

FORGIVE YOURSELF

Have you ever felt like you failed? A failure so big it left you feeling like the popular meme: "You had ONE job..."

Except this wasn't funny. This was no meme; this was a long, dark tunnel filled with self-loathing and depression. Anne Graham Lotz, the daughter of the world's most influential preacher Billy Graham, was stuck in the tunnel for years before she finally saw daylight again.

It began on Tuesday, August 17, 2015, a warm and pleasant morning in the city of Raleigh in North Carolina. With the thermometer hitting 31 degrees Celsius, Anne's husband Danny decided to relax by the pool and play with the dog. He went outside. Inside the house, Anne got busy with the housework.

Nobody knows what happened that day. But when Anne went out to check on him later, she found her husband face down in the pool unresponsive. He was rushed to the hospital and two days later, the man they called 'God's Gladiator' died.

Danny had been ill for years, leading Anne to give up her career as an eminent international speaker to care for him full-time, and she felt responsible for his wellbeing.

He had severe Type 1 diabetes, was blind in one eye and deaf in one ear. He had heart disease, which required five stents and renal failure

that needed three days of dialysis each week, five hours a day.

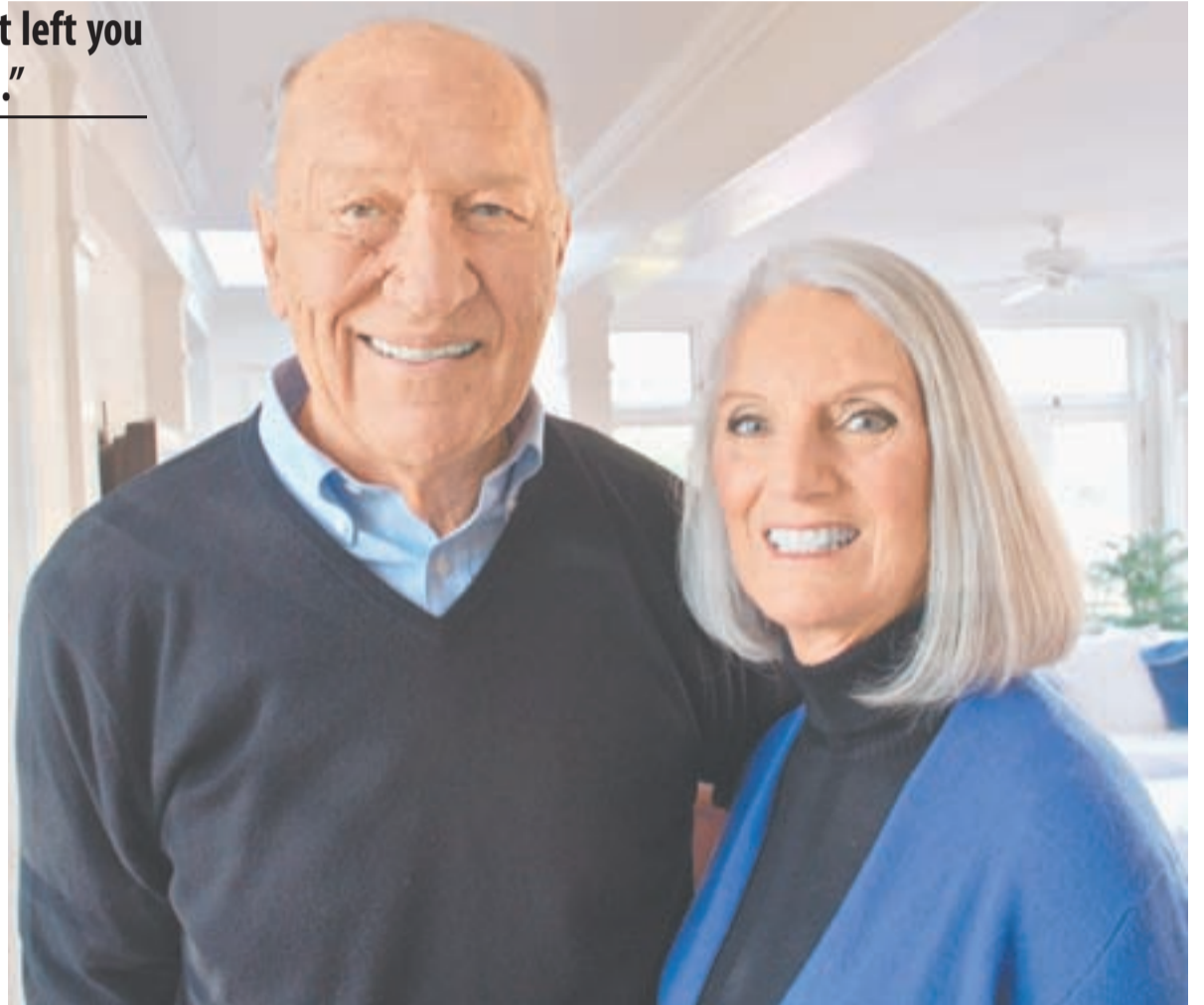
Several years ago, she wrote in her blog: "For three years I was my husband's full-time caregiver. I loved the role. But on August 17th, 2015 I found him unresponsive in our pool. Three days later, my beloved husband of 49 years, Danny, went to Heaven. On my watch.

"And thus began a difficult journey of forgiveness," Anne acknowledges. "I could actually feel the downward pull into that black hole from the moment I found Danny. If I kept blaming myself and wallowing in guilt, I knew I would spiral down into bitterness and self-hatred."

As she had done her whole life, Anne turned to God. Being the daughter of a world famous evangelist didn't automatically make her a Christian - she had decided for herself to commit her life to Jesus Christ when she was eight years old, after watching the Cecil B. DeMille film *The King of Kings*.

Born and raised in a home where Jesus Christ was worshipped, she had always depended on her faith to see her through tough times.

In the 1990s, a hurricane devastated her property, her husband's dental office burned to the ground, their son was diagnosed with cancer and went through major surgery and radiation, all three of her children



The late Danny Lotz and Anne Graham Lotz who were married for 49 years. Photo: billygraham.org

got married within an eight-month period, and her mother's health was failing, requiring multiple hospitalizations. During that period she had to learn to trust God's goodness.

But when Danny died, she had to

go deeper than ever before into her well of spirituality and said her journey to forgive herself finally began with one simple prayer: "God, I am so sorry. Danny's death is my fault. I have failed to obey Your calling to

care for him. I'm so sorry."

One day, Anne said she felt God whisper to "my broken, grief-stricken, guilt-ridden heart."

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BACK PAGE

STAY HUMBLE
TONY BENNETT

Have you got the right reality map?

AUSTRALIAN social commentator Akos Balogh says that one insight can help us to better cope with the strange times we are living in.

He quotes author Stephen Covey, who points out: *Each of us has many maps in our head... we interpret everything we experience through these mental maps. We seldom question their accuracy; we're usually unaware that we have them. We simply assume that the way we see things is the way they are.*

Your beliefs are like a map of reality. We know that a map is not the territory: it's a representation of the territory. And that is what our beliefs are: they're our representation, our view of reality.

So, it's not adversity per se that causes you to feel and act in a certain way, argues Akos. Rather, it's your beliefs about the adversity that lead you to feel and act the way you do.

Our modern culture generally has the belief: *Suffering is all bad, and comfort is a necessity.* That is our culture's map.



Akos argues that this belief system that all suffering is bad and must be avoided at all costs, not only leads to selfish behaviour (like hoarding and aggression), but it's also leading to negative feelings and emotions like anxiety, fear and depression.

Thus, our modern secular map of reality is

morally and psychologically bankrupt, he says.

And so, is there a better map of reality? One that does help us deal with this crisis?

As it turns, out, there is.

The Bible gives us a different map that is an objective view of reality: reality as it is. A reality in which God is King, and the crucified and risen Jesus is ruling at His right hand. God sovereignly rules all things motivated by love, the world is fallen but temporary, we each have a divine purpose and calling and many other realities are part of this map.

When you read the Bible or hear preaching, you're (partly) in the process of upgrading your mental map of reality. The Bible calls this "renewing your mind".

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Coping with Covid
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Is this the key to long life?

BY JIM DENISON (REVISED)

A FASCINATING study by the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine reports that optimism, along with stubbornness, a love for family and country, and a willingness to work hard are traits common among a group of Italians aged 90 to 101.

However, before you decide that optimistic stubbornness is all you need to live longer, take note: other studies claim that owning a dog, drinking coffee, and doing more push-ups and sit-ups contribute to longevity.

Here's a fact: no matter how long you live, you won't live on this planet forever.

Evil people like the Son of Sam killer can develop heart disease. Heroes like John McCain can develop brain cancer. The death rate is still 100%.

If we will all die, why do we try so hard to fight the fact of our mortality?

The Bible calls death "the last enemy to be destroyed" (1 Corinthians 15:26). Jesus Christ, by His blameless life and sacrificial death conquered sin, by His healing power conquered sickness and by His miracles and His ultimate miracle of resurrection from the dead, He conquered death itself. He promised His followers that in the world to come there will be no more sin or sickness or crying or death. When Satan is finally judged and cast into hell at the end of the age, death itself shall die.

But for now, on this earth, death is the great unknown. For those who have accepted Jesus as their saviour and Lord, they have some idea of

where they are going; but death is especially frightening for those who are not sure what lies beyond the grave, or who suspect they don't deserve to end up anywhere good.

Note the many ways we seek to ignore or obscure the reality of our mortality. We use euphemisms such as "he passed on" or "she left us" to avoid saying that a person "died."

There was a day when nearly every funeral included an open casket and a processional past the deceased person's body. Today there is seldom an open casket even at the cemetery or a body present at the memorial service. People are no longer comfortable facing death.

This refusal to confront our mortality is a very effective tool of the devil in keeping people from considering their need for Jesus. In his novel *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis quoted a demonic tempter: "The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

That is why followers of Jesus keep talking to people about needing to be saved. Such conversations can seem confrontational or judgemental, but like an oncologist telling a patient they have cancer, telling someone they have systemic sin but Jesus has the cure, is not insensitive, it is life-saving.

Billy Graham is right: "Heaven is real and hell is real, and eternity is but a breath away." As another writer put it; "If you don't know where you are going it is not safe to die." The key question you need to be able to answer is; are you ready? •

FORGIVE YOURSELF

• From page 1

"Anne, I forgive you," He seemed to say. "The blood of Jesus is sufficient for the forgiveness of any and all sins, including your temporary neglect of Danny and his subsequent death.

"You have said you were sorry. You have asked Me to forgive you. And I have. Now accept My forgiveness and My timing. I called him home when his life was complete. I had numbered his days. Trust Me. And forgive yourself."

It wasn't until Anne was able to understand and accept God's forgiveness that she was able to forgive herself and experience true peace.

"Once we tell God we are sorry for our sin and failures and accept His forgiveness, then forgiving others - including ourselves - is an act of worship," she says. "How can you...or I... accept God's forgiveness, then turn around and withhold our forgiveness from someone else?"

Anne encourages others who may be struggling, to ask God for forgiveness - and then forgive themselves. "Why? For the simple reason that



Still smiling despite fighting cancer, Anne with her daughter (right) and daughter-in-law. In a photo from her Instagram account.

God has forgiven you. And living in His forgiveness is where peace is found."

Anne was dealt another blow in 2018 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer three years to the day of the anniversary of her husband's death and six months after the funeral of her famous father.

Again, the 71-year-old refused to give up hope and turned, as always, to her faith in God. This time, she immersed herself in the Gospel of

John and from that study came her book *Just Give Me Jesus. Centuries-old wisdom for 21st century struggles.*

"The Christian life is so much more than just being saved from hell and is so much more than just going to heaven," she said. "It's a relationship that's vibrant and alive and it's sufficient to carry you through the hardest things."

And after all that Anne has been through, she should know. •

Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Internet access devices
- 3 A long way off
- 7 Undertaking
- 8 Suffer hunger
- 10 Indian language
- 12 A town enjoying sudden prosperity (4,4)
- 14 Beethoven's "Moonlight ____"
- 15 Successor
- 16 Coral formation
- 17 Flowering shrub

DOWN

- 1 Silent person
- 2 Unruly outburst
- 4 The London Eye, for one (6,5)
- 5 Kind of monkey
- 6 1996 Olympics venue
- 9 Partnership, slangily
- 11 School treasurer
- 13 Nitrogen fertilizer

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

The magnificent Aussie obsession

BY ALAN BAILEY

IN a world where empires collapse, earthquakes devastate, assassins slay and armies crush, no news is as important to most Australians as who won the footy. We are sport crazy. At least, it could easily look that way to some outside observer.

Think of the hours of coverage on the telly. Then see the procession of parents following their children to the playing fields, the netball and tennis courts, the swimming pools, the gymnasiums and so on. Witness the people who run, climb, bat, throw, swing, dive, drive, pedal, dance, skate, ski, wrestle, box—and add what you will.

For some it's an interest, a pastime. For others, it's an essential ingredient of life—life being rendered meaningless without it. For yet others it is a passion, a driving force, a religion calling for supreme dedication. Those who view sport but don't play it, can fall into the same categories.

Thank God for sport

Candidly, I wonder just where we would be without it. What would our young people get up to if sport didn't take so much of their spare time? There are a tremendous number of doubtful alternatives that could easily captivate them.

How many would have healthy bodies if they had no systematic exercise? Would we learn to lose well in the game of life if we didn't learn to lose in sporting competition? Where would we learn team spirit, comradeship, courtesy toward rivals and a host of values like determination, courage, endurance and mental and physical discipline?

Even though we see many examples of bad sportsmanship, the overwhelming majority seem to benefit from their sporting activity rather than to lose by it.

Keeping it in context

The thing that troubles people like me is the utter

seriousness which surrounds organized sport in Australia. I know it's serious business when you are shaping up to kick or miss a goal one minute before the final siren. But why must it always be serious business, taking over so much time, money, thinking, ambition and affection?

It's not too far out to call it a religion. Think of the rituals that surround the finals. Think of the fanatical adherence to codes, the quoting of the Book of Rules—to the point where the erring umpire needs to be condemned as a heretic. The commentators speak of the sacred or hallowed turf. Then words like dedication, sacrifice, adoration, miracle, triumph, awe and magnificence, flow in a steady stream.

The sad truth

As I see it, we parents and elders handed sport to our children with this inordinately high profile because we haven't anything else. Do they or we ever ask the question "So what?" So what if this or that individual wins or lose? So what if this or that team goes down next Saturday? So what if America wins the next Olympics? Does it matter that much?

When the chips are down, that is, when life's realities set in, or death stares us in the face, it won't matter very much who could kick a pigskin full of air or who could whack a ball with a lump of wood.

When the last siren sounds and God rings down the curtain on every performance on earth, how many people will be wishing they had given attention to Him instead of being caught up in a game? How fatal, how foolish the Aussie obsession may turn out to be in the end. And, after all, wouldn't any sporting coach say that it's the end that counts?

All the while, God has waited for us to consider Him and enter a new relationship with Him. A Saviour has paid a great price to save us from ourselves and our sin. How wrong to ignore Him. The wages of sin is death; the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. •

Twitter tale reminds us of an ancient one

BY FAYE MICHELSON

IT'S worth celebrating when the lost has been found. Trying to find the proverbial needle in a haystack sounds easy when compared to the case of a lost engagement ring in New York City.

British tourists John Drennan and Daniella Anthony were visiting Central Park last December when John dropped to one knee and proposed to his long-time girlfriend.

She said yes, and John completed the fairy-tale moment by slipping on a sparkly (but slightly too big) diamond engagement ring.

All was going well until they were walking in Times Square after taking in a show late on the same day. The loose ring slipped off Daniella's finger, bounced on the sidewalk and fell down a grate.

"I was devastated," she told the New York Post. "I was literally crying. It was the worst moment of my life."

John lay flat on the ground, peering into the grate trying to see where the ring had landed. The couple called police, with sympathetic officers prising the grate open with a crowbar in an attempt to retrieve it. After two hours of unsuccessful searching, the distressed couple, due to travel home the next day, left without filing a report because they believed the ring was gone.

But the NYPD hadn't closed the case and the following morning officers returned to the scene. Daylight made a difference; they found the ring about 2.5 metres underground after searching for about 15 minutes.

In a city with numerous grates, NYPD detective Joseph Buccignano said police were involved in "plenty of these searches" with people losing items such as keys, phones and wallets.



The lost and found ring.

"It's like finding a needle in a haystack; there was a lot of muck and a lot of just typical stuff that you find in the sewer grate down there," he said. "Fortunately, this has a good ending to it."

But the search didn't stop with finding the ring. The police then had to find its owners, who had not provided their details. The NYPD posted a tweet looking for the couple, accompanied by CCTV

video showing John lying on his stomach peering through the grate with Daniella crouched beside him. Persistence – and more than 20,000 retweets – paid off. The engagement ring was reunited with its delighted owners, who promised to give the officers a special mention at their wedding.

This story is like a modern take on some of the parables (stories) Jesus told in the Bible to illustrate His teachings. The parable of the lost coin reinforces how valuable each one of us is to God. Jesus said, "Imagine a woman who has 10 silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbours: 'Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!'" (Luke 15:8-9).

This little story emphasises that God never gives up on us; that the reason He sent Jesus was to bring people who are lost spiritually back into a relationship with Him. Celebrations are in order when something valuable is found. And just as the people in the story rejoiced and celebrated with the woman when she found her lost coin, Jesus finished His story with, "That's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God." (Luke 15:10).

This article first appeared in the Salvation Army's Warcy magazine.



John Drennan and Daniella Anthony. Below: CCTV footage of them looking for their ring.



12-year-old's decision changes her life forever



Stacey Higgins and her husband Thomas.

Stacey Higgins made a decision at age 12 that has impacted everything else she has done with her life - her teaching degree, mission trips to islands in Oceania, parenting and work with children and youth in poverty.

"I grew up in Adelaide, South Australia," Stacey relates. "Dad and Mum had a strong faith in Jesus and my four brothers and sisters and I attended Sunday school and other children's programs at the church in our local area."

But, while she loved to sing Christian music, memorise Bible verses, and play in the music team at church, Stacey knew that she was not yet a Christian.

"God doesn't have any grandchildren," Stacey's mum used to tell her. "Just because Dad and I have accepted Jesus as our Saviour does not guarantee you, as our child, a place in His kingdom as well. Each person needs to make up their own mind about God and determine who He is and what Jesus' death and resurrection means for their eternal future."

"I knew that I hadn't accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour," she says. "So, one Sunday, I began to listen a lot more during the sermon our pastor was delivering."

They had a Bible reading from John 1:12: "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

"The words stabbed me, as I knew then the need to receive Jesus," Stacey shares. "The service ended with a song that says, 'I'm a part of the family, the family of God.' I mouthed the words but knew I was not singing the truth. I wasn't in the family. I was not yet a child of God."

Over the next few days, Stacey could not

shake the thought that if she died, she would not be going to Heaven. She started to do some searching and read a passage from the Bible in Romans 10:9-10: "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."

"I had discovered the simple truth," she says. "I was ready to confess with my mouth. Even though the message that God had raised Jesus from the dead was one I had heard and knew already, I hadn't made this Christian walk my own. I could not ride on Mum and Dad's faith."

Stacey went to find her mum who was in the kitchen. "Mum," she said. "I want to be in God's family! I want to be a Christian!" Her mum promptly turned off the stove and sat with her at the end of her bed.

"I prayed and received Jesus, aged twelve, on that Tuesday evening," Stacey smiles.

"Two weeks later, on Easter Sunday, I publically declared my intention to trust in the Lord with all my heart and was baptised at our local church. I had a joy within like no other!"

Stacey continued to live for Jesus throughout her teenage years. "I spent a lot of time reading the Bible and memorising verses. Attending youth camps, playing basketball for the church team and catching up at youth rallies caused me to grow alongside others in God's family and I felt encouraged to know this fabulous life, serving and loving my Heavenly Father."

As a young adult, Stacey studied teaching and went on mission trips to Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. "I loved helping children and youth come to a realisation that God wants to know them and that they can come into His family and have Jesus as a daily, personal Lord and source of truth and hope."

Stacey's love and passion for the Gospel [the good news that Jesus has saved us from our sins] shines through her everyday life.

"Now, as a wife and mother myself, I know the precious gift it is to help young children learn and understand God's love for them and the need to have Jesus as a personal Saviour," she says.

"Our children love devotion time on the couch and have learned Proverbs 3:5-6: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.'

"God has directed my path into His family and through years of seeking truth and direction He has been faithful. It is a journey I am so glad to be on as I grow as a child of the King!"

CHRISTIANS ARE BUT A POOR REFLECTION

BY JIM DENISON (EXCERPT)

THE ceiling design in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle in England is stunning. However, it can be painful to look upward for a long period of time, so a mirror has been placed on the floor.

When I have visited over the years, I always looked down so I could look up. But no one standing beside me thought the mirror was the origin of the incredible artistry it reflects.

Unfortunately, many make just this mistake with creation and its Creator. I have known scientists who were fascinated with the incredible intricacies of the human body without giving a thought to the One who designed it. I have known artists who were grateful for their artistic gifts but never thought to express gratitude to their Giver. It is as though a painting exists without a painter or a house without



a builder. Romans 1:20-24 talks of these people: *For since the creation of the world [God's] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, ... but... Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

While we must not mistake the reflection in the mirror for the original, we must also not assume the original is no better than the reflection. Just as the mirror on the floor of the cathedral cannot capture the vast, awesome beauty of the ceiling, and can become dirty or warped, in such a way when you see churches or Christians who are imperfectly reflecting the goodness and love of God, don't blame the original, just make the effort to look up.

Please see Dr Denison's full article at denisonforum.org

Have you got the right reality map?

● From page 1

And what's the Bible's map when it comes to suffering in general, including around COVID-19? Suffering is often painful, but it is for our ultimate good.

For instance, the apostle James writes: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.* — James 1:2-4

In this interpretation of reality, suffering grows us, helps us to be compassionate, teaches us perseverance, keeps us humble and draws us closer to God. This map reminds us that this life is fleeting and helps us to keep our eyes on eternity. It helps us to lean into suffering and learn from it, rather than become bitter through it.

Akos concludes: We don't know when or how COVID-19 will end. Perhaps things will return to some semblance of normality within a few months. Or perhaps we're about to enter a major economic depression. And this state of social distancing will be the new norm until a vaccine appears. Only God knows.

But what we can do in the meantime is replace our bankrupt maps of reality – the ones that demand comfort and happiness now – with the Bible's map of reality. If we do that, we'll respond to COVID-19 in a way that brings joy to our lives, glory to God, and good to our neighbour. ●

See Akos Balogh's article *One Insight That Will Help You Thrive In The COVID-19 Age* on his website akosbalogh.com

FAITH THROUGH THE MATTER-OF-FACT

Wassili Bijl (known to most as Vic) lived a “reasonably good and relatively simple” life as a production tree faller in forestry operations. He admits he may have been a little cold with others, lacking in compassion, and sometimes harbouring a strong aggression and desire for revenge against those who offended him, but basically he was “good”. He did feel a profound loneliness though.

Looking at the trees and working outside in nature, Vic had a strong sense that there was a God but he didn't really know what else to do with that “gut feeling”. Neither church nor other religious traditions appealed to him. The Bible didn't seem to make sense when he tried to read it and, although various types of door-knocking evangelists fascinated him, Vic wasn't persuaded by their content.

Then one day a new colleague started working with Vic and very soon made it clear that he was a “born-again Christian”. Vic asked this man many questions about his faith and was impressed by his matter-of-fact

answers. This man seemed very clear about what he believed and why.

Vic's new friend emphasised the need to be “born again” or “saved” and that this was a deliberate decision that didn't require good works but was an act of faith based on God's freely given grace. He said

Vic only needed faith as

small as a mustard seed and that he didn't need to understand every piece of teaching on Christianity to be able to embrace a relationship with Jesus Christ.

This man invited Vic to church, where he heard the message and was invited to respond, but didn't. An hour later though, over lunch, Vic's friend took him through the message of eternal salvation in the book of Romans in the Bible, which explains man's situation vis-à-vis God and sin and eternity.

This time, when Vic was asked if he wanted to respond, he said yes and knelt with the man right there at the table and prayed.

“I acknowledged that I was a sinner, that I believed in Jesus Christ and that God had raised him from the dead. I asked Him to come into my life to be my Lord and personal Saviour.

“This was on 24 October 1983.”

Since that decision, Vic says his life has been profoundly changed, even though it wasn't a particularly sinful life, by most standards, before his conversion.

Firstly, suddenly the lights came on in understanding what the Bible meant. Now when Vic read it, it made perfect sense and in turn it explained all sorts of things about society and the world around



Vic Bijl and his wife Dawn.

Disillusioned and desperate

Mike Wright's life lay in tatters. Awarded custody of his two daughters after divorcing their mother who ill-treated them, he suddenly found himself primary caregiver and sole provider to the girls, who were four and two at the time.

At the end of his rope, he approached his old church for help and support. He found neither. Instead, he was shunned by the people he thought were his friends. Nobody would testify as to his character or how well he looked after his daughters. The experience left him bitter and disillusioned.

For the next few years Mike focused completely on making money and found success. He remarried. He was making a good living. All was well.

And then one day, the police told him one of his daughters had been caught selling drugs on the school bus. Suddenly, life had him in the wringer again.

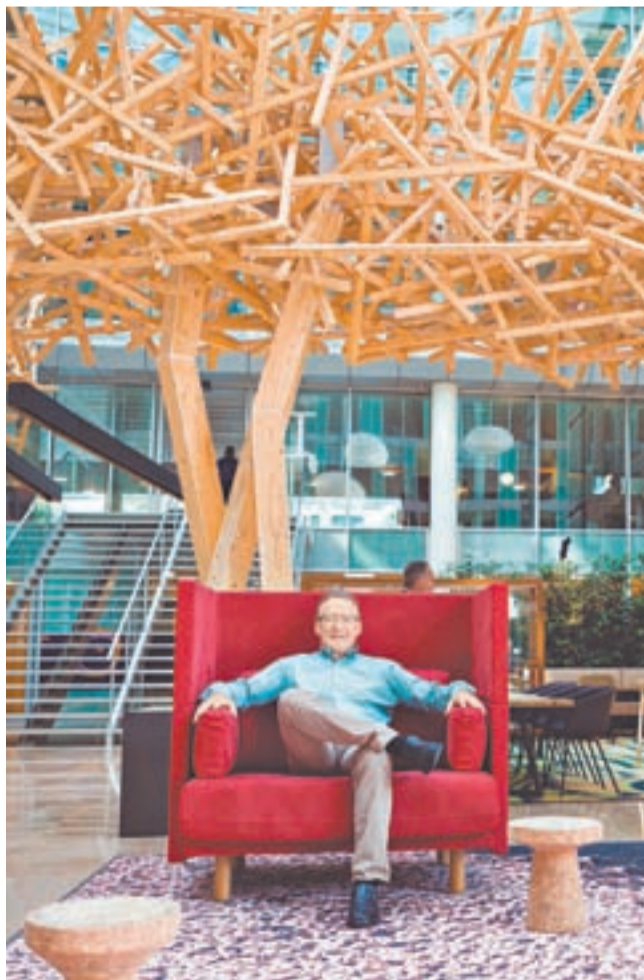
That was when his new wife Tammy suggested it might be a good time to go back to church. Mike balked – it was the last place he wanted to go.

“After my experience I never wanted to go back,” he says. “My church had been legalistic and judgemental and I was raised to believe I would be punished every time I did something wrong.” He also believed his divorce made him a lost cause.

“But we had come to a point in our lives that we didn't have many better alternatives, so Tammy and I began attending a church called Abundant Grace.” It was the turning point.

“I'll never forget the evening I sat next to an elderly woman in the group when we started to pray,” he says. “My heart felt constricted. I wasn't used to praying.

“But then this woman began to pray for me and I experienced a new dimension where God allowed me to see how much He loved me. It wasn't about laws and formulas but about a relationship with



Mike Wright is now right with God.

Him. That touched my heart. I began to experience God's love and my faith began to grow.”

Things improved but the challenges weren't over. Another family crisis unfolded when the daughter who had been caught selling drugs, now 16, became pregnant.

“But this time it was different for me,” Mike says. “Because God had changed my heart and my life, my reaction to her was completely different.

“I held her and told her that I loved her and Jesus did too, and that He would somehow help us through it. I didn't have to rely on my own ability; I could now trust my Heavenly Father. We knew God would guide us and help us and He did. We grew closer through this crisis.”

Mike's granddaughter is now in her twenties. “She's coming to Amsterdam soon to visit us,” says the proud grandfather.

When Tammy's work brought the Wrights to Amsterdam, Mike and a colleague founded an organisation in which Christian businessmen could encourage each other in the workplace. That group was called ‘At Work on Purpose’ and grew into an enormous network that soon connected with Christian Business and Marketplace Connection (CBMC) International.

Established in 1937, CBMC International is an association of Christian business & professional leaders in 96 countries who share a passion to impact the global marketplace by the life they live as followers of Jesus.

At CBMC, Mike soon noticed those who did not speak Dutch could not attend all the meetings. Encouraged by one of the leaders there, he Mike began organising meetings in English.

Today, he is one of the outfit's team leaders who leads a monthly study group of local businesspeople aimed at helping them conduct business using wisdom from the Bible.

“You can't grow spiritually if you don't step outside your comfort zone,” Mike says. “I want to be available to God, and He's free to disrupt my agenda any moment ... My time as well as my possessions belong to God.”

As the Bible says: “Beloved friends, what should be our proper response to God's marvellous mercies? I encourage you to surrender yourselves to God to be His sacred, living sacrifices. And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights His heart. For this becomes your genuine expression of worship.” (Romans 12:1) ●

him.

Secondly, Vic didn't feel as isolated any more but always felt the presence of God with him, which he realised was maintained by his regular disciplines of reading the Bible and prayer.

Thirdly, Vic found enormous satisfaction in being able to tell others about the truths he had discovered, and in sharing the love of Jesus Christ with them. He regularly goes on overseas missions to speak to prisoners and others about God.

He is also actively involved in ministry in Australia, especially in the area of biblical creation as Vic believes this is the number one intellectual barrier that people in Western culture have to accepting the Bible as truthful and wholly inspired.

And finally, Vic says that his natural disinterest in others has been replaced with compassion and interest in their circumstances.

In addition, ironically, now that Vic has been washed clean from his sins by Jesus Christ, he has become profoundly aware of just how vulnerable he is to toward certain sins and how he needs to stay close to Jesus and seek forgiveness when he makes mistakes.

“It is critical to know your weaknesses and deliberately stay away from those things, before they become temptations that draw you away and distract you from your Christian walk,” he warns.

Thirty-six years since his first prayer and now in his sixties, Vic is married with stepchildren and grandchildren, and profoundly grateful that God took his isolated, not-so-bad life and made it satisfying and purposeful, with the promise of eternal life to come. ●

TEENTALK



Clever Covid kid

DURING this Covid-19 epidemic you might have more time on your hands coz you can't see your mates or go hang out at the mall or movies. Instead of rewatching all those Netflix shows you have seen already, why not get creative?

American teen Paul Coschignano is an eighth grader who is using his lockdown to get busy and make something useful. He designed an adjustable earguard for facemask wearers, inspired by his medical mum's complaints of the discomfort behind her ears after wearing a mask all day at work.



Paul Coschignano

on Paul's 3D printer with Polylactic Acid (PLA) filament, which is biodegradable. PLA can also be disinfected, meaning the ear guards can be reused. Paul has filed a patent for his design, which is currently pending.

All the wearer needs to do is to put on a facemask as usual, then hold the ear guard in place behind the neck and stretch the elastic bands of the mask around the hooks on each side until they find a comfortable fit.

Ingenious huh? Go on, let this crisis bring out the inventor in you!

A change of affection

BY DAN ANDROS (FAITHWIRE)

Beket Cook, author of the new book *A Change of Affection: A Gay Man's Incredible Story of Redemption*, was living every artist's dream. After breaking away from Dallas, Texas and moving to Hollywood, California, Becket launched what would become a prosperous career in show business.

After stints as a writer and doing a number of creative jobs behind the scenes, Becket eventually landed on doing set design. He partied and befriended many celebrities.

He was also strongly rooted in his sexual identity as a gay man and appreciated being in an area where his lifestyle wasn't given a second thought. Despite a career marked with wild success, mingling with the famous and powerful, and traveling the world — Becket would have bouts of lingering emptiness, that were odd considering he seemingly had it all.

"Christians, to me, were always the enemy," Becket told Faithwire's Dan Andros. "Because they believed that who I was, was wrong. I always felt like I could never be a part of that club. The longer I lived in L.A. the more God became not even a thought in my mind. By 2009, I was a practical atheist."

Little did he know, his entire world was about to be turned upside down. While grabbing coffee with a gay friend at a trendy coffee shop, Becket noticed something.

"We saw this man walk out on the patio with a big, hard-cover book in his hand. On the spine, it said 'Romans' and we kind of looked at each other like 'what the heck?'" It stood out because, Becket had never seen a Bible out in public in L.A. before. And before their very eyes were not one, but an entire group of people at the shop all reading their Bibles. To Becket, it was like seeing Bigfoot or the Loch Ness monster.

Intrigued, and also wanting to engage in a bit of 'trollery', they approached these Christians and started asking questions.

"Are you guys, like Christians? So, like, what do you believe?" These Christians were more than happy to answer this line of questioning. The conversation lingered on, and Becket's friend eventually gave up and left.

But Becket was drawn to the discussion. Eventually, they got to the big question: what did the Christians believe about homosexuality?

They were blunt and explained it was a sin. But



instead of turning him off, the bold answer earned Becket's respect. "I appreciated their frankness," he said, as opposed to them trying to sugar coat the truth. "They invited me to their church and I said I'd think about it. Sure enough, I found myself the following Sunday driving to this evangelical church. I had never been to one in my life, I didn't even know what it was."

Once he was there, initially nervous, he soon became fascinated and even enthralled. "I was literally sitting on the edge of my seat during the sermon. I didn't want him to leave, I wanted to hear more,"

he says. When the sermon finally did end, he approached the pastor. "Hey, I don't know what I believe but I'm here. The pastor prayed for me and it was a super intense, powerful, loving prayer. I was like, how does this stranger love me so much?"

"I was processing everything and all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit [invisible presence of God] floods my body my mind, everything and God just reveals Himself to me. It was like the road to Damascus moment in the New Testament book of Acts. God's like 'I'm real. Jesus is my Son. He's real. Heaven's real, hell is real. You are now adopted into my Kingdom. You are my child now.' And I was so blown away I couldn't stop crying for the rest of the time. I was crying because of two things: the joy of meeting God, and my sin. It was my most intense cry since I was an infant."

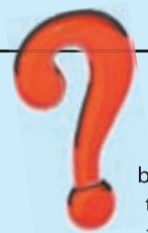
Later that day, after arriving home, Becket says he was overwhelmed with God's presence one more time. "I knew that my life as a gay man was over. I knew that's not who I was." •

This article originally appeared on Faithwire.com

Ask Y:

Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: I've been thinking about following Jesus but what about my butts?



MY guess is your hesitance about becoming a follower of Jesus could be down to one of the classic three 'buts'. Or maybe even all of them!

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

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

What's worse—to look foolish or to pass up the opportunity to connect with the God who created you?

2. 'But there's still so much I don't understand'. But how much more understanding will be enough for you?

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

But the journey of discovery had begun and that is all God asks of us. The invitation is not

to a headful of knowledge but a lifelong growing relationship.

3. 'But what will others think'. Perhaps you fear the snide remarks about having 'joined the God Squad' or parked your brain.

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

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

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

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

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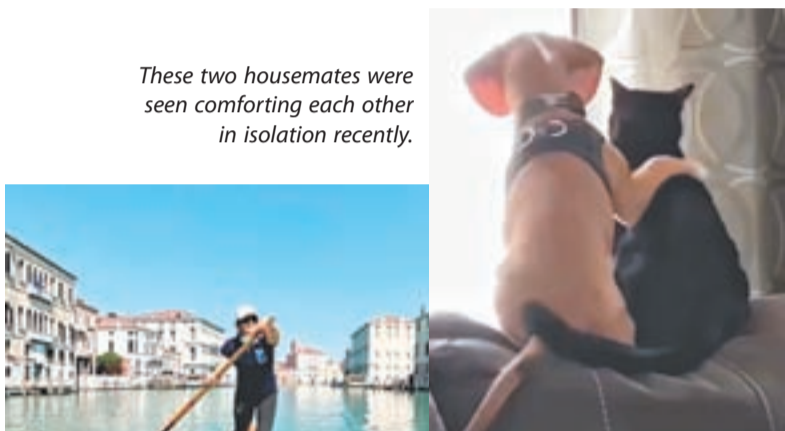
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Be kind



During the WWII siege of Leningrad, Galina Yakovleva learned how to thrive in fearful times. Today the 80-year-old is using those lessons as she distributes food and supplies to needy people in lockdown in Russia.



These two housemates were seen comforting each other in isolation recently.



A group of female athletes in Venice, Italy, are using gondolas to transport food and goods for their elderly and immunocompromised neighbours who can't shop for themselves.

Be creative



British architecture studio Foster + Partners has published a series of architectural challenges for kids on their website, complete with templates. They include building a paper skyscraper or creating a city, like the one above.



Hannah Heil has been giving her Newfoundland, Hank, a different hairstyle every day of quarantine. This is entitled 'self-care Sunday'.



Icelandic artist and student Ýrúrarí is spending her quarantine knitting mouth-themed masks.

Playing the odds

BY JOHN PIPER

IN this coronavirus crisis, I am moved to write because playing the odds is a fragile place to put your hope. Odds like 3% versus 10%, youth versus old age, compromised health versus no history of disease, rural versus urban, self-isolated versus home meeting with friends. Playing the odds provides little hope. It is not a firm place to stand. There is a better way. There is a better place to stand: a Rock of certainty rather than the sand of probabilities.

I recall being told on December 21, 2005, that I had prostate cancer. For the next several weeks, all the talk was about odds. Odds with waiting to see. Odds with medications. Odds with homeopathic procedures. Odds with radical surgery. My wife, Noël, and I took these numbers seriously. But in the evening, we would smile at each other and think, "Our hope is not in the odds. Our hope is in God."

We did not mean, "It is 100% certain God will heal me, while doctors can only give me odds." The Rock we are talking about is better than that.

Yes, better than healing. Even before the phone call from the doctor telling me I had cancer, God had already reminded me in a remarkable way about the Rock under my feet. After my usual annual exam, the urologist had looked at me and said, "I'd like to do a biopsy." While he was going to get the machine, I thought: "Really? So, he thinks I may have cancer."

As my future in this world began to change before my eyes, God brought

to my mind something I had read recently in the Bible. ... The Bible, rightly understood, is the voice of God.

Here is what He said to me as I waited for the biopsy that would confirm that I had cancer. "John Piper, this is not wrath. Live or die, you will be with me." That's my paraphrase. Here's what He actually said: "God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

Awake or asleep—that is, live or die—I will be alive with God. How can that be? I am a sinner. I have never lived a day of my life—not one—without falling short of God's standards of love and holiness. So how can this be? How can God say, "You will be with me—live or die?"

God didn't even wait for the question before he answered. It's because of Jesus. Jesus alone. Because of his death, there will be no wrath toward me. Not because of my perfection. My sins, my guilt, and my punishment fell on my Saviour, Jesus Christ. He "died for us." That's what his Word says. Therefore, I am free from guilt. Free from punishment. Secure in God's merciful favor. "Live or die," God said, "you will be with me."

That is very different from playing the odds with cancer—or with the coronavirus. This is a firm Rock under my feet. It is not fragile. It is not sand. I would like it to be a Rock under your feet. ...

And it is not just for the great by and by. The Rock I am talking about is under my feet now. I could say that the Rock is under my feet now just because hope beyond the grave is present hope. The object of hope is future. The experience of hope is present. And that present experience is powerful. Hope is power. Present power. Hope keeps people from killing themselves—now. It helps people get out of bed and go to work—now. It gives meaning to daily life, even locked-down, quarantined, stay-at-home life—now. It liberates from the selfishness of fear and greed—now. It empowers love and risk taking and sacrifice—now. So be careful before you belittle the by-and-by. It just may be that when your by-and-by is beautiful and sure, your here and now will be sweet and fruitful.

Note: To find out how this can be true for you too, see the "How do I become a Christian?" box on page 11.

From *Coronavirus and Christ* by John Piper, available free on the Olive Tree Bible study app.

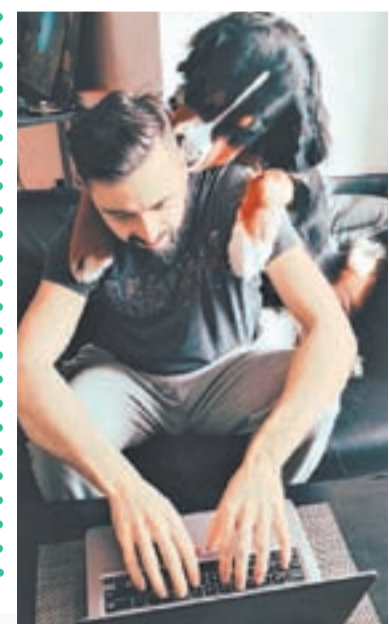
Laugh



In the U.S. bored people in isolation are dressing up to take out the trash.



Even going for a walk can be more fun than it used to!



Those working from home are finding they may have some over-involved coworkers!

Ponder

Meaningless suffering is the goal of the devil, and bringing meaning out of suffering is the saving work of God. - Father Thomas Joseph White

When researchers and clinicians look at who copes well in crisis ... it's those who cultivate an attitude of tragic optimism: the ability to maintain hope and find meaning in life despite its inescapable pain, loss and suffering. As much as we might wish, none of us can avoid suffering. That's why it's important to learn to suffer well. - author Emily Esfahani Smith

God operates outside time and space, so proof of the good, ultimate value in God allowing things — like this coronavirus pandemic — might not be seen even in our lifetimes. ...

Rather than asking God why He's allowed something, perhaps our job is to determine what we can do in the midst of it. - Tré Goins-Phillips Editor Faithit website

We don't yet need detailed plans for the future. For now, we can simply examine the emptiness of this disrupted life and take note of the ways in which we might strive to make it superior to what we had before. Sitting with these questions now will determine what we are willing to accept once this crisis is over. - Steven Paulikas, an Episcopal priest



Brilliant but bitter biologist's eyes opened

BY CLAIRE S.*, PROVIDED TO CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL—NZ

I grew up enjoying Sunday school, believing God was real, even if my experiential life suggested to me He did not care. As I grew I chose science subjects at school—I wanted to be a marine biologist.

Once I was streamlined into separate science subjects at the age of 13 I was indoctrinated into evolution. I became an enthusiastic follower, totally convinced I had evolved from a generalised primate some indeterminate millennia ago. I helped write a thesis for an oceanography/biology degree aged just 15.

I was, by now, certain the earth was some 4.5 billion years old, sedimentary rock [layers] proved this, and that radiometric dating could not be denied showing the age of fossils to be in the millions of years without doubt. DNA showed that there was a variation on a small scale, therefore there could only be one answer of mutation combined with pure Darwinistic natural selection giving rise to new species; as per his Galápagos finch beak variation illustration.

The faithful five

I studied further and became a government marine biologist. In the science labs where I worked, shockingly there were five Christians who even had the audacity to pray at lunch times—we laughed at their foolishness. I wondered how five such intelligent men (including the unequalled genius who headed up the department) could not see that evolution totally disproved the Old Testament rhetoric. And therefore, in equivocal logic, everything else must be very questionable?

Eventually I no longer believed in God except as a desperate answer to some things my beloved science had not explained yet.

Yes, we were creatures that helped each other like no other creature on the planet did—but that was merely a superior form of

a herd mentality and survival instinct, wasn't it? (I had stopped really believing in morals except as a species survival behaviour.)

The Old Testament was totally irrelevant in my opinion. Jesus existed for sure, but He could only have been a man. After all, why would a God become a weak animal; and do it for things as damaged and nasty as the people I knew of?

As a result I began to lead a life where I no longer cared for others, or indeed myself.

I ridiculed the scientists who still prayed to their 'non-existent' God and read their fairy stories.

I trained in nursing and got more degrees as I furthered my education gaining top marks in my country. My colleagues knew me as 'the oracle', as I knew more than a lot of the doctors who were not consultants did. I was so proud of myself, my achievements of multiple degrees and professional diplomas, a hatful of top exam results, my general knowledge that would win pub quizzes with ease, and my IQ in the 2nd percentile in the country—such puffed-up pride.

Without hope in this life

I was not proud, however, of what I was—a heartless drunk, becoming depressed, as I was without hope or reason for life other than some self-aggrandizing hedonism. I sank into deep depression, without hope.

Then one day a friend of mine suggested I go and tell God what was going on and ask for help. I laughed at her. She gave me CMI's address: creation.com.

There I saw presentations that refuted, with easy science, what I thought I knew. This was not fairy stories, this was better science! I had to know more—I read Lee Strobel's book *The case for the Creator* and in it I read of my hero Francis Crick and his thoughts on DNA and evolution. I read of another hero, (former atheist) Professor Antony Flew, and his astonishing u-turn



Marine biologists study things like coral reefs, like this one in Bali, and fish, like this lionfish. Photo: iclipart

to become at least a theist, and his clear denunciation of naturalistic evolution (chemicals to life) as anything other than a disproved theory rather than a religion or even a Faithful Truth.

I was shaken badly. Could all I had believed have been wrong?

I was then given more on creationism and the mathematical likelihood of the four astonishingly coalesced nucleotides of DNA subsequently coalescing a few thousand more times in some miraculous fashion to make a DNA strand. And that then somehow making all the other machinery of a living cell - a machine that can make copies of itself - arose, and this first living thing then avoided all the storms, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes and everything else and from a series of genetic accidents made a population that again continued to evolve, develop male and female sexual reproduction, mitosis/meiosis and more.

The chances were vanishingly small.

The more I thought the more I was disturbed at what I read. I was finally given a book by Charles Colson called *How Now Shall We Live* that continued to answer my questions; or at least it put major caveats in my belief system.

My world fell apart. I knew I was wrong, I knew the five faithful marine biologists were right. I had been such a fool.

This revelation allowed me to continue to go to church—without a true revelation of who God is, but at least I knew He was real.

Then His grace healed me from my 25 years of depression and I had revelation of the reality and power of the creator God who did what science could not do—redeem me, rebuild me, love me and resurrect me.

It was CMI teachings that allowed God to get in and bring the revelation that had been robbed from me in school and university.

My eyes became opened to the world around me and I saw the mathematical beauty in God's creation as well as the genius and systematic approach He has taken—a level of genius reaching from biology, chemistry, physics, the majesty of astrophysics to the incredible detail of the subatomic existence of matter.

My shame was what I had done to countless others, I had been an evangelist for evil. Now my only recourse is Jesus' saving grace. I am now a missionary and evangelist, God in His love and mercy has brought me to other parts of the world and allowed me to share about Him.

Continually I am stunned that I was so blind—but now I see. Praise God for His mercy upon a sinner like me.

*Surname withheld.

This article is condensed from the original, which can be found at creation.com. It is used with kind permission.

Believe It or Not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Spiny parasite worm inspires surgical tape

WHEN people have much skin damage, e.g. through burns or infection, sometimes this skin can be surgically replaced by transplanting or grafting other skin in its place. But one problem is keeping the graft in place, especially when the wound surface is wet.

Chemical glues can cause inflammation, and stapling can damage tissues and increase the risk of infection.

But a tiny worm, *Pomphorhynchus laevis*, that lives in fish intestines, has inspired a medical research team with a solution.

This worm has a spiny proboscis (elongated mouthpart) that it inflates, embedding tiny needles into the intestine wall. Now this has led to a "remarkable invention" by medical researchers in Massachusetts—a surgical patch based on the proboscis structure.

The patch has an array of tiny needles, only 700 µm high—1 inch = 25,400 µm. The needles have a stiff core of polystyrene,

but are coated with hydrogel, a material in disposable diapers that expands when it gets wet. So these needles likewise expand and anchor the patch in place, 3.5 times more strongly than staples.

One researcher said, "The unique design allows the needles to stick to soft tissues with minimal damage. Moreover, when it comes time to remove the adhesive, as opposed to staples, there is less trauma inflicted to the tissue, blood and nerves, as well as a reduced risk of infection."

So if the copy was designed ingeniously, then what does it say about the Designer of the original? Clearly it didn't come about by happenstance.

- A bio-inspired swellable microneedle adhesive for mechanical interlocking with tissue, *Nature Communications* 4(1702) 16 April 2013 | doi:10.1038/ncomms2715.
- Spiny worm solves thorny problem, *news24.com*, 16 April 2013.
- ScienceShot: Parasite Inspires Surgical Patch, *news.sciencemag.org*, 16 April 2013.

On human consciousness

BY DOMINIC STATHAM (EXCERPT)

ATHEISM requires of its advocates that they constantly think and act in ways that are contrary to that which appears to be plainly true.

According to Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, "Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved."¹

Nature appears to be designed; but, he says, we should view it as if it isn't. Biological machines appear to be irreducibly complex; but Richard Dawkins tells us that we should believe that they're not. We appear to be conscious beings; but atheists tell us that this is just an illusion. We all have a sense that we're responsible for our actions; but, we're told, this is not so and, in reality, our 'moral choices' are simply determined by brain chemistry.

As usual, the known facts fit the biblical account of creation far better than they fit the evolution story. Even secular philosophers acknowledge that consciousness appears to transcend science and naturalistic explana-

tions.² Not only can they not explain it, but they can't even define it. In contrast, the Bible provides a wholly satisfactory framework upon which to build an understanding of human nature.

According to the Bible, we are much more than a body, a biochemical mechanism. When we were created we were given an immaterial soul and a spiritual nature (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). Prior to the Fall (Genesis 3), our actions (the activities of the body) would have been entirely under the control of this immaterial aspect of our being. Now, due to sin, we battle with the desires of the flesh and can be dominated by addictions and lusts.

The good news, however, is that Christ died so that we might be set free. Even in this life, we can regain, in some measure, the control that Adam and Eve originally possessed (Romans 6:6; 7:24–25). And, in the next life, we will possess a sinless soul after that of our saviour, and a sinless body with which we will glorify Him for eternity.

1. Crick, F., *What Mad Pursuit: A personal view of scientific discovery*, Sloan Foundation Science, London, p. 138, 1988.
2. Tate, D., *Consciousness: a problem for naturalism*, *Journal of Creation* 21(1):29–32, April 2007

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Vital keys to better communication

BY ROB FURLONG

THE sign hanging from the balcony of the second floor apartment said it all. It simply read, "For sale – one husband!"

After a number of weeks of government enforced isolation, clearly things – or her husband – were getting to one poor lady!

With most of the world in some form of lockdown it would be unusual for even the best of relationships to not experience some form of tension at the moment!

Some years ago I came across the following "Ten rules for communication" – if you are finding it difficult to either listen or be heard lately then let these encourage you!

• **Listen:** Don't interrupt or assume you know what the person

is going to say. Listen instead! And always be polite!

• **Empathy:** Try and put yourself in the other person's shoes as well as honouring the fact that they have chosen to be open and vulnerable with you.

• **Acceptance:** Never treat the person as an inferior. Instead, accept them for who they are.

• **Understanding:** Remember, other people have a point of view as well and they are entitled to it. It doesn't make them right. They may not have all the facts or their understanding may be faulty – but you might be too!

• **Control:** Try not to raise your voice, drown the other person out with your words or monopolise the conversation. Arguing, sulking or resorting to tears are poor ways to make your point.

• **Questions:** Ask questions to clarify a point if necessary. Make sure the question is relevant to the discussion and not simply an attempt by you to push your point of view.

• **Interest:** Give the person your full attention which means not being

distracted by FaceBook, your phone or a mind that wanders. Paying attention can be difficult but it is a skill that can be learned and mastered and the other person will appreciate it. My experience has been that people can tell when you are zoning out and when they catch you it can lead to a very uncomfortable moment.

• **The past:** One husband said to his counselor that in an argument his wife would always "become historical." "Don't you mean hysterical?" asked the counselor. "No!" replied the husband adamantly. "Historical – every time we fight she keeps bringing up all my past mistakes and failures!" Don't refer back to past incidents or failures by the other person. It only reveals a lack of forgiveness on your part and it keeps them trapped in condemnation and failure.

• **Time:** one of the greatest gifts we can give each other is our time. And let's face it, at the moment we have a bit more of that at our disposal! Meaningful conversation flourishes

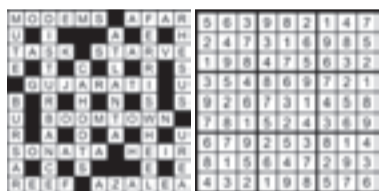


when we allow time for it. A two way conversation in a relaxed environment not only fosters clearer communication but engenders deeper love. A wise man once said that for many people "being heard by someone else also demonstrates to them that they are truly loved."

• **Listen:** We finish where we began! When we act selfishly we seek only to vindicate ourselves, but love listens. Allowing someone to express themselves in a genuinely caring environment establishes deep roots from which healthy, mutual love grows.

Communication is vital to every relationship but without a healthy understanding of the key principles underpinning it, we can end up sending out and receiving extremely garbled messages.

Don't hang out the "For sale" sign on your loved one just yet!



Meeting Jesus on your couch

BY JODY BENNETT

IF you have never read the Gospels (the books Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible) or have read them but found them hard to imagine as history and difficult to picture as real life events, then may I encourage you to watch the free series *The Chosen* about the life of Christ on app VidAngel?



Jonathan Roumie in his portrayal of Jesus in *The Chosen*.

With a 8.5 user score on IMDb with over 5,000 user reviews, making it the highest-rated faith film project of all time, and 100% critic score and 99% audience score on Rotten Tomatoes, this is not some painfully acted, poorly crafted Sunday school project.

The Chosen has surged into IMDb's Top 250 All-time series list. It joins other prestigious series like Netflix's *The Crown* and HBO's hit series *Band of Brothers* and *Chernobyl* as the most highly rated historical dramas. Dubbed into Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, besides its original English, it is currently being watched in nearly every country on earth.

Neal Harmon, CEO of VidAngel said "*The Chosen* is a series about hope and inspiration. It is a show about the Gospels the whole family can celebrate together. We believe that's why it's seeing so much interest both here in the U.S. and around the world.

"It makes it possible for millions to imagine what it might have been like to meet Jesus when he first walked

the earth. This show helps us to read the New Testament with a fresh perspective."

Indeed, the project sticks closely to the Bible narrative but also fleshes out some of the background characters, so that we can get a context for their interactions with Jesus and understand the culture of the day. In a nice touch, Matthew the tax collector is depicted as on the autism

spectrum, which, on reflection on the style of his gospel, he might well have been!

True to Scripture, Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus is an ordinary looking man, dressed not in white robe and blue sash, but in dull, often dirty

brown robes. Roumie portrays very well how Jesus impacted his followers not by outward appearance but by the extraordinary, audacious things He said, by His miracles and mostly, by His compassion.

See Jesus laugh and cry, argue and teach, eat and heal and dance. Appreciate how hard to was for some of those who met a craftsman from Nazareth to accept this was their God in the flesh, their promised Messiah. I'm sure it will make you laugh and cry, as it did me.

The moving multi-season series is the first ever about the life of Christ. Surpassing expectations and breaking records, it was named the #1 Crowdfunded Media Project in 2018 by raising over \$10 million. *The Chosen* went on to become the 1st Entertainment Project to be released around the world in 180 countries on its own app. Due to the overwhelming response, it is projected that VidAngel will soon be able to produce a new season.

Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 2)

BY JODY BENNETT

THIS last week our sausage dog got parvo virus, a gastro-intestinal disease that can easily kill a dog through dehydration or secondary infection.

Carrie was very ill and the vet warned me that should she not improve with treatment at home, she may have to be hospitalised, which would require a \$3,000 deposit!

This put us in a very difficult position. On the one hand, we didn't really have that sort of money to spend, but on the other hand, how could we put a price on the life of our beloved pet? And how would I tell the children we killed the dog because it was too expensive?



I have heard of people who have spent \$20,000 or more on their dogs, paying for operations or ongoing treatments for various diseases or allergies.

Before we owned a pet I would have said that was completely crazy, but now I know our animals come to be part of the family and I, for one, was reduced to uncontrollable sobs at the thought that our dog might die.

But what makes our pets so valuable? They eat rotten bones on the carpet, leave poop all over the lawn and destroy our favourite shoes – from a purely practical, financial point of view they are not worth it.

A pet's worth comes from how much we love them, the emotional investment we place in them.

They are not valuable in and of themselves because of what they have done, but they are valuable because of the relationship we have with them, and it is purely subjective and often unfathomable to others.

It got me thinking that it is like God's illogical, disproportionate love for us. We are not valuable in any objective way to Him, we don't deserve and can't earn the affection He places on us, but He values our lives by His deep and abiding tenderness for us.

And while we may "um" and "aah" about spending a few thousand dollars on the dog, God did not hesitate to lay down His very life for us. No cost was too great because His love for us "reaches to the heavens, [His] faithfulness to the skies" (Psalm 35:6).

If He is not yet your "owner", may I encourage you to surrender to Him? He is the most loving master in the universe.

How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

OUR PROBLEM:

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

ADMIT

GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION:

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

BELIEVE

OUR RESPONSE:

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

COMMIT

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

Bible

Some 'starting off' literature

Information on a helpful church

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

I would like to think about this.

Please send me:

More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.

I have a problem (see attached letter)

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship
 PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985

Fax (08) 9453 3006 or email
 info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Head coach Tony Bennett of the Virginia Cavaliers reacts to a call from the referee during the second half of the game against the Louisville Cardinals at KFC YUM! Center on February 08, 2020 in Louisville, Kentucky. (Photo by Silas Walker/Getty Images)



HUMBLE IN VICTORY

Basketball coach Tony Bennett told his team to promise him they would remain humble and thankful after they won the NCAA Championship. “Don’t let this change you,” he told the Virginia Cavaliers from the University of Virginia. “It doesn’t have to.”

Many are singing Tony’s praises for turning down a “substantial” pay rise so others could make more money. On top of that, he asked that the money be redirected into additional compensation for his staff and improvements for their program. He and his wife Laurel then pledged \$500,000 toward a career-development program for current and former Virginia basketball players.

In a game where the meek are more likely to be blasted than blessed, Tony is a committed Christian who sets an example of indomitable faith in what can be an unforgiving and stressful arena.

He holds fast to his beliefs and what he calls the ‘Five Pillars of Life’: humility, passion, unity, servant-hood and thankfulness.

“Whether you’re a believer or not, those are significant for a team,” Tony says. “They’re posted in our locker room and they’re everything to our program. To be great in

basketball, those things have to be there.”

When his team won the national title last April, he told a post-game interviewer, “I do want to thank the Lord and my Saviour.”

He prays regularly for his players in the hope that “they’ll be able to find the truth in their lives that has really transformed my life” and asks God that they perform with excellence and reach their full potential; that he’ll coach them well and that they will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

“How many people can be mad at you when you tell them that you’ve prayed for them?” Tony chuckles.

It’s therefore not so surprising Tony turned down the raise. “I have more than I need,” he said. “I’m blessed beyond what I deserve.”

Having committed his life to God at a youth camp when he was 14, Tony lives out what the Bible teaches about true riches, to “be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

Using money to serve the purposes of God gives it a deeper spiritual dimension, an eternal perspective. As Rick Warren has said: “Most people fail to realise money is both a

test and a trust from God.”

“If my life is just about winning championships, if it’s just about being the best—then I’m running the wrong race,” the coach said. “That’s empty.”

“But if it’s about trying to be excellent and do things the right way, to honour the university that’s hired you, the athletic director you work for and the young men you’re coaching—always in the process trying to bring glory to God—then that’s the right thing.”

Tony has become one of the nation’s most highly regarded college basketball coaches. He has a 320-122 record in 13 seasons at Washington State (2006-2009) and Virginia (2009-present).

In 2017-18, he led Virginia to its eighth ACC regular-season title and its third ACC Tournament championship, breaking records along the way.

He has also won the prestigious Henry Iba National Coach of the Year award, which recognises the best college basketball coach of the year, three times.

During the 2019 NCAA tournament, Tony said his faith helped him through stressful situations.

“You certainly feel things – things bother you, but where does peace and perspective come from? And as I always tell our guys: It’s got to be from something that is unconditional,” Tony said.

“My faith in Jesus is where I draw my strength from – my peace, my steadiness in the midst of things.

“My faith defines me. It’s what gives me my meaning and purpose and how I try to treat people and live my life.

“I make so many mistakes, and the fact that I know I’m forgiven is the greatest joy that I have. That is the bedrock of my life and the foundation of why and how I coach.”



Head coach Tony Bennett of the Virginia Cavaliers watches a highlight video before the start of a game against the Louisville Cardinals at John Paul Jones Arena on March 7, 2020 in Charlottesville, Virginia. (Photo by Ryan M. Kelly/Getty Images)

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