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# Denzel: love is the point

With three Golden Globe awards, a Tony Award, and two Academy Awards, Denzel Washington is undoubtedly one of the greatest African-American Hollywood actors of all time.

Having acted in more than 50 films over a career spanning four decades, Denzel remembers a time when there were almost no black movie stars apart from a little Billy Dee Williams and some Richard Pryor.

He got his career break as Dr. Phillip Chandler in the TV drama *St. Elsewhere*, and was one of only a few African-American actors to appear in the series for its entire six-year run.

Still, he says he never let it get to him.

"I can't," he told GQ in a 2012 interview. "I'm an actor. First of all, I don't take myself that seriously. I take what I do seriously, and I try to do a good job."

The star has been repeatedly praised by critics and audiences alike and was nominated for seven

Academy Awards— including Best Actor in *Malcolm X* and *Flight*— and won two, for 1989's *Glory* and 2001's *Training Day*.

His feature length directorial debut in 2016's *Fences*, in which Denzel acted as the lead, was described by *The Guardian* as "dense with intelligence and compassion".

It is almost as if Denzel was not forbidden from watching mainstream Western movies as a child.

Only, he was. Son to a church-minister father, he grew up in a household where wine was not allowed and the screen only ever showed titles like *King of Kings* and *The Ten Commandments*.

"I went [to church] every Sunday as a kid," he says, "so I can relate to people who don't like it because there was a time when it felt like a job.

"We all go through our rebellion."

Denzel's own rebellion included befriending a group of three friends who all went on to do time in prison.

But as much as he rejected his parents' religion in his early teens, he did consider becoming a minister for a while after being told by his mother's friend that she believed he was, "going to travel the world and preach to millions of people".

Acting, he found, was just another platform on which he could share his faith. He told *The Guardian* in 2013: "I remember some years ago asking my pastor: 'Do you think I'm supposed to be a preacher?' And he said: 'Well, you are. You have a pulpit of your own.'"

"That's not to say that I'm preaching, necessarily," he added. "I don't want to tell you what you need to do. I mean, I'm not turning it up to 10 when it comes to being correct, I'm



Actor/filmmaker Denzel Washington attends the 89th Annual Academy Awards earlier this year in Hollywood, California. (Photo: Getty Images)

not that guy, I like my wine."

In 2015, according to *The Christian Post*, Denzel made a speech to Dillard University's graduating class and advised them to put God first.

"There's never been a time when God didn't direct, protect, and correct me," he said. "There may have been times when I was less faithful

to Him, but He had faith in me.

"I've felt the hand of God on my life, no doubt about it."

"My father was a minister for 50 years," he said in an interview with *Parade* in 2010.

"We would say prayers for everything and end with, 'Amen, God is love.' I thought 'God is love' was like one word, 'Godislove.'

"I didn't really realize what it meant. I'm still learning. But the fundamental message is in the Bible, which I've read three times from front to back.

"If you don't practice love, you're missing the point."

Denzel's point is summed up in a Bible passage which says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (see 1 John 4:8-10).

## THE AWESOME POWER OF FORGIVENESS

BY RICK LEWERS

I WONDER if you have noticed what terrorism and hate can't do?

When I consider the religious lunacy that our world is confronted by, it gives me cause to consider the value of my Christianity.

Christians can do something terrorists and haters seem powerless to do - forgive, extend mercy, exercise grace of God (undeserved love of God), love one's enemy. These are some of the great things Jesus Christ taught and the stuff of wisdom, not lunacy. To lose the capacity for forgiveness, mercy, grace and love is to lose what it means to be human.

When these are present, the contrast is



Mourners pray next to coffins of victims of the blast at Saint Mark's church in Alexandria during a funeral procession on April 10, 2017. (Photo: Mohamed El-Shahed/AFP/Getty Images)

extraordinary. Taken from a 2017 edition of *Christianity Today*, here is an example of this by way of the terrorist attack on the Coptic Church in Egypt:

"Twelve seconds of silence is an awkward eternity on television. Amr Adeeb, perhaps the most prominent talk show host in Egypt, leaned forward as he searched for a response. 'The Copts of Egypt... are made of... steel!' he finally uttered.

"Moments earlier, Adeeb was watching a colleague in a simple home in Alexandria speak with the widow of Naseem Faheem, the guard at St Mark's Cathedral in the seaside Mediterranean city. On Palm Sunday, the guard had redirected a suicide bomber through the perimeter metal detector, where the terrorist detonated his lethal weapon. Likely the first to die in the blast, Faheem saved the lives of dozens inside the church.

● Turn to page 2

● Turn to page 2

# DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND

BY ALAN BAILEY

**THE BEST THINGS** are the latest things—or so the modern mind thinks. Notice how that wonderful mobile phone that was made three years ago is now despised, almost, because later ones, smarter by several degrees, have hit the market. Whatever the cost, one must keep up with the best.

This way of thinking has very wide implications. Old is bad, backward, primitive. New is improved, advanced; hence, much to be preferred.

Of course, there is evidence for this everywhere. Discoveries are continually being made that take us forward. Old, inferior ways are continually being discarded.

**HOLD ON, NOT SO FAST**

There is another side to all of this. Has history shown that human behaviour has improved over the years? Has barbarism, cruelty, crime and immorality diminished with our scientific progress? Can we say that people, centuries or thousands of years ago, were less intelligent than we are? Did the 20th century show how humane and civilized the race had become? So far, has the 21st century learned from the one before it?

Perhaps we have been seduced by our technology. We see the marvels of

invention and feel superior to all who have gone before us. Even the elderly among us are sidelined as though they have nothing to offer. We are unwise to think that. Today, shameful, evil, unjust occurrences worldwide, warn us that all is far from well.

**DON'T FALL FOR THIS ONE**

So many sweep aside the Bible with a wave of the hand. Old hat. Totally out-of-date. Irrelevant. The vast majority who say this have never seriously read it. They think they know what it is all about but have little understanding.

I remember asking a couple of scholars to tell me one moral rule that modern people could propose that hasn't been known in the past. They could not. Every suggestion they made was covered by the New Testament. Sure, some of the Old Testament laws were never meant for any other people than those addressed, the small nation of Israel, and then only for a time.

The best, the latest, the most reliable news is found in the Bible. The words of Jesus are immortal and are ignored at our peril. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away."

Changes we would all love to see will only come when He is in His rightful place. That is, Lord of our lives. His rule makes all the difference.

# The power of forgiveness

• From page 1

"I'm not angry at the one who did this," said his wife, children by her side. 'I'm telling him, May God forgive you, and we also forgive you. Believe me, we forgive you. You put my husband in a place I couldn't have dreamed of.' (A truth that captured her resurrection hope in Jesus Christ).

"Stunned, Adeeb stammered about Copts bearing atrocities over hundreds of years, but couldn't escape the central scandal. 'How great is this forgiveness you have!' his voice cracked. 'If it were my father I could never say this. But this is their faith and religious conviction.' Millions marvelled with him across the airwaves of Egypt as even in death, the Copts forgive. 'On the night of the bombings, addressing the terrorists, Orthodox priest Boules George said,

'I long to talk to you about our Christ, and tell you how wonderful He is.' But then turning to the church he said, 'How about we make a commitment today to pray for them? ... If they know that God is love and experience His love, they could not do these things—never, never, never.'"

Naseem Faheem's widow offers unconventional wisdom in the fight against terror and hate. She fights with weapons her opposition needs but has no understanding of, or capability to use.

Jesus Christ lay down his life as the weapon for disarmament and the end of terror. He held no AK47. He unmistakably changed the world with weapons not of this world. Where is the sanity and success that has come with us seeking vengeance, meeting force with force, hate with hate and terror with terror?



While the fool continues in murderous ways, the righteous will seek to love.

# Denzel: love is the point

• From page 1

That is how Denzel uses his position - not to preach, but to love, encourage and to share.

The 61-year-old told the annual "We Care" Charities Banquet in St. Louis, Missouri last November, "Give thanks for blessings every day. Every day. Embrace gratitude. Encourage others. It is impossible to be grateful and hateful at the same time."

He is not shy about his faith in front of the cameras, openly sharing in interviews that he reads the Bible and



Denzel Washington says 'Don't aspire to make a living, aspire to make a difference.' Photo: Getty Images

prays every day. And he lives out his faith through his demeanor and the way he treats his wife, fellow actress Pauletta Pearson, and four children John David, Katia, Olivia, and Malcolm.

He may consider himself an actor more so than a minister or a celebrity—but the truth is Denzel Washington is all those things. He just likes to have his wine both at communion, and at fancy restaurants.

"Don't aspire to make a living, aspire to make a difference," he says famously—words he lives by.

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## Crossword

<b>ACROSS</b>	8 Show appreciation	16 Personal effects	<b>DOWN</b>
1 Spring	10 Sly	18 Tape deck button	1 No-frills
4 Fritter away	12 Rodeo rope	19 Yellow gemstone	2 Ashes holder
7 Head honcho (6,3)	13 Hit hard and wildly		3 Igloo's shape
			4 Battle shout (3,3)
			5 Deeply expressive music
			6 Adhesive
			9 Fee for flight
			11 Floor covering
			12 Wood shaper
			14 Sparkle
			15 Shoelace problem
			17 Tree juice

**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

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

**SOLUTION PAGE 11**

# DEATH IS A DEAD CERTAINTY

BY DANIELLE JONES

Recently in my home country there has been a surge of sudden, unexpected deaths. Autopsies revealed undiagnosed or untreated non-communicable diseases (NCDs). However, it seems like sudden death is common worldwide; perhaps not because of NCDs but through shootings, terrorist attacks, wars, natural disasters and hunger.

None of those people saw Mr Death coming with his army, his sickle or his wrestling clothes, like Troy did in August Wilson's *Fences*. They were simply here one day and gone the next.

Recently, I studied the story of King Belshazzar in Daniel chapter 5 of the Bible. He was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, the conceited king who God cut down to size by making him live like an animal until he acknowledged that God was the Most High.

However, like his father, Belshazzar thought that he was the greatest and seemed to have learnt nothing from his father's punishment. So in this chapter he had a party and

used the sacred goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, to drink wine while praising pagan gods.

So God sent him a message which appeared on his wall, and when the prophet Daniel interpreted it, it was a warning of his days coming to an end and his kingdom being divided because of his disobedience. The chapter goes on to say that God had Belshazzar killed that very night.

My first reaction to this was "Woah, that's cruel." However, as I thought about the two major warnings he had received - his father's testimony and the writing on the wall - I wondered why he had not simply asked God to forgive his sins.

Perhaps Belshazzar was too busy. But what could be more important than heeding a life or death warning from the God of the universe?

Many of us are more similar to Belshazzar than we may think. Perhaps none of us have ever received writings in an ancient language by a ghostly hand on our dining room wall; but, we have all seen the news and heard the testimonies of others.

Thus, wouldn't it be accurate to say

that we are being warned every day?

The fact is we could be killed because of the colour of our skin, our wealth or lack thereof, the uniform we wear, or from a stroke, or just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Therefore, how do we not see that tomorrow may be too late?

Today is the right time to pray for our souls, to forgive, to pray for our friends, family and enemies, to make an effort to spend time talking to God and reading His Word (the Bible), and to savour every moment.

This reality has made me a lot more conscious and intentional about the way that I love people. More importantly, it has made me more intentional about the priority that I give to God in my everyday life.

As the Bible says: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16).

The Bible also says: "For, all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Peter 1:24)

It is a fact, 100% of us will die. Have you prepared for eternity?

This article was first published by Press Service International

# Husbands do break

It was supposed to be a bit of harmless fun with his teenage boys – jumping off a ramp on a bicycle into a foam pit – but the moment Shane Clifton landed upside down he knew he had broken his neck and his life had changed forever.

That was in October 2010. Now an Associate Professor of Theology in Sydney, Shane has written a book about his experience of coming to terms with quadriplegia entitled *Husbands Should Not Break: the Pursuit of Happiness after Spinal Cord Injury*, co-authored with his wife Ellie.

The theologian came to believe and trust in Jesus for his personal salvation as a 16-year-old. At that time the death of his father's business partner from cancer caused a crisis of faith in the agnostic family that brought them all to the conclusion that Christianity was the answer to the big questions about life and death.

That year, his second last year of high school, was also the year Shane met Ellie at the church they were attending. They started dating and were married a year after school, at age 19.

"I look back, and I've got a child at the moment whose 20, and I think goodness that's young. But we were married at 19 and it worked wonderfully," Shane recalls fondly.

At the time Shane had intended to continue with his accounting studies and then join his dad in his accounting business on the coast, but in his mid-20s he felt called to Bible College.

Now he teaches systematic theology, which addresses theological topics one by one (e.g., God, sin,

humanity) and attempts to summarize all the biblical teaching on each particular subject.

Before his accident Shane, an avid surfer, skateboarder, and golfer, was just days away from his 40th birthday.

"The local church group had built up a jump into a foam pit for the youth. I had three teenage boys at the time and they were jumping push-bikes and skateboards off this jump into a foam pit.

"I was one of these fathers that was actively involved in all of my kids sporting activities, so I decided to have a go. I took the jump and landed upside down and knew immediately that I'd broken my neck."

What followed were some of the scariest moments of Shane's life. Struggling to breathe, unable to move and aware that everything had changed irrevocably in the blink of an eye.

He was air-lifted to hospital, where his damaged fourth and fifth vertebrae were operated on and he spent the next seven months rehabilitating and learning to adapt to life in a wheelchair.

During this time Shane was also wrestling with the inevitable question: "Why, God?"

"The truth is, I experienced lots of doubt, and asked lots of hard questions," he admits.

"I think sometimes that trust in God involves being honest about the doubts that you experience. But I was really blessed to have really great people who walked the journey with me."



Together with friends and mentors, Shane explored the problem of pain for the bulk of the seven months and "in fact it's a topic I've thought about a lot since that time".

"The reality is that yes God can and does heal," he says, "but miracles, by definition of the miraculous, are rare, and the reality of life is that to be human is to experience suffering and heartache and death.

"Being Christian and exercising faith doesn't free you from those realities. Faith isn't trust that I will be healed. Faith is trust in the providence of God in the midst of whatever circumstance I'm going through.

"So I do believe that God heals, but I also know that life is fragile and for me to live with my disability I can't keep holding onto some future healing that may or may not happen. You need to face up to the loss that you are experiencing and

get on with life. So that is what I've done."

In hospital Shane discovered voice recognition software and started writing for his blog and journaling.

"I was able to process my loss and think through it by writing about it. Spinal cord injury involves massive change and massive loss.

"The problem of pain is at the heart I think of theology and Christian faith. So strangely I was in a position where my experience could be related to my profession and to my writing," he explains.

"Probably a couple of years ago now I realized that I had accumulated enough material that I could put it together in a book and so that's what I did."

*Husbands Should Not Break: A memoir about the pursuit of happiness after spinal cord injury by Shane and Ellie Clifton is available from Amazon.*

## RECOGNISING MORE THAN A GOOD MAN

As a 10-year-old Glen Osher prayed to a God he did not know, begging Him to save him and his four siblings from the hell of hatred they were enduring at home. It was only much later that he was able to acknowledge that when Welfare stepped in and put the children in an orphanage, it had been God's answer.

"I never prayed again after that because I thought God never heard or answered my prayer. He actually did answer by rescuing us out of a chaotic home," Glen now realises.

Nevertheless, the orphanage brought its own stresses and Glen suffered from migraines, back pain and skin diseases as a result of their living conditions.

His frustration and confusion manifested itself in his failing school grades, disrespect for authority, lying, stealing and getting in with the wrong crowd. That in turn got him trapped from a young age in pornography, drug addiction and alcoholism.

As he grew into a man, Glen confesses that he had "no purpose, no discipline and no peace" and was "grumpy and masochistic".

When Glen was 14 he saw the movie *The Cross and the Switchblade* about the radical transformation New York gangster Nicky Cruz underwent when he met Jesus, but it was only 15

years later that Glen was ready to undergo the same change when two women explained to him how Jesus was the prophesied Jewish Messiah. "A lady shared the Gospel [good news about Jesus] with me, with firmness and kindness. I wanted the peace and conviction she displayed. Another lady also had a shining, kind, bold face when sharing the Gospel with me," Glen recalls. "Through those two ladies in April 1989, I was convicted of my sin, the need for God's righteousness and the judgement to come."

Weeks later, Glen went with a friend to church and made a personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

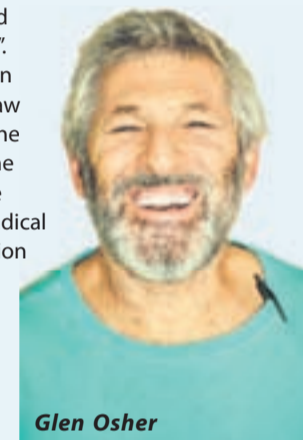
"Once I was lost, now I am found!" declares Glen. "I've gone from darkness to light; from hell to heaven; from no purpose to purpose; from materialistic to spiritual; from unholy to holy; from frustration, anxiety and worry to peace, contentment and trust in Jesus.

I was a liar, now I speak the truth; I owed over a million Rand, now I owe no one anything but love.

"Don't let people tell you that Jesus is just a prophet or teacher, or that he was just a man. Jesus is God and He is love. Jesus can turn a prostitute, liar, homosexual, adulterer, fornicator, idolater, witch, murderer, coward, drunkard, thief or angry, violent thug into a holy man or woman of God.

"The blood He shed on the cross can wash you clean and God's Holy Spirit can empower you to live in a right relationship with Jesus; to be humble, holy, patient, caring, prayerful and be faithful in even the small things."

Glen now loves to pray for the sick in hospitals, share his faith with inmates in prisons and promote love between people of different religions.



Glen Osher

## The cost of physical perfection

It was 2013 and Madelyn Moon was getting ready for her second fitness competition.

She was closer than ever to reaching her dream body and she had isolated herself from her friends and family, lost her period, and cut out all her favourite foods to get there. She was, she says, "flirting on the edge of depression".

She had better win.

She was the "fit girl" everyone went to for tips on weight loss and she thrived on the daily praises of her peers and social media followers.

But she was tortured inside. And after all that, she realized as she stepped off the stage knowing she had not made the top five, she still was not good enough.

"If only I could lose a little weight here, shape up a little there, I would feel complete," Maddy believed.

"If I could only get my diet down to a science, a numbers game, I would finally feel like my entire life was under control."



Madelyn Moon in her fitness crazy days.

That turned out to be a lie.

Maddy had abs but she also needed a pill to get her to sleep every night, was drinking laxative tea to digest all the protein she was eating, had not gone out to eat

at a restaurant in four months, and had lost most of her friendships.

"I had nothing to talk about with my family," she says.

"It wasn't until I stopped searching for something to fill my heart and turned to someone to fill my heart that I finally found the peace, joy, and completeness I was looking for."

Her Christian upbringing finally helped her realise no change to her body shape would ever bring her the happiness that God could.

She says she prayed for God to change her heart so she would no longer desire to be lean, fit, and blameless with her diet. She prayed she would be able to find joy in the things she used to, like enjoying a meal out with family and friends without any anxiety about the calorie content of her food.



Madelyn Moon in a photo from her blog.

"No amount of chicken, dumbbells, or body fat percentage drops could ever bring me the happiness that I now feel in my body since learning how to accept and even appreciate my imperfections," she says. "Without people, without relationships, without laughter and joy... life is meaningless."

Maddy lost her six-pack and 'flawless' physique but says she gained so much more.

"I do not consider myself religious," she adds. "Religion is organized and structured. A lot of it comes with ticking boxes you have to complete in order to do things right.

"Instead, I believe myself to be a Christ follower. A God addict. A Jesus freak. I love God, and I love human beings."

Today, Maddy is a life coach who specializes in spirituality and body positivity. Her mind is free, and her bright smile is genuine.

# IT IS NEVER TOO LATE

The birth of his first daughter should have been the best day of Wayne's life, but because of some selfish choices that was also the day his fiancée ended their engagement.

She returned his ring with a letter telling him he was not committed enough to be with her or to be their baby's father.

"I felt like a worthless human being so I started my downfall into meth and drugs," Wayne says.

Wayne had been no choir boy growing up. He had hated school and liked to rebel by wagging class and smoking cigarettes behind the wood work shed.

Although he had been brought up in church, it had never really made much difference in how he lived.

Following Wayne's disappointment, he and his house mates would spend all their wages on drugs each pay day for about eight months, until his parents came to rescue him and take him back home to live with them.

One Christmas, while away on holiday with them, he met and fell in love with Colby, whom he married in 2010.

However, being a husband, and then a father to another baby girl, was not easy for a hard-drinking, party-loving guy.

"I was a pretty poor husband and father. I was a liar, and unfaithful to my wife," admits Wayne.

"Drugs had taken me over. The meth had made me a not-nice person, father and husband. I wasn't there for my wife when she needed me the most. The last two years of my life I

have spent really destroying my marriage," he laments.

When Colby finally packed up and left him, it was the wake-up call that Wayne needed to get his life straight, and he contacted Peter Lyndon-James of Shalom House, a Christian rehab facility in Perth.

"My journey so far in Shalom House has been an incredible one and I haven't looked back," Wayne enthuses.

Wayne and his younger brother both made commitments at Shalom House to give their lives over to the Jesus to heal and direct, and were then baptised in water as a public

declaration of the inner commitment they had made.

"It started a new beginning in my life," Wayne said.

"I realised that if I started doing good things and getting to know God, all the things that I had pushed away started to come back.

"I've seen a smile on my parents' face that I've never seen before and it was awesome, after everything they have been through."

Wayne was freed of his addiction to meth, cigarettes and alcohol, and his marriage was restored when Peter led Colby to make a commitment to Jesus too.

"Colby and I prayed together for the first time that day. It was something very special for me," he recalls.

"We have been married for six years this year and we are falling in love all over again. Our marriage is looking better than ever."

Wayne now sees hitting rock bottom and losing everything as the means God used to rescue him from his self-destructive choices.

## "My journey so far at Shalom House has been incredible"



The staff, residents and vehicles of Shalom House

And he has a message for other people who think that they too have made a mess of their lives: "God saved me. I asked for forgiveness

and He forgave me. It's never too late, guys, just take the first step and trust me when I say this, 'you won't ever look back', because the drugs

won't make it better, they only tear things apart.

"So I encourage you all, it's never too late to get better and change." •

## Set free from years of self-hatred

### How a young woman's tragic life of addiction was saved, healed, and restored

BY CHRIS EYTE (GOOD NEWS)

Steff used to hate God. She hated her life to the point of wanting to kill herself.

Today Steff smiles, completely transformed and free from the cycle of drugs alcohol, and sexual abuse she was trapped in. But she endured years of self-hatred, depression, and suffering before she discovered joy.

The 27-year-old says she "hated anything to do with God or religion" growing up.

"I made a decision when I was 11," Steff says.

"I didn't think God could be real because of all the evil things that happen in life.

"At that age, I had moved 11 times and I had depression. I had been bullied since I was very young and loathed

the way I looked. I saw an ugly pig when I looked in the mirror and I started self-harming, and I made my first attempt to commit suicide.

"I hated life and if God was real, I hated Him too."

Steff grew up with her stepdad, whom she says was a bad role model, and was sexually abused at nine years old by a female, which left her confused about her sexuality.

She started using drugs and alcohol at the age of twelve to dull her inner pain.

"I just wanted to be off my face," she says. "I had no self-respect or value for my body. I met a lot of cruel men and lived a life no 12-year-old should live. I experienced a lot of evil things. I exchanged my body for drugs and alcohol."

Steff ended up in a children's home but ran away most nights to parties and clubs. She roamed streets and parks alone to find men until authorities moved her to a secure unit because, she says, she was a danger to herself.

"It was a miracle that I wasn't abducted and murdered," she says. "Addiction put me in a lot of bad,

dangerous situations. I struggled with a lot of fear and anxiety and different disorders throughout my life."

At 18, Steff had a baby boy. But she says her addictions, paired with postnatal depression, affected the care she was able to give.

"I was an awful mum. And then, when I turned 19, that was the worst year of my life – a year of destruction. After years of sexual assault and rape, I allowed men to treat me like trash because I felt worthless and disgusting."

Steff ended up in hospital several times. In one incident she was thrown out of a moving car after two men used

her, abused her, and robbed her. Then she had a mental breakdown. "I felt so dirty and unlovable," she says. "I was hated by so many people for the things I did when I was intoxicated. I was called many names but the main one was 'slag'. That became my identity. My mind was so sick, it was in so much torment, and I just wanted to be dead."

Steff doesn't claim to be perfect, but she knows she is no longer the depressed, anxious, and stuck young woman she was. She is now a trainee on a Christian discipleship program run by Youth With A Mission.

And she knows that, in the same way He changed her, God can change anyone.

"Do you want to be free from addiction?" she questions. "Do you want to be free from your guilt and your shame? Have you had enough pain and hurt? If you ask Jesus into your heart, He will transform you. He will heal you!

"You are not reading this by accident. You are reading this because God is giving you the opportunity to know Him. If you ask for forgiveness, God will forgive you for any sin you have committed and He will wash you clean. The Bible says: 'Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!' (2 Corinthians 5:17)." •



Steff today - healed and happy.

Eventually, Steff found her way to a rehabilitation centre, where she met a former prostitute who had given her life to Jesus Christ.

"She was the most happy, lovely, and joyful person, and I realised God must be real because she had been changed into a new person and I wanted what she had. So I asked Jesus into my heart.

"It was the best decision of my life," Steff says. "I am a new person now. God has completely changed me, He has set me free from so much."

Steff doesn't claim to be perfect, but she knows she is no longer the depressed, anxious, and stuck young woman she was. She is now a trainee on a Christian discipleship program run by Youth With A Mission.

And she knows that, in the same way He changed her, God can change anyone.

"Do you want to be free from addiction?" she questions. "Do you want to be free from your guilt and your shame? Have you had enough pain and hurt? If you ask Jesus into your heart, He will transform you. He will heal you!

"You are not reading this by accident. You are reading this because God is giving you the opportunity to know Him. If you ask for forgiveness, God will forgive you for any sin you have committed and He will wash you clean. The Bible says: 'Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!' (2 Corinthians 5:17)." •

nudge

WITH KARL FAASE

## The necessities of life

IN 2006, the Pew Research Centre in the USA did a report on what people said was a necessity of life. Not just nice to own or important, but a necessity. The following is a selection from the report:

- Car 90%
- Home air-conditioning 70%
- Mobile phone 49%
- Cable television 33%
- High-speed internet 29%
- Flat screen television 5%

If you think that those who said flat screen television must be mad, keep in mind that 29% said that a high-speed internet connection was a necessity, even though it had not even been invented ten years previously.

Until recently in my home, we didn't have a dishwasher and people reacted like we lived in a third world country! Surely necessities aren't about technology. They are about relationships. The things we can't do without really should be a list of people and attitudes, not gadgets and merchandise.

A life of faith also ought to be found on Pew's list, but I doubt that will ever occur!



Steff at 12 years old - 'I lived a life no 12-year-old should live.'

# I am Michael - one man, two lives

In 1995, Michael Glatze publicly came out as a homosexual.

In 2007, Michael Glatze publicly came out as a straight man in what he describes as “the most liberating, beautiful and astonishing thing I’ve ever experienced in my entire life”.

Michael noticed he was attracted to other guys at 14, came out at age 20, and at 22 he became editor of the first magazine of its kind: Young Gay America.

“Michael had seemingly read every gay book ever written,” Michael’s friend Benoit Denizet-Lewis writes in *New York Times* article *My Ex-Gay Friend*.

He describes how Michael was involved in marching gay rights rallies and urged young people not only to accept but also to celebrate their homosexuality.

“I had never met anyone so sure of himself,” writes Benoit.

So how does a gay activist and gay magazine editor go from rallying in the streets glorifying same-sex attraction to writing “I am straight” on his computer at work before walking out of the building?

*YGA Magazine* was really taking off in 2005. Michael was asked to speak on the JFK Jr. Forum at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.

It was after watching a videotape of his speech that Michael says he began to question what he was doing with his life and influence.

It wasn’t so much that he began doubting whether he truly was a homosexual. Rather, he became completely objective to homosexuality and all it stood for.

“I struggled trying to understand what was happening to me,” Michael writes in his 2007 “coming out” column *How a Gay Rights Leader Became Straight*.

“I’d always been told that

if you had doubts about the rightness of your homosexuality, which I had been having for a while but was trying to silence, that it was because you just hadn’t worked through all your internalized homophobia.

“But that didn’t feel true now.”

**“God came to me when I was confused and lost, alone, afraid, and upset”**

At this point, Michael already considered himself a Christian. In 2004 he had experienced a “spiritual awakening” when as a 29-year-old he experienced a series of heart palpitations and became convinced he suffered from the same heart defect that had killed his father.

After tests had ruled out his father’s illness Michael thought he had escaped death and found himself “staring into the face of God”.

He had turned to God then, and it was God whom he turned to when things in his

life started to feel wrong.

“Soon,” he says, “I began to understand things I’d never known could possibly be real, such as the fact that I was leading a movement of sin and corruption.”

“It became clear to me, as I really thought about it – and really prayed about it – that homosexuality prevents us from finding our true self within. We cannot see the truth when we’re blinded by homosexuality.”

Michael sought to find this “truth” that had been hidden from him. He realised culture and world leaders had convinced him he was doing the right thing even though nothing felt right anymore.

To find the truth, he had to look within.

“Jesus repeatedly advises us not to trust anybody other than Him. I did what He said, knowing that the Kingdom of God does reside in the heart

and mind of every man.”

This is what he found: “Homosexuality, delivered to young minds, is by its very nature pornographic. It destroys impressionable minds and confuses their developing sexuality.”

Once he realised homosexuality was not from God, Michael sought to eradicate it from his life and find healing.

“Every time I was tempted to lust,” he writes, “I noticed it, caught it, dealt with it. I called it what it was, and then just let it disappear on its own.”

“In loving ourselves fully, we no longer need anything from the ‘outside’ world of lustful desire, recognition from others, or physical satisfaction.”

Michael writes in his column about the challenge of healing from the wounds caused by homosexuality. He



had little to no support and had to “sift through” the disappointing voices of the people he was close to. But for the first time in a long time he felt

**LEFT:** Michael Glatze (left) and actor James Franco, who plays him in the movie.

**BELOW:** Michael Glatze and Rebekah Fuller married in October 2013.

things were right, and he knew God would pull him through.

“God came to me when I was confused and lost, alone, afraid, and upset,” he writes.

“He told me – through prayer – that I had nothing at all to be afraid of, and that I was home; I just needed to do a little house cleaning in my mind.”

Michael has continued to grow in his relationship with God. He is married to a woman named Rebekah and is the pastor of a small church in Wyoming.

A movie entitled *I Am Michael* based on his life and starring James Franco premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival.

Michael’s life continues to be a reflection of the words he typed on his computer screen before resigning both *YGA* and homosexuality: “I am straight,” he wrote. “Homosexuality=Death. I choose Life.”

**PLEASE NOTE:** The movie *I am Michael* contains graphic scenes that may offend some viewers and this article is not to be taken as an endorsement of that movie.

## Generosity makes you happy

BY LYN BEASY

**ARE** we born generous, or selfish? Some may argue we have a natural survival instinct, but a recent study showed we are wired to be generous from a very young age.

Between the stress of everyday life and insurmountable responsibilities, being generous is often the last thing on our minds. But did you know that giving to others makes you happier? A recent study by the University of British Columbia showed that pro-social behaviour in toddlers led to greater happiness.

The researchers found that children were happier when they were giving a treat to others than when receiving treats themselves.

In fact, there are many more benefits to helping others than just gaining happiness. Researchers discovered that it can reduce stress and improve mood disorders, such as depression. Helping others also gives us a better perspective on our own situation.

The term ‘First World problems’ originates from our tendency to complain about the trivial things in our life, such as a poorly made latté, missing a car space or having limited internet access. Yet by

helping people we can develop better empathy and compassion and appreciate the things we do have.

From a neurobiological level, researchers also know that providing social support to others may benefit the giver more than the receiver by activating areas of the brain that are associated with trust, connection and pleasure. Using brain imaging, the researchers were able to identify specific brain benefits of giving social support to others.

In one study, people who supported others during a stressful task had less activity in the amygdala (part of the brain) where a stress response is generated, and other areas that are considered reward centres were activated instead.

Doing random acts of kindness or more regular volunteering will have added health benefits for you.

Simple ways can give you a buzz, too, such as giving up your seat on the bus, offering to make a coffee for a colleague, or donating to a worthwhile cause.

Volunteering as little as a few hours a month can have significant health benefits and numerous studies have



shown an improvement on stress and cardiovascular health in volunteers. It can also provide a sense of purpose and identity, particularly for those no longer in the workforce.

Former US president Barack Obama said: “The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don’t wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.”

Helping others is one way to spread hope and joy—and it will even benefit your health.

Lyn Beasy is a psychologist at the Caringbah Wellbeing Clinic, in NSW.



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# DIVINE DESIGN

## a journey in science, medicine and Christian ministry

BY DANIEL DAVIDSON

**A** young John Leslie arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah in the winter of 1974. It was to be the first time he had come into close contact with the Mormon Church, but it was the beginning of an exciting and unexpected journey.

He was there to begin working on his Ph.D. in Experimental Pathology at the University of Utah, where he would study with a renowned expert on blood vessel formation.

He had been exposed to Christianity as a child by his parents, and knew a basic set of Bible stories, but not much more. When he was a teen, his parents divorced and John felt disillusioned and confused about faith.

John began to do a bit of reading to try and understand Mormonism. The first book he picked up was a critique of Mormonism written by a Bible believing Christian. Reading this, John was forced to think about his own beliefs and realized that he knew very little.

But he knew that he needed God and he knew that Jesus had something to do with it—and that's what John told God as he came to that place of committing his life to Him. It was a transforming experience he acknowledges. "I knew something had happened to me, but I wasn't sure what it was," John recalls.

But one of John's professors knew what had happened so he began to mentor John. John learned that he had indeed been transformed—'born again' by the power of Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe.

This had intellectual as well as spiritual consequences. John saw the world of science in a new light. As a new Christian and a new graduate student, delving into the study of biology, he began to see the wisdom and grandeur of God in creation.

John thrived in the research-intensive world of graduate school, even co-authoring a paper in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*. He also met his future wife, Barbara, in the research lab. They were married in August 1980, John received his Ph.D. in December of that year, and then they headed to Australia, where John had a research fellowship at Monash University.

It was in Australia that John heard a speaker on biblical creation, a representative of an organization that was later to become Creation Ministries International. John had already come to appreciate the world as God's handiwork. But he had not thought much about how or when God created.

He had always been taught that evolution was a fact and hadn't questioned it. Until hearing this presentation, he had not known there was a way of thinking about

origins apart from the evolutionary model. But after this, he began to rethink his position from both Scripture and science. As John says now, "I went from being a default evolutionist to a diehard creationist."

John became convinced that Darwinian evolution was ultimately not based on science. Instead, he came to see it as a non-Christian 'faith system' that was itself trying to provide answers for the meaning of existence. He began to see the genetic code as particularly persuasive evidence.

On the one hand, the failure of evolution to account for this fundamental building block of life demonstrated to him the bankruptcy of evolutionary theory, while on the other hand, the incredible design evident in the genetic code testified to the glory and wisdom of God.

Then, in 1985, another door opened: medical school. He headed back to the US and earned his M.D. degree and had both internal medicine and paediatric residencies, becoming Board certified in both. This all confirmed his awe of the Creator's handiwork—and provided him with new reasons to reject evolutionists' claims.

"For evidence of design, you can pick the cell, you can pick the organ, you can pick the body as a unit," John says. "Every organ of the body is incredibly unique in its design and highly complex. The one that I find most fascinating is the hearing and balance mechanism of the ear."

John explains the intricate relationship between the bones in the inner ear, the pressure balance maintained in the ear drum, the way in which air vibrations are converted to electrical impulses, and the nerves which transmit these to the brain. This system poses real problems for evolutionists: "Any mutation you can imagine in just about any component of the complex structure of the organ would bring it down," John says.

In recent years John has studied biblical archaeology which allowed him to study the Bible more closely. One of the areas he has looked at was the worldwide flood.



Dr John Leslie went from being a default evolutionist to a diehard creationist.

"Linguists talk about the characteristics of a 'true narrative,'" John explained. "In my paper, I looked at how the Flood account in Genesis displays those characteristics."<sup>7</sup>

So is there good reason to believe the Flood account? John's answer is an emphatic "Yes". Looking at the way the biblical narrative is put together, and the way it intersects with everything we know about the world, we have every reason to trust the Bible.

Whether we look at biology, geology, or anthropology, the Flood fits with what we know about the world. "In anthropology, for instance, we see that all the major areas of the earth have people groups with a flood account with basic common characteristics: A god who is displeased by sin and evil but preserves a man or group that has the god's favour. They are sealed into some craft, protecting them, while a flood is sent to punish the others."

While he originally thought that he might practise medicine overseas, it turned out to be closer to home, as he served people in rural and disadvantaged areas in Oklahoma and now in New Mexico.

"I loved the research I pursued, understanding how the creation

worked," John says, but medicine was fulfilling on a whole different level. "It put me right in the middle of people's lives, helping them to address not only their physical problems, but their emotional, social, and spiritual problems."

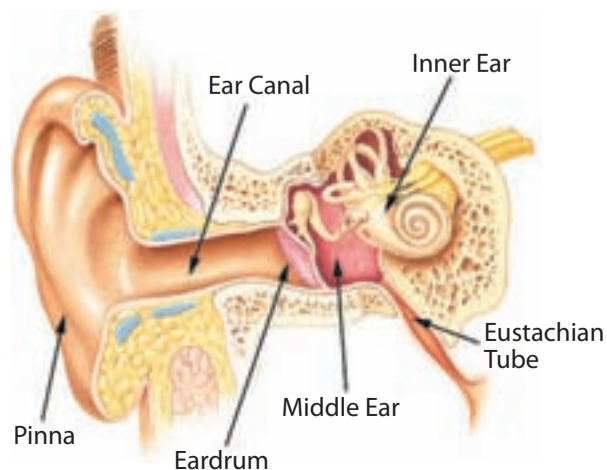
As a Christian, John sees this as a great challenge and a wonderful opportunity. As a doctor, he also sees the importance of understanding the consequences of sin and the Fall. This makes it possible to understand how sickness, pain, and death came into God's creation: "God made a good creation in the beginning, but now due to sin, things are falling apart."

An understanding of creation and redemption provides hope.

As a doctor, John says, "My job is to alleviate suffering," following Christ's example while on earth. This job points forward to our ultimate hope—full restoration through the fulfilment of Christ's work, as He brings about a new heavens and a new earth.

**"Every organ of the body is incredibly unique in its design and highly complex"**

**John Leslie:**  
"[The ear] poses real problems for evolutionists: Any mutation you can imagine in just about any component of the complex structure of the organ would bring it down."



**Believe it or not**  
BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

### Eyeing off centuries-old sharks



**SCIENTISTS** have used a unique method to determine that Greenland sharks (*Somniosus microcephalus*) are the world's longest-lived vertebrates.

It involves identifying a 'pulse' of carbon-14 in the animal's eye lens known to be caused by atmospheric testing of nuclear bombs in the mid-1950s. (This same spike in 14C was detected in samples of wood from the alleged 'Noah's Ark' site on Ararat associated with a Hong Kong-based team. It established beyond reasonable doubt that the wood was from a tree growing in that same decade—see [creation.com/hong-kong-ark-fiasco](http://creation.com/hong-kong-ark-fiasco).)

The technique helped researchers to establish that the shark has a very slow annual growth rate of about 1cm which translates to a lifespan of around 400 years.

Other known long-living creatures include the chowder clam (500 years), bowhead whale (200) and Galapagos tortoise (170).

Bible skeptics scoff at the idea that humans such as Methuselah (969 years, Genesis 5:27) once lived for centuries and say that would be 'biologically impossible'.

Ignoring death by accident or disease, different living things seem to be genetically programmed to live for different average periods. Such 'programmed longevity' in animals can be drastically affected by breeding experiments.

For humans, it may be that the population bottleneck after Noah's Flood (only eight people survived) contributed to the dramatic decline in post-Flood lifespans. There is also considerable evidence that the relentless accumulation of many mutations each human generation also played a part, as renowned geneticist Dr John Sanford explains in his book *Genetic Entropy*.

Pennisi, E., Greenland shark may live 400 years, smashing longevity record, [sciencemag.org](http://sciencemag.org), August 2016.

Nielsen, J., et al., Eye lens radiocarbon reveals centuries of longevity in the Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*), *Science* 353(6300):702-704, August 2016 | doi: 10.1126/science.aaf1703.

### GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

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# Walking dead finds true life

**"F**rom bush to bush I dodged bullets and machetes, hiding when I could and running like a hunted animal when there was nowhere to hide. For days I didn't eat. I learned to sleep while standing. I had to push dead bodies out of the way in the lake to even get the smallest drink of water. "I lost my home. I lost my family. I lost my identity. I lost my life," recalls Theoneste (Theo) Makombe, a Tutsi survivor of the atrocities of the Rwandan genocide in April 1994. "I grew up in a strange time in Rwanda. For decades a hatred for the Tutsi had been building in the Hutu. The Hutu held all of the governmental power and positions of authority. They began to believe that the Tutsi were cockroaches, a curse, a plague. It was the job of a good Hutu to hate the Tutsi," Theo explains.

His parents, who had lost their own parents in the first genocide of 1959, could sense the mounting racial tension and tried to prepare their boys for what was coming.

"But I didn't understand. I was a child. I was just a boy who fought with his brothers and loved to play soccer," Theo remembers.

Then the day came when the Hutu militia invaded the area of Rukumbeli where Theo's family lived and turned their peaceful village "to a living horror show, flooded with blood".

"The ground was covered with bodies and the rivers ran red with blood all the way to Tanzania," Theo recalls.

"My friends and family were cut to pieces. I didn't know where to go or what to do. There was nowhere to



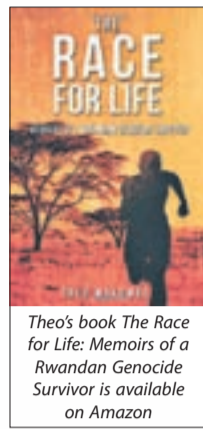
Theo Makombe says God has taken away his pain.

run because we were surrounded by lakes, but I still ran."

In 30 days the Rukumbeli population was reduced from about 50,000 to 300.

"But those of us left in the 300 knew that we had died with [the others] them," Theo confesses. "[Death] haunted me every night as I died in my dreams and every day as the images I had seen constantly replayed in my mind." He tried to drown his pain and fear with alcohol.

**RIGHT:**  
Theo with his wife Bri.



Theo's book *The Race for Life: Memoirs of a Rwandan Genocide Survivor* is available on Amazon

a heaven and a hell.

During the genocide, he held onto the words of a song from the church choir that spoke of God's promise: "Ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened."

"It became my prayer, I asked God to spare my life, even though I didn't believe He could. I told Him that soon I would be knocking on the door of heaven and I asked that He would let me in.

"When the killings ended I forgot about the song, my prayer, and God, but God never forgot me," Theo says. "I was full of anger and hungry for revenge."

For six years after the events of 1994, Theo continued to suffer physically, emotionally and mentally, searching for something he wasn't even sure how to define.

Then a group of friends at school gathered around him, placed their hands on him and prayed over him.

"That is when the Holy Spirit began to minister to my spirit. I had my first taste of Jesus and I knew that it was what I had been searching for all that time.

"As they prayed for me, it felt like a shower from the inside. Pain, bitterness, anger and fear were washed

away. I had my first taste of peace in my whole life," he shares.

That night when the killers came for Theo in his dreams, "before they could reach me, Jesus came from behind and picked me up. I then flew in freedom above all of the chaos and hatred.

"From that point I gave my whole life to Jesus. I knew He was the answer and I followed my friends everywhere learning how to serve Him."

Theo never touched alcohol again. "Instead of trying to cover up the pain, I found the true God that takes it away," he beams.

"I immersed myself in prayer meetings, church services and the Bible. God continued to heal my inner wounds and is still healing me today.

"I don't want revenge anymore. I used to be angry, but now I am full of the joy of the Lord. I used to be lost, but now I have purpose.

"Even before the genocide, I was cold and did not connect with others, but now I have the love of God in me that causes me to reach out to those around me.

"I hope and pray that those who killed my family can know the forgiveness and freedom in Jesus that I know."

Because of his God-given compassion for the hurting, and because there are many people in Rwanda still suffering as a result of the violence they inflicted or endured, Theo, who now lives in Ohio, has decided to take his family back home.

"We are going back to show others the God of healing and hope that I know," he concludes. •

nudge  
WITH KARL FAASE

## Present comfort blocks change

**THERE** are not a lot of people who think that having a comfortable life is a negative experience. We all love to think we can be comfortable – in our financial position, in who we are and what we do. However, have you ever considered the downside of being comfortable?

The only initiator of change for us as people, to grow and improve in various aspects of life, occurs when we don't like our circumstances.

It is when we are struggling with discomfort that we are motivated to make positive changes to our lives.

When we are comfortable, we often become lazy in every area of life. Be that physically, socially, intellectually or spiritually. Our greatest block to growth may actually be our comfort.

Your discomfort can be a gift. •



# Disappointment with God

BY JODY BENNETT

**THIS** paper is filled with success stories about people who have found God, been set free from their addictions, been healed emotionally and physically, had their marriages restored and found a peace and joy that was previously unknown. As a result of this, you may be forgiven for thinking that giving your life to Jesus will fix all your problems and make your life rosy.

The truth is, though, that in the Christian life there will likely be deep disappointments and unanswered prayers.

I know a faithful Christian couple who lost both their sons in separate freak accidents; another Christian couple who can't have children; and a woman who was raped while her husband was away on missionary business. I have Christian friends who have never found Mr. Right despite much prayer; and I know a wonderful Christian father who seems about to die of cancer and leave his wife to raise five young children, despite many prayers for healing.

How does one process this in the light of the Christian teaching about a loving, all-powerful God?

This is a deep issue and I would be arrogant to think I know all the answers, but having known my own share of disappointment in life, these are the insights I have gained.

• **God is not Santa.** We don't control or manipulate Him. We don't come to Him on our terms with our demands. He is the sovereign ruler of the universe. We come to Him on His terms, and any goodness or answer to prayer we receive from Him is because of His kindness and mercy, not



because we deserve or earn it.

• **God has an eternal perspective.** We can't see the long-term results of our choices or plans, but God sees all the knock-on effects of our prayers and sometimes it is His grace that says "no". We can't see the bigger problems or heartaches that have been avoided, or the greater blessings that are achieved by not getting what we want right now. In the book of Isaiah God tells us "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord." (55:8)

• **We need to have an eternal perspective too.** Christians are like athletes training for a marathon. This short life is a time of hard work, deprivation and occasional pain, for most, in order to prepare us for the ultimate goal of eternal life. These 70+ years on earth are a dot in the light of forever. As the Apostle Paul, who suffered many beatings and loses, said: "I consider that our present sufferings

are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)

• **God is more interested in making us holy, than keeping us happy.** How do we learn the virtues of patience, long-suffering or humility if we are always given everything we want? Sometimes God uses suffering to gently deal with our natural narcissistic, selfish pride, and make us more compassionate and loving towards others.

• **Seemingly unanswered prayer refines our motives**

**and focus as followers of Christ.** God often encourages new believers with a lot of answered prayer but as we mature in the faith, He tests us to disclose (to us - since He already knows) whether we are in love with the gifts or the Giver; whether our faith is based on answers and blessings, or on a true commitment to Jesus.

Disappointment is real. Christians can be honest with God when they are angry or hurt by the perceived way He is dealing with them, and sometimes those situations will never be fully understood in this life.

But ultimately, like Job in the Bible, if we turn to God in the hard times, although we may not get the answers we want, we will get a deeper understanding of the character and trustworthiness of God - a deeper faith that He is good and that "all things work together for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28). •

# Building Better Marriages

## PUTTING EACH OTHER FIRST IN EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

BY ROB FURLONG

**B**y the time you read this article Karen and I will have celebrated 36 years of marriage and as I write these words I realize how far into the fourth decade of our life together we are!

When we embarked on our journey of marriage all those years ago we were inspired by the words of the poet, Robert Browning who wrote: *"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be..."*

It wasn't a pipe dream that we shared. We had a genuine desire expressed through our marriage vows to continue to grow in our love for each other through every stage of life.

And there have been many stages! There were the early years where we did not have much money but

somehow (with God's help!) we managed to get by.

Then came the parenting years where we learned to juggle work commitments with the demands of growing children as well as carving out time for ourselves.

Navigating the teenage years was never dull. Everything from staying up until 2.00am, waiting for your child to get home from camp, he or she having driven there for the first time, through to meeting the young man who would like to date your daughter. (Always an interesting experience!)

Then suddenly, you find that all of your children have either married or left home and you enter the phase known as "empty nesters". I have learned that this term is actually a myth because grandchildren start arriving and they all seem to find their way to Gramps and Grammy's house!

Our nest is rarely empty these days!

Here's the thing. I can honestly say that I love my wife more deeply now than I ever have and she can say the

same about her feelings for me.

I do not say this to boast or to gloat.

Because of the nature of my work I come into contact with many marriages where couples are living lives of "quiet desperation" and there is no sense at all of deep connection with each other.

The last thing I want to do here is to give the impression that we have it all together, because we do not.

So despite our imperfections, why can I say that our love continues to grow?

The following thoughts come to mind.

From the outset of our marriage we decided that after God, the most important relationship in our lives was our marriage.

We love our children, grandchildren and our friends. But none of those relationships has ever taken precedence over ours. (This also includes our work life).

Far too many relationships come to grief because couples pour all of their energy into these other areas only to realize, too late, that when these are gone, they are left with a husband or wife that they barely know.

We have made time for each other.

Whether it was time at the end of each day catching up with each



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other or going out together, quantity and quality time as a couple has been a priority for us and we reap the benefits of this today.

We have also prayed together.

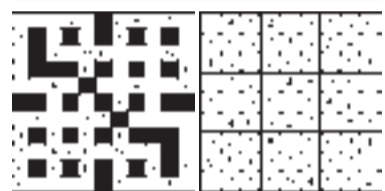
This has become a sharper focus for us in more recent years and we have found through sharing with each other about what God is doing in our lives, our intimacy has grown deep.

Praying for each other about "life stuff" always enhances intimacy.

Simple things like these have enabled us to walk the path happily of growing old together.

It can happen for you as well and it doesn't mean that you have to do what we do. Discover what will work for you and above all, start doing it!

Because Robert Browning was right – the best is yet to be!



## 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)

<b>OUR PROBLEM:</b>	<b>Separation from God</b> "Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God's standards are perfect" (Romans 3:23)	<b>ADMIT</b>
<b>GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION:</b>	<b>Jesus died on the cross</b> "God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)	<b>BELIEVE</b>
<b>OUR RESPONSE:</b>	<b>Trust Jesus by receiving Him</b> "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)	<b>COMMIT</b>

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

**AS A NEXT STEP:**

<p><b>If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box</b></p> <p>I have prayed this prayer. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some 'starting off' literature</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information on a helpful church</p>	<p><b>If you have NOT prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box</b></p> <p>I would like to think about this. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have a problem (see attached letter)</p>
--	--

*\* Please tick and write clearly \**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

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## There's an APP for that ...

### HEALTH ENGINE APPOINTMENT APP

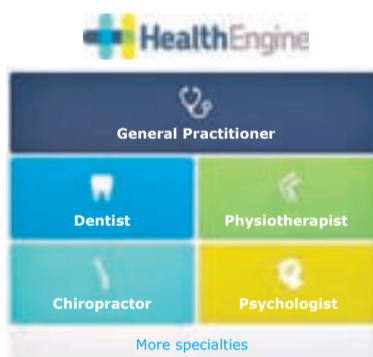
**WANT** a fast, efficient way to find a doctor, dentist or other health care specialist near you and make an appointment?

Are you perhaps new to the area and don't know what is available? Do you need to find your nearest bulk-billing doctor? Maybe it's afterhours or you are sick of waiting in a phone queue?

The Health Engine App is a clever, practical, easy-to-use app you can access 24/7.

It is able to find all the GPs, dentists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, psychologists, audiologists, podiatrists, counsellors, skin check clinics or optometrists in your area (or another location) and when the next available appointments are. Over 11000 practitioners are registered with Health Engine Australia-wide.

You can view the addresses, phone numbers, descriptions, staff, photos, opening hours, maps and reviews about your chosen provider.



You can also star your favourites so that next time you are taken to their appointments immediately.

Then you go through a simple process of filling in your details (which are saved for next time) and choose your appointment.

If there are multiple doctors at your surgery the app will tell you which staff member you will be seeing. It will also tell you if you will be bulk billed or how much you will need to pay; and allow you to choose which family member is having the appointment, if you use the app for more than one person. Your booking is instantly confirmed, 24/7.

Health Engine will also ask you if you want to add your appointment to your Google calendar so that you can be reminded when you need to be there.

The app can link you to Google maps to give you directions, and can add the practitioner to your address book.

Under the "My Bookings" feature, you can quickly see what upcoming appointments you have and when past appointments were, and you can cancel your appointment at the touch of a button.

Some practitioners even allow you to check in for your appointment through the app when you arrive on site!

## Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 5)

BY JODY BENNETT

**DURING** the school holidays my teenagers are usually at home with our little sausage dog while I go to work. They tell me that Carrie hardly moves from her spot at the lounge room window all day while I am out, waiting for me. She doesn't come to play with the children or sit with them watching TV and, according to the kids, hardly eats or drinks either.



But as soon as she sees my car pull into the driveway, Carrie goes crazy – rushing around, jumping at the window, barking like mad and trying to force open the front door to get to me. (The children only let her out when I've parked, so I don't run her over!)

Then she delightedly rushes up to me, before I have even fully gotten out of the car, rolls over, weeing with joy as soon as I pat her, and spreading the mess everywhere with her manic wagging!

My, that is a restorative for any bad day!

I am good to my dog in my own limited way, and love her company, but in an infinitely greater way, God showers us with good things and deeply desires our fellowship.

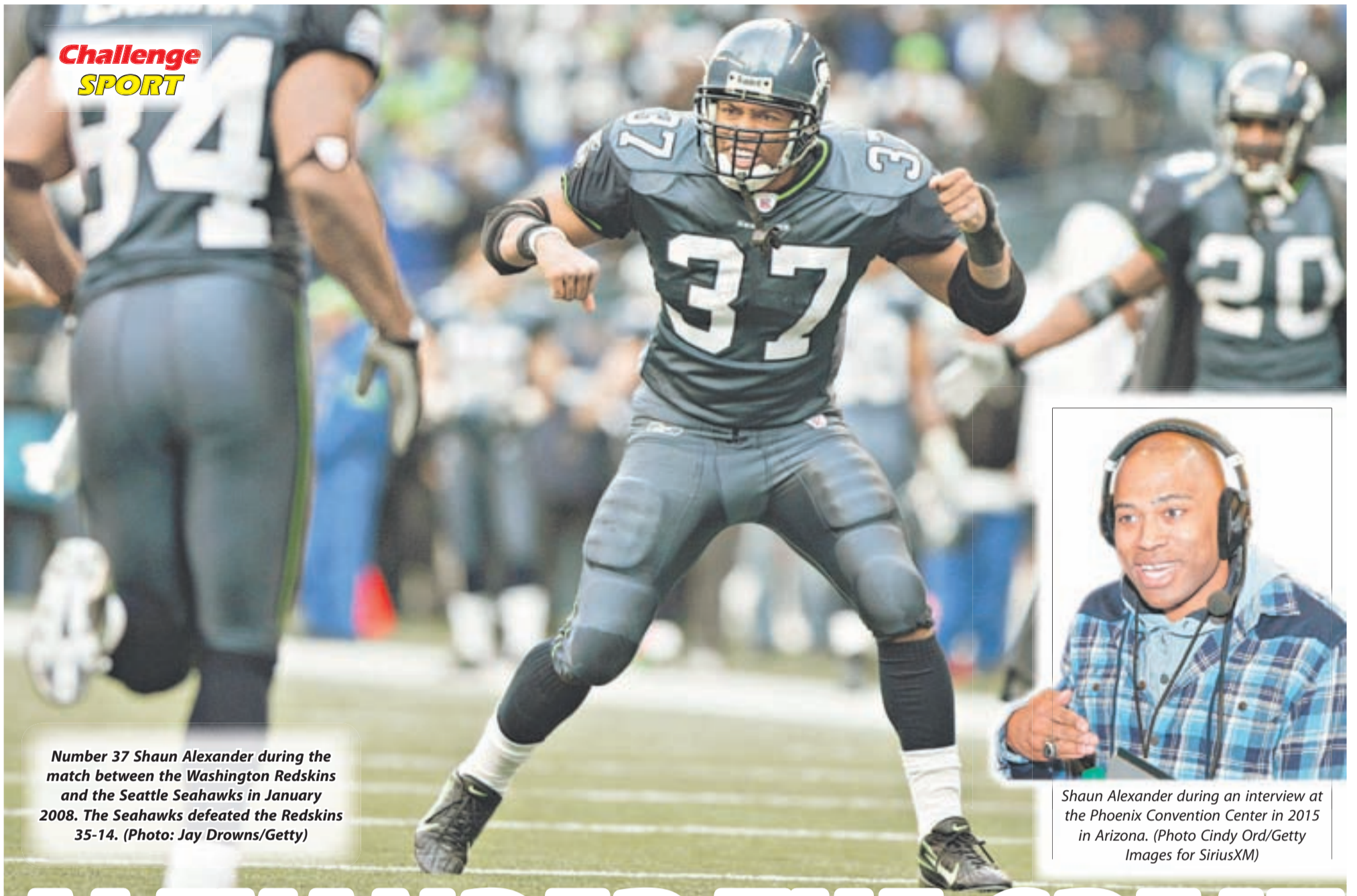
Should our longing for Him and delight in His presence not be akin to that of my little dog?

Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind (Luke 10:27). In church, Christians sing songs of worship and love to God and sometimes even dance, clap and wave their arms enthusiastically because God is so wonderful and so praiseworthy it is difficult to express adequately our gratitude and love for Him.

We can sometimes almost tangibly feel His presence with us now but also wait eagerly to see Jesus "for real" because He has promised to one day come and take His followers to be with Him.

May I learn from my little Carrie to be undistracted and patient, with my nose, as it were, pressed up against the pane, anticipating the first glimpse of my wonderful Master and delirious with joy in His presence.





Number 37 Shaun Alexander during the match between the Washington Redskins and the Seattle Seahawks in January 2008. The Seahawks defeated the Redskins 35-14. (Photo: Jay Drowns/Getty)



Shaun Alexander during an interview at the Phoenix Convention Center in 2015 in Arizona. (Photo Cindy Ord/Getty Images for SiriusXM)

# ALEXANDER THE GREAT

**An ex-sporting legend talks about faith, football, and the only way to live.**

Former American football running back Shaun Alexander was already a football superstar in college, with a police escort making sure he survived a walk across campus.

At 18 he was given the nickname “Alexander the Great”. By the time he left the Alabama Crimson Tide

football team he held 15 records.

The records continued to break after he was drafted by the Seattle Seahawks. For that team, he scored five touchdowns in one half.

Shaun rode a wave of success until he was 30, in 2007, when a series of injuries to his left wrist, knees, and ankles affected his game to the point of his being cut from the Seahawks team in 2008.

To many players, such a turn in their career would be cause for immense frustration and disappointment, a loss of purpose and motivation. Not so to Shaun. Shaun had his wife Valerie and two children to care for.

And he had God.

While still at the peak of his career, Shaun told CBN: “I am a Christian who loves the Lord and just happens to play football, happens to be on cool TV shows, and happens to get to be on commercials.

“I’m a Godly man first. I chase after God. I play football for the sole reason of

giving God glory.”

Shaun recalls his relationship with God starting with his first prayer.

“I was like, ‘God, I don’t know much but I do know how to be obedient’. That was my first prayer at 10 years old.

“That’s just how I live my life – chasing after Christ, finding new ways to get closer to Him. I want to do what children of God do, and that means going all out for Christ.”

Shaun does know how to be obedient and he kept that promise even through the hotel and party scene he was confronted with as a player.

“When you start breaking down things in the Bible and you’re chasing after the Bible, you’re saying, ‘Hey, I’m going to be obedient no matter what I feel like I want to do.’ That’s picking up your cross daily.

“I crack jokes with people when they say it’s hard being a Christian. To me it is not hard. The hardest thing is choosing whether you’re going to go all out or not.”

Once he decided to go all out, Shaun says some aspects of his life, particularly to do with his game, were easier. A lot of the pressure was taken off and he knew as long as he did his best, God would do the rest.

“I honestly believe that I’m supposed to do everything that I can do to the best of my ability, and God takes care of the rest,” he says.

“How can you worry if your Father

is taking care of everything? The God who created the world says, ‘I got you; just give me the best you’ve got’.

“You’re never going to be perfect,” says Shaun. “But you’re always gunning for it. You’re usually tired of going through this battle, and that’s when you’ve got to go back and depend on God. You’ll have a bad play, and then the next thing you know you make the greatest play that anyone’s ever seen.

“You’re always in that fatigue where you’re crying out for a little bit more. ‘God, give me a little bit more strength.’ That’s kind of how it is in football and in Christ.”

Shaun says his life scripture is Psalms 37 verse 4, which says,

“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart”.

Shaun says he sees this as a reminder to take joy in what God is doing in his life, take joy in learning about him, and take joy in growing as a person every day.

To Shaun, there is only one true way to live, and once you decide to do it, it is not as difficult as you would think.

“I believe it’s my job to give you truth and be a light. If you ask me, I’m going to tell you the truth about Jesus Christ walking on Earth and saving souls and dying on a cross.”

“[There] is only one way to do it, and that’s the way the Bible says it,” Shaun says. “That’s the way Jesus Christ showed it and lived it, and that’s it.”



DALLAS, TEXAS - Val and Shaun Alexander attend a charity benefit at The Ritz-Carlton, on November 12, 2016. (Photo: Peter Larsen/Getty)

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