

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

Reggie isn't your typical motivational speaker, but one thing's for certain, he is the man for the job.

For the past 31 years, US-based inspirational speaker Reggie Dabbs has been travelling across the world delivering a message of hope to teens. He is known by multiple generations of Aussies for his jovial presence, booming voice and heartfelt messages – often with a serving of saxophone. While his audience ages, his message does not.

It's not because Reggie's funny, it's because, unlike many other speakers, he gets right down to what's important.

"It ain't the humour and it ain't the honesty [that make kids relate to me], it's the love," says Reggie. "I believe people turn to drugs and a lot of other negative, horrible influences in their life because they don't have that love. When you put in that love factor, it attracts people in a cool and genuine way."

Reggie's presence is undeniable – one which stands head and shoulders above everyone else in the room.

"The number one thing I make fun of is my size. Being very large, I just joke about it, and anybody who has any kind of abnormal feeling about themselves thinks, 'Now this cat, he's laughing about himself. Why can't I laugh about me?'" he says.

By laughing at himself, Reggie gets to talk about what truly matters to his audience: their concerns about relationships, bullying and their



Reggie Dabbs says being fostered inspired him to help others who are without hope. INSET: Reggie on his sax.

future. But, most of all, it gives him the remarkable ability to bring hope where there is none.

"If you confront the walls and break them down, when you bring up hope, love and Jesus, it's easier to reach into the heart of every person in the room," he explains.

After the laughter dies down, Reggie will tell the kids sitting in front of him about his own upbringing.

He explains that his birth mother was a prostitute, and she gave him away to her favourite schoolteacher and her husband, who continued to care for him as foster parents before eventually adopting him.

In fact, Reggie was only eight years old when he found this out for himself, and he shares that this put him on the path to helping young people.

"When I was 12, it was three in the morning and I decided I didn't want to live any more. My foster-care dad came into my room, put his arms around me and said, 'You're not my son. I can't give you my blood, but if you let me I'll love you to the day I die.' And he did just that," Reggie gladly acknowledges.

"It was the love of Jesus through him and through my foster-care

mum that led me to Jesus the first time."

After graduating from college, Reggie began his public speaking. During one speaking engagement, his host asked if he would be interested in addressing a high school assembly. From that small beginning in 1987, Reggie has become a popular public school speaker.

● Turn to page 2

Does the Easter resurrection even matter?

BY ANDREW HALLOWAY

YOU might be thinking, what do I care? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead or not?

It makes all the difference in the world. If Jesus didn't come back to life after being dead for three days, then millions of Christians have been deceived for 2,000 years, and martyred for it. And today, thousands of believers are still being persecuted and killed rather than deny their faith, so if the resurrection was a hoax they are dying for nothing.

But if He really did rise, then He is still alive and is God – just as He claimed. That means every word He said is true – including the fact that we can have a relationship with God today, that death is not the end, and that Jesus will one day

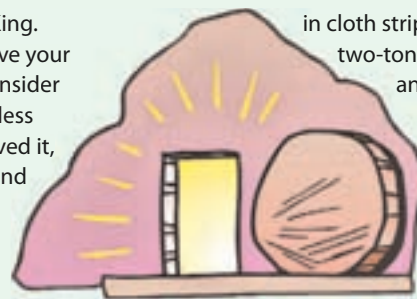
return to our world as King.

You don't have to leave your brains at the door to consider the resurrection. Countless intellectuals have believed it, from Sir Isaac Newton and JRR Tolkien to today's Oxford Professor of Maths John Lennox and Cambridge paleontologist Simon Conway Morris. Why? Because an impartial look at the facts of the resurrection make it hard to avoid the conclusion that Jesus did rise.

Let's look at a few.

THE EMPTY TOMB

After Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, wrapped from head to toe



in cloth strips, and laid in a solid-rock tomb. A two-ton stone was rolled across the entrance and sealed so it would be known if anyone broke in. Soldiers guarded the tomb.

On the Sunday morning the stone had been rolled aside, the guards had fled, and the body was gone. But the strips of cloth were still where the body had been, and no one ever produced the body to disprove the resurrection.

Jesus' disciples could not have stolen His body. The disciples (Jesus' closest followers) thought the movement was over and they hid for fear of being arrested like Jesus. Hardly the state of mind of a group who would attack the guards to steal the body.

● Turn to page 4

BACK PAGE



Time marches on

BY ALAN BAILEY

TIME makes sure nothing lasts for long. Everything around us is passing by, fading into the past at the same rate. Sure, certain solid things like you and me take a while to disappear completely, but eventually we'll go too.

This flow of history gives us the strong impression that the most valuable thing is the latest to arrive. The new fashion, the new electronic device, the new entertainment is what's worth going for.

Then, it applies to history. Everything was bad back there. Through the years we have improved so much, the primitive old has been replaced by the sophisticated new. Undeniable, isn't it?

NOT ENTIRELY

Not everything was bad. After all, the present has been built on the foundations laid in the past. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. A huge legacy is left for us to draw upon. (We still mess up badly though, Hmmm?)

So many today have the idea that talk about God and Christ is old hat. Out-of-date and out-of-touch. So old it has no relevance for today. This is a great mistake.

We read it the New Testament that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). He spans history. Please don't think



His life began at Bethlehem at that first Christmas. He has always lived—eternal with the Father. He was active though unnamed in the days of the Old Testament. His life on earth as man we can all read about in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

But we need to notice this. Jesus foretold future things. The destruction of Jerusalem was one thing. It occurred 35 years or so after His death. He spoke of the spread of the Christian gospel world-wide. How did He know that would happen? He described conditions that would prevail prior to His second coming, which is yet to occur. Those conditions, including the place of the nation Israel, are with us now.

No, Jesus is not out of date. By His death and resurrection He proved that He is the King of all Kings, holding power over the whole universe and mankind. He will very soon be the latest thing when He comes to judge the world. The Bible says that every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father.

Christians are people who have already bowed the knee to Jesus Christ as Lord. They know Him and are known by Him. It is the habit of Christians to speak to Him daily in prayer. They will welcome His return.

Reach out to Him, accept His forgiveness, and get to know Him better.

Abused suicide survivor finds freedom

BY CHRIS EYTE

A suicide and abuse survivor asked 'Why?' when she saw a depiction of the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

Maz Chapman, now aged 36, from Littlehampton in West Sussex, was at a Good Friday church service at the time, looking at a slide show of the crucifixion. Rock singer Bryan Adam's famous song, 'Everything I do, I do it for you' was playing in the background.

The presentation showed Jesus stripped naked, flogged, carrying a huge, heavy cross and bleeding with tears after a crown of thorns was pushed into His head.

Maz said: "I looked up into the screen at the exact moment that there was a close-up of the pain on Jesus' face as He was dying. And the words, 'I do it for you' just said it all. The attention, love and warmth that I so desperately needed from people was there in those eyes.

"It was like there was no one else in the room. Jesus had died for me, so I would be free from my own hell, free from evil and free to live in heaven."

That moment of faith marked a change in direction for Maz whose life was 'horrible' growing up. She had previously suffered 'abuse men-



Maz Chapman says that since understanding the Good News of Jesus she has felt free from her own hell, free from evil and free to live in heaven.

tally, physically and in other ways' as a youngster at the hands of someone she trusted. To make it worse, thugs at school picked on the young girl and bullied her.

"I had no one at home to turn to and few friends I could talk to at school," added Maz. "I became paranoid, hateful, and self-harmed a lot. Alcohol and cigarettes were great company. By the time I finished secondary school, I had attempted suicide a few times. It was all quite nasty."

Maz went back to university in London after her encounter with the reality of Jesus and told a Christian friend, "I get it now". She got involved with a local church in the city and spent the next couple of years throwing off the negative self-image she had accepted when a child.

She added: "I learned to develop real relationships and friendships, learning to trust and become a good friend. I also got more involved in the church and joined ministry groups,

wanting to serve God, wanting other people to have this amazing relationship!"

London provided a romantic backdrop for Maz to meet her future husband Warren. The couple dated, fell in love, got married and then moved back to Sussex. The busy mum was also baptised on Good Friday, 2010 – the exact date she had become a Christian 12 years before.

Maz said: "We try our best for our family, and encourage the children to pray and be open with people about their faith. There is still a lot to learn about the wonders of our Lord Jesus."

Living as a Christian does not make you a superhero, according to Maz. There are still everyday challenges which need to be faced.

"I have my daily struggles," she said. "I make mistakes, but we also have a lot of fun and laughter. No matter what - I am living in the security of the love and salvation of Jesus Christ."

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

● From page 1

Over time, Reggie realised that the only way he could keep kids from the darkness he once felt was to share his own story.

That's why every joke he cracks is paired with the truth that no-one is ever truly alone.

"We all have something deep inside that only love, only Christ, can fill," he says. "I can be a part of that hope-finding process. I come across as very funny in my humour, and also very serious in my personal testimony, and I think God gave me the ability to blend the two in a way that's really unique."

Reggie talks to kids about family and how thankful they should be that they have families. Most of all, Reggie drives home the fact that, "You can never change your past, but you can



Reggie sharing his story

change your future!"

In a climate where religion is becoming more contentious in public forums, different sources label Reggie different things: a motivational speaker, an evangelist, even a 'bully buster'.

When you get down to it, though, it's clear he has one simple agenda:

to bring hope wherever he goes.

Reggie's results speak for themselves. He's met with tears, kids that line up for bear hugs, ones that want to take selfies with him and messages from all over social media.

He makes a point of travelling far and wide so people in even the most remote areas have the opportunity to hear his story.

"I have an incredible wife who lets me go," Reggie says, before mentioning that she made sure their son Dominic joined him on the road as a kid so he understood what his father did.

"When Dominic was 10 years old, a teacher asked him, 'So, what does your dad do?' and he said, 'My dad saves the world.'" Reggie says with pride.

Reggie is planning to return to Australia in May – by way of London and Stockholm.

Crossword

ACROSS	8 Lone singer	14 Petty quarrel	20 Short social media post
1 Cartoon magazine	9 Mountain goat	17 Midwest U.S. state	
4 Prohibited	10 Relics building	18 Hawaiian garland	
7 Hot water dispenser	12 Right-leaning?	19 Medical worker	

DOWN

1 Jesus' execution

2 Itchy dog ailment

3 Banknotes and coins

4 Bathroom powder

5 Pickling liquid

6 Sight tester

11 Open wider, as a pupil

13 Viper

15 Sign of life

16 Fruity pastry

SOLUTION PAGE 11

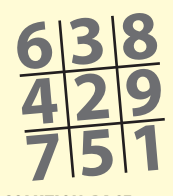
Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11



Only one way? At least there's one!

CHRISTIANS say it all the time and Jesus said it Himself when He walked on this earth— He is the only way to God and to heaven. “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes unto the Father except through me” (John 14 verse 6).

That might seem greedy or unfair. How can one man be the only way to eternal life? What if I don't want to confess Jesus was the Son of God? What if I don't believe it? What if I live my life in the right way, love the people around me, do good in the world— what if I am a good person? Why is that not enough to get me into heaven?

Because heaven is reserved for the perfect and faultless. Heaven is not just for good people and hell for bad people— heaven is for people who have never once lied, or cheated, or had a jealous thought, or put themselves above others, and hell is for everyone else. Hell is for you and me. Heaven is for no one in this world.

Jesus is a loophole. He is a free keycard into heaven. Swipe it and get in, no questions asked. He is the only way, but rather than complaining there is only one way, we should be rejoicing there is a way at all. Because there shouldn't be. Because we don't deserve it.

We deserve death. And for us to be allowed entry into heaven, for the loophole to work, someone perfect and faultless needed to take on our fate and die instead of us.

Jesus did that, and that is why He is the only way.

In no other religion did someone who was blameless voluntarily put themselves through the worst kind of death with your very face in mind, taking the punishment for every little and big thing you have ever done wrong so you could become blameless in God's eyes and get access to an everlasting life with no pain and no suffering.

That's why it has to be Jesus. Without His sacrifice, there would be no hope for us beyond this life.

At Easter we celebrate because we are remembering the day when we were all given a keycard into heaven, when all the ways in which we mess up began to no longer matter, when forgiveness started raining down on this earth as it continues to do today.

You can't get into heaven by yourself. You might be good, but you've done bad things. But that's okay— you still get to go to paradise, you still get the eternal life only reserved for the perfect and faultless.

You don't have to do a thing— except let that rain pour down on you and wash away the sin, the filth, the wrong, the painful, from your life. Just receive the gift Jesus gave you when He died in excruciating pain even though He had done nothing wrong. He did that for you, and He gives you this gift, completely free, if you just recognize what He has done and let Him love you.

You don't deserve this gift. But take it anyway. •

EASTER PHOTOS

EASTER in the Middle East

Right. Thumb up, a boy holds palm leaves during a Palm Sunday procession in Cairo. (Khaled Desouki/AFP/Getty Images)

Below: A girl in the Syrian city of Qamishli as people gather on Easter Sunday. (Delil Souleiman/AFP/Getty Images)



“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead ...” 1 Corinthians 15:17-20a

Atheist MD tries to debunk the resurrection - but fails

BY QIAN JIAWEN

Instead of being happy and fulfilled, Dr Greg Lehman was always frustrated and angry – despite having an enviable lifestyle that included ski trips, luxury cars, and an expensive house.

“I was going from one thing to the next: I'd buy a new car, and when that didn't do it, I'd go out and buy new clothes or take a trip. I went through hobbies. I did triathlon,” Greg says.

A proud atheist, Greg had cruised through medical school, ran a profitable practice and had a wife and two kids. Yet for all that success, contentment eluded him.

“You're sad, you're empty, you're angry, you're frustrated, because you're like, ‘Why? What's wrong with me? Why am I not fulfilled? Why don't I feel like I have achieved what I worked my whole life for?’” he explains.

Greg tried to mask what he was feeling inside: “You're embarrassed. You're not going to tell anyone. You keep it inside. So what you wind up doing is taking it out on other people.”

Lehman took it out on his wife and family.

“He was good but he had a short fuse,” says his wife, Ruth. “He was arrogant. He was always right.”

If he was irritable with his family, he was even more annoyed with his Christian neighbours because he thought their lifestyle did not match up with the Bible.

Setting out to expose his neighbours' hypocrisy, he began to look for ammunition in the Bible to confront their inconsistencies with their own book.

Instead, he was dumbfounded by the gospel's claim that Jesus was God, living as a man: “That quickly got my attention because I realized if that did happen, it was the most important event in history. I forgot about the neighbours and set out to find out if this really happened.”

After weeks of researching, he realized everything about Christianity hinged on the resurrection. As a doctor, he tried to rule out options, testing hypotheses that could explain away the resurrec-



Dr Greg Lehman was dumbfounded by the gospel's claim that Jesus was God, living as man.

tion. “Maybe the apostles stole the body or it was a hallucination,” he considered.

After carefully examining the alternatives he came to a startling conclusion: “None of them were credible. The only thing that could make sense with the historical facts was that the tomb was empty and He actually rose.”

He was impressed by Luke, fellow doctor and author of the Gospel of Luke. Doctors were trained to dismiss superstition and identify known causes, even in Luke's day. Yet here was a doctor validating the miracles of Jesus.

The real clincher, though, was Paul, who wrote a lot of the New Testament of the Bible. He started

as a Jewish persecutor of the early Church but wound up being the biggest proponent of the faith.

“He's killing Christians. He has nothing to gain [by converting to Christianity]. What in the world could make this guy go and be the greatest evangelist ever? There was only one explanation and that was that he saw the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. When I looked at the evidence and I looked at these guys and their changed lives, I said, ‘I have to believe it.’”

One day, Greg finished a medical consultation with his usual, “Do you have any questions?”

The walk-in patient asked: “Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?”

“I about passed out,” says Greg. “Why was he asking me this? Who was this guy? I bolted out of the room because I didn't know what to do.”

For two days, he pondered the strange event.

“There were things in my life I wanted to change – the anger and the frustration. But I didn't have the power to change. It culminated with me breaking down and crying and asking God to forgive me. I repented of my sins and asked [God] to change me.”

Greg prayed alone at home to invite Jesus to be his Lord and Saviour. The next morning he felt an inexplicable and unaccustomed tranquility.

“I was completely peaceful. Something was really different. I had been changed.”

At first, he was not sure what was going on and even checked to see if his antihistamines had been changed to a brand that would explain the peace he felt. But they were the same.

Finally, he accepted this as a miracle.

“Since that day, I have never felt alone,” he says. “I have never felt empty. I have never felt all that discontentment.”

“Every other religion is man seeking God. Christianity is God seeking man. The real test of Christianity is you call on Him, you put Him to the test. He's not just going to forgive your sins, He's going to show you so you know it's true. That's the big difference.” •

Does the resurrection even matter?

● From page 1

In any case, the guards would have faced death or severe punishment for failing in their duty, so they would have been no pushovers.

Perhaps Peter (who was so afraid he denied knowing Jesus three times) and Thomas (who did not believe Jesus was alive even when told by all the others) overpowered the guards to take the body, and later died for a myth they made up? Unbelievable.

Jesus' enemies could not have stolen His body.

Why would the Romans or Jewish religious leaders steal the body of someone they had killed? The Jewish leaders were the ones who asked for the tomb to be guarded, to prevent resurrection rumours arising. And if they had the body, surely they would have shown it in order to quell the rumours, and Christianity would have died out. They did not, and it did not.

THE SWOON THEORY.

This supposes that Jesus did not die. The Roman executioners only thought he was dead. Really? He was flogged with a Roman whip that ripped the flesh from His back, then forced to carry His cross around Jerusalem, then crucified, and finally stabbed in the heart to ensure He was dead. Then He was wrapped so tight in cloths that, had He still been alive, He would have suffocated.

Yet somehow He is supposed to have survived on a stone cold slab for two days, with no food or water, then pushed over a two-ton stone without the soldiers noticing



and walked out of the tomb on nail-pierced feet. This is harder to believe than the resurrection!

THE HALLUCINATION THEORY.

This says the eleven disciples had a group hallucination, all seeing the same things at once. Problem – hallucinations are an individual experience, so even if they all hallucinated at the same time they would have seen different things. Not only that, it was not just the eleven male disciples who saw the risen Jesus, but the women too, and the appearance of Christ kept happening for 40 days after his death, up to more than 500 people at once.

THE TRANSFORMED DISCIPLES.

After Jesus' crucifixion, most of His disciples went into hiding, apart from a few brave women who had stayed by Him through His death and looked after His body. That's why the Bible records that women were the first to see Jesus after His resurrection despite the fact that this would have been counter-productive for the early Church. Why? Because a woman's testimony was not regarded as reliable at that time. That's why historians today see this as genuine evidence for the resurrection. If you were making it up, you wouldn't make women the first eyewitnesses.

But after seeing Jesus for themselves, the rest of the disciples were no longer cowards. They risked life and limb to tell the world about Jesus, and ten of the eleven disciples were martyred. Early Church writers say Peter was crucified upside down, Thomas was speared, and James was beheaded. Why die for something if you know it isn't true?

THE EXPLOSION OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

Historian Ken Curtis writes: "The spread of the Christian Church in its earliest centuries is one of the most amazing phenomena in all of human history". Within weeks of Jesus' crucifixion, followers of Jesus in Israel were numbered in the thousands. Why follow an executed "criminal"?

And within a few decades, there were churches across the Roman Empire, and as far away as India. Their leaders were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. How could a movement so dangerous to your personal well-being become so popular?

Of course, there is much more to consider. But the real reason people oppose the resurrection is not because of the historical evidence, but because they cannot – or will not – believe in such a miracle. Those whose minds are closed to the possibility of the supernatural will endlessly look for alternative explanations, despite the evidence. ●



Mexican evangelist is former lesbian prostitute

Isabél Contreras says, in her experience, same-sex attraction is often rooted in abuse.

Isabél Contreras was living la vida loca – the crazy life. Raised in a religious family in southern Mexico, Isabél rejected it all and became an atheist at 14. She explored satanism during high school, drank heavily and embraced a lesbian lifestyle, even working as a same-sex prostitute for three years in Mexico City.

"I was so full of rebellion and disobedience that my Mum booted me out of the house when I was only 14," Isabél shares sadly. "I did such despicable things! One day, my mother came to my house and said, 'You are no longer my daughter. I disown you.' I continued with even more vengeance in my sin."

This messed up rebel was the most unlikely person on earth to become a travelling speaker.

But, at age 21, she found Jesus and everything changed.

"Someone told me that God loved me," Isabél relates. "It was beyond my understanding that anyone could love me. I had to find out about this God who loved me and I found the Lord."

No one had to tell her to stop having sex with women or drinking heavily. "I was convicted by the Holy Spirit who told me all this was wrong," Isabél recalls. "I cut out everything that was ungodly and followed the Lord."

After her conversion, Isabél invited 25 of her friends to a dinner and told them that she was a Christian. After inviting them to church, she announced, "You are welcome to join me... Otherwise you can pretend you never knew me. The old Isabél is dead."

Her lesbian friends were not happy with the drastic change at all. They hired a girl to try and seduce her, but Isabél resisted the temptation.

"IT WAS BEYOND MY UNDERSTANDING THAT ANYONE COULD LOVE ME"



"I knew I would never go back into that life," she says. "I knew my decision was to follow Jesus."

Thus began an unusual journey for a woman who has become a

respected speaker in a male-dominated country marked by its machismo.

Sharing the gospel, the good news, is not easy for Isabél, even though she has travelled for 20 years telling others the good news of salvation (the story of Jesus coming to earth to save us from our sins). Sometimes, when she visits a new city, she often learns that she is the first woman ever to preach the good news.

Now 54, Isabél has planted two churches, spoken in every state in Mexico, and travelled to five other nations to tell others the good news of what God has done for her.

She has become especially popular among women. Her plain appearance and brutal

honesty wins over her audience who love that they feel accepted by her, and not threatened.

"I know what some of you ladies are thinking when you see me," she tells them. "You think I look like a dyke. [She doesn't wear heels or fancy dresses and doesn't style her hair.] But that's okay, because I don't care what people think about me. I am going to keep looking at Jesus until I look just like Him."

One day, Isabél's mother came to her church. She stood up the front and told the whole congregation, "This is my daughter and I am very proud of her."

"I believe my homosexual struggle began at age 11," Isabél says about her earlier life. "I was only 11 when an older girl molested me in a dark closet."

I believe some women turn to lesbianism because they have been raped or abused by men – and therefore they view sex with men as painful or traumatic."

This problem is especially serious in Mexico, where domestic abuse has become an epidemic and the rate of femicide [killing of women] is one of the world's highest.

"While I view homosexuality as sin," Isabél states, "I only have compassion for people who struggle with same-sex attraction as it is often rooted in abuse."

She has counselled countless people who struggle with their sexual identity and offers God's healing, not only to them, but to Christians struggling with various sins in churches everywhere. ●

How sure is your foundation?

POEM BY INMATE JOSEPH S. OF WISCONSIN

HOW SURE is your foundation?

Can you stand and not be shaken?
When the world around you quakes,
Will the ground beneath you break in?
Are you certain or mistaken?
Or have you been deceived
By the one we call Satan?
Don't wait 'til it's too late,
To test the ground on which you stand.
When the world around you is falling,
And you find yourself on sand ...
Sinking ...
Sinking into what the world regards as wise,
Enshrouded in the darkness,
Choking on the lies,
Drowning in your sorrow,
As you meet your soul's demise.

HOW SURE is your foundation?

Are your feet upon the Rock?
If the storms of life arise,
Or if you're hailed by certain death,
Are you sure that on the other side,
What you've trusted will be left?

HOW SURE is your foundation?

Have you tested it with fire?
Does the thought of simply trying it
Cause you to perspire?
Confident your faith is vested
In temporal desires?
If you're sure of nothing else,
You can be assured of this:
Heaven and earth shall pass away,
And all that is therein.
But if you trust in Christ the Rock,
All you'll lose is sin.

Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:10-11

60s hippie left empty by sex, drugs & rock 'n roll

Born in 1953 in a small Wisconsin town called Sheboygan, Bill had a very low self-image as a child. He was raised in a nominally Christian family that attended church, but Bill turned his back on religion. He described himself as a loner who did not fit in well. He often felt empty and unhappy.

Bill recalls telling his dad, "The only thing I am good at is not being good at anything."

A RADICAL JOURNEY

To cope with his lack of popularity, Bill submerged himself in books. He read everything from *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx to *The Politics of Ecstasy* by Timothy Leary. His search for truth also led him to explore eastern religions, cosmic consciousness and the New Age movement. "It was all part of a quest I was on – a journey to find truth and ultimate reality," Bill says.

At the same time Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, was a hotbed of student revolt. Bill often hitch-hiked there to be part of the action. Drifting quickly into the New Left movement, Bill began stirring up rebellion at the Sheboygan high school. He led demonstrations, edited a local underground paper and sold drugs to fellow students – sometimes getting arrested. He supported the Free Speech Movement, socialists, Marxists and various radical feminist and homosexual liberation groups.

A HAZE OF DRUGS

"When I read that you could find God while on LSD, as Timothy Leary insisted, I started getting into drugs big time," Bill admits. "Drugs and rock and roll went together, so I attended as many rock concerts as I could get to,



Before his life was transformed, pro-family blogger and author Bill Muehlenberg was lost in the hippie culture of the sixties.

almost always stoned out of my mind."

But the more drugs Bill took, the more he lost his original vision of finding God and truth. He simply wanted to get high.

When Bill – decked out in long hair and beard – walked to his high school graduation ceremony in June 1971, a fellow student said to him, "You are looking more and more like Jesus Christ every day." Little did he know how prophetic that remark was!

But it was a depressive, desperate period of Bill's life. "Psychedelic drugs like LSD did not really help much," he confessed. "They simply amplified a million times over whatever state or condition you were already in."

SAVED FROM SUICIDE

One night, crushed with overwhelming despair and depression, Bill grabbed the kitchen knife in the hope of ending it all.

"As I was in the very midst

of this insanity, suddenly something happened. There was another person in the room. As clear as day I knew there was someone in the room. And for some reason I knew exactly who it was – it was Jesus," Bill said.

"He was not there very long, and I don't recall anything being said by Him. But I put the knife down and thoughts of suicide flew away. He saved my life."

Soon, Jesus was to save Bill's spiritual life as well.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNE CULT

Two months later, in August 1971, Bill had an unexpected conversation with Cheryl, a fellow hippy. She had just returned from a Christian commune in the mountains of New Mexico.

"Cheryl was telling everyone about Jesus and her new life in Christ. She was certainly excited and radiant," Bill said. "She seemed to be a new person, and wanted everyone to discover what she had. Music to my desperate ears and empty soul."

Bill decided to follow Cheryl back to New Mexico to discover what she had found. Unfortunately, he found himself in a cult led by a Charles Manson-like figure.

ESCAPATE TO TACOMA

After some months – and many adventures, which included escaping the FBI, Bill broke away from the cult

and arrived in Tacoma in Washington state, still seeking truth. A truck driver gave him a copy of Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. This book on biblical prophecy led Bill to make sure he was right with God.

"I prayed a prayer of commitment to Christ. I told Him that I did not know if I was a Christian or not. If not, I wanted to get saved then and there," Bill said.

Two elderly Christian ladies were another godsend. They ran weekly home Bible studies, which Bill attended. "I learnt about God's word and they patiently tried to answer all sorts of gnarly questions. It was a real time of grounding and growth for me," Bill said.

One night the group studied 1 Peter 2, which talks about suffering for doing what's right. Bill was convicted about his drug use.

"After around four years of regular drug abuse, I have never had so much as a puff of a joint in 40 years. Such is the powerful liberating power of God."

THE PRODIGAL RETURNS

In June 1972, Bill received a tear-stained letter from his dad, ecstatic to hear about Bill's true conversion and longing to see him again. His dad said: "I am so happy that you are becoming such a wonderful young man ... you are like the prodigal son come back."

So after nearly a year in New Mexico and Tacoma, Bill finally returned home. A Christian girl later lent him some books by C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, and the rest is history.

Today Bill Muehlenberg uses his sharp intellect to explore key issues of our day on his CultureWatch blog at www.billmuehlenberg.com. There you can find the full version of his amazing story. ●

Reprinted from VoxPrint by permission of FamilyVoice Australia.

Ruined life made new

Marcus Jordan (right) used drugs to drown out the dysfunction and abuse of his relationships until he found a love he had never known before.



"**T**hroughout my childhood I went through a lot of physical, sexual, and verbal abuse," Marcus confesses, "I became very dysfunctional and looked at life a lot differently than most kids."

"At the age of 12 I began smoking pot. One day my friend, my twin brother, and I got caught smoking a joint by my mum. I thought she was going to beat us to death; instead, she rolled a joint and smoked it with us."

"Every day since that day our house became the party house. Everyone thought it was cool that my mum let us smoke pot and do practically whatever we wanted."

Marcus began skipping school and sport activities just so he could get high.

"I started taking prescription pills," he shares, "and my drug usage escalated. I even skipped school to go to work so I could support my drug habit."

When Marcus started dating a cheerleader from his school, things took a turn for the worse.

"She had a job as a pharmacy technician and she took the inventory on all the prescription pills," Marcus says, "So, of course, I talked her into stealing all the pills she could get her hands on. I became a slave to drugs."

"My life was being controlled by my addiction, and I couldn't cope physically unless I had some type of drug to take. It destroyed me."

"Next thing I knew, my girlfriend left me, I dropped out of school, and my reputation was ruined."

It was then that Marcus made a horrible mistake by trying crack cocaine.

"I'd never been so infatuated with anything as badly as I was with this drug. All my time, money, and effort went into this poison," he admits.

"I remember driving to my drug dealers and suddenly realizing how lost I was as a person. I began to cry out to God for help ... but my heart was so hardened that my feelings and emotions could not be reached."

After work one day, Marcus decided to commit suicide.

"I drank over 110 milligrams of liquid methadone

and smoked a bunch of crack cocaine," Marcus says remorsefully, "Everything went black."

"I woke up a week later out of a coma with a machine breathing for me out of a tube down my throat. The doctors told my family that I wasn't going to make it, and if I did, I'd be brain dead."

However, God stepped in and Marcus recovered enough to leave hospital.

"Anyone in his right mind would have stopped using drugs at that point, but I was so far gone, nothing mattered to me."



STOCK PHOTO

Marcus continued using drugs and was in and out of jail several times. He destroyed his family, lost touch with his sons and burned many bridges.

When he hit rock-bottom, Marcus finally realised he had no choice but to turn to the only One who could save him – Jesus, who had died on the cross to take on Himself all of Marcus' guilt and shame and pay for all his mistakes and sins.

"Everything in my life has been changed drastically since I accepted Jesus Christ into my life and my heart," Marcus says joyfully, "I now know God is real because I would never have been able to [kick my drug habit] on my own. Jesus gives me confidence and a hope that through Him I can make it."

"My family is slowly being restored. I'm becoming the person I've always wanted to be. People actually come to me for prayer and answers. I have never felt this type of love, like the love of Christ, before. I'm so excited about my future that I don't have the words to describe it," he enthuses.

"If it weren't for God's never-ending love, mercy, and grace, I would be dead. Thank you, Father God!" ●



Let PSSM introduce you to God through FREE Bible lessons! pssm.com.au

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

Name _____

DOB / / Male Female

Street _____ Suburb _____

State _____ Postcode _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under 18 years) _____

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

We are looking forward to hearing from you!
(07) 5433 1628
info@pssm.com.au
pssm.com.au



Challenge
INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE

WWW.CHALLENGENEWS.ORG

Testimonies • Children's pages
Lifestyle articles • Sports

Published 11 months of the year by Challenge Literature Fellowship (ABN 98 206 125 814) in association with the international family of Challenge newspapers.

Editor: Carl Carmody.
Staff writer: Jody Bennett.

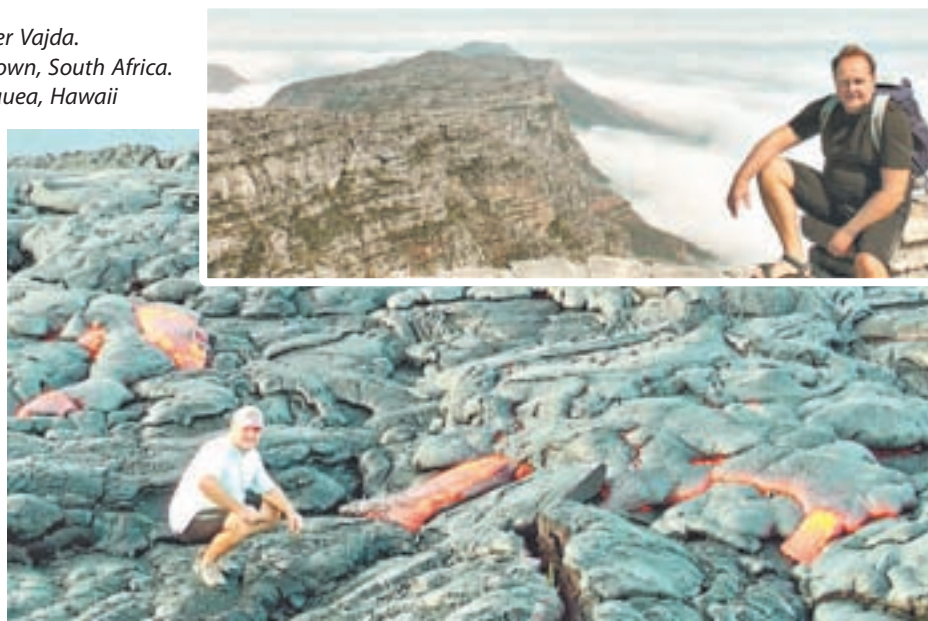
WANT A YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION? 11 issues:
1 copy per month \$42.02 (WA \$39.82)
5 copies per month \$85.25 (WA \$80.30)
BULK PRICES AVAILABLE
News stand for public place distribution: \$75 + freight

Order Challenge from
Challenge Literature Fellowship
PO Box 978 Cloverdale WA 6985
Call 08 9453 3311
Email: accounts@challengenews.org

Death and geophysics



Dr Peter Vajda.
Right: in Cape Town, South Africa.
Below: Kilauea, Hawaii



Tas Walker talks to geophysicist Dr Peter Vajda about Earth science and Earth history

Peter Vajda, Ph.D. is a research scientist with the Division of Geophysics at the Earth Science Institute, at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, Slovakia. He studied geophysics at the Comenius University, Bratislava, specializing in paleomagnetism, and obtained his doctorate at University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada, researching the earth's gravity.

These days, people think scientists do not believe in God or the Bible, but Peter is one of many researchers who shatter those ideas. He is a successful scientist who believes the Bible completely.

Dr Vajda (a Hungarian name pronounced VIE-da) is the internationally acclaimed head of the Department of Gravimetry and Geodynamics at the Earth Science Institute. With more than 60 papers to his name, he has presented at conferences all over the world including in South Africa, Canada, Fiji, USA (including Hawaii), and in several European countries.

His research interest is primarily geophysics, with a focus on the earth's gravitational field, its observation and interpretation. One important application of his research is studying magma deep inside volcanoes by carefully measuring the strength of the gravity in the surrounding area. It helps scientists understand how dormant volcanoes re-awaken, and the threat of impending eruptions. This helps keep people safe from volcanic explosions.

Peter grew up in Slovakia (formerly part of Czechoslovakia) in an orderly, happy home. His father lectured in physics at the university, and his mother taught at college. Peter recalls that the family enjoyed hiking, swimming, skiing, snowboarding, and mountain climbing.

It was his passion for the outdoor life and the beauty of nature that prompted Peter to study mathematics and physics.

DISCOVERED SOMETHING WAS WRONG

Peter recalls, "I was a satisfied

atheist. I firmly believed that the world and life came into existence through evolution, although I knew nothing about it. And I thought of myself as a good person who never hurt anyone."

Things started changing during his time in Canada. A friend introduced him to the Bible, which he began reading in the evenings. Within a few days he was 'hooked'. As he read, he realized he was selfish, used people, and hurt them. That made him think there was something wrong with his heart, which started him reflecting on life.

"I began reading the Bible in Genesis," Peter explained, "and the amazing thing is that, although I was an atheist and evolutionist, I did not dismiss it. As I read, the truth came through that the heart of man is corrupted. This matched my own experience."

When he read about animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, he felt he needed to get a flawless lamb to sacrifice somewhere to make him clean. "Eventually I reached the New Testament and discovered the solution—Jesus Christ died on the Cross 2,000 years ago as my sacrifice."

Peter explained, "I knew the Bible was right about the corruption of man's heart so I concluded it would be right about the cure." Eventually, he got on his knees and asked God to save him. Peter recalls, "And God did. With time, I realized there were new things at work in me. I had new values in life. I had new desires. I discovered that God is alive and personal."

THE QUEST OF EVOLUTION

Surprisingly, Peter's evolutionary beliefs were no obstacle to him reading the Bible. At that time, the origin and history of universe were not at the forefront of his thinking. Rather, he was consumed by the issue of his relationship with God.

Evolution did pop up about two years afterwards. The context concerned the origin of death. According to evolution, death is a natural part of life on Earth, and has been around for hundreds of millions of years. But, according to the Bible, there was no death originally. It came into the world through the disobedience of the first two people, Adam and Eve.

Peter explains, "Then and there it hit me. I realized it was either/

or. I immediately accepted the biblical account for the origin of death, based purely on the authority of the Word of God. For me the Bible stands infinitely higher than human speculation. My attitude was that the ultimate truth is the Word of God. He has all wisdom; He was the only 'eye witness' of the history; He reveals the truth to us."

That decision began a quest to understand where and how the evolutionary explanation was wrong. "I was especially motivated because I work professionally in research in academia, and the majority of the people I knew considered it fact. I wanted to know every possible detail

"I DISCOVERED THAT GOD IS ALIVE AND PERSONAL"



about the errors with evolutionary thinking."

IT'S NOT EMPIRICAL SCIENCE

In this regard, Peter remembered his research work for his Master's degree* in Bratislava. He was studying paleomagnetism, the past magnetism of the earth, allegedly reaching back over millions of years. He recalls how, even as an atheist, he was deeply concerned about all the unknowns in trying to recover information about the deep past. He was uneasy about the way researchers said so many things with such certainty about what the earth was like 'millions of years ago'. He recalls thinking, "How can we know? How can we be certain?"

Peter quipped, "I eventually escaped from paleomagnetism to work in physical geodesy and geophysics, specifically gravimetry. I was very happy. Now I could research things that were verifiable by empirical science based on facts—on actual observations."

Recalling this confirmed for Peter that we cannot discover the origin and history of the earth using 'science'. "The past is inaccessible to empirical science. Observations can only be made in the present. The rest is reconstruction, in which beliefs play a pivotal role."

He said, "God had already explained this in Job 38:4, that the only genuine knowledge about origins is His Word. He was there, and He has revealed this knowledge to us. Not only does He know the history of the earth because He witnessed it; He actually did it—Himself."

One topic Peter initially found

tricky to resolve was radioactive dating and the age of the earth.

This, too, became clear when he recognized the difference between empirical knowledge and speculation.

"The empirical knowledge, what is actually measured, is the ratio of isotopes. The age is a questionable interpretation based on untestable assumptions. Further, the value actually selected is chosen to match their naturalistic philosophy. Although they don't want to say it, the ages they quote are taken on faith."

"I was thrilled as I discovered that when we begin with biblical assumptions the outcomes beautifully harmonize with the true history of the world."

MOST INTERESTING QUESTION

On the positive side, Peter refers to many scientific evidences that give insights into and confidence in the Bible. In geology these include the abundance and preservation of fossils, the horizontal and vertical extent of sedimentary layers, their deformation, and the interfaces between them.

Even more compelling are the evidences from biology: the impossibility of chemical evolution, the insurmountable problems with biological evolution, and the overwhelming evidence of design.

Peter said, "I find the origin and history of the cosmos and life to be the most interesting and ultimate of questions in the human quest for knowledge. And I am convinced that the Bible reveals the true history of the universe, and can be depended upon absolutely." •

* Rerum Naturalium Doctor (RNDr.): a degree issued in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, equivalent to the Masters degree in natural sciences. Not to be confused with Doctor rerum naturalium (Dr. rer. nat.), another European postgraduate science qualification, issued in e.g. Austria and Germany, and equivalent to a Ph.D.

Believe it or not

The human nose knows better than we thought

BY DAVID CATCHPOLE
AT CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

NEW Research shows people are "surprisingly good" at telling smells apart.

It was previously thought, and often claimed in scientific literature, that the human



nose could discriminate between, at most, about 10,000 different aromas. However, this was based on a "crude estimate" made in 1927 and has never been empirically validated.

Rockefeller University researchers are now saying the average person can distinguish between more than a trillion olfactory stimuli. This claim is made based on research that involved presenting volunteers with combinations of 30 chemicals drawn from a standard set of 128 diverse odorants.

"We have an amazing olfactory capacity that has not been appreciated," said researcher Dr Leslie Vosshall, who also pointed out that the typical person's nose has 400 kinds of olfactory receptors.

"Our analysis shows that the human capacity for discriminating smells is much larger than anyone anticipated."

It shouldn't come as such a surprise. After all, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

This article was first published in Creation Magazine.

GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

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

CREATION
HUMMINGBIRDS

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

ONLY \$32 A YEAR

6 ISSUES A YEAR

Subscribe at CREATION.COM/CMAG

CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Building Better Marriages

MARRIAGE IS NOT A FAIRYTALE ENDING

BY ROB FURLONG

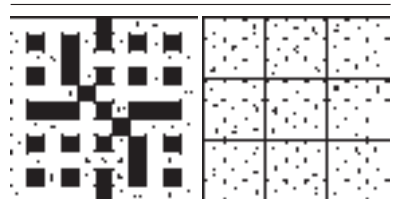
I CAN honestly say that I have never watched a single episode of *Married at First Sight* or *The Farmer Wants a Wife* and I do not intend to – the advertisements are enough!

What strikes me is that the people appearing on these shows are not so much looking for someone to love as they are for the feeling of being in love.

The comments often focus on “the wonderful feeling of being in love” or “being that special someone”.

At least, that is what I see on the ads!

It seems to me that our obsession with these programs stems from a profound unhappiness with our own life – that somehow it is boring and mundane; that it needs a little “spicing up!”



Perhaps we even feel a bit like that in our marriage.

But life consists of many things, including the exciting and the mundane. Listen to the words of King Solomon:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...”

In other words, there is a set time for everything that happens to us during our lives as well as there being a specific period of time for each of them.

Solomon describes many of these events in the words that follow: times for birth and death, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing, loving and hating, war and peace.

None of these events, or others, always occur all the time – they each are given a set time.

And none of them lasts forever – they have a period of duration that can sometimes be long or short, depending on the circumstances.

Sometimes life is vibrant and exciting but sometimes it can be plain boring! Can you relate to that?

I most certainly can! This is the ebb and flow of life and it is grounded in reality.

I am writing this way because so many people manage their relationships as if they were living in a TV program or soap opera.

We all love the romantic movie where the knight rides off into the sunset with his princess and they live happily ever after. We conclude that this is how marriage is... but is it?

In our own marriages we discover that there are times of happiness but also conflict and in extreme cases, it seems to be only conflict.

What happened to the romantic ending?

For one thing, we don't have the privilege of seeing how things worked out for the knight and the princess, but I'm certain they will have had their tense moments as well.

We have been duped into thinking that happiness in marriage is merely about finding this wonderful person or having “the feeling of being in love” and then everything will automatically flow from there – we have been “Hollywood-ised” about love and marriage!

Every marriage, even the best ones, have their times and seasons: times of laughter and passion and yes, times of conflict and boredom.



The solution is to try and make sense of these times.

This is why Solomon also said, “God has made everything beautiful in its time...” It is God who brings meaning to every moment of our lives. We can only ultimately be completely fulfilled in Him, not through some soap opera or unrealistic view about love and relationships.

And He is also able to bring meaning and fulfillment to our marriages.

A growing marriage begins its life when two people say “I do” to each other and to God. Then they are truly free to grow into unselfish people who find meaning in the times and seasons of their relationship with each other and with God.

Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 12)

BY JODY BENNETT

THIS week my youngest daughter tried to take our sausage dog Carrie for a walk, without me because I was busy with laundry.

Carrie loves to walk and gets all excited at the prospect. Hannah got her leash and put on her collar, and then kept calling her as she left the house. The dog was all ready to go, got as far as getting out the door and then realised I wasn't coming.



She promptly turned around and stood at the screen door waiting for me to let her back inside. Without me, Carrie wasn't going anywhere.

Even the prospect of meeting doggie friends and smelling interesting odours, wasn't temptation enough to get her to leave me behind.

It reminded me of that passage in John 10, where Jesus talks about being the good shepherd of the sheep.

“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out ... and his sheep follow Him because they know His voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” (John 10: 3-5)

Now Hannah is no stranger to Carrie, but still the dog doesn't trust her enough to follow her, rather than me.

It makes me confident that a real stranger would never be able to lure Carrie away. Carrie knows who her true master is. She knows my voice and follows it.

Would that I were as loyal to Jesus and clear about my priorities, so that I don't get waylaid by pursuits - even by good, fun, familiar things - that God isn't part of or wanting me to do at that time.

It reminds me not to get complacent.

Christianity is an ongoing walk of obedience. We need to keep in constant touch with God - speaking to Him (praying) and listening for His direction (reading the Bible). Then we will know where He is leading us right now, stick close by and not get distracted.

Also, knowing God's voice means that we won't be fooled by the voice of that “dog-napper of our souls”, Satan.

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



ATHEIST HUNTS DOWN THE FACTS

BASED on a true story about the faith-journey of a hard-nosed journalist who believes nothing without factual evidence, *A Case for Christ*, starring Mike Vogel and Erika Christensen (with Faye Dunaway in a small role), was in cinemas last year and is now available on DVD and download.

“The only way to truth is through facts,” says *Chicago Tribune* legal affairs reporter Lee Strobel. “Facts are our greatest weapon against superstition, against ignorance and against tyranny.”

So, when his wife does the unthinkable and starts going to church and praying to God, Lee is convinced he can bring her back to “truth” with factual evidence that Christianity is based on a sham. He embarks on a passionate and secret crusade to destroy her ‘cult-like’ faith.

A colleague at work advises Lee “The entire faith hinges on the resurrection of Jesus. If it didn't happen, it's a house of cards.” So Lee sets out to prove that if Jesus Christ in fact lived and died, that He was never raised to life again.

However, the deeper Lee gets into his research, and the more experts he interviews, the more walls he hits in trying to disprove the Bible's account. In the end, Lee eventually surren-



ders to the reality that Jesus did rise from the dead. He confesses to his wife, “When you became a Christian, I freaked out. I was scared. ... I just had to prove the whole thing wrong. But I couldn't. The evidence for your faith is more overwhelming than I could have imagined.” Then Lee talks of the powerful witness of his wife's own spiritual transformation: “But it wasn't just the evidence, OK? It was you. You never stopped loving me. You never gave up on me.”

After his unlikely conversion in the early '80s, Lee went on to write a bestselling book also called *A Case for Christ*. He eventually left journalism to become a pastor in Chicago.

His story is dramatic and persuasive, an encouragement for Christians and non-Christians alike that belief in Jesus doesn't mean leaving your brain at the door, or basing your life on superstition instead of facts.

The movie is rated PG and has no sex or swearing but does portray Lee's retreat into contempt, anger and alcohol in response to his wife's conversion.

As a side note, the movie, full of 70s-era clothing, music and outdated technology is also a fun blast from the past.

JORDAN SPENCE

LIVING THE DREAM

English footballer Jordan Spence is one of those lucky people who gets to do what he loves for a living. He's also very good at it.

The 27-year-old is playing his second season for Championship League outfit Ipswich Town and scored his first goal for the club recently, a late header from a free kick, to clinch a 4-3 victory for Ipswich over Millwall on 15 August, 2017.

Jordan, who plays defence predominantly at right-back, or a centre-back, has had an elite career that has included captaining England's U17 and U18 sides, and playing for West Ham United, Leyton Orient, Scunthorpe United, Bristol City, Sheffield Wednesday and Milton Keynes Dons.

In a 2015 interview with website Cross the Line, he said his best career moment so far was making his debut for West Ham "I came on as a substitute against Manchester City; it was awesome!"

"To play for West Ham and to be educated by them, coming through their youth system was amazing. Growing up as a London boy and then to play for West Ham was a huge dream

of mine which I achieved to some level; obviously I would have liked to have played a few more games for them. But overall, it was a very good experience for me," he said of his seven years with the club.

Jordan began his soccer dream "Going round to mates' houses and having a kick around in their gardens. Then a friend invited me to a soccer camp in the summer, and I went along and that began the process from there."

He began that journey at the age of seven at Chelsea and feels very fortunate to have been able to turn it into a full-time profession, but acknowledges that his talent is a God-given gift.

"To see my God-given talent and take it as far as I can is amazing. I don't see my talent as my own, I am merely a steward of it. I'm always trying to maximise my potential and it's something I enjoy doing," he shares.

Jordan was brought up going to Sunday school and church but it was

not until his teens that he had his "first real encounter with God". That was at around 14.

"I gave my life to the Lord [Jesus] when I was 15 and I was baptised [immersed in water as an outward sign of his inward commitment] not long after that.

"There wasn't necessarily one moment for me [that changed my life], it was more a series of moments in my life and it's just awesome to see how God had His hand on my life. God has really revealed Himself to me through a journey."

Jordan says there is quite a lot of support for Christian footballers.

"At West Ham there was a chaplain who was ever present. I have had support from Christians in Sport and they've been great, visiting me wherever I am in the country, and they always pop in with a word to share or a voice down the phone.

"Obviously, I've also come across other Christian players too who have shared a similar

faith. So there is a support network but also, for me, I've had a great church support which has really helped me. They always pray for me, which is amazing.

"With regards to playing and in life, I see my faith as my driving force. I wake up every day trying to work as hard as I can. When I play, I want to win and I want to play to the best of my ability, and hopefully I can give the glory back to the Big Man!"

Jordan says the best player he has ever played with is Craig Bellamy "when he was at West Ham. He was a phenomenal player and was sometimes just unplayable" and the best player "I played against was a 40-year-old Ryan Giggs and he was the best player on the football pitch."

When asked who he believes is the better footballer, Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo, Jordan replies: "I would have

to say Ronaldo. To be honest, they are pretty inseparable, but I just feel like Ronaldo could play in any position, in any country, in any league you put him in. He can score all different types of goals too; poacher's finish, long range, penalties, free-kicks, headers, the lot. Messi has the natural ability, but for me, Ronaldo is just a better all-rounder."

In 2014, Jordan married English actress and singer Naomi Scott, whom he had dated for four years. Naomi played Pink Power Ranger Kimberly Hart in the 2017 *Power Rangers* movie.



2ND JANUARY 2018, CRAVEN COTTAGE, LONDON: Jordan Spence of Ipswich runs with the ball during the Championship match between Fulham and Ipswich Town. (Photo Alex Pantling/Getty Images)



Jordan Spence and wife Naomi Scott attend the Emporio Armani Show last September in London. (Photo David M. Bennett/Getty Images)

DISTRIBUTED BY: