

## DESPERATE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Wesley Stubbings started using drugs and alcohol when he was just 14 years old. At 17 he found himself behind bars where he had a radical experience that transformed his life. Now, at 30, he's a church pastor and works to help young people change their lives too.

He shared his journey of embracing his identity with 40 stories.

"When I was a kid, I'd look at my dad, who's really dark – he's black and my mum's white. And so I would think, well, Dad's Aboriginal but I'm not, because of the colour of my skin. And it wasn't until many years later that I learned that being Indigenous is about identity and respect for culture and things like that."



Wesley Stubbings

Wesley's father was born under a tree in Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains.

"When dad was born in the '40s, the local township in Katoomba wanted to build a racecourse because it's so scenic... The only problem was that all the Indigenous population were in the way."

"Well, that's how they saw it at the time. And that's where the kind of traumatic thing happened is that they

rounded up all the Indigenous people that were living in the bush and my dad was a part of that. And they split everyone up, rounded them up and moved them on. And so they went ahead and built the racecourse.

"And on day one, they did like a hot-lap type thing and all the drivers complained. They said, 'Hey, it's too steep. If we do go off the road, we're going to hit a tree. Our cars will be write-offs.' So they never raced on it again."

Wesley's father moved to Townsville and joined the army. He didn't discuss much of what happened to him.

"As a kid growing up wanting to have identity and find out that stuff, he would never talk about it because he'd been stripped of all that, he lost all that so why would he want to?"

Wesley says he had a lot of identity issues as a child.

"I got expelled from school by grade 8 and was into drugs and alcohol really heavily by like 14, 15. I kept a lot of that life hidden from my parents and my brothers. I lived that life through all my teenage years, right up until the age of 17. And I got caught for doing a few things and it was there that I had an encounter with God in jail, just in a cell on my own."

Wesley admits he had hit rock bottom.

"I just found myself crying and just calling and saying, 'God, if you're real, help me, change me, I need help.' God turned up that night."

When Wesley was released he told the magistrate that he had genuinely changed and that he now wanted to help people. The magistrate believed him.

Not knowing what to do next, Wesley just walked around his local shopping centre and chatted to people.

● Turn to page 2

# Stalking hell tests peace

BY JANICE TEO

Journalist Joanne Lee-Wong's four years of stalking hell began with ordinary fanmail.

At first, the emails from a woman who signed off as ND (not her real initials), were friendly, complimentary.

Kudos in the tough world of journalism were rare, so Joanne welcomed the positive feedback, no idea of the nightmare that would engulf her in the early to mid-2000s.

The messages soon changed, becoming hostile, abusive and ultimately deranged. Emails and messages rolled in non-stop. Joanne became afraid to answer her phone, jumped every time a new email landed.

ND signed off as "your hubby", believed she and Joanne were married and had a child together. She sent disturbing artwork, left long, incoherent and often offensive voice-mails – including one that scared Joanne into thinking she was planning to abduct her.

The psychiatrists told Joanne her stalker was schizophrenic and suffered from a condition that deluded her into thinking she and Joanne had a real relationship.

When Joanne left TV to complete her MBA, ND railed at her in an email that she had deserted their family and child. Another time she accused Joanne of stealing their baby.

Once, when Joanne wrote in a column that she liked browsing in a particular bookshop on weekends, ND shot her a message on Monday telling Joanne she had spent the whole weekend there waiting for her.

The stalking lasted four years and Joanne's world imploded. She writes in her blog, *Ponderings from the Pew*:

"I developed severe insomnia, I had to take sleeping pills just to get four hours of sleep.

"My anxiety levels went through the roof. I was browsing magazines in the bookshop when a shadow loomed up beside me. I screamed and cowered... until I realised it was a...friend.

"I went into a severe panic attack and he had to spend more than 15 minutes calming me down.

"My (work) performance was sliding because I was little more than a walking zombie and the lack of sleep was triggering multiple migraines a week."

Joanne's blog is named for the fact that she is a Christian. Her 'about' section notes she is "not a bible scholar, teacher nor church leader – just a former journalist and member of a Methodist congregation who

MY ANXIETY LEVELS WENT THROUGH THE ROOF.



Joanne Lee-Wong loves animals.

struggles reconciling her faith with everyday experiences."

She attended a Christian school and committed her life to God very early. "God was always in my life. I've never ever known life without Him and His love and grace," she says with a smile. "Without Him, I wouldn't have survived what I went through."

Joanne, now 47 and a freelance writer and media advisor, led a charmed life. Brought up by loving parents, her days were filled with ballet lessons and church youth camps.

She went to Oxford University, where she read politics, philosophy and economics, then went back to Singapore, where her career took off.

Then, a little abashedly, she says: "I never turned my back on God, but I admit I got distracted and my walk grew a little lukewarm."

● Turn to page 2

Fun for Kids

Pages 5,6,7



BACK PAGE



BEST SEAT!  
HUBERT DAVIS

# Desperate search for identity

• From page 1

"I [said] to young people that were committing crimes, 'I believe that I've changed, you can change too.' So I was trying to help people in my own capacity."

One day the magistrate saw Wesley in the shopping centre and asked him what he was doing. He explained and she said, "All right, we need to start a program."

"So I ended up working for the courts," Wesley says. "The magistrate would look at the kid in the face and say, 'See this guy here?' And the kid would go, 'Yeah,' she goes, 'He's done 10 times more than you. And he's sitting up here with me. He's changed his life. So what I'm going to do, I'm going to give you to him. He's going to help mentor you and stuff. And if you don't listen to him, then you're going to go to jail.' So we started this program for kids to stop them reoffending."

Wesley also started studying at TAFE, where he met Linda. Linda kept inviting Wesley to church but although he believed in God, he wasn't sure about Jesus. But Linda persisted and eventually Wesley gave in.

"So that weekend I went to the church and I sat up the back," Wesley explains. "Somewhere in the midst of it I just felt like God hit me. All of a sudden, I fell off my chair and I was so embarrassed. I walked out and I came back in at the end; I waited until

the service was over."

Wesley then spoke with Linda's sister Ada Boland, who is a pastor and school counsellor.

"Ada said, 'God the Holy Spirit is touching your life and you need to give your heart (life) to Jesus.' So right there and then I gave my heart to Jesus and immediately got involved with Ada in the church and I did that for about 10 years."

Wesley explains that although he had had an encounter with God and had given up drinking and taking drugs cold turkey, it wasn't enough.

"I needed a revelation of Jesus," Wesley attests.

Wesley is now an assistant pastor at a church in Townsville, Queensland. He is married to Jessica and they have a son, Rocco. In 2008 he was named Queensland Volunteer of the Year in 2008 for his work with Indigenous youth.

"I believe in Australia, God's going to bring a transformation in the church, empowering people to go out and share with them what it means to have a relationship with Jesus, The agenda will be about sharing Jesus with those who don't know him, and not about anything else. Helping people. The agenda will be about going into the hospitals, giving to the poor and all this sort of stuff that we're supposed to be doing... Jesus made Himself of no reputation. Then He became like us. And so that's the challenge for us. If Jesus did it, we've got to do it."

# STALKING HELL TESTS PEACE

• From page 1

Then the emails from ND landed — and everything changed, including her faith. The ordeal was a turning point for Joanne's convictions and led to a deep recommitment.

Looking back, Joanne says she now realises, "I kind of folded up into myself during that time. Better Christians than me would have become more dependent on God, but I just got consumed with being a victim — and then later I got angry with God for allowing this to happen to me."

"At the same time, I felt guilty for wanting ND to pay for what she was doing — I knew she was unwell, that she wasn't being deliberately malicious. So as a Christian I really felt conflicted."

What really stung was the fact that ND was only fined \$4000 by the court. Joanne, who quit her job to avoid her, seethed at God: "I asked 'why me, God? Why have You let her get away with such a light penalty when my career has been destroyed and my life was such a hell for four years?'"

"Of course now I know He never left me. In fact, He turned something awful into something good — and answered my prayer from a very long time ago at the same time."



Joanne Lee-Wong and her husband Norman, with their dog.

Joanne was referring to what she used to pray for as a teenager — "I asked God for the gift of healing. I wanted that because I hate seeing people suffer."

"Since my story became public, I've been contacted by people who have gone through or are going through the same thing and I've been able to help them!"

"God is just so amazing. He has actually given me the desire of my heart to help heal others. When God showed this to me all my anger melted away — I just now feel so humbled and grateful to Him."

Joanne's husband Norman, a pastor and the chaplain of the Methodist Welfare Services in Singapore asked her a pointed question on their first date. "Have you forgiven her?"

"She was schizophrenic," Joanne answered. "She had no idea what she was doing. There is nothing to blame."

Joanne credits her faith with helping her to release her anger. "My early upbringing and faith informed my response. God has forgiven me much; who am I to withhold? Jesus is the best example. He forgave those who crucified Him."

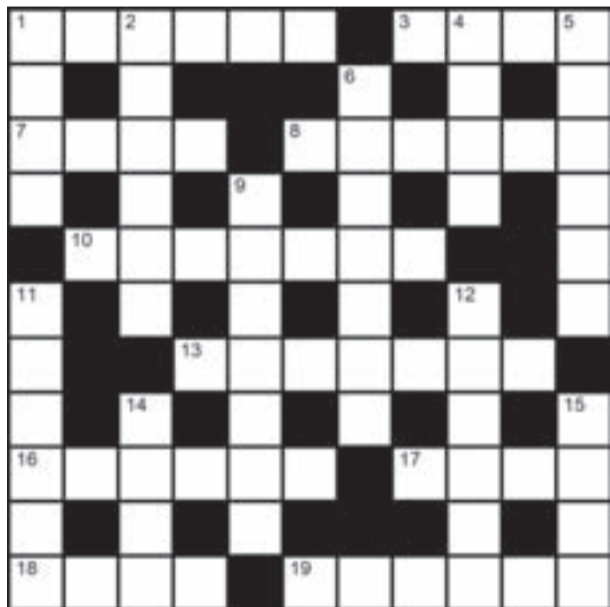
## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

### ACROSS

- 1 Item an Olympian hurls
- 3 Give the cold shoulder
- 7 Swim's alternative
- 8 Toolbox item
- 10 Commitment
- 13 Two-part lens
- 16 Chin covering
- 17 Symphony member
- 18 American military branch
- 19 Portable computer

### DOWN

- 1 Dawn's counterpart
- 2 Man of Brazil
- 4 Without feeling as a dental patient
- 5 School financial officer
- 6 Label for a picture
- 9 Daytime show
- 11 Martial art (4,2)
- 12 Warren inhabitant
- 14 Volcanic flow
- 15 WWII vehicle



# A successful total disaster

BY JODY BENNETT

I RECENTLY learnt about the life of American chemical engineer Thomas Midgley, a mild-mannered inventor, who only lived 55 years and whom I had never heard of before, but whose impact was one of world-wide destruction and death. He has been dubbed the most destructive single organism on Earth!

Midgley was instrumental in the invention both of leaded gasoline and CFCs, two of the worst inventions ever, which continue to have untold human and environmental impacts.

Leaded gasoline, developed as an anti-knock agent for internal combustion engines, pumped toxic lead into the atmosphere for decades causing "serious long-term health problems from childhood, including neurological impairment [ie. lowering people's IQ, as well as literally causing them to go crazy, like mercury did] and [linked] with increased levels of violence and criminality ... around the world."

Midgley himself suffered twice from lead poisoning and knew of its dangers, but continued to lie about his fuel additive, tetraethyl lead (TEL), sold as Ethyl. Only decades later, due largely to the work of Clair Patterson, the truth about lead poisoning became public knowledge and unleaded fuel became the norm.

Later, Midgley went on to develop Freon, the first chlorofluorocarbon (CFC), for use in refrigerators. He received accolades for his inventions and work, but three decades after his death, the ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas effects of CFCs in the atmosphere became widely known, and Freon (HCFC-12) has now been banned.

Midgley was not only a danger to the whole planet, but himself as well. In 1940, at the age of 51, he contracted polio and became severely



Thomas Midgley

disabled. In order to get out of bed, he devised an elaborate system of pulleys and ropes. As with his other inventions, this too eventually proved to be deadly. In 1944, he became entangled in the device and died of strangulation.

Imagine living such a life! Thinking that you are solving problems with helpful inventions and ending up leaving absolute carnage in your wake, with your inventions killing more people than even the worse dictator on earth, and adversely affecting generations of not only humans but animals and plant-life too! The mind boggles!

Here was someone with the best of intentions, with a first class education and a fine mind. Someone lauded as a hero and success at one time, whom history now calls a one-man environmental disaster<sup>3</sup> and has nothing good to say about. It would have been so much better for the planet if Thomas Midgley had never existed. How very tragic.

But, to be fair, at the time he invented Ethyl, no one knew the dangers of lead in the environment; at the time he invented Freon, no one knew what CFCs would do to the ozone-layer.

This ties into another idea I heard of recently — the Dunning-Kruger effect — that people vastly overestimate their knowledge or competence in a field in which they are unfamiliar; basically that we don't know what we don't know, so we think we know a great deal. (On a side note, this may explain how 16-year-olds know everything!)

The fact is that all of us know very little compared to the sum of all knowledge in the universe and that even as a highly developed society, there are vast amounts of things of which we are totally unaware. In some instances we know we don't know much — like about deep space or how the human brain works. But the scary thing is we don't actually know how much, or what, we don't know!

That is one of the reasons why being a Christian makes so much sense to me. I know I don't know much, but I entrust my life and future into the hands of a God who knows ALL things — the beginning from the end, all things visible and invisible, the future and the past, the knock-on effects of every decision; and I obey Him because He alone knows the repercussions of all my actions and the legacy I will leave.

God forbid that history decides it would have been better if I had never been born! We all make some impact, big or small, on those around us and on those who come after us — our children and grandchildren, our pupils, those who read our books or watch our movies or engage with our inventions. But we are ignorant, finite creatures who within living memory have made the most incredible blunders, so I pray daily that God's will, not mine, be done.

May misguided Midgley be a lesson to us all.

1. By J.R. McNeill, environmental historian  
2. Wikipedia  
3. Fred Pearce, New Scientist

### SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



And then it occurred to him: the world needed yet another book on leadership.

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

# Drinker back from the dead

## Aboriginal teacher in remote NT woke up in a body bag!

The Aboriginal community of Maningrida, in the Northern Territory of Australia, is one of the most remote places on Earth. It is at least 500km – a nine-hour drive – from Darwin Hospital, so time was of the essence when Ray Larangai, drunk and high on marijuana, fell and injured himself badly.

Ray's wife Loretta, tells the 40Stories channel on YouTube of her panic and anxiety. "We had to rush to Darwin Hospital," she says.

"I went to the chapel and prayed and cried 'Lord, bring my husband back'. My daughter was only five years old."

Tragically, Ray died while in the ICU.

Only he didn't stay dead.

Not long after he was zipped into

a body bag and wheeled into the morgue, he woke up and thrashed around in the bag looking for a way out.

He picks up the story. "When I woke up in that body bag, I was moving around, trying to open that zipper, and I said, 'Hey, someone open that zip so I can come outside!'"

"One of the nurses heard me, and then I heard her say 'he's ... he's awake!'"

Ray says he had an incredible experience while he was clinically dead. First he was in "a dark place where he felt heat and heard people crying and yelling for help," says Loretta.

"They were grabbing my shirt to stop there but I said 'No, I want to go straight to that light'," says Ray. "They were saying 'Ray, Ray help us,

help us!' But I said 'no I want to go straight to that little light' cos I saw a little light there."

Loretta says it was while she and her family were praying that Ray saw the light.

"As he was walking, he saw this light and he found Jesus. And Jesus said, 'I am the Light of the World'."

"But he didn't know who this Jesus was. He reached that light, that light was just like, like a vacuum, just swallowed him back and made him go back to his normal body."

Since his incredible experience, Ray has committed his life to Jesus Christ.

"I thank God because only God can do that. I was a heavy drinker and heavy smoker, I smoked a lot of gunja



Ray Larangai

(marijuana)... And I'm not going to do that anymore.

"I'll follow the Lord. I'll keep following the Lord. I won't turn this way or that way. I'll just go straight

ahead," he grins.

Ray, who is also community youth teacher, tells other men in his community about God and how he found Jesus, the light of the world. •

## FAMILIAR WITH GRIEF

Loretta George knows sorrow. "I've been through many sorrows. My mum, my oldest brother, my younger sister, my youngest brother. They've all been just taken away [died]. And I haven't got a reason why they're all gone. Only God knows."

Loretta was 10 when her mother abandoned her, her younger sister and their eldest brother. "My father had just died," Loretta, a senior health worker and assistant teacher, tells 40Stories in a YouTube video. She lives in Beswick, a remote Aboriginal community in Northern Territory.

"We were left without a mother, without a father. It was hard for me. It was hard for me. I asked God 'where's my mum? You show me'."

Loretta had learned about God during Religious Education classes and Sunday School. "That seed was planted inside of me," she says. "But I didn't really have Him in my heart."

Still she continued to pray according to what she had been taught. "I just kept asking God to bring peace, bring love and bring joy."

Being abandoned by her mother had left Loretta with a deep ache – and a fierce unforgiveness. "I had anger, bitterness," she admits.

But God was working in both women, who were reunited after many years when Loretta's mother returned to Beswick.

"Only my outside appearance had love and smiles. But inside I didn't have that real love for my mum because she left me. She was supposed to be there for me, my little sister and my brother. I didn't really know the meaning of forgiveness."

"And then I felt the Lord speaking to me 'pray for your mum and forgive her and do it in action'."

In obedience, Loretta took the first



Loretta George

step. "I said: 'Mummy, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for you leaving me and for me hating you. I didn't want you back in my life, but God is telling me to say sorry and forgive.'"

"And then my mother turned around and said the same thing. 'Forgive me for not being there, for you and your sister. I was out drinking and drowning my sorrow. But now I'm here.'"

"God brought us together to forgive one another and to share that burden. And I was really happy and released. When she gave her heart to the Lord, she used to get up and dance, even though she was sick."

In fact, Loretta's mother was a talented artist who went on to win awards for her work.

"God is a good God," smiles Loretta. "Whenever we get we get

hurt, we don't want to forgive that person. But deep inside, what God is really telling us, is to show that love and forgiveness."

"When you forgive you're releasing that person, you're releasing yourself from all that burden. It sets you free. And it sets your enemy free."

"If you don't forgive, you will be carrying that burden for the rest of your life. Forgiveness sets you free."

One of her favourite Bible verses is Psalm 23, about the Good Shepherd. "God leads me to that quiet place. And I go and relax, because that's where I can hear the birds. I can see the river or the flowers. I can't hardly describe how much God really loves us."

Today Loretta declares God's faithfulness. "He never left me or forsook me. Jesus changed my life. Without Him, I wouldn't be here today."

"So I'm just thankful and grateful to the One, yeah."

"God is love," she concludes. •

## The difference between doing good and being good

It seems modern society has settled the question "Do we have to believe in God to be good?" with a resounding no. But perhaps we've confused the issue.

We're really answering the question "Do we have to believe in God to **do** good?" The answer to this question is obvious - no!

Stephen Hawking changed astrophysics; Alan Turing has been called the founder of computer science; Andrew Carnegie was one of the greatest philanthropists in history; Richard Feynman made crucial contributions to quantum physics. All were non-Christians.

But the real question is: do we have to have a personal relationship with God to **be** good?

What it is to "be good"? This list might include: be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled.

These are what the Bible describes as "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23). They are the result of God's Holy Spirit's unhindered transformative work in the lives of

those who surrender to Him.

The Bible teaches that these things do not come naturally to us. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9). King David admitted, "I was brought forth in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5). The Apostle Paul reminds us: "None is good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10) and "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

That is why none of us, on our own, can be "good enough" for heaven. Our "good" deeds are like wrapping paper on a lump of coal. We might look great on the outside but we are still wicked within. When someone scratches the surface, they are disappointed.

However, when we give our lives to Christ, He turns that coal into a beautiful diamond. It is a miracle only God can perform. Only He can change our intrinsic nature, causing us to **be** good, out of which we can then **do** good.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10 •



... but because of his mercy, He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour. – TITUS 3:5-6 NIV

# WHO DECIDES WHAT'S TRUE?

BY JANICE TEO

Harry Mengham wanted the truth. But could he handle it? The 28-year-old Perth resident, who was 19 at the time, was at a crossroads. A simple remark by someone close to him flipped everything he believed in and left him grappling with what his foundation for right and wrong was.

Harry recalls he had made a flip-pant comment about homosexuality and was surprised when the person he was with snapped at him, saying “You can’t say things like that anymore, times have changed.”

Harry was shocked. “This person used to make the same kind of derogatory remarks I had just made,” he tells *Challenge News*.

“She used to tell me not to dress gay, behave gay or do anything that would make people think I was gay.

“And yet just because the social climate had changed over the last few years, this person changed their tune as well. I felt like the ground had completely shifted under me.

“I always believed right and wrong were right and wrong no matter what society said, yet now I realised I hadn’t any objective measure of good and bad.”

Harry’s parents had raised him to be a “good” person and to be guided by his conscience. In fact, this was instilled so strongly in him that he would later become a Parole Officer for the Department of Justice. But without an objective source for truth, morality or purpose, Harry’s philosophy was left floundering.

This changed when he encountered Jesus.

Harry had grown up around Christians. His parents are not religious but sent him to a Christian school in Perth. He says he never took part



Harry Mengham has found a solid foundation for his definition of truth. Inset: Harry with his wife Celestine in 2020.

in the religious activities or requirements because it all seemed ‘dumb’ to him, but he did think that his Christian schoolmates always seemed happy.

“In my arrogance I thought they were happy because they were too dumb to know otherwise,” he confesses.

And then he bumped into Alex, an old classmate still brimming with that familiar Christian joy, at a party and blurted out: “Hey Alex, tell me about Jesus.”

A stunned Alex responded by inviting Harry to church. He went to three services but had no interest in God or the Christian faith. “All I wanted to do was reconnect with old friends. I didn’t want the singing or the sermon.

“I had no interest in church at all.

I was so very arrogant.”

He decided he would attend one last service and never return. It was an evening service, and at the end of it the pastor invited people to pray for each other. Alex turned to Harry and prayed: “Dear Lord, please don’t give Harry what he wants; give him what he needs.”

“I’ll never forget that prayer for as long as I live,” Harry smiles. “I used to think what I wanted and what I needed were the same thing but here was Alex praying this prayer and I’m thinking ‘maybe they’re not.’”

Five months later, that prayer was still ringing in Harry’s ears. Driving home one night, he stopped at a traffic light.

“It was a Thursday night, around 9.30,” Harry remembers.

“I’m not a person given to the

supernatural, but all of a sudden, as I’m waiting for the lights to turn green, this knowledge, this understanding, just landed in my heart and I knew. I just knew that the Bible and Jesus were real. Not just a little, not just here and there but all of it. All of it was real.

“There is no explanation for my experience. It was literally one second I wasn’t a believer, couldn’t believe and the next second I was completely convinced Jesus was who the Bible said He was.”

He says this was a literal example of 2 Corinthians 4:6: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”

Harry was 20 when this traffic light

conversion happened and it changed his life immeasurably. He describes it this way: “That gaping hole in my life for objective truth was filled by Jesus and the Bible.”

Six years later, sensing God’s call on his life, he left the Department of Justice. “After becoming a Christian I realised that human justice is a very poor copy of God’s justice,” he says. “I wanted to be an agent of God’s restorative, redeeming justice.”

Harry now studies at Trinity Theological College in Perth and aspires to become a pastor. He interns at his church and co-ordinates the youth ministry. In March 2020 he married fellow Christian and social worker Celestine.

Unfortunately Harry’s choice to become a Christian has led to difficulties with his family members, but he prays for them and is hopeful that there will be reconciliation down the road.

“I was also blind to the truth until God in His grace opened my eyes. I brought nothing to the table except my sin. Though I am a creature inherently corrupted by sin, I am being fixed by God over time and saved by His grace and mercy alone.” ●

## RICHES STILL LEFT A HOLE IN MY HEART

Elaine sat in her mansion, one that many would pass by and wish they could have, and hung her head in misery. Despite her wealth and success, she was lonely and depressed.

“No matter how many clothes I bought, no matter how many houses we had, my life was empty,” she speaks candidly in a One for Israel YouTube video. “It was like I had a hole inside me.”

Unhappiness was not a new concept for Elaine. As a child, she was caught up in the turbulence of an unhappy, broken home. Elaine’s father gambled and had multiple affairs which placed a strain on his marriage and his relationships with his family.

Being Jewish, Elaine was aware of God’s existence. “He was *Adonai Elohim* (the great Lord) but I didn’t really know who God was.

“I would talk to God and I would say, ‘Dear God, I think You have made a mistake. I’m not supposed to be with this family. Give me another family.’ And I would talk like that practically every night because of my unhappiness,” she says, but five-year-old Elaine did not get her wish.

Even when she grew older, Elaine struggled to escape from the dark,

debilitating place of unhappiness and turned to “smoking dope, snorting cocaine, taking sleeping pills, and drinking.”

Then, she met the man she was going to marry. His name was Brian and he managed a young English actor and singer, Jack Wild, who is best known as Artful Dodger in the film *Oliver!* Then, he was introduced to an English progressive rock band called Yes. “They went on the road and Yes’s album started to climb and do so well,” she states.

The money started pouring in and Elaine was able to live a very luxurious lifestyle in London. “But the joy of it was short-lived because I had to live my life myself,” she sighs. “All this time, I was alone and they were away for up to six weeks at a time. I was always alone.”

She admits that sitting alone at home waiting for Brian was very difficult. “When he did come home, it was like he was a stranger,” she admits. “He wasn’t a good communicator.



Elaine (no surname supplied) was wealthy but miserable.

Maybe I was in denial and I didn’t want to look at things as they were, but he was actually having affairs.”

It was a repeat of her parents’ failed marriage all over again. Elaine felt like she was missing something big in her life. It was only when a friend from L.A. sent her a letter that she found a small glimmer of hope. “The only words I ever remembered were, ‘Donna Summer got born again.’ I thought, ‘That sounds good. What does that mean?’”

Donna Summer was a famous

American disco singer. Elaine knew all about her. If Donna could come back from depression and suicide, maybe she could too.

“I was talking to God and I said to Him, ‘Born again. That sounds good to me. How do you get born again? How can I make restitution for everything wrong that I have done in my life?’”

Elaine went to her friend’s house. A woman arrived and sat opposite her at the table. She was Susan Mineo, the manager of Donna Summer, and Elaine could not stop staring at her.

Eventually, she asked, “Are you born again?” She said, “Yes.” And Elaine looked at her and said, “You have something that I want, and I know that I can’t buy it with money.”

She elaborates, “I wanted the peace that I saw in Susan Mineo’s eyes. I had been searching for that peace my whole life. And so at the table, they held my hands, and I prayed. I accepted Yeshua (Jesus Christ).”

Elaine finally found out what being born again meant. She accepted Jesus into her heart and believed that He died on the cross to save her from

her sins. Now, she was a new person, completely clean and free.

And that was just the beginning.

### I’M JEWISH AND I DO BELIEVE IN JESUS.



“When Brian found out that I had received the Lord, he went crazy,” she says. “He said, ‘What are you doing? You’re Jewish. This is all anti-Semitism.’ I wasn’t one of those people that hit him over the head with the Bible and all that stuff. I just quietly

prayed, and I lived ... I lived what I had been reading, but eventually, he left.”

As heart-breaking as it was for Elaine, she decided to get a divorce after Brian left her. “I stayed in that marriage for three years.”

Elaine smiles as she refers to one of her favourite Bible passages, Isaiah 53.

“It tells you that Jesus was pierced for our transgressions. All our iniquities were put on Him and those stripes on His back are the very things that heal us. Because I was so lost in my heart, I know this to be true. So to those people that say to me, ‘You can’t be Jewish and believe in Jesus,’ I would say, ‘I’m Jewish and I do believe in Jesus.’” ●

# YOUTH TRUTH



## Keep hold of hope

BY GREG LAURIE

A LOT of people in our culture today are starting to lose hope. Experts say that one of the reasons suicide rates are so high is because people have lost hope.

From the inside of a very large fish, Jonah was beginning to lose hope. But then he prayed. Jonah said, "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple... But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:7, 9 NKJV).

Notice that Jonah didn't have any promise that God would deliver him from the belly of that beast. But he gave thanks to the Lord while he was there.

Maybe you're going through a hard time right now, and you're thinking, "I don't feel like giving thanks to God. I'll give thanks when I get through this problem."

Give thanks to God now. When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for preaching the Gospel, we read that "at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25 NKJV).

The Bible says, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! for His mercy endures forever" (1 Chronicles 16:34 NKJV). It doesn't say, "Give thanks to the Lord when you feel good" or "give thanks to the Lord when circumstances are good."

If you're losing hope today, don't give up. I don't know what kind of situation you're in right now, but you're going to get through it. Remember this acronym for hope: holding on with patient expectation. Don't lose hope. God is in control. God is sovereign. And if He got Jonah out of a fish, then God can get you through whatever you're facing today, if you just turn your life over to Him.



### Contact Challenge!

Do you have a story to tell, a tricky question to ask or want to let us know how *Challenge* has impacted you?  
Email [harriet@challenge.news.org](mailto:harriet@challenge.news.org)

**Let PSSM introduce you to God through FREE Bible lessons!**  
[pssm.com.au](http://pssm.com.au)

---

Complete your details below and PSSM will send you your first lesson or visit our website for online lessons!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: / /  Male  Female

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under 18 years): \_\_\_\_\_

**Delivery Address:**  
PSSM Mailbox Club  
PO Box 357  
Morayfield 4506  
Queensland

**We are looking forward to hearing from you!**  
0483 326 522  
[info@pssm.com.au](mailto:info@pssm.com.au)  
[pssm.com.au](http://pssm.com.au)

# The flaw of attraction



Alex Miotto

When Alex Miotto was introduced to the 'law of attraction', the idea that her thoughts could affect her reality appealed to her. She started implementing the techniques to 'manifest' what she wanted in life.

Sharing her story in a YouTube video on her channel, Alex explained that the law of attraction is the theory that people attract what they think about.

"The whole concept is that you are in control of your life and you are responsible for everything that happens to you," she says. "You can bring in and manifest very specific things in your life like money, a car or a house. It follows the basic idea that everyone is their own personal god within their own life. So I lived a very self-focused life, believing that I was the most important person in my life and that life was pretty much just about my own personal happiness, comfort and success."

One night Alex was on a night out with some friends when they came across a group of Christians on the street.

"I don't remember how I started talking to them or what we were even talking about but somehow I ended up talking to this group," Alex explains.

"We somehow started talking about God and they ended up praying for me. They

prayed that I would just start to realise God's love for me and that He had a plan for me."

When Alex was younger she had attended church but she didn't enjoy it and when she was in high school, she stopped going.

"I decided that I didn't believe in God," Alex says. "I thought Christianity was just another religion. I probably had some bitterness towards it, from being forced to go to church [as a child]. Anytime anyone brought up God, I thought it was a bit stupid. So I essentially decided that I didn't believe in God, and I wanted nothing to do with church." But after the encounter with the Christians, she wondered if she was wrong.

"I left that night thinking, 'Maybe God is real, maybe this is His way of reaching out to me,'" she recalls.

Alex wrote in her journal after the encounter, "I think that maybe God sent me to these people to reconnect with Him and my faith."

But in the days that followed, she talked herself out of that idea.

"I just wrote it off as silly and decided I didn't believe in God anyway," she remembers. "I was like, 'This is silly. What am I doing?'"

Alex kept using the law of attraction to manifest what she wanted in life. But instead of bringing her joy, she felt like

her happiness was just out of reach.

"It caused me to put my happiness into external things," she explains. "My happiness hinged on whatever I next thought I could bring into my life to make me happy. And the more I went through life the more and more dissatisfied I became with my life. I thought that happiness was going to be something that I would experience after I had done a certain thing or after I had achieved a certain thing. It was always something that was slightly out of reach for me. I tried to convince myself that I was content with my life, but there was this subconscious feeling of emptiness that I had that I couldn't really understand why I was feeling that way."

Alex wanted to go to a music festival with her friends and when she got free tickets, she believed she acquired them through the law of attraction. But the festival was a disaster. Before it had even started, she and her friends had to come home because there was a storm.

"We went home a couple of hours after we got there and in my head I tried to justify this as the universe trying to teach me a lesson," she recalls. "There had to be a reason why this happened. But the more I considered it, the less sense it

made to me." Then something like a lightbulb went on in her mind.

"I started to consider the possibility that God was real and this was His way of reaching out to me and to show me that this whole idea of living for yourself and creating your own reality is not the way," she explains. Alex recalled the time she met the group of Christians who prayed for her about a year before.

"I started noticing God working in my life in so many ways," she remembers.

"Everything in my life — from people I spoke to, to what I was reading and watching — they all pointed to Jesus..."

### I JUST FELT SO MUCH PEACE

"I started praying that God would come into my heart and that He would take away my brokenness and my anxiety. And I just felt so much peace."

"I knew that God was real and I knew that through Jesus I was saved, and I was forgiven and I didn't have to do anything — I was just saved. I accepted Jesus, and I was saved. I didn't have to drastically change my life before I could come to God — I could come to Him in my brokenness, as I was, and His arms were wide open for me."

Alex started reading the Bible and attending church with a friend.

"I moved from a place of thinking that my happiness depended on my circumstances or what I did or what I had, to a place where I could just experience the pure joy of Jesus," Alex attests.

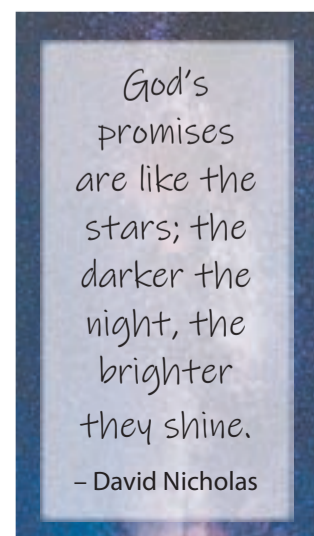
"That didn't depend on any of my circumstances. I could have so much joy because God, the Creator of the universe loved me so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for me."

"God's love for me never changed. He continuously pursued me even when I turned away from Him and wanted nothing whatsoever to do with Him. And that is how God pursues you. He loves you so much, He will never stop pursuing you."



The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

PSALM 19:1-2 NIV



# YOUTH TRUTH

## Skillet has sizzling message



John Cooper of Skillet performs in concert as part of the Tailgate Series at H-E-B Center at Cedar Park on October 10, 2020 in Cedar Park, Texas. (Photo by Gary Miller/Getty Images)

When John Cooper was a child, he wasn't allowed to listen to rock music. The "no rock and roll, no drums, no black clothing" environment he was raised in is a far cry from the world he's in now – as the lead vocalist and bassist for rock band Skillet.

During his concerts, John shares the story of his past and the challenges he has faced. In a video on YouTube from one of these concerts, he talks about his biggest challenge from when he was in the sixth grade and finding out his mother had cancer.

He says she fought for three years, undergoing chemotherapy, surgery and radiation, before she passed away when John was 14. After this his father remarried, and John says his home was like World War III had started.

"Things got hard in my family, there was a lot of fighting in my house," John recalls. "My dad and I did a lot of hateful things to each other for a long, long time. I was angry, I was mad, I wanted to hurt somebody, make somebody feel as bad as I felt. I felt misunderstood, was told I was a loser, an embarrassment to my family, an embarrassment as a son."

John's parents had raised him in a Christian home and he always believed God was there. But he started to doubt that God actually cared about what happened in his life and that he was hurting.

Alone in his room one night when he was 15 years old, John cried out to God.

"I basically said, 'God I've never questioned whether You are real, I've always believed it, but I am not sure that You are listening to me tonight. Every day is worse than the last one. And I need to know You tonight, not just as a God who made stuff, I

need to know you tonight like a daddy and like a friend,'" John says.

"I found out at age 15 in my room one night, alone, that Jesus is not just something that we talk about, He's not just somebody we read about in an old book. Jesus is not just somebody who was really good and died on a cross, I found out that Jesus was alive... In Jesus I found a friend Who would never betray me, Who would never leave me, Who would never forsake me. I found a Saviour Who didn't just make my life better, He made my life new. In Jesus I found a God, a Father, Who would never be ashamed of me."

John formed Skillet in 1996 and, in his early days touring with the band, he was approached by someone within the music industry who told him Skillet could become the biggest band in the world.

But there was a catch – they would need to stop talking about Jesus. John says he couldn't sell out his faith for rock and roll. Despite not taking the advice he received that day, Skillet has gone on to become one of the best-selling rock bands of the 21st century. Of the band's 10 albums, two have received Grammy

nominations. Two of their albums are certified Platinum and Double Platinum respectively by the Recording Industry Association of America and two are certified Gold.

Five of their songs are certified Platinum and four are certified Gold.

There have been challenges along the way however. Speaking at a youth concert in 2018, John shared his sorrow over many of his rock and roll heroes taking their own lives.

"These are people in Hollywood who've had fame and money and power," John explains. "These are people me and my friends always wanted to be. The richest people on the planet, the most beautiful people on the planet, they

have everything they could ever want and there's an emptiness in their life that is just so deep and so dreadful... There's only one hope for the universe – that is Jesus Christ."

In an interview with Jesus Calling podcast, he encourages people to cry out to God when they go through bad times.

"Then we need to turn and begin to see truth in the Bible; we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). We are not slaves to sin any longer, and that we do have a new nature and we were crucified with Christ.

"We no longer live, but Christ lives in us. Therefore, live in victory."

John's wife Corey is also a member of Skillet and the couple has toured together for the entirety of their 23 years of marriage.

They live in Wisconsin with their two children.

John regularly shares his thoughts on his podcast Cooper Stuff and has recently released a book called *Awake and Alive to Truth*.

### I FOUND A FRIEND WHO WOULD NEVER BETRAY ME



Korey Cooper, John Cooper, Jen Ledger and Seth Morrison of Skillet. (Photo by Dominik Bindl/Getty Images)

## I finally came home

Michelle Reynoso was at a three-day electronic music festival, surrounded by bright lights, people dancing, loud music and drugs. She looked around at everything that was supposed to be bringing her joy but she only felt darkness. Then two simple words popped into her head, as they had done regularly since she was a child: "Come home".



Michelle Reynoso

Sharing in a YouTube video on her channel, Michelle says that when she was young she didn't know who she was and tried to fit in with everyone around her. She started hanging out in the wrong crowd, drinking and experimenting with drugs and lying to her family. Michelle remembers feeling overwhelmed and like there was a void within her that she couldn't identify.

"When I was partying, drinking, smoking, and hanging out with certain people I thought that's who I was, but in reality I was just conforming to the people around me because I wanted to escape that feeling of loneliness. I felt like I finally found a place where I belong," Michelle remembers.

She also remembers something deep inside her telling her that what she was doing wasn't right and asking her, "Is this the life you want to settle for?"

"As I was getting these thoughts and these convictions, I chose to ignore them because I was just running away from dealing with what I had going on inside," she says. She also felt pressure to measure up and look and act a certain way so people liked her.

"I just constantly battled with not feeling liked enough," she admits. "I remember being at parties and I felt so out of place and even though I had friends and a boyfriend and I had all these things I still could not shake, this feeling of loneliness or this hole that I had deep inside of me."

Although Michelle didn't grow up attending church regularly, her family had occasionally visited different kinds of churches. Whenever they visited a Christian church, Michelle remembered feeling a peaceful presence that brought tears to her eyes. She thought one day she would like to follow God and be devoted to Him. As a teenager, there had been times she had cried out to God in her room and asked for forgiveness for the way she had been living but she would quickly fall back into temptation. But those

two words 'come home' kept popping into her head.

"I knew it was God and I chose to just keep ignoring him because I just thought to myself, 'No God, I'm not ready... I want to do things my way, I want to have fun' and then I would go to that party or go to that rave or try this drug or drink this or have sex."

But something was different at this festival when she was 19. Michelle said all the experiences she had tried didn't satisfy her and had actually left her feeling emptier than before.

"I was really just hungry and thirsty for something more," she says. "I was just done with feeling empty, with feeling lonely despite having all the things that I thought were going to fill me up. I was done. I finally cried out to God and was like, 'God it's time now. I'm ready to go all in. I'm never looking back,' and then God

came into my life and He showed me a better way. He kept whispering, He never gave up on me."

Michelle visited a church with her sister and a friend.

"I heard God say,

'Welcome home,' and He welcomed me with open arms. He didn't hold my past against me, instead He wrapped me in love, compassion and mercy. I still look back at all those times when I said no to Him and [I'm amazed] He didn't give up on me and He still pursued me and He still wanted me... I felt like I finally found what filled my soul. I finally felt true, perfect love," she shares.

"The one thing I am sure of in this life, the one thing that I can stake my life on, is that the only answer is Jesus. "There is no relationship that can top His love. There are no earthly treasures, fame or fortune that can ever outweigh His love. Go to God and He'll do the rest... God will change your heart and He will clean out your heart and you will see that God is patient to help you deal with your struggles and whatever you may be facing."



# Soft dino tissue makes strong case for creation

The late Dr Kevin Anderson was a professor of microbiology at Mississippi State University. He worked as a research microbiologist for the United States Department of Agriculture, and published more than 20 papers in scientific journals. His special interest was soft tissue in dinosaur bones.

BY ROBERT CARTER

**D**R. Kevin Anderson, a self-professed farm boy from Kansas, worked hard as a kid. He got up early for chores before school and then had to do chores again after school. He said he was proud of his roots and upbringing, but he knew early on that farm life was not his calling.

In high school, Kevin read Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain*, a fictional story about the discovery of a deadly pathogen from space. He said he was captivated by the scientific process described in the book and realized he wanted to be a microbiologist.

Kevin grew up in a Christian home. His father was a part-time pastor. He said he never really went through a rebellious teenage stage nor a crisis of faith. Instead, he told me, "I went through a period of determining whether I professed to be a Christian simply because that was my family heritage or because that was my personal faith."

He said he entered college as a creationist, but with only a modest understanding of what that meant or any of the science involved.

Kevin took several evolution classes but wondered: "Where is all this evidence everyone keeps talking about? The material presented in the courses was little more than speculation and extrapolation."

In fact, he said, "I was a much stronger creationist upon completion of my postdoctoral training than I was at the beginning of my academic years."

"I guess I must have been asleep during the five minutes in which they presented the overwhelming evolution evidence that apparently so deeply impressed many of my peers. Rather, the science information I



Kevin and a student process dinosaur tissue samples in the Creation Research Society (CRS) laboratory.

learned seemed to fit so well with creation and even Genesis."

This motivated him to understand the difference between science, philosophy, and theology, something too many scientists still do not understand.

"My creation beliefs put me in the library studying topics that were not directly related to the classes I was taking, but were a very valuable part of my maturing as a young scientist," he said.

"I certainly would have never guessed that I would be working with dinosaur bones in a laboratory or talking about dinosaur proteins. As the saying goes: to

make God laugh, simply tell Him your plans! I've had a front-row seat for some of the biochemical work challenging the various explanations currently offered by the evolutionist community.

"The presence of preserved original biomaterial in dinosaur bones has been well established, even though some evolutionists desperately try to offer alternative explanations. I think the main focus for creationists should be the lack of any sound explanation for the presence of this material in fossils."

When I asked if he had any faith-affirming encouragement to give to the next generation, he replied,

"This fallen world will try to convince you that science has 'proven' the Bible wrong and that creation is a failed idea. This is simply the rhetoric of people who are willfully denying their Creator and all the evidence that He left for us to discover in His creation."

"Evolutionists rarely allow close examination of their ideas, usually waving off challenges with dismissive claims such as, 'No real scientist believes in creation'. This is hardly an inspiring scientific conclusion, as it rests heavily upon everything but the use of science."

"The presence in many dinosaur remains of original soft tissue with intact proteins has now been well established. Since the evolutionary timeframe puts the youngest such fossils at 66 million years, this is a huge problem for secular researchers."

"From the laws of physics and chemistry, if they were anything near that old, these proteins should have completely



Kevin died shortly before this interview was to go to press. He leaves behind his wife, Diane (above), their three children, and four grandchildren.

disintegrated long, long before our time."

He concluded our interview saying, "Twenty years ago, evolutionists were literally giddy with claims that the newly published human genome sequence was devastating to those ignorant creationists."

"As more genome data and analysis was gradually gathered, that giddiness began to subside to the point that it is now almost nonexistent."

"In contrast, creation geneticists have never been so vocal. It is a

## WHERE IS ALL THIS EVIDENCE [FOR EVOLUTION] EVERYONE KEEPS TALKING ABOUT?



wonderful time to be a creationist, and even more so, a creation geneticist. The human genome data has been a godsend for us.

"For example, the concept that most of it is 'junk' DNA was embraced by evolutionists."

"It is now clear that

almost all DNA is in fact translated, sometimes into protein, but often into different forms of RNA that regulate the expression of many different

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

## Sticky truth

**HERE'S** a challenge. Design an extremely strong glue which can adhere to surfaces underwater, can withstand the strongest tides, but can be quickly dissolved when needed.

That doesn't sound like any superglue from the supermarket; but in the ocean, it is found in tiny parasites called flatworms.

Flatworms attach themselves to fish with this glue, which is made up of two non-sticky components that only adhere when the two parts come together—just like a man-made two-part epoxy resin.

University of Queensland researchers discovered this creation from specimens gathered on the Great Barrier Reef. They believe that this natural superglue will have 'almost limitless' potential as a commercial adhesive, with from underwater construction to sticking people back together again after surgery.

It's only when our technology begins to get close to God's that we start to understand the 'marvellous' designs that He has used!

protein-coding genes.

"So, even if only about two per cent of the genome codes for protein, the rest of the genome is involved in regulating the cell in many different ways."

"I find it highly ironic (actually, just plain silly) when we creationists are accused of being anti-science. Because people want to equate evolution and science, it's then assumed that to reject evolution is to reject science."

"That is hardly the case since evolution is just one interpretation of the data. Science only gives us the tools to gather that data. Scientific discovery continues to confirm creation (such as the genome data). So, we want more scientific discovery, not less."

Dr Kevin Anderson passed away unexpectedly on January 16, 2022, due to complications from Covid and will be remembered by thousands as a brave and effective warrior for the truth of the Bible and the Gospel. •

## Dar and Winny

By Richard Gunther

## GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

Young people struggle to find purpose in life, believing that 'science' has made God irrelevant. CREATION MAGAZINE provides answers for your family.



- Affirms the complete reliability of the Bible
- Refutes evolution with real-world evidence
- Helps Christians share and defend their faith

Subscribe at [CREATION.COM/MAG](http://CREATION.COM/MAG)

# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## IS IT EVER PAYBACK TIME?

BY ROB FURLONG

**"N**ever take your own revenge..." The man who penned these words, Paul the Apostle, was writing to a group of people who were living in a city and world that was hostile to their beliefs and values and they often found themselves the victims of unjust treatment.

When we are treated unfairly, it is natural for us to feel angry and revengeful. Thoughts of "payback" arise within us, and we imagine scenarios where we are the one in control and we give the culprit "what he or she deserves."

Well, at least I do!

Years ago, I read the story of a woman who discovered her husband, a British Lord, was having an affair. Her first act of revenge was to daub his expensive European car in house paint! She then went from house to house on the estate where they lived and deposited bottles of champagne

worth one thousand pounds on every doorstep – all taken from his private cellar.

"I suppose it was a bit over the top," she said, "but it gave me a great sense of resilience!"

There is a significant problem with revenge though. Initially you may feel good because you have given the person "their just desserts" but it is highly questionable your feeling of being justified will last for long.

Most people, when they have wronged or hurt another person have a deep sense within them that they need to be punished for what they have done. When they are punished or paid back, it relieves their guilt and makes them feel better about themselves.

Ironically then, it seems that when you take your anger out on the wrongdoer and exact your revenge, you are doing them a favour because they now feel they have "paid" for what they did, and the ledger is balanced!

There is another problem: where

and when does "p a y b a c k" stop?

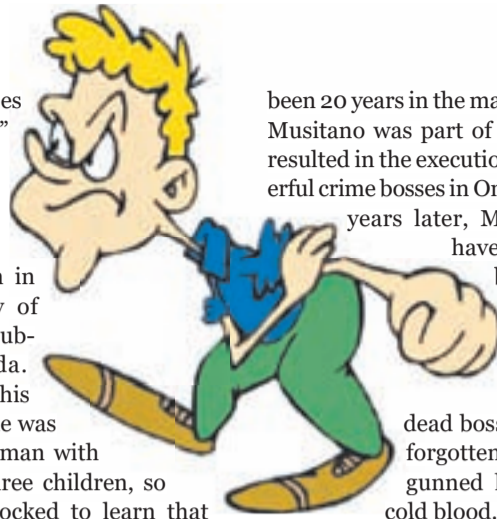
Back in 2017, Angelo Musitana was gunned down in the driveway of his home in suburban Canada. According to his neighbours, he was just a family man with a wife and three children, so they were shocked to learn that he had once been a member of the most powerful Canadian Mafia family – the Rizzuto clan.

Speaking on Musitana's death, one expert suggested his murder had

If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God's anger do it. For the scripture says, "I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord."

Instead, as the scripture says: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame." Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good.

Romans 12:17-21



been 20 years in the making. In 1997, Musitana was part of a plan which resulted in the execution of two powerful crime bosses in Ontario. Twenty years later, Musitana may have left his past behind and was now living a quiet life, but the family of the dead bosses had never forgotten, and so they gunned him down in cold blood.

The commentator went on to say that "In the Mafia, there is no statute of limitations on revenge", often leading to more bloodshed.

The same can be said for our own relationships. They may not end in bloodshed, but the fires of anger, bitterness, and rage are continually stoked by those who insist on maintaining a futile cycle of payback.

There is a better way.

"Never pay back evil for evil..."

Has your spouse betrayed you and you're contemplating having a "revenge affair?" Don't do it! As hard as it is, with God's help, choose the path of forgiveness and seek to heal what is broken in your marriage.

"Bless and curse not..."

Has a friend gossiped or lied about you to others? Don't give in to the temptation to slander them back – bless them instead! To pray a blessing for them does not mean you are asking God to bless their behaviour or words – it simply means to ask God to show them His mercy and love.

None of this is easy but living differently never is. It will take a lifetime commitment to growth and seeking God's help, but the "payback" from Him is a life of peace, freedom, grace, and resilience.

# In the dark about death?

ORIGINAL VERSION BY PETER BRAIN

**THERE** are many humorous graveyard inscriptions. Recently I came across one that said, "Here lies my wife: here let her lie! Now she's at rest, and so am I." Another said, "I told you I was sick."

Humour is one way of handling death, which we all know is anything but funny.



There are other ways of coping with death, and all the uncertainty and fear it engenders. Some say there is nothing

after death; what we see is all there is. Others rely on reincarnation as an explanation for death. Still others trivialise the awfulness of death by saying that death is just a natural part of life. And others, that everyone will go to Heaven or that God will give us a second chance after we die.

It's all fairly confusing, and sad, don't you think? Especially since God would neither have us fearful nor living in the dark about death and eternity.

He made it very clear in the Bible in Hebrews 9:27 "... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

There are some who would say that the Christian faith is escapism – but what if, as Dr I. Howard Marshall writes, "it is the only ultimate realism?"

Now, to make a claim like that there must be some clear public domain evidence. Wonderfully, there is. Marshall reminds us that "it rests foursquare on the fact that Jesus has defeated death, and anybody who can defeat death can defeat anything."

The coming of Jesus into our world gives us a new way of looking at things. He offers life eternal to all who trust Him now and will honour the choice of all who refuse Him with death eternal. There is no reincarnation or second chance. The choice of eternity hangs on the decision we make about Jesus now.

St Ambrose said, "To the good man, to die is gain. The foolish fear death as the greatest of evils, the wise desire it as a rest after labours and the end of ills."

For those trusting in Jesus, death holds no more fear than going to sleep at night. And it is all because of Jesus. We see this confidence in John Newton, who gave us the hymn *Amazing Grace*, having found forgiveness in Jesus after a life of slave trading and vice. Newton said to one of his visitors toward the end of his life, "I am like a person going on a journey in a stage coach, who expects its arrival every hour and is frequently looking out of the window for it." And the reason for his confidence was revealed by his friend who heard his final words, "My memory is nearly gone but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour".

## HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

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

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

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

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

*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**What now?**

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

**AS A NEXT STEP:**

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

\* Please tick and write clearly \*

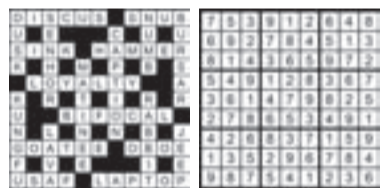
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985  
[info@challengenews.org](mailto:info@challengenews.org)

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



## Want to explore more?

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

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





**Below:** Hubert Davis speaks at a press conference introducing him as the new men's head basketball coach at the University of North Carolina at Dean E. Smith Center on April 6, 2021 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. (Photo by Jeffrey Camarati/Getty Images)

Head coach Hubert Davis of the North Carolina Tar Heels reacts to a play against the Kansas Jayhawks during the second half of the 2022 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament National Championship game at Caesars Superdome on April 04, 2022 in New Orleans, Louisiana. (Photo by Jamie Schwaberow/NCAA Photos via Getty Images)

# BEST SEAT ON THE BUS

**H**ubert Davis was installed as head coach of the North Carolina University men's basketball team in April 2021.

He remembers the first time he realised just how big a deal it was to be in that position. It was when he sat in the front seat of the team bus — the spot reserved for the head coach.

UNC is no ordinary basketball college. Its most famous player is the legendary Michael Jordan. It has won five NCAA Championships and is number three on the Division I all-time wins list.

Speaking to ESPN about his moment of truth, Hubert said: "I was like 'Wow, this is different.'

"Out of all the stuff — the practices, the press conferences, the media — all that hadn't affected me. I hadn't had a moment of thinking that I'm the head coach for the University of North Carolina, except when I sat at the front of the bus."

So where does Hubert get his strength to carry the weight of expectations? During a Sports Spectrum podcast he revealed his source — Jesus Christ.

"This is where I felt like Christ wanted me and my family to go,"

Hubert said. "Wherever He wants us to go, I'm following Him. I'm not going any other direction. ... This is not a job, it feels like a mission field, a ministry opportunity.

"I'm here to serve, and shed light on, and be an example for Christ."

At the press conference announcing him as head coach last April, he said: "The most important thing to me is my faith. My foundation is firmly in my relationship with Jesus."

It wasn't always this way with the former New York Knicks player. In fact, it was just the opposite.

Hubert ignored God growing up even though his mother, a fervent Christian, begged him to go to church.

"I wasn't interested," he admits. "My mom used to say 'Jesus has a plan for you, plans for a hope and a future, plans not to harm you, plans to prosper you' (Jeremiah 29:11). But I didn't understand."

Two days before he began his junior year of high school his mother died. Hubert was 16. "I developed tremendous hate towards God. I didn't understand why He would take away my mom."

"She didn't get to see

me play here, she didn't get to see me drafted, she didn't get to see me play in the NBA, she didn't meet my wife, she wasn't at our wedding, and she hasn't been with my kids."

Hubert did, however, attend church while at high school — because his basketball coach insisted.

"He encouraged me to go to church and slowly I started to understand what my mom was talking about.

"I started to understand the sacrifice that Jesus has made for me and how much He loves me; two days before my junior year of college I became a Christian — and then instead of being upset that Jesus took away the most beautiful person in my life — my mom — I'm thankful

every day that He gave me the best mom that I could ever have."

Today even after all the success he has enjoyed as a player and now being appointed head coach of one of the most successful college basketball teams, Hubert remains firmly grounded in Christ and not his own prestige.

He brings his faith to training sessions as well, recently sharing a Bible verse — Proverbs 4:25, "Look straight ahead, ignore all sideshow distractions" — with his players during practice.

The passage goes on to say: *Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the dust.*

Very good advice indeed for anyone in the game of life. ●



Head coach Hubert Davis of the North Carolina Tar Heels celebrates with the regional final trophy after defeating the St. Peter's Peacocks, 69-49, in the Elite Eight round game of the 2022 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at Wells Fargo Center on March 27, 2022 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Photo by Tim Nwachukwu/Getty Images)

**DISTRIBUTED BY:**