

Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

UNWANTED AND UNNAMED YET UNASHAMED

Australian wife, mother, writer, and international speaker Christine Caine has come through the challenges of her life to be unstoppable, undaunted and unashamed.

Christine Caine may have suffered sexual abuse, abandonment from her biological parents and a bout of cancer but nothing will hold her back from life.

In her latest book *Unashamed*, released last year, Christine shares that her first experience of shame came in the form of racism from her kindergarten peers because she was raised in a Greek family.

Enduring sexual abuse from several men as a child cemented this feeling inside her.

"Nobody talked about that stuff [40 years ago]. You walked in the shame of it, and you buried it," she told Today's Christian Women.

"When you're first abused, you're filled with shame about what is

happening to you," Christine says. "When it happens over a long period of time, you then begin to think it's happening because of who you are.

"So I grew up feeling a lot of rejection, shame, insecurity, fear, and anger. Over the years I've had to fight to renew my mind to a place where I understand at the core of my being that Jesus is trustworthy," she says.

Her family were always regular church goers and Christine grew up with a strong God-consciousness, which developed into a personal relationship with Jesus in her early 20s.

"When you're abused, you shut down and think you're used goods. You think God could never really do anything with your life," Christine admits. "It certainly has been the fight of my life to get to the place of trusting God to redeem the broken pieces of my past for his glory."

Christine started to serve in youth

ministry in her mid-20s, and that was when she began to deal with her own dark past, in order to help lead others to the light.

"The pain of recovery was great," Christine admits. "We have to undergo a process of restoration to have the wounds of our soul healed, and to allow Jesus to touch those dark places."

Little did she know she would become the director of nationwide youth ministry Youth Alive.

Later, she and her husband Nick founded Equip & Empower Ministries, started the A21 Campaign to prevent human trafficking, and founded Propel Women to "honour the calling of every woman, empower her to lead, equip her for sucChristicness, and develop a sense of God-given purpose".

Then, at age 33, Christine found out she had been adopted.

In an instant, her entire life's foundation was shaken. Who she was, where she was from, who her family was, what her cultural herit-



"God created me intentionally. I was not an accident," says Christine

age was; all had been a lie. She was not the daughter of Greek Orthodox immigrants. She was "unnamed #2508", as she found out once she got a hold of her real birth certificate.

The social worker report said she was "unwanted".

Unwanted, unnamed, yet surprisingly fine, because she explains, "My life is built on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ".

"Even though all the facts about my life changed, the truth really never changed and the truth is that I have a Heavenly Father, and He loves you and me so much that He

gave His only begotten son to die for us.

"My birth certificate might say I am unnamed, but God says before I was even formed in my mother's womb He had named me.

"God created me intentionally. I was not an accident. Even before I got to the planet He planned for me to be here, He planned good works for me to do when I got here. My knowledge of my circumstances have changed, but the truth never has."

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EX-SATANIST

BACK PAGE



BETHANY'S BACK

HEROIN PLAYBOY FINDS THE GOOD STUFF

David Twivey grew up a typical 'poor rich kid' who had it all financially and yet felt a spiritual and emotional emptiness that drove him to alcohol and heroin.

It was only when he had tried all money could buy and blown it all that he was finally ready to find true riches.

David's parents and grandparents were very wealthy, owning hotels and real estate investments in western Sydney. He remembers a privileged early childhood: gambling on his grandad's lap, surfing at their holiday house, catching lobsters, and being a junior life saver.

However, he also remembers that his parents were very focused on making money and climbing the social ladder, so at 11 David was sent to The King's School, an elite military boarding school in Western Sydney that specialised in punitive discipline.

"It was a hellish culture of hard discipline and I did not respond well to it," David confesses. "I even tried to overdose on aspirin at 11 because



David Twivey and his wife Beth.

I could see no future."

After high school, while he was studying economics at New South Wales University, David's grandmother died and left him a lot of money.

He bought a fancy Alpha Romeo sports car,

invested in some real estate, and found an escape from the depression and rejection of his childhood by drinking champagne and smoking drugs with an elite group of rich friends from school.

"They were happy, they enjoyed life," David says. "Money was never an issue. Fast cars, girls – it was all there. But I knew I was heading for disaster."

David had always believed there was a God.

"I went forward at the Billy Graham Crusade in the late '60s but didn't understand surrendering to the Lordship of Christ," he admits. "I wanted a magic pill to come from God to lift me out of my problems."

By 1974 David's partying lifestyle had used up all his liquidity. For his 21st birthday that year his parents gave him a one-way train ticket to Perth, plus a guarantee of a job in Dampier 1500 km to the north.

● Turn to page 2

FAMILY MATTERS

BY ALAN BAILEY

If the family is society's basic unit and is as old as the human race, why is it such a mixed blessing? Why haven't we mastered the art of living together, of relating well? Is the family just another instance of something that is hard to live with and hard to live without?

THE STRUGGLE

Probably the main cause of all our relationship problems is our own nature – our hearts. All of us struggle against selfishness, covetousness, anger and undisciplined use of our tongues.

Of course, we will all claim that we were provoked, that circumstances or other people caused us to do what we did. Whatever the reason for our lapse into aggressive and hurtful behaviour, the result is the same.

THE DOWN SIDE OF LOVE

Love is attractive and desirable. We all know that. Loving and being loved is what successful marriage and family life is mainly about. (And let us not forget that there are many people right now who are happily enjoying their family life.)

But loving is dangerous. There is a side to love which cannot be avoided. When we love someone deeply we are bound to get hurt sooner or later. Quite apart from the injuries we can sustain by the hurtful behaviour already mentioned, life and death will

see to it that we feel pain. The pain of parting, of sickness, of eventual bereavement. Some people recognise this problem about love and so determine never to lose their hearts to anyone. But this will not help in the long run. We were meant to love and be loved. Life is harder without love than it is with it.

THE FAMILY THAT LASTS

There is a family that fulfils the dream of all families.

It is the family of God. He is Father; all his children are brothers and sisters who will enjoy untainted, unending love together for eternity. He has planned it that way. Our families on earth are just a pale

picture of what He has in mind.

THE WAY IN

Many have already gone to their eternal home. Others here in this life experience what it is like to be in the family of God. Who are they? A particular denomination? People of unusual goodness?

No. People who have put their trust in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. They come from every continent on earth. They have different coloured skins and speak different languages. There are hundreds of millions of them. And God knows everyone of them.

The way into the family is through faith in Christ. To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God (John chapter 1, verse 12).



Heroin playboy finds the good stuff

● From page 1

Although "it felt like I was being sent off to boarding school again", the job as a ship ping officer at a mining company turned out to be a role David enjoyed and excelled in.

Yet every night he would drink himself into oblivion.

"It was pretty horrendous," David admits. "It was sort of an accepted thing in a mining town that you drank heavily – as long as you could work during the day."

After a few years, David tried to escape his alcoholism by returning to Sydney, and from there he followed a school friend to Sri Lanka.

But his problems followed him.

"Sri Lanka is where I got into heroin. I started up a restaurant on the beach, met [actress] Dita Cobb and went surfing with [pop star] Simon Le Bon. It was an extreme lifestyle," David remembers.

"I found myself one night on this idyllic beach in tears, crying out 'Where is my life heading?' I had lost about 30 kilograms in weight and I wasn't coping very well."

David returned to Australia where his downward spiral and heroin habit continued and was much more

expensive, costing him \$2000 a day by 1982.

"To get that money I started selling off my properties. I was living for today and in a fantasy that everything would be alright."

It wasn't long before David had lost everything and was so desperate for cash that he hocked his mother's jewellery when his parents were away on holiday.

On their return, his parents charged him with theft and, after three nights in lock up, the judge asked David if he wanted to go to rehab, to the Salvation Army, and he agreed.

On 23 September 1983 David entered a 34-week rehab programme that turned his life around.

A Salvation Army matron befriended him, telling him about Jesus and saying, "David, we're going to work together and you're going to know Jesus as your Saviour and you're going to be a changed man."

"I surrendered myself to God," David recalls. "I started to pray and read the Bible and I changed. It was



David Twivey in his office in Townsville

You're going to be a changed man

a great experience."

David's father also came to Christ about six months later, but was still shocked when, on completing the programme, David wouldn't re-join the family business but announced: "No, Dad, I think I'm called to be a Salvation Army officer."

He has been in the Salvos for 33 years and is now in charge of their drug and alcohol recovery services in Townsville, Queensland.

"It is an exciting place that God puts us," David declares, and for a man who has known as much excitement as he has, that is saying something!

Used with kind permission from Warcy magazine.

Unwanted, unnamed yet unashamed

● From page 1

Her mind began to race, but she says she "had to trust that God knew what was going on in my life and that if He brought me to it, He would bring me through it. His grace would be sufficient for me".

She wrote on her website: "I was blind-sided by a surprise attack, but God was not. I felt many emotions and very vulnerable, but I could also feel God's presence with me in a very real way."

The growth in Christine's throat was removed during a one-hour surgery two months later, leaving no trace of cancerous cells in that area.

There is a verse in the Bible that says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm chapter 23 verse 4).



Christine Caine. Photo from her book Unashamed

Christine has walked through many dark valleys in her life. But she says, "There is something about walking through the valley of the shadow of death with Jesus: You come out knowing Jesus."

"No one can take that from you. No one can silence you. You no longer fear."

Christine has also authored *Undaunted: Daring to do what God calls You to Do* and *Unstoppable: Running the Race you were Born to Win*.

Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Pasta tubes
 - 6 Baltic and others
 - 8 Mix of mural work
 - 10 In consequence (2)
 - 11 Kill prominent person
 - 12 Provide lodgings for
 - 15 "Deal ___ No Deal"
 - 16 First born
 - 18 Agreeable
 - 19 Follower

DOWN

- 1 Poorly administer
- 2 School group
- 3 Desert sight
- 4 Large dinosaur
- 5 British broadcaster
- 7 Never-ending story (4,5)
- 9 Strain, exhaust
- 13 Game, set, ___
- 14 Get out of bed
- 17 Chem class

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

6 3 8
4 2 9
7 5 1

SOLUTION PAGE 11

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

PART-TIME JOURNALIST NEEDED!

Are you an experienced Christian journalist with a heart for sharing the Gospel with people?

If so, consider applying to be a part-time journalist at Challenge, part of the team in our Perth office, 2 days a week.

For more information about this position please contact our Global Operations Director, John Palandri.

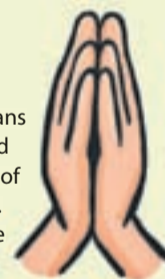
Office phone: (08) 9453 3311
Email: john@challengenews.org

share your story

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

People in prayer

SURVEYS of average Australians show that around 30 to 40 percent of us pray regularly. This may surprise you, but it is true. Lots of people pray. For many prayer is the last resort. "I have tried everything else, I might as well pray." If you regularly pray let me encourage you.



Firstly, be consistent. Don't pray only when you are in trouble. Constantly seek God in all areas of your life for wisdom and direction.

Secondly, be persistent. Don't give up because your prayer is not answered the first time, stay at it. Continue to bring your concerns to God.

And thirdly, be resistant. Some people pray, then become bitter because God hasn't answered they way they want. Resist becoming bitter and angry because God doesn't give you what you want. God is not a celestial slot machine that pumps out answers to prayer because we ask. God may have something even better in mind for you.

Do you pray? Then keep at it and be consistent, persistent, and resistant.

Old me is a stranger

BY EMMA AYRE

I came out as gay at 15, utterly convinced that was who I was and that was the life I would lead. I couldn't fathom ever being attracted to men or living that life.

But I didn't feel I had been born gay either. I remember that my first female crush was on a teacher, which I can see now was really a desire for a closer connection with my parents, as my home life was at times unstable and violent.

I was raised attending Sunday school and had a sense God was real but saw that I didn't fit in to "Christianity" and so left it to pursue a life for myself. However, the tug of a life for God was never too far from my heart.

I tried several times in my 20s to live for God (including being baptised in water in my early 20s) but I could never reconcile it with what I knew the Bible said about same-sex relationships, so I would always fall away.

With God's help I became free of drugs in my late 20s but I could

not let go of being gay. I even tried to convince myself God wasn't real, even though He had shown Himself to me at many points in my life; delivering me from dangerous situations, and speaking to my heart. I also knew of the power of the Bible and its pre-eminence above all other writings.

At the age of 32 I decided to just totally embrace being gay and not wrestle with it anymore. For a while I felt great, had new friends, a renewed

sense of identity and a relationship I was happy in.

But the more time went on the emptier I felt, because I knew that the places I was seeking satisfaction were ultimately empty without God. I felt so lonely that sometimes, by myself, I would just cry. On the outside I looked fine but inside I was crumbling, yearning so much to feel clean and free in my relationship with God.

I tried joining a gay Christian group but I saw they were twisting scriptures to live as they wanted and I never wanted to be fake. At the age of 34, in 2016, after about



Emma Ayre says nothing in the world compares to the peace she has found.

five months of wrestling I finally said to God I no longer cared what I had to give up, I just wanted Him and to follow Jesus.

God was so gracious, when I cried out to Him, His Holy Spirit met me right where I was and started lifting me up.

I was ready to leave being with women totally even if God didn't change my heart, I only wanted God now, but in the space of less than a year I can see He has healed so much in me that I no longer desire those things or that life. Being intimate with a woman is totally abhorrent to me now.

I am even hoping to one day be married.

So many other things that I thought

were integral to my personality have been changed too; now looking back at videos or photos of the woman I was, feels like looking at a stranger. I truly feel like a new creation.

It's been hard. I had to walk away from a relationship and I lost friends, but the peace I have now in my heart, the joy and assurance of Jesus with me every day, compares with nothing in this world.

If you struggle with any sin, even one like homosexuality that can feel so ingrained in a person's identity, there is healing and freedom waiting, but it's a narrow road. It has to be Jesus above all. But His love is more amazing than you could even comprehend. Cry out to him, He will help you.

"God has healed me so much"

Conned!

AUSTRALIANS are swindled out of at least \$50 million a year by local and international telephone scammers linked to organised crime, according to a recent article on News.com.au.

These sliver-tongued cold callers, often supported by slick websites, promise high returns for an average investment of \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Surprisingly, their main targets are computer-literate men in their 50s and 60s, who consider themselves financially savvy.

These crooked businesses change like chameleons, are extremely difficult to pin down and expensive to prosecute, and the best advice the police can give is "just hang up".

So why don't we?

Well, isn't it true that when asked how much is "enough" most people would answer "just a little bit more"? We are discontent with what we have.



This discontent feeds into the hands of advertisers and marketers on a daily basis, and explains why unlikely returns in an "exclusive" scheme that pays out quickly seem so appealing.

Fear and greed are not modern afflictions.

The Bible, might be speaking directly to a 21st-century audience with this warning: "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

Jesus addressed both our greed and our fear in His Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus warned His disciples, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15). And He told the parable of the rich man who stored up his goods in more and larger barns, but whose life was taken from him in an instant and his goods went to another.

Jesus said not to worry about not having enough but to trust in God's provision for His children.

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (see Matthew 6:25-34).

The bottom line? "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" (Hebrews 13:5)

Hang up on those dodgy con artists and look up to God who promises to supply all the needs of those who submit to his Lordship over their life.

The man who really saw the light

A horrific childhood drove Karl suicidal, then a light shone into his dark world

BY IAN WHITE

Karl Ayling didn't care whether he lived or died as he rode a motorcycle at 267km/h.

Betrayed by those closest to him who had sexually abused him, Karl initially channelled his anger into judo, rugby and half marathons. His dedication to physical prowess was transferred into the study of a wide variety of disciplines and 'ologies'.

Yet his life plunged deeper into despair with financial calamity, a business collapse and two failed marriages.

Karl's inner turmoil sprang from his childhood traumas. He recalls being woken by his parents arguing at home when he was about three.

"I walked down the hallway and saw dad fighting with mum. I tried to run between them, shouting at dad to leave mum alone, but dad hit my head against the wall. I remember urinating on myself from the shock."

Later, after discovering Karl's mother had been unfaithful, his father started sexually abusing him and other children.

"I was still only seven when dad went to prison," he says. "I was the primary witness for the prosecution, and then the abuse started by mum who blamed me for the break-up of the family."



Karl Ayling



Karl's autobiographical book of poems

Karl, now 56, never reported his alcoholic mother to the authorities and it was only in the latter stages of puberty he began to stand up for himself – both to her and to school bullies.

Although his mother re-married into financial security, any benefits passed Karl by.

By age 19, he was living in his own flat and travelling the world to broaden his mind – "a way of getting away from the horror of my childhood," he says.

While touring Australia and the US Karl was "mind-boggled" by the splendour of the Blue Mountains and the Grand Canyon, but at the same time he had hit the self-destruct button. Despite global travel from Rome to Rhodes, San Francisco to Sydney, he found "no relief from the grief".

He tried jumping out of aeroplanes and speeding on racetracks. He turned to sex, drugs, and rock and roll. But nothing gave him the answer.

Karl survived a desert smash in Arizona, a near-miss mid-air collision in a light aircraft, and another close call when a business trip plane almost crashed after being caught in a furious

cross wind. He believes God spared him.

Finally, at 41, broken, dishevelled and suicidal, Karl walked into a church. Still hooked on sex and pornography, he looked up at a huge cross and saw a beaming light he knew was not imagined or artificial.

He literally "saw the light", encountering God's love right then and there.

"Something immediately shifted in my heart by a very gentle yet real shining of a light. I knew the God-shaped vacuum in my life was being filled."

Karl says after that first experience of God, Jesus Christ turned his life around.

In his autobiographical book of poems *Massive Power Massive Love*, Karl charts his gradual healing. He transformed from a sex addict suffering from undiagnosed obsessive compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder into someone who believes his "conception was not some random event, but an orchestrated, celestially planned one ... seeking, finding and working out my purpose ... delayed by a convoluted pathway strewn with missed opportunities to find a genuine relationship with God."

The father of two, who remarried in 2015, has a "new, tender heart" to help those who have come from the same darkness he has – survivors all forms of abuse.

The product of two broken families, he learned to forgive his parents after he found God's forgiveness through Jesus for everything he'd done wrong himself. "I'd left a trail of destruction and horror behind me as I verbally and physically abused women," he candidly admits.

Karl believes God also healed him of an eye condition that should have left him blind. But he is most grateful that the spiritual eyes of his heart have been opened by God's light.

BORN TO SING

She has penned songs for Grammy Award winners and is one of the most sought-after writers in her industry – but Mia Fieldes' journey did not always point to such success.

The songwriter explains that when she started writing songs as a child, she knew she wasn't the best singer or musician.

"I only played the euphonium, which is like a tuba and not at all helpful in writing songs," she writes on her website.

"Plus I was the very overweight, un-liked kid with bad acne – there was nothing about me that made me popular," she adds in an interview with *Warcry*.

Yet she never doubted her destiny as a songwriter, because she felt a call on her heart to write special kinds of songs.

"I would write these letters to God when I was 13 or 14 saying, 'One day I'm going to write songs about you that go all over the world'," she tells *Warcry*. "I was just convinced that God was going to use me.

"I had this deep revelation that despite being an identical triplet, God was going to use me for something unique and special."

The youngest of triplets born to a

single 22-year-old mum, Mia's family lived out of a car before they stayed at a women's refuge and later in government housing.

Mia's first experience of the church – and Jesus' love – was through the Salvation Army.

"Some of the [Salvation Army] officers got to know us and picked us up on a Sunday morning to take us to Sunday school. We were only four or five," she says.

"We used to sing all these songs about Jesus and who He was. One day they said, 'He can live in your heart and be your best friend,' and I remember thinking, 'I want Jesus in my heart'. It was so real for me – the songs, the stories, everything."

Eventually her whole family would become Christians, and not only did Mia gain a faith in God through her experience, she also gained a father.

"My dad actually taught us at Sunday school when my mum first found Jesus," she laughs. "They got married when I was nine."

Looking back, it is clear God's love anchored Mia's family through the hard times.

"I think the biggest thing for everyone in our family is that we've learned to make God the first place we go to no matter what we are walking through," she says.

"He has every answer, every miracle, every breakthrough we could ever ask for. Relying on Him is how we have gotten to know what He is like. Every family has its own stuff, but I love that mine knows how to live gratefully."

At 17 Mia moved to Sydney where she spent the next 10 years at Hillsong Church. She began singing and writing songs that would go on to be recorded by Hillsong United and Hillsong Live.

She has collaborated with top Christian artists Michael W. Smith, Meredith Andrews, Matt Maher, and Kari Jobe, to name a few.

In 2013, Mia won ASCAP and BMI awards for the hit collaboration "Proof Of Your Love", recorded by; For King & Country. Her recent song with Francesca Battistelli, "He Knows My Name", has seen consecutive weeks as a #1 on radio.

"For a long time I didn't think I could sing," she says. "I know that's silly – but it's funny how we let ourselves believe that we aren't good enough, and I definitely did that for a long time.

"It's actually been a great journey where God put strategic people in my life along the way who really encouraged me in the things I thought I couldn't do."

Mia only began songwriting full-time a year before she moved to her current hometown of Nashville, Tennessee. Having lived in Nashville for six years, she has found that her love of God has acquired her a new family – a church community called The Belonging Co. where she leads worship.

She explains what worship means to her: "Worship is a response. I don't want to complicate it. One of my biggest joys is giving people songs they can respond with in their own way. Songs where they go, 'That's something I've always wanted to say but maybe didn't know how'. When I can give people some sort of framework



Despite being an identical triplet Mia Fieldes just knew she was destined for something unique.

for their own unspoken prayers, or faith for the season they are walking through, there's nothing better than that."

Mia seeks to encourage others as she sets the stage for encountering Jesus.

"To that end, Mia seeks to encourage others as she sets the stage for encountering Jesus. "I'm not thinking 'How can I impress people with clever lyrics or intricate melodies'. I'm thinking of the contractor who's had a hard week at work, or the mom who's just found out her kid has ADHD, or the 12-year-old girl who's really lonely at school. How can I make it easier for them to see God

and give them something that's going to help them lean into Him and what He's saying?"

"Lifting your eyes is always harder when you're going through something difficult. But if you give people songs where they can lay their cares in the hands of God, look to His kindness and remember that He is with them, that's a wonderful thing."

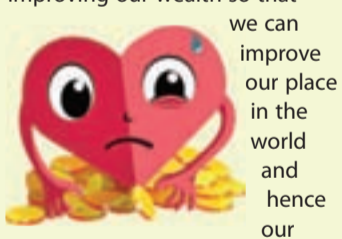
Mia has certainly come a long way since her days writing letters to God. Yet one thing remains the same: her love for God, and her love for family.

"God never stops reaching out for us," she says. "He is hope itself – it's impossible to be in His presence and not see things change." •



STATUS ANXIETY

IN HIS book *Status Anxiety*, Alain de Botton says that for many of us our lives are taken up with improving our wealth so that



we can improve our place in the world and hence our sense of personal status. So what does De Botton say is the motivation behind this activity and anxiety?

"It might be more accurate to sum up what we are searching for with a word seldom used in political theory – love." De Botton believes that the search for money, fame, and influence is actually a search for love – a sense that we 'matter' more than anything else.

We all want to be loved, to believe we are really worth something. The Bible gives us a simple yet powerful truth. "For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son – so that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."

God loves you. God is reaching out to you. God wants to know you. Just reach out in faith and God will respond. •

Never really abandoned

The experience of months of sexual abuse, school bullying and a childhood home dominated by alcoholism left Leoné Boshoff struggling to understand where the loving God that she had committed to as a nine-year-old had gone.

"I couldn't understand why (God) would allow all the bad things happen to me. What horrible thing had I done to deserve this?" she wondered.

"I felt ugly, dirty and alone. I grew angry at how unfair life seemed and got mixed up with the wrong crowd. I got involved in all the 'cool' stuff just to forget about life."

Life got harder for her when Leoné fell pregnant at the age of 16, and when her boyfriend then made another girl pregnant at the same time, her rejection and loneliness increased.

She says that it was a miracle that she was able to keep her baby girl, despite strong opposition, and raise the child herself.

"A decision I have never regretted," she says. At 18, when Leoné's mother died of alcohol poisoning, she moved into an even worse situation with her new boyfriend, who was both an alcoholic and a drug-addict.

"This is the point where I just stopped trying and surrendered everything.

"At the age of 23 I was sick of the life. I was unhappy and felt all alone in the world."

Leoné decided to go to a local church in an



Frikkie and Leoné Boshoff are now pastors of a church. (Photo: Facebook)

attempt to try and pick up the pieces of her life.

"I realised that it was foolish of me to think that I could make life work on my own," she said.

There she rediscovered the passion that she had had for God as a little girl.

As a child she has heard about Jesus' love and death for her on the cross from a Christian evangelist who came to her primary school, and she had eagerly embraced Jesus as her personal saviour.

"I learnt that through (all I had been through) He had never left me.

"God stepped in when I said 'yes' and He gave my life a whole new make-over. He took my shame and renewed my heart.

"I am no longer a victim, now I live in victory.

"Ever since then I have pursued Him with everything I have. I still make mistakes," Leoné admits. "I am not perfect, but I dedicate each new day to the Lord and try to live each day for Him."

Her boyfriend also found freedom from his drug addictions by surrendering his life to Jesus and they married in 2008. They are now leading a church and have had a second daughter together.

"I study the Bible daily and do what it tells me, no compromise," Leoné declares.

"I once lived by my own desires, using my needs and emotions as a compass, but now I rather trust God to decide what is best for me."

Leoné does not fully understand why God allowed her to go through all she did but it is enough for her to know who God is.

"Although we still live in the world where there are many troubles, I have the assurance, joy and hope that is steadfast and unshakable. God is my rock, my unshakable foundation," she says. •

OLDIES BUT GOODIES

BY JODY BENNETT



IT amazes me that some things that have long ago been surpassed in a technological sense are still around and flourishing today. I'm sure that, at one time, these "simpler" inventions would have been predicted to go the way of the dinosaur because of modern advancements.

Think about bicycles – they have been far surpassed as a form of transport by the car, bus, train and motorbike, but still vast quantities of bicycles are sold each year and riding one is a skill almost every child acquires.

Despite being 'old school', they still have the advantage of not needing a license, being quicker than walking and just as independent, being environmentally and physically friendly, and being cheap to run.

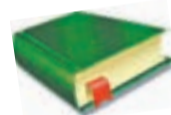
Not only are bikes still made, they have advanced greatly in design, to the point where you can get some that do cost as much as a car!

The humble lead pencil is another example. It has been overtaken by push-pencils, pens, markers, textas and, more recently, styluses, but still each year on school booklists, thousands of HB pencils are required. Like the bicycle, pencils have the advantage of being cheap and good for children, as they are easy to use. Pencil marks are also easy to correct, won't run, work on surfaces pens cannot (like wood or brick) and wash out of fabrics, so are useful for dress making.

Apparently US aerospace engineers worked very hard to develop a pen that would write in space under conditions of zero gravity – Russian astronauts just used pencils!

Even printed matter, liked this newspaper, books and magazines one would have thought would quickly become obsolete because of electronic media. But though the printed page is not in as great demand as it used to be, it is difficult to imagine that the world will ever be completely paperless. Books don't need to be recharged, don't keep interrupting your reading with Facebook updates, are easier than screens to read in the sun and lend to others, safer to read in the bath, and less likely to be stolen at the beach!

Also, printed matter can be easily distributed and marketed to people who would never go looking for that information online.



In the same way, many people thought the Bible would have become obsolete by now – superseded by other philosophies and religious writings or debunked by discoveries of modern science. An ancient book, written by a largely despised, nomad people group and cobbled together from writings of different eras and genres.

And yet the Bible is still the most read book in the world, available in every major language, in multiple formats and translations, having withstood every scrutiny levelled at it by archaeology and history. It has inspired millions to accomplish important things like abolishing slavery, starting hospitals, orphanages and universities, and discovering and civilizing the world.

In addition, many millions have found the Bible's teachings to be so revolutionary and life changing that they have been prepared to die or suffer torture, rather than deny its instructions.

In this crazy world of change and rush, why not enjoy some timeless insights and age-old goodness by taking time out in your busy day to centre yourself with some unchanging wisdom from the greatest book ever published? ●

From New Age to new life

Former New Age enthusiast renounced his beliefs after an unexpected personal encounter



Steve Bancarz shares his full story on Youtube.

At age 22 Steve Bancarz was "living the dream" with a sports car, a mansion and a New Age website receiving a minimum of 150,000 hits a day. Website advertising revenue was making him a fortune but nothing could shake the feeling of unfulfilment in his life.

His "journey down the rabbit hole", as Steve describes on his Youtube channel, began in high school when he was exposed to a television series about extra-terrestrials.

"This caused me to question the Biblical worldview and everything I had been brought up to believe," Steve says. "I started to research aliens obsessively."

Steve had grown up in a Christian home and attended church regularly but never considered himself a Christian.

His alien research led to research into channelling, hidden knowledge, spiritual science and mysticism. Knowledge led to practise and Steve delved into Tarot card reading, lucid dreaming, astral projection and meditation.

"I was having out-of-body experiences," he recalls.

In November 2012, Steve started a Facebook page to share information he had gathered from four years of research into New Age practises. The page exploded in popularity and he was invited to write for a well-known New Age website.

Two years later he gained enough of a following to launch his own website and the money began rolling in.

"I was full of greed and materialism. I was obsessed with making money," Steve admits.

At the time he believed God was the energy of the universe, an impersonal force, and that to have a relationship with God meant having a relationship with your inner self.

Steve was majoring in philosophy at university and Christianity seemed to him naïve and childish.

But he says: "In my research I saw

testimonies of people having seen Jesus in near-death experiences, or having seen heaven or hell. I was moved by their testimonies. I had to admit that there is something unique and special and pure and holy about Jesus. I couldn't put my finger on it and I couldn't reconcile it with what I was researching and experiencing in the New Age."

He put his questions and confusion on the back shelf but "always knew there was something different to the person of Jesus".

Then, says Steve, life issues led him to "face all the traumas and skeletons in my closet at the same time".

He began reading the Bible and exploring things pertaining to Jesus more open-mindedly but

was still writing New Age articles.

"I still felt lost inside," he admits.

"[Then] one night I went outside on my balcony fell on my face weeping and reaching out to Jesus; and I felt the atmosphere around me start to change. I could feel in the air that there was something holy and pure around me. And it was also personal. I knew I was in the presence of Jesus.

"The wind felt like it was infused with His presence and when it hit me it just completely broke me. I felt like He was showing me Himself, who He is and where He stands in relation to me and to life."

People had been telling Steve that Jesus is God and Christianity it is not some complex mystical thing.

Now, as he stood in the presence of God, he realised "Oh my gosh this is it!"

He started thinking about all the New

Age things he had been involved with and realised how deceived he had been.

Steve's life was radically transformed.

"I never wrote another New Age article again. Drinking stopped, smoking stopped, pornography stopped, sex stopped and addictions just fell away immediately," he shares.

"For the first time in my life I had a conviction to live righteously and to live a holy life before God."

In the New Age there is no belief that sin separates you from God but now the conviction of sin and the need to deal with it was strong.

A day or two later Steve cut all of his work ties and deleted everything on his site affiliated with the New Age. He threw all the idols out of his house, burnt all his occult and new age books, and started seeing through his new spiritual lens that things like astral projection, channelling and aliens, which he had previously seen as harmless were "false, dangerous and demonic".

Steve's income was cut by 97 per cent without his writing income and he had to sell his house and car.

"And I was glad to!" he smiles.

Steve has now started a new website www.exposingthenewage.com and his testimony can be seen on his Youtube channel From New Age to Jesus, which also debunks New Age beliefs and explores the evidence for Christianity.

Steve wants others to know: "God is not an energy blob, not an impersonal force, prana, or a void, God is a personal being who loves you and sees you and has a purpose for you. It is his promise that if you seek Him diligently and sincerely that He will reveal Himself to you, as it says in Jeremiah 29:11." ●

"For the first time I had the conviction to live righteously"

Jesus said: 'I am the Truth'

BY SUSIE KEARLEY

NO-ONE denies that truth is important and no one wants to be deceived. We all know the consequences of untruths, whether it's adulterous partners, dodgy salesmen, email scams or paedophiles posing as teenage friends on social media.

And our appetite for the truth has never been greater. For example, we want truthful politicians and honest reporting, but it can be hard to separate the facts from spin or bias. How do you know whose word to trust, when all parties have their own agenda?

People were no different in Jesus' time, so when He said "I am the Truth"* it immediately got attention. He wasn't just saying "I'm telling the truth" – He was claiming to BE the truth. How can anyone BE the truth?

People have different opinions: their version of 'the truth' is based on their perspective of reality. But when Jesus said "I am the Truth" He meant "I am God: the ultimate reality". God is eternal, all-knowing, and the answer to all the big questions. He IS

the truth.

Only through Jesus Christ can the truth about God be truly revealed to us, because He came to earth to show us

God – to show us himself. When you start to know God, the big truths, and the purpose of life itself, become clearer.

This is difficult to grasp, and in Biblical times they weren't sure what to think either. Some objected to Jesus' claims, and said He was being blasphemous. Yet over the two thousand years since He said it, the truth has been proven in people's experience of knowing Christ. When they've put their trust in Him, they've found the truth they were seeking.

So if you're confused, but keen to discover the truth about life itself, you don't have to look any further than Jesus. Find out more about what Jesus said for yourself. Then start believing Him.

He never lies. ●

*Find it in the Bible: John chapter 14 verse 6



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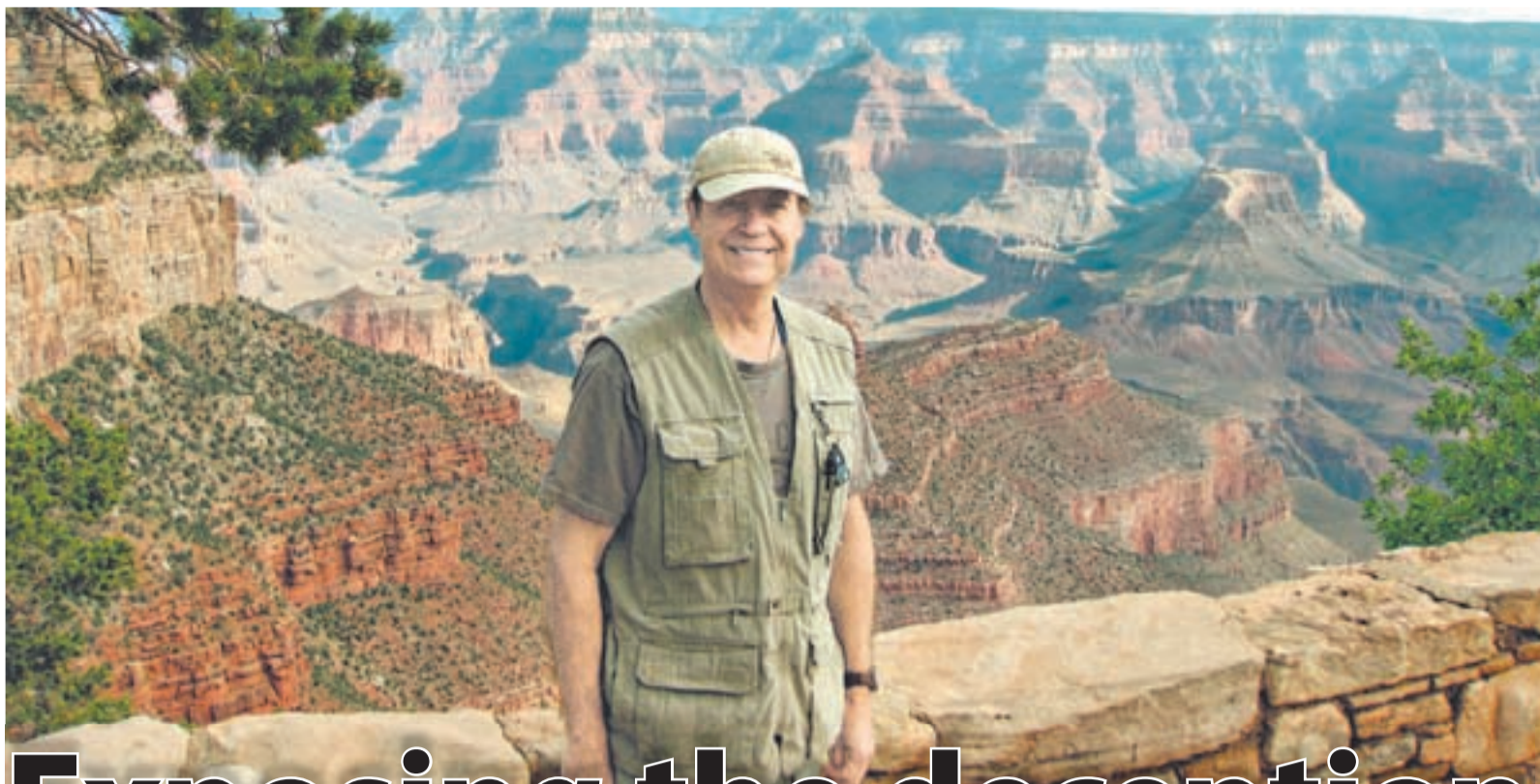
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Exposing the deception

Carl Wieland chats with geologist, marine scientist, author and educator Roger Gallop.

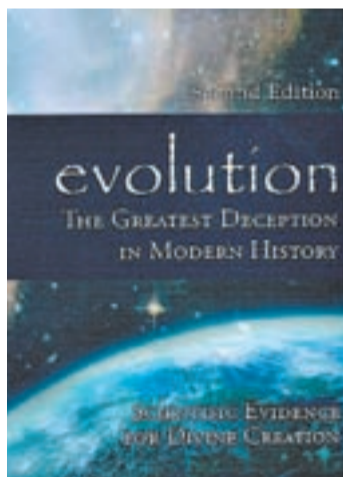
BY CARL WIELAND

After receiving a bachelor's degree in geology from the University of North Carolina, Roger G. Gallop obtained a master's degree in oceanography from Florida Institute of Technology in 1975, where he also earned his Ph.D. in science education in 2002. A certified professional geologist, he has spent more than 35 years as a geotechnical and marine scientist.

Roger says he was greatly blessed by growing up in a Christian family but despite being baptized at age 10, he says, he progressively became 'disconnected' from his faith, much of which had to do with being indoctrinated with evolution and millions of years. This started at high school, and was particularly acute while attending college. "This period can be a real 'stumbling block' for many students from Christian families," he admits.

"Nonetheless, I was open-minded enough to question what they were telling me, especially in geology. I was fortunate to have a visiting professor who admitted that the earth's landforms were better explained by large-scale catastrophic processes rather than 'slow and gradual' over billions of years, and who said that other geologists were thinking along those lines too. That was important to me later on."

While serving post-Vietnam at the US naval base in Cuba, Roger started attending a weekly Bible study with fellow marines. "I began reading books about Bible prophecy and Genesis creation, and renewed my faith in Jesus Christ and God of the Holy Bible."



"Prior conditioning is immensely difficult to challenge"

After ten unfulfilling years with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Roger resigned to start his own business. What followed were years of much struggle and sadness for Roger and his wife, Katharine, due to death and illness in the family.

"We found ourselves walking through a dark and uncertain time of our lives (financially, physically, and emotionally—but not spiritually). God answered our heartfelt prayers, including for Katharine's total recovery [from cancer], and we persevered.

"In fact, one of the big things I've repeatedly learned throughout my life is perseverance; the other ones are humility, and learning to overcome adversity through prayer and faith."

Eventually Roger was able to return to his studies at FIT, and obtained his doctorate over a span of five years—all while overseeing his growing business some 300 km away.

During the 1980s and '90s, Roger says, "I grew increasingly weary of public television, the secular media and public schools and colleges continually promoting evolution as 'fact'. Eventually, fed up with the way in which people were being led astray, he says, he was motivated to write and self-publish his book with the no-holds-barred title of *evolution—The Greatest Deception in Modern History* (deliberately missing the opening capital letter). It is well illustrated and covers a wide range of topics and arguments.

Regarding why the majority of scientists believe in evolution, despite the evidence against it, Roger said: "I can think of several reasons. First, they are the product of a secular educational system, one that assumes evolution and long ages 'as fact', and

contrary evidence is simply ignored.

"Then there is the fear of being ridiculed—a any time you bring up your belief in creation, or even the name of Jesus, you are considered an outsider or a freak. You cannot get a federal grant for research if you are labelled a creationist. It's easier for most to 'go with the herd'.

"And of course, as 2 Peter 3:5 indicates, people 'deliberately forget' about creation and the Flood. They just choose not to believe. This is part of that general post-Fall tendency of humans to rebel against the Creator, which is described in Romans 1:18–32—it reads like today's headlines.

"Despite the common perception that scientists are 'objective', they actually tend to be some of the most biased people," Roger reveals.

"I did my doctoral dissertation on this very subject, that when people learn something and vocalize it repeatedly it's very difficult for them to change their mind. It seems that the mind finds it hard even to process information that conflicts with previously accepted data; prior conditioning is immensely difficult to challenge."

Nonetheless, Roger says, "It still amazes me that people with a science degree are not willing to step back and say, 'I want to know the truth', and ask serious questions. It's always a wonder to me, too, why people would actually favour evolution over creation. Any credible scientist should know that today's 'big evolutionary story' goes against the laws of science—such as the law of causality, the law of biogenesis, and the laws of thermodynamics;1 but creation is perfectly consistent with such laws. Biblical creation fits the facts."

Today, he and Katharine continue to routinely read the Bible together



each night, and he says, "The Lord blesses your life through the time you spend in His Word each night—never forgetting that life's securities and blessings are gifts from God.

"Ultimately, it is not about where you have been, it's where you are going that matters."

Roger's book is available through Creation Ministries International at www.austore.creation.com

Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Human gene mutations "arose in the last 200 generations"

WE at Creation Ministries International have periodically pointed out that, from a biblical perspective, there have only been about 200 human generations since time began. (e.g. *Creation* 31(2):18–19, 2009; *The Non-Mythical Adam and Eve!*.) In that light, consider these recent findings by evolutionary geneticists, who studied more than one million mutations, or changes to our DNA code, found across human populations.



"Most of the mutations that we found arose in the last 200 generations or so," said Joshua Akey of the University of Washington. He and his co-researchers found that of the mutations likely to be harmful, 91% emerged in the past 5,000 years. Many of these have only existed for the past thousand years.

Echoing Akey's statements, population geneticist Alon Keinan of Cornell University said: "Humans today carry a much larger load of deleterious variants than our species carried just prior to its massive expansion just a couple hundred generations ago."

These observations match the Bible's declaration of a world "in bondage to decay" since Adam sinned (Romans 8: 19–22). Evolutionary geneticists belatedly realized that the rate of degradation of the human genome poses huge problems for the evolutionary timeline.

- Analysis of 6,515 exomes reveals the recent origin of most human protein-coding variants, *nature.com*, 28 November 2012.

- Human evolution enters an exciting new phase, *wired.com*, 29 November 2012.

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Who's your daddy?

As a satanic priest, John Ramirez was fine with the idea that he was going to hell when he died – until he saw it for himself

John grew up in the south Bronx in New York in a family that practised Santeria, an Afro-Caribbean religion that worships demons. His father came from a family of witches and warlocks and was heavily into spiritualism. He was also an abusive drunk and John got no love or compassion at home.

When John was 10, his mother took him to a tarot card reading, where she was told her son would be blind in 30 days if he wasn't given over to the devil in a certain ceremony in which demons were invited to possess him. From then on John's life and personality changed.

"My whole childhood was stolen," he shares in a Youtube testimony "From 7pm to 5am I would go to devil church to be trained by high rank witches and warlocks. It felt like my whole life was cloaked in blackness."

His involvement deepened quickly. Within years John was able to astral travel - leave his body and send his spirit to other neighbourhoods to curse them with prostitution, murder, suicide or drugs. But sometimes he would see a group of people holding hands and praying and he couldn't do anything in those areas.

For the first time in his life he felt powerful and respected.

"People knew that I was a force to be reckoned with. I liked that power," he remembers.

When John was 13 his father was murdered in a bar fight, for which John credited the devil with alleviating his mother's suffering.

"The devil became my daddy," he says, "He said practise my religion and I'll give you anything you want, just ask."

John says the presence of Satan became to him like

a family member and he would say "What is it my father, what do you want to speak to me about, what would you like me to do?"

Eventually he became a high priest in Palo Mayombe, a form of African spiritualism.

"The spirit realm is more real than the natural realm and we fail to see that," John says, "And whatever is not covered with Jesus Christ is an easy target to bring down."

John was often asked to curse people with disease or death, and he was able to do this, but once he remembers being asked to kill a woman and the spells didn't work. He couldn't understand why. The devil told him that "the God she serves said to let her alone and not to touch her". John wondered who this God was.

Another time he went to curse a

group of street evangelists that were speaking in his neighbourhood, but when he got there he saw a ring of fire around them and none of his curses would work.

Then he met a girl who invited him to church and who took him to visit her parents, who talked to him about Jesus.

He found Christians amusing and harmless. "They were just kisses, hallelujahs and we love yous," he would mock.

Then one Sunday John went forward during an altar call but wasn't prepared for what happened next. All of a sudden the devil took hold of him and made him start strangling the pastor. The men in the congregation had to intervene. Then some of the congregation members got up and started to pray to God and John saw the power of God that day.

John was urged to say "Jesus is Lord" and when he finally got the words out the situation stopped. He was embarrassed about the outburst but not sure what to do next.

Then a few days later one of the church elders brought him a sweat-shirt and said "Jesus wants you to have this, you are a warrior for Christ." The gift from God, a token of His love, moved John powerfully. "To me that was amazing. I couldn't believe Jesus loved me," John remembers.

"But I was committed to the devil and the demons and I was between two worlds."

Soon after he decided to end the spiritual struggle within him by killing himself.

He started to talk to God, reviling Him and pledging his allegiance to Satan then, at the end, he whispered "If you are bigger than the god that I serve, you show me tonight or you leave me alone."

John fell asleep and dreamed he was on a subway train full of people heading very fast for somewhere he knew was no good. The doors opened and he stepped out into the darkness of hell. He felt heat unlike anything on earth, heard wailing like "a cross between a child and an animal", and experienced terrible hopeless fear. He tried to find a way out but the



John Ramirez discusses the demonic meaning of some graffiti on a wall in New York in this image taken from a Youtube clip.

INSERT: The cover of John's second book *Unmasking the Devil*.

devil appeared to him in huge form and said to him, "I've been with you since you were nine years old, I've been a father to you, I've given you everything, I gave you powers and a name in the kingdom of darkness. I destroyed people for you. Now you want to leave and betray me? You belong to me, I own you and you're not going to leave. You know too many secrets about my religion."

Then, as Satan reached for John, a three-foot (90cm) cross appeared in John's hands and he put it between himself and the devil and suddenly the devil felt powerless "like nothing, like a baby".

"There is no greater love than the cross," John proclaims emotionally, "Grace and mercy showed up in hell for a despicable, arrogant, demonic, self-centered, selfish person like me."

When John woke up he was a changed man. "I knew that Jesus was Lord and I bent my knee (bowed before him)".

He took a piece of paper and wrote: "I am a servant, a slave of Jesus Christ, and I will serve you all the days of my life."

John then threw out all his witchcraft paraphernalia, which was very valuable.

That was 16 years ago and John says he wouldn't trade anything for what he has found in Christ. "For 25 years of my life I was able to do anything to anybody, anywhere but now I count that as foolish compared to gaining Christ. Christ is my all-in-all. He is the breath that I breathe. He walks with me, I hear the sound of his voice in my ear."

Now John tells everyone he can about Jesus and has written a book called *Out of the Devil's Cauldron: a journey from darkness to light*.

"I've got peace. I'm not empty any more. I got fulfilment, I got a purpose and a destiny today. And all because I said yes to the cross," John affirms. "We don't have to die in our sins and we don't have to shed blood like in Palo Mayombe, Jesus shed the blood for you. That's the blood that counts, the one at the cross."

"No voodoo, hex or incantation can separate me from the love of God."

"I switched daddies. I was cursed but now I am blessed, because Jesus became cursed for me," he concludes.

John's books *Out of the Devil's Cauldron: a Journey from Darkness to Light* and *Unmasking the Devil* are available from Amazon.

Details about the Devil

IN the cult movie *The Usual Suspects* Kevin Spacey's character Verbal Kint famously says "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist".

The Devil seems to be doing a good job. In a 2009 poll conducted by Nielsen, 68% of Australians said they believe in God, while only 37% say they believe in the Devil.

Belief in the Devil, or Satan as he is also known, has been made ridiculous by portrayals of him as a cloven-hoofed, pointy-tailed, red, goat-like creature, carrying a pitchfork.

What does the Bible actually say about the Devil and does one have to believe in him to be a Christian?

How did the Devil come about?

The Old Testament books of Ezekiel (chapter 28) and Isaiah (chapter 14) explain that the Devil was created by God originally as a beautiful angel called Lucifer, which means Day Star, who became full of pride and decided he no longer wanted to serve God but to be God.

For this rebellion Satan was thrown out of heaven, taking one third of God's angels with him (Rev 12:4, 7-9) but we see in the book of Job, (chapter 1) that he is still able to come before God's throne and talk with Him, and that Satan is also free to roam the earth.

Is the Devil as strong as God?

Unlike God, Satan is a created being and therefore limited by time and space. He is not all-knowing, all-powerful or everywhere present at the same time as God is. Nevertheless, he is a very powerful adversary whom even the archangel Michael "dared not bring ... a reviling accusation [against], but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"

Thus the yin yang idea of a balance between good and evil is not Biblical, as God has twice as many angels as Satan and Satan has to have God's permission to act.

Does the Devil rule in hell?

The idea that the devil is ruling a wicked kingdom in hell is entirely without Biblical foundation.

In fact, the Bible says that hell is prepared as a place of torment for those angels, now demons, who rebelled against God (Matt 25:41),

and was never intended for people at all, although we condemn ourselves there by not accepting God's payment for our sins on the cross through Jesus' death and resurrection. Hell is not a place where Satan will rule but a place where he will suffer eternally (Revelation 20:10).

The Bible teaches that until Jesus comes again to rule and reign on the Earth, Satan is the prince of this world (John 12:31) who has the power to give riches and power to those who worship him - as he tempted Jesus to do in the wilderness. (Luke 4:5-7)

But as Matthew 16:26 says "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

Jesus warned that the devil is a liar. "[The Devil] ... does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44)

Part of this lie is that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) in order to make wickedness seem appealing.

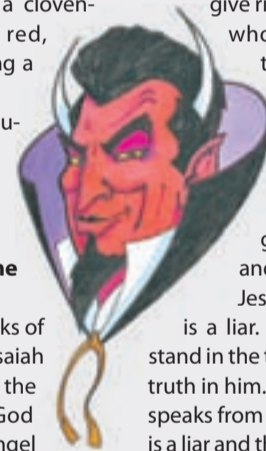
Satan hates humans, as those created in the image of God and whom God loves, and he hates especially those who choose to obey God. Peter warns Christians: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8) and Jesus called Satan the thief who comes to steal, to kill and to destroy (John 10:9).

By becoming a Christian we declare war on Satan (Ephesians 6:12) but the Bible promises us that the Holy Spirit of God within us is greater than he who is in the world [Satan] (1 John 4:4).

Does one have to believe in the Devil to be a Christian?

Believing in Satan is not a requirement for salvation, but it is a requirement to be able to live the Christian life.

Satan's existence is taught throughout the Bible. Seven Old Testament books teach his existence and every New Testament writer refers to his reality and activity as a personal being. Jesus also referred to Satan 25 times in the Gospels which points to us needing to know who he is and what he does.



Building Better Marriages

GOD CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

BY ROB FURLONG

God can make a difference in your marriage. I know this from firsthand experience.

Karen and I both come from dysfunctional family backgrounds, so even before we were married we made a commitment to God and each other that we would work hard to not repeat the mistakes of previous generations of our families of origin.

What difference has God made for me personally in my marriage?

I have discovered the joy of loving my wife sacrificially.

Husbands are instructed to “love their wives” and it is the kind of love that is willing to put the other person’s needs ahead of your own, to be willing to serve that person

and to consider their interests before your own.

This kind of love does not come easily, especially when you are in the heat of an argument and your wife (you believe) is being unreasonable!

So, the only way I can possibly love like this is to ask God to help me. The perfect example of sacrificial love is seen in His Son Jesus who gave up His own life for us when we did not deserve it.

My default button drifts toward selfishness when I am under pressure so I need the occasional reminder that I also, am not perfect but God still loves me anyway!

I have learned that honesty is liberating in marriage.

I am talking here about honesty with your wife about where you are “at.” There have been times in my marriage where I have thought it best to not share with Karen what I might be struggling with at any given moment. It’s not that I have sought to be deceptive or tried to hide things from her – I just did not want to cause her unnecessary worry or concern.

This is not a good policy!

Firstly, if I do not share with her then I miss out on one of the greatest privileges of marriage. That of being supported, cared and prayed for by my best friend. As Solomon wisely said, “two are better than one” because they can lean on each other in the storms of life.

Secondly, Karen can read me like a book, so there is no point in me trying to simply soldier on!

I have found that good communication develops greater intimacy between us.

One of the great descriptions of marriage is the Biblical statement that a husband “knew” his wife. When we read this, we immediately think of the sexual relationship yet there is so much more to this word than simply sex.

To “know” carries with it the ideas of knowing the other person emotionally, spiritually and intellectually.

The word underlines the very essence of what a relationship is all about – to my wife for the person she truly is, to see her more deeply than others see her and to see what no one else sees: the beautiful person God created her to be.

Which is the way God sees me; the person I really am. So, what I learn through my relationship with God changes, for the good, the way I relate to my wife.



And the only way that I can truly know Karen well is to talk with her, listen to her, share with her, dream with her, cry with her and laugh with her.

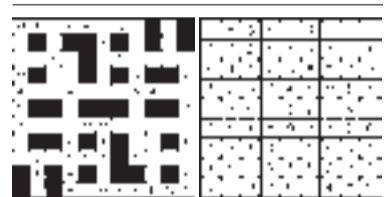
I experience what God described as “oneness” in marriage.

This oneness does not happen overnight. When a couple is married they begin a lifelong journey toward oneness and there will be the inevitable ups and downs along that journey.

But they do not travel that road alone. If they are both committed to God, He goes before them, encouraging, nurturing and shaping them into the people He wants them to be.

And the result is oneness – a true unity of body, mind, heart and soul.

God can make a difference in your marriage – why not let Him start today?



Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 4)

BY JODY BENNETT

HAVING a dog is very good for one’s ego.

To have a creature greet you like a celebrity every time you come home, look at you with slavish devotion and follow you “doggedly” around as if they are afraid you will disappear at any moment is healing balm in a world of criticism and disappointments.



Having a cat, as far as I remember from my cat-owning days, does not bestow on you the same king-like status though; cats might yawn from where they are curled up on the couch as you walk in the door, or perhaps get up to meow near their food bowl in complaint at the delay in feeding them.

Or they just won’t be there if they have better things to do.

Dogs are dependant, cats are independent. That is why dogs have a reputation for being man’s best friend and are the inspiration for such tales of faithfulness as *Red Dog* or *Lassie*.

I am not trying to get into a cat-lovers versus dog-lovers argument here, as I think both make good pets, but they do display two extremes of responses to kindness; much like our own attitudes towards God when we realise He loves us and wants to be in relationship with us so much that He sent Jesus to die in our place for our sins (wrongdoing).

We can have the cat’s attitude of, “My master cares for me, feeds me, pets me, provides for me and lets me sleep on his bed, which is proof that I am special and valuable, and it is only what I deserve.”

Or we can have the dog’s attitude, which says: “My master cares for me, feeds me, pets me, provides for me and lets me sleep on his bed, which is proof that he is such a wonderful, loving master, and it is more than I deserve.”

God loves and draws you to Himself, not because you are so important or talented, but because He is so gracious and long-suffering, as the Bible says “all our good deeds [done in our own strength] are as filthy rags”. But when we do come to Christ, we realise we are valuable, unique and beloved in Jesus and our gratitude causes us to love, obey and praise Him even more.

How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP :

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

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

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

I would like to think about this.

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

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____

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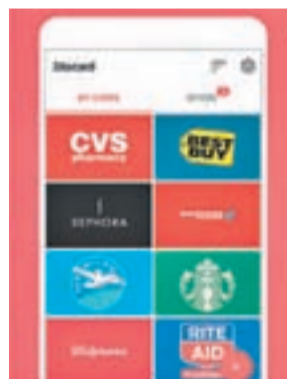
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STOCARD REWARDS/LOYALTY CARD APP

IS your wallet or purse crammed with loyalty cards? Have you forgotten which ones you have and hardly ever use them because you can’t find them when you need them? Do you forget the points or special offers associated with a particular card?

Well, the Stocard app, available free in the iTunes or Google Play store is just the organisational tool you need.

Simply load each card onto the app by scanning its barcode (with a barcode scanner app) or manually enter the number (if you don’t have a scanner or camera). Each card is then displayed clearly and accessibly as soon as you open the app.



When paying at the till, you simply open the app, choose the card you want and scan your phone like you would a card.

That way your wallet is less bulky and your cards are all manageable and with you at all times. Your key chain could also be lighter if you use Stocard instead of those annoying little barcode

tags that you might have for the gym or the video store etc.

You can even use Stocard for your library card or aeroplane boarding pass! And it is especially useful for hotel or aeroplane loyalty cards which are seldom used and you may not want to carry everywhere with you.

The app also keeps you abreast of the special offers and catalogues associated with your cards so that you can get the best deals. (But you can also turn that feature off.)

It allows you to take and save photos of your cards, and associate notes with them too. (Maybe a note about where you put the actual card should you need it?) If the card is not one of the dozens of cards whose icon is already on the app, you can take your own photo of the logo or add your own icon.

The app also allows you to backup all your info to the cloud so that it is saved for when you change devices.

Stocard is a really simple app that performs its function efficiently, works smoothly and is uncluttered by annoying adverts.

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SURFS LIKE A GIRL



After feature film *Soul Surfer* captured her inspiring shark attack survival story in 2011, the real Bethany Hamilton will be hitting the screens this year with *Surfs Like a Girl*, documenting her journey to the best waves on the planet.

The surfer was in Australia late last year promoting the film.

"I'm super excited, it's coming together amazingly," Hamilton said of the film. "We've been working on it for the last three or four years, and it's a raw, real version of my life story, highlighting my surfing career and all the different obstacles that I've overcome. I think *Soul Surfer* did an amazing job but I think this will be a very different version and it's actually me."

Hamilton says the documentary "will be a really cool way for people to see a deeper look at my life and the journey I've been through, especially the success I've had as a professional surfer, and as a mum

and in life — and doing it all at the same time."

Soul Surfer, starring Anna-Sophia Robb and Helen Hunt, as well as Bethany's 2004 autobiography *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board*, tell how the 13-year-old girl who had just lost her arm in a shark attack returned to the water almost immediately and, rather than wallow in her suffering, took charge of her situation.

Two years after her attack Bethany went on to win the NSSA National Competition in both the US and Australia and has not stopped competing since, with immense success.

It was Halloween 2003 when a young Bethany went surfing with her brother, best friend, and best friend's father in Kauai. She was lying on her board with her left arm dangling in the water when a 4.3-metre shark took her just below the shoulder.

"I had no warning at all; not even the slightest bit of danger on the horizon," she recounts in her book.

"That's all it took: a split second. I felt a lot of pressure and couple of lightning-fast tugs. I couldn't make out any of the details,

but I knew that the huge jaws of a fifteen-foot tiger shark covered the top of my board and my left arm.

"Then I watched in shock as the water around me turned bright red."

By the time she arrived in hospital she had lost 60 per cent of her blood. A month later she was back on her board.

Initially she used a custom-made board, longer and thicker than standard and with a handle for her right arm, making it easier to paddle. She learned to kick more to make up for the loss of her left arm.

She entered her first major competition in January 2004. She now uses standard competitive performance short-boards.

After her performance in the Fiji Women's Pro competition last year, for which Bethany won third place, surfing legend Kelly Slater told *The Gospel Herald* the hardships Bethany has to overcome to perform at the level she does was "arguably unparalleled" in men's or women's sport.

"I think everyone should have a full surf with one arm strapped to their side and attempt not only to paddle out but put themselves in position at heavy spots like Pipe, Jaws, and Cloudbreak, and try to get up on a short board," he said.

"I'm scared to do it myself and ridiculously impressed with her talents."

Perhaps more than her talent, it is Bethany's resilience and maturity in responding to such a traumatic and life-altering event that is truly remarkable and inspiring.

As a 14-year-old, Bethany wrote: "I often dream that I have both my arms again, and I wake up expecting the whole shark business to be a nightmare. But it's not. It's my reality now, and I've learned to accept it.

I've moved on."

This was only a year after the attack. She goes on to explain where she found the strength and hope to persevere through her pain.

"I don't pretend to have all the answers to why bad things happen to good people," she writes.

"But I do know that God has all those answers, and sometimes He lets you know in this life, and sometimes He asks you to wait so that you can have a face-to-face talk about it.

"What I do know is that I want to use what happened to me as an opportunity to tell people that God is worthy of our trust, and to show them that you can go on and do wonderful things in spite of terrible events that happen.

"I don't think it does any good to sit around and feel sorry for yourself. I made myself a promise: I'm not going to wallow or walk around moaning, 'Woe is me!'"

Today, Bethany says the fact she surfs with one arm is irrelevant and continues to credit God for her strength and wisdom in dealing



with life's trials.

"As a Christian, I really cling tight to the promises that God has for my life," she tells *The Gospel Herald*. "They remain steady and true, aren't going to waiver or change and are there for us to rely on. He grows us in our faith as we go through hard times."

Bethany is married to youth minister Adam Dirks and gave birth to son Tobias in 2015. She continues to train as a surfer but is also focusing on being a mother.

Surfs like a girl will be released in theatres this Winter.

Bethany Hamilton's autobiography is available on Amazon.



Bethany Hamilton and her husband Adam Dirks with their son Tobias, in a photo from Bethany's Instagram account.

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