoll

Grief is a tunnel, not a cave. As surely as there was a beginning, there is an end. - Janet Denison

MOUNDS OF EVIDENCE FOR CREATION

Don Batten from Creation Ministries International interviews termite expert, Dr Victor Meyer

Victor Meyer was born and raised in South Africa in a devoutly Christian family with a Huguenot heritage.¹ Taking on his father's love of the outdoors, Victor worked as a game ranger, which kindled an interest in termites and he earned masters and doctoral degrees from the University of Pretoria for his research. Victor also discovered a previously unknown woodlouse that has been named after him.

Victor and his family now live in New Zealand, where he works as a technical writer for an organisation that services health professionals.

Termites: beneficial!

The mere thought of termites might evoke images of destruction of houses, and the nearest pest control company! In natural habitats, however, termites are beneficial and an integral part of ecosystems. Termites are very efficient at reducing woody litter to simple organic compounds. They are pivotal in nutrient cycling, as Victor found during his in-depth study of mound-building termites in the Kruger National Park (KNP).

His Masters² research required more than 400 kms (250 miles) of often uncharted bush-walking. He studied termite mounds in the northern parts of the park, determining that soil types helped determine their density and distribution. This work was awarded *cum laude* (distinction).

Doctoral studies

For his Ph.D. in entomology (University of Pretoria),³ Victor studied the most abundant mound-builder in the KNP, *Macrotermes natalensis*. He excavated small, medium, and large mounds to determine the number of individuals comprising each colony. The tallest mound found by Victor measured 5.3 m (17 ft) high, and was estimated to contain close to a million termites.



A mature termite mound with a spire approximately six metres tall. **Bottom photo:** Termites digesting wood.

He and co-workers found, among other discoveries, that the proportion of termite soldiers tends to decrease as a colony ages and reproductive success peaks.⁴

Disinvestment in soldiers benefits the colony because more workers means that nutrient cycling is increased; more labour is required for food gathering beyond the scavenged areas around large nests. A continual trade-off between workers and soldiers is thus maintained. The results also provided baseline data against which future population trends could be measured, and as

such, were incorporated into the KNP Management Plan.⁵

A new species found

Dr Meyer discovered a new species of terrestrial isopod (woodlouse) in 1995, and it has recently been named after him—*Ctenorillo meyeri*.⁶ This isopod is found only in close association with termites, hence the term 'termitophilous' (liking termites). It benefits from the relationship with the termite colony without harming it (called 'commensalism').

Dr Meyer is now part of a research team to revise the classification of New Zealand's isopods.

Colonies and creation

Colony-forming termites are 'eusocial' insects, meaning that a single female queen produces the offspring, with some males called 'kings'. Then non-breeding workers care for the brood, and soldiers defend the nest. Building nests and regulating the temperature of the brood each require a lot of coordinated cooperation. How could such eusociality have evolved?

As Dr Meyer

says, "The 'pin-head' brain of a termite is hardly capable of reasoning that joining forces with other individuals and living in a colony are more beneficial to survival than sticking it out on its own."

And if an individual had a mutation that caused it to not breed (worker or soldier), that mutation needed for eusociality would be lost! The system is a 'package deal' where all the components have to work together for it to work at all. As Dr Meyer says, "Surely this communal lifestyle was set up by the Creator, as alluded to in Proverbs 30:25."

Evolutionists propose the living species *Mastotermes darwiniensis* (from northern Australia) as a 'primitive' termite, because it has some similarities to cockroaches. However, fossils dated by evolutionary reasoning as 'Cretaceous', supposedly over 100 million years old, closely resemble this species, so it is yet another 'living fossil'. This is not evidence for evolution, but 'stasis', or created kinds reproducing according to their kinds (Genesis 1).

How do termites digest wood?

Animals, including termites, do not have the enzymes needed to digest wood. Termites use microbes to do it. Some have them in their gut (flagellates). Others cultivate fungi in 'gardens' inside their nests and harvest the enzymes from the fungi to digest the wood.

This raises a question for evolutionists: if these insects ultimately evolved from microbes, why did the process lose the ability to digest wood? It would be a very useful trait for natural selection to preserve.

"The intricacies of creation, such as the termite colony, display some of the glory of God as revealed in His creative brilliance," Victor says.

From Victor's conversion to Christ at a young age, he took the Bible at face value.

However, during his university studies he toyed with an 'old earth' view, via the flawed Gap Theory. He also flirted with the idea of a local flood, influenced by Dr Hugh Ross's teachings on origins.

However, Victor's confidence in biblical creation was re-established, mainly through reading the book trilogy by Dr Jonathan Sarfati of CMI.⁷

Victor remarked that "the logical, coherent, scientific approach with the highest regard for Scripture was both impressive and convincing."

He remains wary of mindsets that stand against the plain reading of Scripture. How can Christians believe (and expect others to believe) in the resurrection of Christ, which forms the basis of their faith and utterly defies the physical laws of science, but not believe in instantaneous creation within the Bible's God-inspired record of the timeframe?

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Believe it
or Not

BY CREATION
MINISTRIES
INTERNATIONAL

As silent as a flying owl

IF you watch an owl flapping or gliding, it's like viewing film footage with the sound on 'mute'—they are so silent. That's because their wings have velvety surfaces, comb-like serrations (see photo) at the leading edge, and trailing-edge fringes that dramatically suppress the sound of air rushing over the wings.

Therefore the owl's prey (mice and voles) can be taken by surprise.

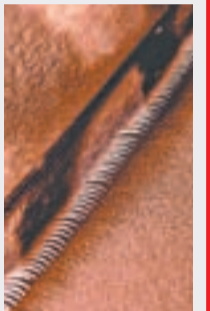
Also, with wing noise suppressed to a level below the owl's own hearing range, they can better hear (and thus locate) prey while flying—crucial for hunting at night.

These features have caught the attention of researchers in the dramatically-expanding field of biomimetics, whereby engineers copy biological design.

Owl wings have already inspired quieter fan blades in computers. More recently researchers using wind tunnel facilities have studied the leading-edge serrations. Each is "the tip of a single barb, having a very complicated 3D shape", and its size and orientation differ according to its position.

The owl wing design also efficiently resolves the trade-off between effective sound suppression and aerodynamic force production. Biomimetics hopes to use those design aspects. For example, so the blades of multi-rotor drones can 'chop' the air more quietly, without unduly sacrificing lift; similarly in other aircraft, wind turbines, and fluid machinery in general.

Which raises the question: how did owls come to have such enviable design characteristics in the first place? Design implies, well, that they were designed, which of course, implies a Designer. However, when it comes to crediting the Creator, many today would rather that be kept as silent as an owl in flight (see Romans 1:18).



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Slowing down on the steps of life

BY ROB FURLONG

On a recent trip to Israel, Karen and I were taken to the “Southern Steps” in the Old City of Jerusalem.

In the days of Jesus, these steps were the means by which pilgrims ascended to the Mount on which the Temple stood in order to worship and bring their offerings to God.

Just prior to the Steps, pilgrims would purify themselves for worship by bathing in a *mikveh* filled with water.

Upon arrival at the Steps, pilgrims would often meet with family and friends, sit, chat and spend some time together.

If you look closely at the Steps, you will notice that they are irregular, not

uniform, in their construction.

You could run up the Steps quickly if you wanted to, but this meant that you had “to gird up your loins” – pulling up your long flowing garments around you. This was particularly embarrassing for a man because it would expose his legs (and possibly other parts of his body) by doing this.

The Steps are irregular because they encourage you to ascend to the Temple for your time of worship *slowly*.

As a pilgrim you take the time to purify yourself in water.

You take your time ascending the Steps.

You spend time in conversation with loved ones.

Everything says to you, “*Don’t rush the things of God. Slow down. Take your time to enjoy and savour this moment with family, friends and God.*”

I love the principle behind all of this because it reminds me to slow down in life, to *live* in this moment and to *be present* with people and God.



The southern steps of the temple in Jerusalem.

This idea of slowing down and being present is critical if we are going to truly build better relationships.

In days gone by, we made jokes about the stereotype of the husband who begrudgingly grunted out “Yes, dear” at regular intervals while his wife spoke to him through the back page of the newspaper.

Fast forward to 2020 and we have replaced newspapers with Smart Phones or some other form of technology.

If I sit at a meeting with colleagues but I am continually glancing at my phone or responding to messages, I am not *being present*. My mind and attention is elsewhere, rather than focusing on what is being discussed at that moment.

And for some reason, we think this behavior goes unnoticed! But it

doesn’t – and it discourages people.

When a friend comes into my office to say good morning to me and I cannot tear myself away from the computer screen, look them in the eye and return the greeting, I am not *being present*.

Instead, I send a subtle (not necessarily intended) message that what is on my computer screen is more important than the person before me.

Our lives and relationships are literally filled with moments like these and how we respond will either build up and encourage...or slowly erode them.

If I were to live my life over, I would do it more slowly and try to be more present in the moment.

I often thought things like, “*When the kids are older...*” or “*Once we get through this season...*”

The stark truth is this – you *never* get those moments again.

We miss *much* in life and relationships when we persist in rushing through them.

But what a gift we give when we slow down and choose to be present in the moment with each other.

Swiss psychiatrist, Paul Tournier once said:

“How beautiful ... and liberating [it is] when people [listen] to each other. It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need people have to be really listened to ... Listen to all the conversations of our world, those between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf.”

This year, commit to slowing down and being present in the moment – it *will* transform your relationships! •

The Jesus nut

MENTION the words ‘Jesus Nut’ in 2019 and one first thinks of a person who walks with Jesus or at least talks a lot about Jesus.

There are several kinds of popular nuts in modern engineering, all with different uses or advantages. There is the hex nut, jam nut, acorn nut, flange nut, square nut, coupling nut, wing nut, nyloc nut, slotted nut, keps nut, T nut, and castle nut.

But there is another nut, important in aviation. On top of the main shaft that holds the rotor on to some types of helicopters is the ‘Jesus nut’. The origin of the term is thought to be in the Vietnam War, when so many soldiers became familiar with helicopter travel. But it could go back to Igor Sikorsky when his mechanic used the term.

The weight of the whole machine and its load depends on the ‘Jesus nut’. They even sing songs about it.

In modern engineering the ‘Jesus nut’ has come to represent ‘a point of failure with catastrophic consequences.’

What could be more catastrophic than to lose one’s own soul? Jesus died in your place to bring us to God. He knocks at the door of your heart. We need to open the door and let Jesus come into our lives through prayer.

Our lives will crash without the ‘Jesus nut’. •



It doesn’t matter what you’ve said or done; what you’ve thought about saying or doing; where you’ve been or who you’ve been there with - there is more grace in God than sin in you.

Our greatest need and God’s greatest gift are the same thing: forgiveness of sins. And to receive it we have only to ask and pass it on. But to ask for it we must first admit that we need it. Instinctively, we wriggle.

You cannot be too bad, too broken or too boring for God’s unconditional love, only too proud to acknowledge how desperately you need it.

- Pete Greig
How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People

Ask Y:

Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: Starting to follow Jesus seems the right thing to do but I have so many ‘buts’.



LET’S face it, weighing up a step that is this significant—letting God rule and reign in your life—can raise all sorts of fears and barriers. My guess is your hesitance could be down to one of the classic three ‘buts’. Or maybe even all of them!

It may be – ‘but I’ll have to admit I was wrong’. It’s been said: to err is human, to admit it is unlikely! Indeed, seeming to lose face with those we know well can be stomach churning.

But sometimes owning up to what is true is the only thing we can do and still maintain our integrity. And it’s not simply about owning up that you’ve been driving north for an hour when you should have been heading south. This is a matter of life and death.

What’s worse—to look foolish or to pass up the opportunity to become the person God created you to be?

It may be – ‘but there’s still so much I don’t understand’. But how much more will be enough?

In some ways the step of faith you need to take is a lot like marriage. At some point my knowledge about my wife was enough for me to make an initial commitment to marry her. By saying “I will,” I gave all I knew of myself—at the time—to all I knew of her—at the time. Looking back, I now see I didn’t know much about either of us.

But the journey of discovery had begun and that is all God asks of us. The invitation is to a lifelong growing relationship.

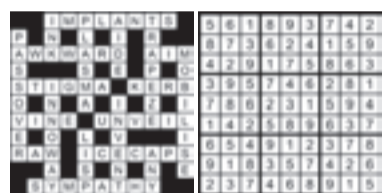
It may be – ‘but what will others think’. To lay ourselves open to snide remarks about having joined the God Squad or parked our brain is not any sane person’s idea of fun.

But isn’t it interesting that, in this present tolerant age, it is only following Jesus that evokes such scorn? You can get more respect for claiming you’re the reincarnation of Napoleon’s horse trainer.

Throughout history, many have suffered deeply for their belief in Jesus—losing their reputation, livelihood, home, family, friends, and even life itself.

They made their choice based on the belief that there is nothing too great to sacrifice in order to know the forgiveness and new life that Jesus offers.

Actually, Jesus spoke about ‘sheep and goats’. The difference? Perhaps its that goats keep going ‘but, but, but’. So how about becoming one of His sheep? •



How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

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

ADMIT

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

BELIEVE

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

COMMIT

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

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

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

I would like to think about this.

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

** Please tick and write clearly **

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

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All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



HISTORY MAKER REMADE

When South African rugby captain Siya Kolisi raised the World Cup in victory last year, it was not just a celebration of a ground-breaking achievement for the country but also a declaration of how far this outstanding sportsman had come personally and professionally.

Siya, the first black man ever to captain the Springboks, grew up in abject poverty in a township outside Port Elizabeth. His mother died when he was 15 and his family struggled to put food on the table, let alone find enough money to pay for his education.

“Sometimes we didn’t have enough money to pay my school fees, which were only R50 (US\$4) a year,” Siya told *The Guardian*.

However, Siya discovered early on that he had a talent for rugby and he latched on to the sport as his ticket to a better life. True enough, he was scouted from a local competition and won a scholarship to the prestigious Grey High School in Port Elizabeth.

The rest, as they say, is history. “When I was a kid all I was thinking about was getting my next meal,” Siya said following the victory. “There are so many people in South Africa who just need an opportunity – I got my opportunity and I took it with both hands.”

Against all predictions, South Africa beat England in the World Cup final, 32-12.

Yet there is another aspect to the captain that has also been drawing attention: the 28-year-old’s strong Christian faith.

Speaking to *SportGo* magazine during the World Cup, Siya explained how he was raised by his grandmother because his parents were too young to take care of him. She was a godly woman who brought her grandson to church every week, giving him a strong religious foundation.

“I grew up going to church but [later] only went on and off for several years,” he told *SportGo*.

“However, God had been preparing me for such a time as this. While I grew up going to church, it wasn’t until recently that I truly gave my life to Christ.

“I was struggling with a lot of things personally – temptations, sins and lifestyle choices – I realized I wasn’t living according to what I was calling myself: a follower of Christ.

“I was getting by, but I hadn’t decided to fully commit myself to Jesus Christ and start living according to His way until something I was struggling with in my personal life was exposed to the public. Up to that point,

everything I was fighting against was hidden, but when my sin was exposed, I knew I either had to change my life, or lose everything.

“I decided to lose my life and find it in Christ.”

Siya was referring to the scandal in which his wife Rachel found risqué pictures of a fitness model on his social media account that were allegedly sent by the model. This led to a messy and very public exposure of his private life and drove him to his knees.

Feeling the Lord calling them back, Siya and Rachel sat down and admitted to each other how much they needed God in their lives. Soon after, they joined a church in Cape Town and, under the guidance of the pastor, the couple reconciled.

“Walking alongside a spiritual mentor I’ve been able to discover the truth and saving power of Christ in a whole new way. This new life has given me a peace in my heart I’d never experienced before,” Siya testifies.

Siya also found strength and comfort from this Bible verse in the book of Isaiah, which he read over and

Rachel and Siya Kolisi during the South African Springboks Rugby World Cup 2019 Champions Tour on November 11, 2019 in Cape Town, South Africa. (Photo Ashley Vlotman/Gallo Images/Getty Images)

over again: “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.*” (Isaiah 43:2-3)

He said, “I told myself that if God could come through for countless people throughout history, He could do the same for me.” Now that difficult time has passed and Siya is back on his feet again. He and Rachel have recommitted themselves to each other and today are passionate for Jesus.

The lessons of that tumultuous time have not gone unheeded, though. Knowing how difficult it is to live out his faith in the public eye, Siya said: “The temptations are real.

“At times we all struggle and make mistakes. The best is always to surround yourself with Christians, and

there are many in the Springbok team.

“They encourage you, build you up and will always keep you accountable. We have Bible studies as a team and often pray together. I try to read the Bible as much as I can when I’m alone, every single night before going to bed. I love reading devotionals.”

As for the much-lauded part he played in the Springboks’ World Cup win, Siya said: “I always tell my teammates that our talents are God-given.

“We must always remain humble. It is a great blessing to know that no matter what, nothing can deter God’s will – it will always be done.

“I don’t have to understand everything in life, and there are so many things I don’t,” he added, “but I know God is in control of it all. My job is to do the best I can and leave the rest in His hands. Knowing He is in control gives me peace.”



Siya Kolisi (captain) and Rassie Erasmus (coach) of the Springboks during an interview at OR Tambo International Airport on arrival in Johannesburg, South Africa on November 05, 2019, following the win in Japan. (Photo Sydney Seshibedi/Gallo Images/Getty Images)

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