

FINDING HOPE IN THE FLAMES

BY JANICE TEO

The recent fires in Australia that have laid waste the landscape, decimated the wildlife population, destroyed homes and killed at least eight people have been heartbreaking and unimaginably destructive.

Close to 20 million hectares have been razed to the ground as the humongous blazes swallowed up everything across their paths. The grief has been palpable and heart-wrenching.

Many people have blamed God for the destruction or asked why He let this happen. Yet in the midst of all this anguish, there are indications God is indeed at work and working out His purposes through the situation. A report in The Daily Declaration (<https://bit.ly/2tMtk67>) lists some of them.

There have been reports of properties, towns and people being miraculously saved. Of winds inexplicably changing direction and of tinder-dry grass that stayed strangely flame-free even when embers landed on it.

One of the most incredible stories is the one being called The Malla-coota Miracle, a story that went viral when the BBC broadcast a local bed & breakfast owner's enthralling account of what happened on New Year's Eve.

Malla-coota is a small coastal town in Victoria's East Gippsland. Four thousand people found themselves trapped on its beach on December 31 as a wall of fire bore down on them.

David Jeffery is a local businessman who owns the Wave Oasis B&B. His self-filmed account, broadcast by the BBC, Sky News and ABC on January 1, described how he and a few other Christians prayed feverishly for God to change the direction of the wind – and saw exactly what they prayed for come to pass. (See his story here: <https://bbc.in/30MacBb>)

David, who became a Christian

more than 25 years ago, says he understands how ridiculous it must sound to a non-believer. Yet he – and thousands of others on that beach, many of whom were not Christians – can testify to it.

The firewall was about 20 metres high, David says, and moving at 90 kilometres an hour. "We could hear the roar. It was like a monster bearing down on us..it went black as black. The smoke was so thick it was hard to breathe."

Looking at that fiery death moving towards them, David says he knew their only hope was if the wind changed direction. They needed a strong east wind to do the job.

Calling on two other "prayer warriors", the group asked God for a miracle. Things happened as soon as they started praying, he says.

"The wind started blowing from the east a little bit....I felt it change," he says. "I noticed that the bolder I got, the stronger the wind got. Soon I was yelling 'in Jesus' name, thank You Lord for rescuing these souls. Push it back Lord, rescue us!'"

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This still from an NRMA insurance advert of a volunteer fireman rescuing a koala, captures the idea of our helplessness in the face of disaster and our need for rescue by Someone greater.

It starts with a spark

BY JIM DENISON (ABRIDGED)

THE Carr Fire in California in July and August 2018, which destroyed nearly two thousand structures and claimed eight lives, started when a tire failed on a trailer, causing its rim to scrape the asphalt. With the heat and extreme drought in the area, that's all it took to start a

tragic inferno.

There is a principle at work here: something tiny can have enormous consequences. And the principle applies spiritually as well.

According to Gallup, more people than ever before consider divorce, unmarried sex, homosexuality, having a baby outside of marriage, euthanasia, recreational drugs and pornography to be acceptable.

What do these issues have in common? They are all considered personal decisions with little relevance to the larger culture.

We seem to believe that private behaviour stays private, that we can make unbiblical moral decisions with little consequence. But an inferno starts with a spark.

"Small" sins never stay small. Cancer starts as a single cell among the 37.2 trillion cells in your body.

Every sin (wrongdoing) works in the same way. The reward it promises is far eclipsed by the suffering it produces. As the saying goes: Sin will always take you further than you wanted and cost you more than you thought. This makes sense, actually. Satan hates us and would never tempt us with anything that produces any

benefit for us unless that benefit leads to even greater loss.

That's why Jesus warned His hearers so severely about anger and lust (Matthew 5:21-30). He knows that murder starts with anger and adultery begins with lust.

And He knows that "small" sins injure our relationship with our holy God. Scripture warns us: "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (James 2:10). It takes very little dirt to contaminate a bottle of purified water.

When we face our next temptation to commit a "small" sin, we should ask ourselves if we would choose to ingest a "small" cancer into our bodies.

The first step in refusing "small" sins is realizing that they are not small. The second is recognizing that we cannot refuse them in our strength.

Satan knows the temptations we can defeat easily. That's why we never face them. I've never been asked to participate in a bank robbery, for example.

However, there are other temptations I cannot defeat in my own ability. These are the strategies Satan employs against me.

SOMETHING TINY CAN HAVE ENORMOUS CONSEQUENCES.

Jelly art



Perth artist **Connie Chandra** brings together creativity, beauty and patience to make intricate art, as she emulates her own Creator.

See page 3.

Finding hope in the flames

• From page 1

That wind blew for five minutes – just long enough to stop the fire from reaching the crowd. “There is no way it was all luck,” David insists.

His neighbours, who are not Christians, concurred. “God saved us,” they said. They too, realised there was no other explanation but that the hand of God moved.

Other similar stories have surfaced. Vision Christian Radio received a call from a woman named Lorelle, who told about some friends on Cobargo on the South Coast of NSW.

These friends had fled for their lives. They returned two days later, expecting to find their property burned to the ground. To their amazement, they saw the fire had stopped at the foot of a wooden cross, a cross they carry down Cobargo’s main street on Good Friday every year to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ.

The fire had apparently burnt around the shed and right up to the edge of the house – and there it stopped. There had been sprinklers keeping the house wet, but not for the timber shed. Relieved beyond words, the couple have no explanation as to how their property survived.

The stories don’t stop there. Near



This photo posted to social media of Donna’s property shows the straight line of burnt grass and unscathed posts.

the town of Wingello, in the NSW Southern Highlands a fire had been burning for weeks in national parks.

Michael, a volunteer firefighter in the town, received bad news on January 4 when he came back from his posting. His fellow firefighters told him they’d tried to save his house but couldn’t. “It’s gone,” they told him.

They spoke too soon. Another patrol that passed Michael’s house the next morning were “gobsmacked” to see it was still standing. One of them, a tough veteran of many a battle, said: “You guys must have some

Jesus juice. I need some of that.”

Says Michael: “We are people of faith. We’ve had our house blessed and we’ve always tried to live a good prayer life. We credit our Lord for this miracle.”

It’s not that the property escaped untouched. The front garden and workshop were roasted. But the house? “The fire raced towards the front of the house but miraculously burnt around it. There are burn lines right up to the front door and even to the back door,” says Michael.

The local RFS captain was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as saying: “There’s a miracle. It was like he had a dome over his house.”

There are many other accounts of the miraculous, of how the fires burned all the way to the fence lines of properties and suddenly stopped for reasons no human eye could see. There are photographs showing blackened ground metres away from walls and doors.

Donna, of Mount Torrens in South Australia, says she and her husband prayed for angels to protect the borders of their home as they drove away to safety. She went to bed troubled, but woke up the next morning with this verse from Psalm 34:7 in her mind: “*The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and He delivers them.*”

When she drove back to her property, her heart in her mouth, not only was her property untouched save for some minor damage, but the burn lines were almost perfectly straight.

You can see in the photo on this page how close the fire came to Donna’s house and how unnaturally straight the burn line is. Donna’s posted on Facebook, prompting many comments such as: “*A fire doesn’t advance perfectly straight like that; the pine posts normally go up like Roman candles. The fences are still new and spotless with no smoke damage. Something has intervened...*”

Eternity News reported another amazing story from South Australia.

A resident, Eric, was in Melbourne for short-term work. Exhausted, he decided to stay overnight rather than

I’m late, I’m late for a very important date

BY ALAN BAILEY

TIME flies when you’re having fun! So the common saying goes. And doesn’t it fly! The dream holiday or last weekend vanishes into the past like a puff of smoke. The precious moments cherished before the departure of a loved one fly out of sight like a nifty little flock of swallows.

But for those anxiously waiting for the event that never seems to come, time can drag terribly. Standing in the cold waiting for a bus can seem like an age. Sitting around waiting to know if you have at last landed a job can seem like half a life-time. The young lady waiting for years for her boyfriend to propose, finds weeks turning into months and months to years.

Every day we hear it or say it. “If only I had the time...” There are things we want to do—some of them important to us—but we cannot get to them. The urgent takes over from the important.

Urgent things are the ones that present themselves more visibly or are pressed upon us by someone else. So we put other things off to attend to the demands of the present circumstances. Sometimes there is no choice but to fit in with those demands, especially if it’s an emergency.

The bottom line is that we can be cheated out of dealing with matters of real importance. Time gets lost, often by choices we make and later regret.

It would be great if we could get the mastery over the old enemy,



time. In my contest against time I have been beaten convincingly over the years. Take Saturday jobs for instance. I start with the day’s list of six tasks to be done before nightfall. You guessed it! After the first three have been crossed off, the sun has set and I’m working by moonlight. You’ve been there, done that, too.

How seldom do we take into consideration the fact that our whole life has a deadline. That at any time the curtain may fall, our time all gone. The sand-glass will be empty, the contest against time, lost. Doors of opportunity forever shut. Some things left undone won’t matter very much. The house you were going to build won’t mean anything then. But some things will matter tremendously.

What is the most important thing to attend to while we live this life? It is getting right with God. What could possibly be more important than that? It is imperative that we find out what to do and then do it. God has told us all that the death of Jesus on the cross took place in order to bring us forgiveness and pardon; to bring us into a right relationship to Himself; to prepare us for the day we meet Him. Have we responded to His offer?

Now here is something else that can too easily be shelved while we attend to other things. Don’t risk your eternity. Don’t place a bet against certainties. Don’t fiddle while Rome burns.

God says; “Listen! This is the hour to receive God’s favour; today is the day to be saved!” (2 Cor 6: 2).

drive the eight hours back as planned.

But Eric felt strongly he should set his alarm for 4am the next morning.

He arrived home in Cudlee Creek just after the fires had broken out on the afternoon of December 20 – and his mode of transport was a water truck with a full 6000 litre tank and power

THE BURN LINES WERE ALMOST PERFECTLY STRAIGHT



hose!

He arrived as his neighbour’s property caught alight. He managed to save her house and another neighbour’s property, as he also protected his own home, wife and four kids.

Eric admits divine help enabled him to arrive at just the right time.

Thousands have been praying for rain and those prayers too have been answered. Rain has fallen heavily, bringing relief to the exhausted firefighters and residents but, ironically, also posing further threat to homes and lives.

The country grieves. I dare not presume to understand the mystery of why some were saved and some were not, and I

do not want to minimise the anguish of those who have suffered so much.

But, as was the case in the aftermath of 9/11, many have been drawn back to prayer, to cry out to God. Proverbs 18:10 says: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”



B&B owner David Jeffery from Mallacoota (above) and people congregating on the Mallacoota beach to escape the fires (top).

Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36

ACROSS

- 1 Delight
- 3 Postpone proceedings
- 7 Possess
- 8 Droop
- 9 Indent creators (3,4)
- 13 Garden coil
- 14 Promise to pay a debt
- 15 Band’s work trip
- 18 Revolves, spins
- 20 Himalayan “Bigfoot”
- 22 Rainy day mess
- 23 Columbus state
- 25 Non-working time
- 28 Ocean
- 29 Hawaiian garland
- 30 To make believe
- 31 Film stage

DOWN

- 1 Vindicate
- 2 Cultured dairy product
- 3 Aardvark food
- 4 Quick punch
- 5 Take illegal drugs
- 6 UK health provider (abbrev)
- 10 Oxygenating tool
- 11 Toy with a tail
- 12 “___ rang?”
- 16 Liquid diffusion in plants
- 17 Positively glowing
- 19 Motor and olive
- 21 Potato seed-bud
- 24 Gripped onto
- 25 Prune
- 26 Swelling reducer
- 27 Function

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

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Asian SCHINDLER saves thousands from sex trade

His nicknames hint at his choice of vocation – ‘the Asian Schindler’, the ‘James Bond pastor’, the ‘Godfather of North Korean defectors’.



Pastor Chun Ki-Won of the underground railroad speaks on a panel discussion of human rights abuses in China against North Korean refugees. (Photo Brad Washburn/FilmMagic)

His real name is Chun Ki-Won. A little less Hollywood perhaps, but the man is no less heroic.

Mr Chun is a 61-year-old South Korean pastor who risks life and limb to save North Korean defectors and girls trafficked to work in China's multi-million dollar sex trade. He finds safe haven for them in countries such as the UK, the US and South Korea.

To date, he has saved more than a thousand women by means worthy of any James Bond movie – he uses drones, knotted bedsheets to climb down hotel walls, jumps out of high-rise buildings and even surfs the dark web posing as a customer or smuggler.

“I’ve got no choice but to go onto the dark web and in the chatrooms and listen to their stories,” he says.

“I pick the ones who are really desper-

ate and need help. I negotiate with their bosses and pretend that I’m the girls’ uncle or father and offer to buy her.

“Every day I receive faxes, calls and emails from people who want to be freed. I can’t be indifferent to their plight.”

Mr Chun’s journey into the world of trafficking began in the nineties, when he went to North Korea on a business trip. His itinerary brought him close to the border between North Korea and China, where he stumbled across the body of a woman who had frozen to death trying to escape the brutal regime, something he was told was not uncommon.

In a nearby city, he saw some North Korean children being beaten by Chinese police for begging. Later that night, he saw a North Korean woman screaming as she was dragged down a street by a group of men. His Chinese guide explained

that “whoever catches her first, can own her”.

These experiences were a turning point for Mr Chun. “I prayed a lot to God to help me forget those memories,” he says. “After I came back to South Korea I turned to Christianity, due to another personal motivation.

“I wondered what I could do to help North Koreans in China, and decided to publicise this issue. I created a website and uploaded what I saw, and the tragic stories. That was October 1999. Then I started receiving calls and emails from defectors. My first rescue operation was in 2000.”

Mr Chun soon left his career as a hotelier and enrolled in a seminary. He became a pastor in 1992 and established the Durihana Church in Seoul to rescue, rehouse and educate North Koreans.

Part church, part Christian aid organisation, part reunification outreach and school, Mr Chun says it is the goal of Durihana, which means “two become one” to use the Gospel to reunite North and South Korea.

Nicknamed the “Asian Schindler” after Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist and Nazi Party member who saved the lives of more than 1200 Jews during the Holocaust, Mr Chun accepts the inherent danger of his work, which has attracted the unwelcome attention of North Korean dictator Kim Jung Un, who has labelled him “a cancer who should be eradicated”.

In 2001, Mr Chun was arrested in China at the China-Mongolia border while helping a group of 12 North Korean defectors escape. He remained in prison for nine months and was finally released in 2002.

But the unassuming and well-groomed Mr Chun is undaunted, and says this is all part of God’s plan.

He tells of a particularly harrowing rescue when he navigated his way from North Korea through China and then to Vietnam.

“I just headed for Beijing, and bought a map, to find a route to Vietnam and Cambodia. After we finished our journey, a South Korean government official didn’t believe my story. He thought that I was lying, as we had just come through an impossible route. The border district between China and Vietnam was full of police officers and cobras. The route between Vietnam and Cambodia was a minefield.

“For common people it is luck, but for me, it was the grace of God. We used to try to preach the Gospel by dispatching American Christians, but not anymore. It is not impossible but difficult. I believe our number one ministry is rescue, which is saving human lives.

“Jesus came down to this earth to heal the sick, liberate the oppressed, and restore man’s relationship with our Heavenly Father. The only hope for our generation is the blood that Christ has shed for us on the cross.”

Jelly art - giving God a little wiggle room

Jelly art has taken the creative world by storm in recent years. YouTube has hundreds, if not thousands of videos showing how to make these 3D dessert creations. Jelly chefs use large syringes and specially shaped nozzles to inject semi-solid coloured gelatin into a colourless gelatin base that has been allowed to set overnight.

The result is stunning artscapes suspended in a clear gelatin that looks like glass. Creations are limited only by your imagination. Some chefs create edible fish bowls with gelatin sculptures of goldfish. Others etch floral arrangements, or country scenes, animals, birds or rolling landscapes.

It is a laborious, messy and time-consuming business. When Perth jelly artist Connie Chandra’s deep in the creative process, her dining table is strewn with sticky remnants and food colouring. But she loves what she does, not only for the pleasure it gives her but also for the pleasure it gives to others.

You see, Connie’s jelly art has a deeper purpose than just being eye candy. This creative mother of three makes these edible works of art to give away. She gives them to people she feels could use some extra love, some expression of compassion and care and also donates them to churches and non-profit organisations to use as fundraisers.

It is her way of bringing joy and sharing her faith in Jesus Christ with others.

Connie, who fairly crackles with energy and is rarely found sitting down and doing nothing, says making jelly art helps her fulfil one

of her passions in life: blessing others with the gifts and talents she says God has given her.

“I’m proof that you can use anything to share the love of God with people,” she says. “Sometimes people believe they have to have some kind of mega-impressive talent, but you don’t.

“People just need to know someone cares, and

whether that’s done by impressive means or simple means, it’s just important to do it and not to think poorly of your own efforts.”

She feels God’s gifts should not go to waste. Using her jelly creations as a tool for evangelism has opened doors for her where perhaps more traditional methods have not worked. “It’s a way of sharing the love and good news message of Jesus Christ in a gentle and non-threatening way,” she says. “It’s hard to be offended by jelly!”

Connie, who is originally from Singapore, has lived in Perth for almost 25 years.

She is a first-generation Christian whose parents and grandparents were proud Chinese religionists and considered Christianity a white man’s religion.

Thanks to her uncle who was the first in her family to commit his life to God and endured much mocking and rejection, Connie attended church. She received God into her life when she was about nine years old.

Her journey with God has had its hurdles. She struggled with issues such as evil and pain in the world. She says she battled with intellectual pride

as she sought to understand the heart of God with her mind rather than her heart.

The turning point came with the birth of her first child. “It was only when I became a mother that I began to tangibly grasp the love of God, who gave His only Son so that none of us would perish (John 3:16).



“It was only when I could not imagine seeing my own son experience pain of any form that I was able to appreciate the tremendous sacrifice God had made.”

Today, nearly 50 years since her uncle braved family scorn, Connie reveals with great joy that her entire family are all Christians.

“Here we are decades later, a family united in God. His love is amazing. If He could reach into the lives of my grandparents, aunts, uncles and parents-in-law, there is hope for anyone!

“We just have to give Him time.”

Yes, time and as any jelly artist will tell you, a little wiggle room.



And you think your family was bad!

Drugs, hard discipline and indoctrination weren't enough to blind cult victim to the Truth.

Ben Shenton was only eighteen months old when his single mother handed him over to cult leader Anne Hamilton-Bryne. For the next fifteen years, Ben grew up in the notorious Australian cult known as The Family and was subjected to extreme torture and abuse.

After his rescue from the cult, Ben was plagued by his past until he came face-to-face with a life-changing truth that saved him.

Ben's mother met Anne at a yoga and meditation group: "She supposedly healed my mother [from a calcified spine] and gave her permission to walk out on her marriage and three sons," he relates.

Ben's mother got into a relationship with another man in England and, when Ben was born, willingly gave him to Anne to be brought up as her son.

Ben was taken to a property in Lake Eildon, Victoria and was brought up, along with dozens of other children stolen through adoption scams, to believe that Anne was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ and that they were a master race being bred to survive the apocalypse. They were all given matching outfits, their hair was bleached blonde, and their names were changed.

Ben explains: "We were brought

up with home education seven days a week. A very strict and controlled regime started with yoga and meditation at 5:30 in the morning through to an evening meal and lights out at around 7:30 at night.

"Schooling was interspersed with more yoga and meditation, brief periods of time outside and punishments that ranged from fingers being held over candles, to being brutally belted with metre-long wooden rulers and three cornered plastic canes, to being dunked in water until we were nearly drowned, when minor infractions came to light."

But this wasn't the worst part, according to Ben: "[When a child reached a certain age], we would be given LSD as part of an initiation rite of passage. This was a horrific experience that caused wild hallucinations that Anne claimed were past life and death experiences. This drug was administered in large amounts when we were sleep and food deprived."

In spite of all this, Ben knew [based on the beauty and design of the countryside] that a God existed.

A new chapter in Ben's life began when several girls from the cult escaped and alerted the authorities. The police rescued the children from the property and Ben was fostered out to a Christian lady.

"Over time I began to ask her about God," he says. "She told me that He was the creator of this world. She also told me that God was a gentleman and would only come into our lives



Ben Shenton (circled) during his time with The Family.

Inset: Cult leader Anne Hamilton-Bryne

Below: Ben as an adult.

I CAN ASSURE YOU THERE IS A PATH OUT.



Spark to a flame

• From page 1



JIM DENISON

But he wants me to think such sins are small enough that I can refuse them in my strength. That way, I won't ask God for help until it's too late.

Another version of this strategy: the enemy loves to bring temptations against us that we have already defeated, hoping we'll have the false confidence that we can defeat them again without needing God's help.

Here's the bottom line: every sin we are tempted to commit is large enough to please Satan. And alluring enough to require God's strength.

The bad news is that we will face such temptations as long as we live on this broken planet. The good news is that God's greatest power is found where we need it most.

Oswald Chambers: "God does not give us overcoming life—He gives us life as we overcome. The strain of life is what builds our strength. If there is no strain, there will be no strength."

Where do you need God's strength today? He is as close as a prayer—call out to Him and He will answer. •

Find the original of this article and more from Dr Jim Denison at www.denisonforum.org.

when invited. I decided to test God out. Before long a quiet voice in my head told me to stop testing God as I knew He was real; the time had come to start to know Him."

As Ben struggled with depression, suicidal thoughts and a longing to fit into society, he started a rocky relationship with God in August 1989 but "anger, sexual immorality and pornography kept driving me away," he explains.

After high school and a trip around Australia, Ben moved in with his girlfriend.

"While she was working a summer job a lady told her about Jesus Christ and invited her to come to her church. During this period of time God had been dealing with me about how far I had grown from Him and all the things that I had done that I was so ashamed of. I was left wondering what I needed to do to get back in contact with Him.

"We both went along to church and for the first time I was challenged to

stay and actually serve God.

"I asked Jesus to come into my life and be my Saviour and Lord," he smiles. "God brought me to the foot of the cross and made me aware He'd bought me by what He did on the cross. I have been forgiven and been able to be set free by forgiving those who destroyed my childhood.

"If you've been abused by parents and care givers, faced depression and given into destructive patterns of behaviour, from experience I can assure you there is a path out. If God can put my life back together again He can do the same for you. Nothing is impossible with God when we co-operate with Him in achieving His good, pleasing and perfect will in our lives," Ben exhorts.

Today, Ben is happily married with two children. In 2007, he became a pastor. He then moved to Perth and

started an organisation called Rescue the Family, teaching others about the true purpose and importance of family.

Ben's biography *Life Behind the Wire* will be published later this year. A documentary about The Family that features him was released in 2016. •



A knock on the door brought her life

Often if a stranger knocks on our door we will give them short shrift and have little time for them, or we would be suspicious and wary. However, 16 years ago, housewife Carol Dorey opened her door to an elderly gentleman whom she now credits with helping to save her life.

"I was at home still in my nightdress and not doing much when I answered a knock at the door," she says. "Straight away, this elderly man launched into a speech and asked me, 'Do you know Jesus?'" It seemed to Carol to be a silly question. "I thought he was being funny and laughed. I replied, 'No, not personally.' How could anyone know Jesus personally unless they went to heaven?"

Being brought up in London, England, Carol had been taught Bible stories and had an awareness of there being a God but had no personal relationship with Him.

She met her husband, David, when they were both 16. They married at 18 and raised three children. "We did life our own way with no guidance from the Holy Spirit (the invisible presence of God). We made many mistakes in our life. Somehow we survived," she says.

But then came one of the most important questions she had ever been asked, "Do you know Jesus?"

Followed by "an even more important question, 'Would you like to know Jesus?' I don't know why, it must have just been the right time for me, but God had His hand on me and I answered, 'Well, yes, I would.'"



Carol and David Dorey

The man proceeded to lead Carol in a prayer of salvation. This is basically talking to God and admitting you are a sinner; expressing your belief in His son Jesus and the death Jesus died on the cross, and in His resurrection; and asking God to forgive your sin and take over your life.

Carol says when she committed herself to Jesus, her life changed straight away and she immediately found a loving Christian community to be a part of. The stranger's name was Ron and he helped her to connect with a pastor of a small church in the area. Carol started attending the church and soon grew strong in her new-found faith.

While Carol had come to her own decision regarding Jesus Christ, her husband, David was not interested in church.

"However, David dropped me off at church each Sunday and would be there to pick me up. Some people from the church would speak to him

through the window of the car and ask him to come in. He wasn't interested though."

Carol says it took years of praying before any change occurred in her husband. "One day, he actually went into the church," she smiles. "I had managed to get him to help out around the church, washing up and doing bits and pieces."

Then one day, David sat through one of the services. "Before long, he was coming in regularly," Carol says. "God was working in his life and had plans for his life, plans that involved Ron once again."

Ron came to their house and talked to David. At the end of the discussion, David prayed the same prayer as his wife had done years before.

Carol says David becoming a Christian was a "joyous occasion for us both". "Never underestimate the power of prayer," she asserts. They were both baptised in water as an outward sign of their inward commitment.

David and Carol have been married for more than 49 years. Ron, the stranger who led them to Jesus, has since gone on to heaven but the couple will never forget the amazing impact he has had on their lives.

"He was a faithful man of God," Carol attests. "He had a passion for evangelising [preaching the Gospel]. We were blessed that [God] led him to our door that day.

"We have a peace that only comes from knowing God. We are accepted and loved by God and we have been privileged to be able to serve Him and His people at our church over the years." •

Psychic's choice: the Truth or the familiar

As a New Age psychic, David Leone's life was filled with supernatural and unusual encounters but none as powerful as his experience in a tiny church in his early twenties, as he reveals in a Youtube clip on his OmegaofApostasy channel.

David and his two brothers grew up in the seventies, basically raising themselves after his "screwed up, dysfunctional" parents spilt up and his mother kept trying to recapture her youth.

She got into psychic readings and spiritualism, while his father went off and pursued his college career, never paying child support.

Trying to survive on just a waitress's salary was difficult; the family was kicked out of several rentals, moved around a lot and the boys ended up hanging out with the marginalised kids at school and bikies.

After high school David went to the navy, where he found new friends and horizons, but also reengaged with spiritualism and got involved with rock musicians and the occult.

After leaving the navy, David, now married, got in with a rough crowd involved in drugs and gangs, and was nearly arrested. He then found out his wife was having an affair. David felt his life was chaotic and filled with drama.

"I had a lot of turmoil inside me, so I reverted back to the occult," he says. He was running a business, studying and playing in a band. All these pressures, together with all the violence, adultery and betrayal, became a perfect storm that pushed him over the edge mentally into a breakdown, he relates.

That was when he cried out to God asking if there was any objective truth, as all he had known was subjective relativism. He had never been exposed to the Bible or church or anything that taught him that there was absolute truth.

"I cried out day and night. For four months actually," he remembers. A neighbour told him that she believed God was a person with whom one could have a relationship, which David thought was a crazy idea.

About Easter that year, he felt he couldn't deal with there being no right and wrong, or black and white, or true and false. He planned to end his misery with a bullet to the brain. At about 12.30 pm, just



David Leone as a young man (above) and more recently (right).



as he was telling himself to pull the trigger, there was a knock at the door. It was his mother, with whom he did not really have a relationship, and who had never visited him before.

They went out to dinner. David never told her that her visit saved his life.

After this, several things happened that he could only attribute to divine interven-

tion. For instance, once, when he was feeling very low, David heard God tell him,

"I'm going to take care of everything and it's all going to be alright."

Another was when he felt God say clearly to him, "David, My way and My way only."

"It was a clarifying moment. I just knew this was the God who created all things," he recalls.

A guy at work, Danny, kept saying to David "God loves you!" every time he saw him.

An ex-psychic who had come to faith in Jesus, told David, "God wants you. You might think being a Christian is boring, but it's not."

David was by this time a well-established clairvoyant and operated powerfully with 'second sight'.

Another psychic, whom David was consulting to try to get his wife back, told him to stop talking to God and Christians because it was messing up her "astral plain". Even though David had told her nothing of his search for God.

"You're not coming back here, are you?" she added. "No," he told her.

David experienced the choice before him like two doors: one familiar door behind which was the occult with all the things he knew, but which he understood would ultimately kill him; and one door behind which was only a hand [belonging to God], which he would have to take in faith, forfeiting all his foresight. That second door felt clean and holy and pure and right but scarily unfamiliar.

David ended up attending a tiny church where he heard powerful truths about Jesus Christ and responded when the preacher invited, "If you have cried out for truth, God is holding out His arms and telling you to come to Him."

David chose to give up his friends, his business and his own designs for his life, and become God's man. He studied the Bible and got baptised [immersed in water as an outward sign of dying to his old life]. He says his desire for drugs and alcohol evaporated.

Following his life change, David spent a year in Sweden before going back to San Jose and working with teenagers with mental health issues, which he has been doing for many years.

Unplanned actress was unplanned

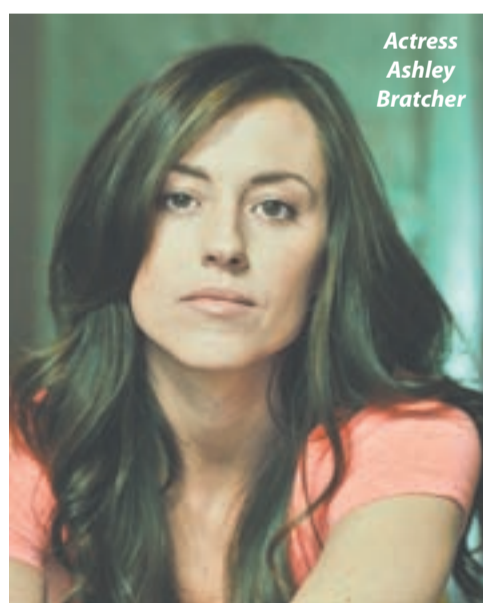
The recently-released anti-abortion movie *Unplanned*, is well made but difficult to watch. It tells the true story of Planned Parenthood director Abby Johnson, who went from passionate pro-choicer, who had had two abortions herself, to convinced pro-lifer, after watching on ultrasound as a baby struggled against a suction tube for its life.

But the actress who plays Abby, Ashley Bratcher, was nearly not around to play the part, due to her own mother's almost abortion.

Ashley was astonished to learn while filming that her mother had changed her mind at the last minute and chosen to get down off the abortion table and keep her baby.

"I don't really know how to describe it other than shock," Ashley said of her initial reaction to the revelation. "I was not mad or angry, I wasn't sad. It's kind of like having a near-death experience. I just thought about everything I had the chance to do here on earth. I thought about all my relationships, my husband, my son, literally everything in my life flashed before my eyes because I was almost minutes from never having the opportunity to live."

Ashley had already been inspired on the abortion issue thanks to reading Abby's story, but getting news of her own personal connection to it made things all the more real.



Actress Ashley Bratcher

Ashley could understand her mum's point of view though, since she was also tempted to have an abortion when faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

"A couple of weeks after a major depressive episode, I had quit acting because I was just failing in New York. I came back to my hometown and tried to re-connect with my high school sweetheart. I ended up getting pregnant. I had my own unplanned pregnancy," Bratcher says before a momentary pause.

"I was a holiday Christian. My parents went on Easter and Christmas," she confesses. "But the real thing that I think grounded me in is that I had three really

faithful, strong, praying grandmas.

"They instilled this God-awareness in me, and they planted seeds that just hadn't taken root until I was much, much older. I knew who God was even if I was choosing to rebel against what He wanted for my life. There were times I was crying out saying, 'Okay, God why am I here?'"

When Ashley's son was born she suddenly understood God's love.

"I looked at him and for the first time, I understood relationship versus religion. I had always thought Christianity was a checklist, a set of rules, you have to do this and this is how you can be a Christian. And I never understood it was really about a relationship where you have a conversation with God where you love God and you do things out of respect because of that relationship that you have with God through Jesus Christ. And when I saw my son and I loved him so much I thought, 'Wow! God must really love us so much more if I can love this tiny little person this much'. That was the awakening that deepened my faith."

Apart from just caring about the life of unborn babies, Ashley wanted to do something practical for young mothers tempted to abort. She has recently launched the Unplanned Movie Scholarship program to help young women stay in school while carrying their babies to full term.

The *Unplanned* movie is available on download and DVD, and Abby Johnson's book by the same name is available on book sites.

Quotes in this story from an interview Ashley Bratcher did with Faithwire.com

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ALPHA ALTERS ATHEIST

BY ANNE LIM (ETERNITY NEWS) (ABRIDGED)

Marie Davis used to be a dyed-in-the-wool atheist. She would tease her Christian mother about “your imaginary friend up in the sky”. And after an unhappy experience in a cult, she became determined not to have anything to do with Christianity or the church.

But then a Christian woman called Sarah came into her life.

“We just hit it off when our boys started at the same high school,” the Gold Coast-based teacher’s aide told *Eternity*.

“Anyway, she would talk gently to me about God and Jesus and I’d just say ‘no, it’s very sweet but I don’t believe it. Thank you very much, but no.’”

Finally, late one night, Sarah sent Marie a text inviting her to an Alpha course at her church, saying the course was for people like Marie who don’t believe in God but have lots of questions – no questions would be off limits.

“And she said, ‘plus there’s free coffee and muffins’ and I thought ‘oh, I love my coffee and I love my muffins.’ I thought, ‘oh, my darling friend for 13 years has just stood by while I was a practising Buddhist for nearly two years (I was into crystals, angel card readings – all of this trying to find something), and she just gently, gently never gave up on me, and just loved me – never judged me, just loved me.”

“Anyway, I just looked at my husband and said ‘darling Sarah never gives up. I’m going to give her the surprise of her life and say ‘yes, I’ll go.’”

Marie began her first night at Alpha by sitting right up the back of the church with her body half-turned towards the back.

But what followed was nothing like she had experienced before. The pastor, who was running the course, was the first to breach Marie’s defences. Having grown up at the beach with surfer brothers, she immediately related to his “surfer dude” look. And that was just the start.

“He just has the most soothing voice and just spoke from the heart and he had me captivated – like, whoah!” Marie recalls.

She also found the Alpha course film presentation “just incredible – I absolutely loved it, absolutely loved it.”

It was a dramatic and sudden turnaround for Marie, who had rejected God after suffering three types of cancer seven years ago, and then seeing her brother die a painful death from cancer in 2016.

“I saw him suffer; it was horrific, and I thought ‘really? If there is a God, can you just take this pain away from him?’ And instead of being so close to death with him and turning to God, it made me turn away even further.”

Marie believes God had aligned everything so that she would become a Christian during that Alpha course because she had seven “amazing women” in her discussion group who “just embraced me and answered my questions and never judged me for asking and going ‘what?’”

It was the love of Jesus that enthralled and captivated Marie, cutting through her shell of hostility.



She found it amazing that Jesus loved her, even though He knew everything about her.

“I learnt about this most loving God, this person who would have died for me if I was the only one that sinned. And it was like, ‘whoah, this

just blows my mind.’”

When it came time to pray a prayer of repentance (turning away from sin) and faith, Marie felt like she was floating.

“When I took that step of going ‘yes, I give myself to Jesus, my life is

for you to do what you wish. Please forgive me for my sins and help me forgive those who’ve done things against me’. And when we had this beautiful prayer, the only way I could describe it was just this helium-filled balloon just floating.

I WAS TORMENTED BY VOICES

BY CHRIS EYTE

“**G**OD, KILL ME!” Sarah Clarke sat on the floor of her room with the curtains closed, begging for death to take her. It wasn’t the first time she’d wanted to kill herself.

Her inner torment had become too much. She was hearing voices, going in and out of mental health centres to be treated for ADHD and deep depression, and drank too much. Sexually abused as a young girl, she was making her living as a prostitute.

Sarah, aged 29 and living in Hull in the United Kingdom, had been sexually abused 10 times by different men by the time she was 21. At the time, she thought she deserved such treatment because she was worthless.

“I faced sexual abuse from the time I was very young and became very angry,” she said. “I wasn’t even able to tell my mum of the pain I carried. I cried on the inside and started to self-harm - I was lonely, felt isolated and lashed out.”

“When I was 12 I was diagnosed with ADHD and that led to a downward spiral of dysfunctional living and a chaotic life.”

Sarah’s paranoia grew. Responding to voices in her head, she tried killing herself a number of times. It got to the point that she had to self-section herself (admit herself into a psychiatric facility) because she was dangerous. It was then that doctors diagnosed her with a personality disorder.

“I had no hope,” Sarah recalled. “Mental hospitals, medication, alcohol to numb the pain and bingeing on drugs caused me to live in a cycle I called hell.”

She visited churches hoping to find relief. The night she cried out to God to kill her was the night she reached breaking point.

“I begged Him to kill me,” she said.

And then, crying herself to sleep, she had a dream. She saw Jesus and His hand was like fire. And He lay hold of her hand and His presence filled her.

“Jesus said this: ‘I love you. Keep persevering.’”

Sarah woke up after the dream and felt that something had changed in her. She felt positive



ABOVE: Sarah Clarke mentally unwell, bingeing on alcohol and involved in prostitution.

RIGHT: Sarah healed and happy.



for a while but then relapsed a few months later. A friend then told her about Teen Challenge, a Christian ministry helping people trapped in addiction and life-controlling problems.

A support worker for Teen Challenge supported Sarah. She attended a Teen Challenge centre for women at Gorslas in Wales where she found, at last, true freedom and healing.

“I met with Jesus in this place and was healed and completely set free from substance abuse and mental health problems. Three years later, I’m clean! I also have contact with my daughter and I am in Bible college doing ministry with Revive Church (Hull) working alongside some mighty men and women of God who inspire Me.”

The voices have disappeared from Sarah’s mind - replaced by the loving voice of Jesus Christ. She can turn off the light without fear at night and sleep peacefully.

“I have an inner strength now. I can be who I’m truly created to be. I don’t need medication any-

more - I’m in my right mind!

“I’m free to go and do normal day-today things like shopping, and eating out and I’m able to pay bills and handle money without alcohol in my system.

“I love the fact that I can get on buses now and not be so paranoid and shaky! I don’t treat myself unkindly because I’m a child of God with a new identity who is loved by her heavenly father.”

Sarah has been supported by her home church, in Nottingham, England.

She encourages anyone with a similar story to her’s, to become desperate for change.

“Make a choice and stick to it,” she said, “position your heart and believe. If you don’t do it for yourself - you will relapse and pick the bottle or drugs back up. Remember that you can do this but it’s a choice! Reach out to people and ask for help. Tomorrow is not a promise - you have one life. What are you going to do with it?”

“It was just the most glorious feeling.”

Anyone who knew Marie before she took that Alpha course in May 2017 is amazed at her transformation and how she tells everyone she meets about Jesus.

Recently she got baptised [immersed in water as an outward sign of dying to her sins and rising to a new life with Jesus].

“It’s that obedience and it’s that outward showing of ‘yes, I will follow Jesus’. And I must admit, since getting baptised, I’m still floating. And people say ‘oh, my goodness, you still have that look’.”

There are two wonderful ripples effects from Marie’s salvation.

“My dad wasn’t a Christian, but after the course I went to him and said, ‘Dad, you won’t believe it, I’ve just been learning about the most amazing God’, and I told him all about it.”

Marie’s father started going to her church, did the next Alpha course and, at age 80, gave his life to Jesus.

Through meeting someone else at the Alpha course, Marie gained the courage to change her career from medical administration to being a teacher’s aide at a Christian school, for a third of the income but much greater job satisfaction.

“How blessed am I? I love my job. The riches I receive in serving God’s children is far richer than the money in my old job,” she says.

The full article appeared in the Bible Society’s *Eternity News* and is used with kind permission.

Nuclear physicist defends Creation

BY JONATHAN SARFATI (CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL)

Dr Heinz Lycklama earned a Ph.D in experimental Nuclear Physics from McMaster University in Canada in 1969. By this time, he had already published 10 peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals, including the prestigious *Physical Review*.

He worked for some decades in the telecommunications and computer software industries.

In 2013 Heinz founded the Apologetics Forum of Snohomish County in Washington State, USA, to help equip Christians in the defence of their faith. He regularly teaches and arranges seminars on topics related to the Bible and science, and has presented in a number of countries around the world.

Heinz's favourite subject at school was always mathematics but the basis for his later career as an apologist goes back even further. He says he was blessed to be raised in a devout Christian family.

"My parents faithfully took us to church each Sunday and instructed us in God's Word [the Bible]. I never wavered in my belief in God, with [Jesus] Christ being the Creator, Redeemer and Saviour."

Unlike today, evolution wasn't brought up at high school. So Heinz was not confronted by the conflict between the Bible and evolution until his first-year geology class at university.

However, this didn't affect his general science career, for which evolution was irrelevant, including his graduate studies in experimental nuclear physics.

Evolution and the Christian faith

Things had changed by the time Heinz's children were attending public schools in the mid-1970s. His daughter came home one day declaring that people came from monkeys!

This motivated Heinz to develop teaching materials about the issue for Sunday School and home studies. The late Dr Henry Morris's books *The Genesis Flood* (1961) and *The Genesis Record* (1976) were very helpful.

In his creation talks, Heinz emphasizes the importance of God as Creator – meaning He owns us and therefore has absolute authority over us. And he copiously documents that Jesus and the New Testament authors affirmed Genesis as real history.¹ Another very important biblical teaching is that death is the result of Adam's sin, as opposed to evolution's teaching that death of the unfit led to man.

Evolution versus science

Heinz points out that Christians should have no fear of evolution on scientific grounds. Rather, "Evolution is the greatest myth ever foisted on our society in the name of science."

One strong reason he provides goes right back to the supposed beginning of neo-Darwinism evolution



Dr Heinz Lycklama and his wife Gerda. Originally from the Netherlands, Dr Lycklama has spent most of his life in Canada.

by natural selection. Before natural selection can even get started, there must be at least two self-reproducing entities – at least one of which must have arisen directly from lifeless, non-reproducing chemicals. However, Heinz points out:

"All attempts by evolutionists to show that first life from non-life by natural processes can be explained by evolution have come to naught for four main reasons:

1. The Law of Biogenesis discovered by Pasteur in 1864.
2. The failure of experiments like that of Miller in 1953 to show that life can come from non-life.
3. The mathematical probability of forming the first living cell by random chance processes is beyond possible.
4. Information in a cell (DNA) requires an intelligent mind."

The failure of the origin of first life from non-life by natural processes is actually a showstopper for evolution.

And even if we grant the first self-reproducing cell, it's not the end of the problems. No one disputes that things change, but the small changes

observed in nature just don't add up to big changes. For one thing, they are going in the wrong direction: downhill instead of uphill.² And, Heinz points out, "the fossil record does not show the 'innumerable transitional links' expected by Darwin"³ – even 160 years later, and neither does it support human evolution.

Not only that but many supposed "irrefutable proofs of evolution" have been totally discredited, yet are still in the textbooks!

"Some of the more dramatic examples are Haeckel's embryonic recapitulation and embryo similarity,⁴ vestigial organs,⁵ and claims made by evolutionists at the Scopes Trial in 1925. Dr Jonathan Wells identified 10 discredited icons of evolution in his book by the same name, and he identified more discredited icons of evolution in his more recent book *Zombie Science*. Recent examples include the alleged '98% human-chimp DNA similarity'⁶ and the alleged 'junk DNA'.⁷

On the other hand, "The truth of the Bible has been confirmed by history, geography, prophecy and archaeology. In terms of prophecy, more than 50% of the prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled. Archaeology has supported the accuracy of many statements in the Bible."

In particular, Heinz is impressed by the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1948. They show the accuracy of the copying of Isaiah (a large book in the Old Testament), and that Isaiah's prophecies about Christ were written centuries beforehand, not after the events, as skeptics asserted. He is also impressed by the Ebla tablets, discovered in northern Syria in 1974 and dating from centuries before Moses. They document the five cities of the plain in Genesis 14, and destroy skeptical theories that writing wasn't invented by Moses' day.

Radiometric dating

Many people think that radiometric dating proves millions of years. After all, haven't scientists precisely measured both half-lives and amounts of isotopes in samples? Dr Lycklama, a specialist in experimental nuclear

physics, points out:

"It takes more than today's known decay rates to determine dates. There are three basic assumptions made in radioisotope dating methods:

1. The initial conditions of the sample are known.
2. There has been no contamination of the sample.
3. The decay rate of the radioactive isotope has remained the same since the sample's formation."

He then referred to the meticulous research by the RATE group in the early 2000s, which showed that these assumptions were demonstrably false:⁸

"For example, they have found C-14 in diamonds and coal where there should have been none if the earth was millions/billions of years old. The RATE team has also identified many discordant dates for rock samples when different radioisotope dating methods are used. This all puts into question the accuracy of dates determined using conventional

dating methods that depend on the validity of the three basic assumptions."

As regards relativity and quantum mechanics, Dr Lycklama argues:

"Relativity and quantum mechanics are part of our operational scientific knowledge. Einstein's Theories of General Relativity and of Special Relativity have never been falsified and are regarded as true science. Quantum mechanics solved some of the classical physics problems that had remained unresolved in the 20th century. But this did not render classical physics obsolete at all. The dual wave-particle nature of light has been well established by science using the scientific method.

"I do not see relativity and quantum mechanics as being in conflict with what the Bible teaches."

Heinz concludes: "Throughout my scientific career and beyond, I've been encouraged that true science has always supported the truth of God's Word. As a scientist, I'm not afraid of what real science will discover in the future—in fact, I look forward to it." •

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Believe it
or Not

BY CREATION
MINISTRIES
INTERNATIONAL

Flowing blood found in frozen mammoth

RUSSIAN scientists have recovered blood from a woolly mammoth so well preserved that hopes of obtaining viable DNA for 'cloning' the extinct species have surged again. The blood was in ice cavities below its belly and flowed freely when these were broken with a pick. The find was announced by the expedition's head, Dr Semyon Grigoriev, chairman of the Museum of Mammoths at Russia's North Eastern Federal University. Scientists from the Russian Geographical Society were also involved.

This mammoth is believed to be 10,000 to 15,000 years old. This is still the most common sort of timeframe given for mammoth extinction, despite long-standing secular suggestions that in some places they survived till around 4,000 years ago. Of course, a post-Flood biblical Ice Age scenario for the freezing (see creation.com/mammoth), less than 4,000 years ago, seems much more believable in the light of this find.

In fact, even that seems a long time for something to last 'in the freezer'. The fact that the blood remained liquid even at subzero temperatures in the lab has revived discussion about mammoth blood containing special 'antifreeze' proteins (cf. creation.com/antifreeze-protein).

This is of course not as sensational for creationists as the discoveries of flexible soft tissue, nucleated cells, identifiable protein and even DNA from (unfrozen) dinosaur fossils supposed to be at least 65 million years old (see creation.com/dinosaurs). But it is one more thing that helps bring home the reality—namely, that the whole creation is really much more 'fresh' than we have been led to believe. •

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

I SOLEMNLY VOW ...

BY ROB FURLONG

BEING asked to officiate at a couple's wedding has been one of the greatest privileges of my life and I especially love being a part of the special, sacred moment when a man and a woman make their vows to each other.

The dictionary defines a vow as a "solemn promise...especially in the form of an oath to God..."

It's a good reminder.

You see, when a couple commits to loving and staying with each other for life, they have not just made their promises before their family and friends.

They have also done so in the presence of God Himself – and I believe that He holds them accountable for the words they have spoken.

Stop and reflect for a moment on the solemn nature of wedding vows which usually include statements like these:

"...forsaking all others keep yourself only for her/him, so long as you both shall live..."

"...I take you to be my wedded wife/husband...till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto do I give you my vow..."

The wedding vow is a life-long commitment of love and faithfulness to each other that is only broken by death.

Many years ago I read an article that made a strong impression on me as a then, young husband.

It was entitled, *Defend Your Vows* and was an appeal by the author to couples to take their marriage vows seriously.

He also advocated that couples try and find creative ways to regularly remind each other that the promises made on their wedding day still hold true.

The author wrote, "There is simply not enough emphasis on wedding vows any-

more. We need to face it. This is one of the most significant problems in modern marriage.

With a little thought, you'll discover many creative ways to remind your spouse and yourself of your vows.

Sometimes I just like to tell my wife that I remember my vows and that she is the only woman I have ever slept with and the only one I ever wish to sleep with.

I don't think she ever tires of hearing me reiterate my vows. I know I never get tired of hearing or saying them."

For many years now, Karen and I have made it a practice to re-affirm our vows to each other on our wedding anniversary.

My hope, as you read this, is that you do not view your wedding vows as promises you gave years ago that have now faded somewhat with the passing of time.

If this is the case, perhaps the place to start is with God.

Remind yourself of the solemnity of your vows because they were taken in His presence.

But also remind yourself of their joyous nature!



When you made your vows to each other they set you free to love each other fully and to experience the joy and freedom of married life.

And remember that marriage is made up of countless choices.

Years ago, on your wedding day, you chose each other but the strength of that choice is weakened, if not outright nullified, if you do not continue to choose each other today.

All couples find their love for each other challenged at various points in a marriage – it is in those times that you either choose to love again or to walk away.

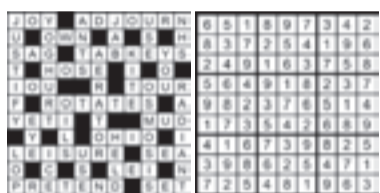
Sadly, many people choose the latter, Christians included.

So what about it, husbands and wives?

How seriously do you take your wedding vows today?

Are they still vibrant with power, or has their significance waned with the passage of time?

May the promise you made to your spouse "to love, comfort, honour and keep each other, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health" still be true for you today!



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) _____

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DEADLY BITES

ONE summer day two men and their wives went fishing on a lake. They had some of the finest equipment and were looking forward to a good catch, but after several hours without a bite, they decided to return home. However, they were amazed to see a small boy on the shore pulling in fish after fish.

One of the women walked over to the boy, curious as to how he was catching all those fish. He was happy to share his success. Pointing to a rotten log, he explained, "There are lots of worms under that log. They make good bait, although they bite your hand when you put them on the hook. Help yourself; there are plenty of them."

Surprise! Lifting up the log, the woman saw, to her surprise, not worms, but a nest of poisonous baby copperhead snakes.

"Those aren't worms – they're copperheads!" she called to the boy. "Let me look at your hands."

The boy's hands were covered with tiny bites already beginning to swell from the poison. They rushed him to a doctor, who injected some anti-venom serum, and the boy's life was saved. The doctor estimated that the poison from all those little bites actually equalled the bite of a full-grown copperhead. Another hour and it would have been too late!

That little boy was innocently handling snakes, not realizing they were poisonous...and they were actually destroying him! He thought he was using them to his advantage, but in the end they would have killed him.

Many people today are innocently living their own lives, not hurting anyone else – yet completely

unaware that sin in their lives is destroying them. You may not consider yourself a sinner (many people don't), but God says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23).

Everything that does not please God is sin. Does that define any of your actions? Many of the things you think you do for your own advantage, are really sins, and the bite of these sins leads to eternal death. "For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23).

Hope Is there any hope? Just as there was

hope for the boy because of quick action, so there is hope for you if you act in faith. The boy's life was saved because he was taken to the right source for help – the doctor. So it is with you: there is only one source of help concerning sin – God Himself.

God has determined that sin must be punished, but He has also provided a Substitute who already suffered and died for your sins. "Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18).

"Christ died for our sins." (1 Corinthians 15:3).

You are in trouble and need help! God offers you the help you desperately need: "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23). You can chose either to accept God's salvation or reject it. "He who believes in the Son (of God) has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36).

The choice is yours; you must decide. Come to Christ now for the only remedy!

This article is from *The Highway Evangelist*.



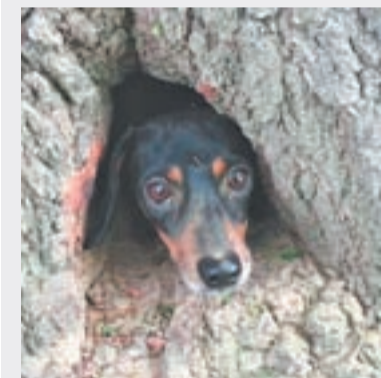
Bonus lesson from a sausage dog

BY JODY BENNETT

CARRIE, as a sausage dog, is of course very short-legged. This has some advantages for me, as she is unable to jump on my bed, reach food on the kitchen counter or pull things off the couch. However, the flip-side of that is that she needs my help a lot – every time she gets on or off anything.

She knows she needs my help with these manoeuvres and many other things, so she will scratch doors for me to open, jump against the bed for me to pick her up, whine to get down, stare at me meaningfully if her bowl is empty.

The other night she had the challenging task of trying to get me to understand that her doggy door wasn't opening and she couldn't get outside. She was dashing about like a nutcase going from one door to the other until I finally realised her problem.



Other times she shakes her head at night to wake me up with her ear-flapping, so that I can cover her up because she is cold. Spoilt? A little!

The point is though that Carrie knows she can't sort out these things herself. She is aware of her own limitations. On the occasions when she has tried to jump off the bed, she has smooched her nose, banged her head and risked more serious injury.

It is absolutely no advantage to Carrie to try to do these things herself or to refuse my help out of 'pride' and it occurred to me that we should be more like my dachshund in realising our 'smallness' in the face of our problems. We should stop thinking we are doing God some sort of favour by 'not bothering Him' and tackling them on our own, and admit we need help. He already knows, anyway.

Although I am quite in tune with my dog's needs, God knows our needs even before we do. We are only kidding ourselves by not involving Him in our problems and trying to get through our days in our own strength.

Carrie knows that I will help her because I love her. And because I am consistently loving towards her, she trusts me. Maybe the first thing we should admit we need God's help with, is trusting in His goodness and love towards us.

As the old hymn based on Lamentations 3 in the Bible assures us: *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness, O Lord.*

RAISING THE BAR



Nicola McDermott of Australia competes in the Women's High Jump during the Queensland Track Classic at QSAC on March 28, 2018 in Brisbane. (Photo Bradley Kanaris/Getty Images)

Aussie Nicola McDermott has made a name for herself in the sport of high jumping. In 2011, she sailed over 1.76 metres and has been beating her personal best every year since. In 2018, she leapt her way to a bronze medal at the Gold Coast XXI Commonwealth Games for clearing 1.91 metres.

"I got into high jump when I was in under-9s," she says. "Back then I had a little dream to represent Australia...to be one of the first women ever in Australia to jump two metres."

With a current best of 1.96m, Nicola is a whisker away from accomplishing her goal. Her prowess has won her worldwide attention and has placed her equal third on the Australian all-time rankings list and equal sixth on the 2019 World Rankings.

However, the 23-year-old athlete has faced several challenges on her journey to the top and openly shares her struggles – and the faith that grounds her.

Nicola explains, "When I first started sports such as swimming, tennis or dancing, I was just terrible. But then at my first school athletic carnival, to my surprise, I started winning all the events. I realised I had a gift and my parents enrolled me in Little Athletics, which I immediately loved."

She describes what it was like when she first tried the high jump. "I was nine, tall and loved running. High jump was a sport that chal-

lenged me physically and mentally and I enjoyed all the training and the feeling of jumping."

Nicola says her height made her a target for bullying while she was growing up.

"I went to a new school in my last year of primary school and I was

said they loved because Jesus loved them. It was simple yet it changed my entire life."

Nicola had been raised in a religious family and attended a formal church regularly but after going to her new school, things shifted for her.

"It was the first time I came into full realisation of the Gospel [story of Jesus saving us from our sins] and the reality of God," she smiles. "I committed my life to Jesus and got involved in different youth groups and camps while at school.

"There were regular Bible studies, chapel services and opportunities at school which helped me grow in my faith. When I finished school I left my old church and joined my local church whose teachings corresponded more closely with my personal beliefs."

Nicola also joined the Evangelical Union at Sydney University where she was trained to lead Bible study groups and spoke about her journey of faith to large meetings. She also began her own ministry – Everlasting Crowns – in 2017, with a few friends who were also international athletes and wanted to serve God through sport.

"This ministry connects athletes with local sports chaplains, so wherever in the world they would

be competing they could have access to Skype Bible studies," Nicola explains. "It offers encouragement, another chaplain and a local church so travelling for sport won't be a barrier to an athlete growing in his or her faith. This ministry has organised meetings at the highest international sporting competitions and has created incredible fellowship within a high-pressure environment."

Nicola, who recently became an

ambassador for Youth for Christ, is not only passionate about her sport but also about reaching others with the good news of the Gospel. "I was

given the opportunity to write daily devotionals, attend Christian conferences internationally and speak at national chaplaincy events," she says.

Her story of dedication, commitment and perseverance has opened doors to share her faith. "I love the

platform this sport gives me to be a role model for the next generation," she says.

I WAS IMMEDIATELY MET BY THIS OVERWHELMING, NON-JUDGING LOVE



Nicola McDermott shares her journey on a Youtube clip for Athletics Australia.

concerned about what would happen," she says. As it turned out, she worried for nothing.

Nicola's new school was a Christian one and her experience there proved life-changing.

"When I walked in I was immediately met by this overwhelming, non-judging love from the students and teachers," she recalls. "It was a love that left me with questions and envious of how they were able to show that sort of love. They all

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