

Strength to match Hercules

He played Hercules for 111 episodes between 1995 and 1999, but Hollywood actor Kevin Sorbo was confronted with his mortality after suffering from a severe shoulder aneurysm.

Kevin got his breakthrough role in *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* in 1994 and has conquered the screen countless times since.

"I'm an actor," he says. "I'm not saving people's lives. I just hope I give them some escape from reality for a while and give them a good laugh and a good cry."

He recalls his role as Hercules with particular fondness.

"I relished and looked forward to it," he says. "I had an amazing stunt team that made me look like I knew what I was doing."

Kevin thrived on movement and exercise, and tried every day to match the strength and invincibility of his character.

Which is why the pain that awoke in his shoulder in the last few years of the series was a cause of great frustration.

As he sat at the chiropractor, his latest attempt at trying to reduce his agony, Kevin heard a voice say, "Don't let him crack your neck".

The chiropractor cracked his neck. "I felt two very loud pops in the back of my head," Kevin tells the Christian Broadcasting Network.

In his book, *True Strength: My Journey from Hercules to Mere Mortal and How Nearly Dying Saved My Life*, he describes it as if an 8.9 earthquake had struck his head.

"Oh, it was unbelievable," he says. "The buzzing, the vibration, the humming that was going on. I just looked up at the sky and said, 'I'm going to die today'."

Over the course of a couple of days Kevin's condition grew worse. His eye sight began to fail, his balance was gone and his speech was



ABOVE: Kevin Sorbo as Hercules.

RIGHT: Kevin in a photo taken January 20, 2017: (Photo Michael Bezjian/WireImage/Getty)

slurred. When he went to the hospital doctors admitted him into ICU where they ran tests and found an aneurysm in his left arm.

Kevin remembers, "My left side clavicle had opened up and now thousands of clots were in my arm and they thought they might have to amputate."

In addition, Kevin had suffered three strokes. The invincible "Hercules" was now incapacitated. He

had a talk with God.

"I was scared. I was scared for my future, my career, my life. Am I going to be able to have kids?" At the time, Kevin was engaged to his wife Sam Jenkins, who had guest-starred on *Hercules*.

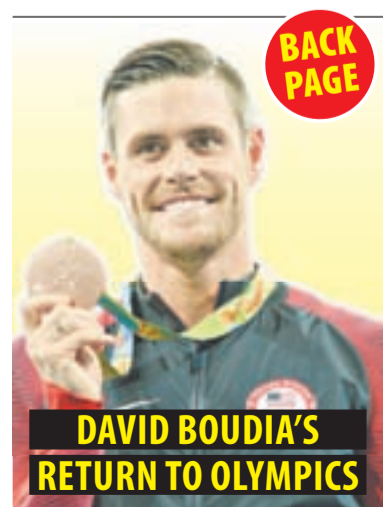
"We were four months away from saying 'for better or worse' and [Sam] got worse before she got to say those lines."

What followed, over years of reha-

bilitation, was pain, weakness, and migraines, and confusion as to why and how this could have happened to him. He believed God had warned him about the chiropractor, but then why still allow it to happen?

Kevin grew up in Minnesota to Christian parents. When he was 13, he went to one of evangelist Billy Graham's campaigns and gave his life to Jesus Christ.

● Turn to page 2



THE POWER OF SAYING SORRY

NATIONAL Sorry Day is an annual event that has been held in Australia on 26 May, since 1998, to remember and commemorate the mistreatment of the country's Aboriginal population. I imagine many Australians might feel the whole idea is just a hollow attempt by "the white fella" to soothe his conscience about the past, and that an apology is just empty words.

But the words "I'm sorry" can be very powerful. Sincere apologies create unities where there were disunities. Certainly they unify people relationally, but they also unify something inside people – the disconnect between our baser, selfish instincts, and our higher moral standards.

An apology is an act of self-debasement. Whoever is apologising is wilfully placing him- or herself in a lower position in regards to the other, they are humbling themselves, admitting imperfection and blame, and making themselves vulnerable.

When one person sincerely takes responsibility

for hurting others or for contributing to the rise of tensions, it immediately takes the wind out of an argument and deflates rising passions. It makes us feel, not only better about the other person and the situation, but about ourselves too.

An altercation with my late father was never over until his child or wife said, "I'm sorry, you're right, I'm wrong, I admit it." It came to be a bit of a family joke. The other day when I, only half-jesting, said it to my daughter she commented: "It is amazing how satisfying it is to hear that from an adult!" I retorted, "And from a child too!"

A good apology helps both givers and receivers to successfully pivot from the past to the future by expressing, firstly wrongdoing in the past (e.g. "I'm sorry I said those things"); secondly, regret and empathy in the present (e.g. "I know that you feel betrayed"), and thirdly, change and reconciliation in the future (e.g. "I hope we can still be friends").

So basic to human life is the spoken apology that it is one of the three first things we teach



little children to say. "Say, Thank you." "Say, Please." "Say you're sorry." Significantly, saying each of these phrases hurts our pride and independence just a bit and reminds us that we are not isolated islands, able to get through life on our own. We are interdependent, relational creatures.

Christianity reflects this too. Think of the Biblical book of Psalms. One can almost boil all the Psalms down to thanking God, asking God for help and admitting to God our limitations and failures.

● Turn to page 2

TAKING A CHANCE ON IT

BY ALAN BAILEY

Base-jumpers. No doubt you have seen them on TV. They stand on some giddy height then leap toward the ground well below. Their parachute will let them land safely—they hope. Then there are the climbers who scale the side of a skyscraper, hanging on with fingers and toes. All very scary.

RISK-TAKERS

Life is full of risks of course, some scarier than others. When taking a risk seems to be the only course available, we simply must do it, hoping for the best. Strangely enough, we like the idea of risk taking.

Look at the business done every day by betting agencies, the lotteries, the bookmakers and the casinos. Every day on the Stock Exchanges, risks are taken, some paying off, others not.

A DRAWING POWER

It is the hope of winning that drives people on. Stories of others getting a lot for a little, grab the imagination. But then, how do we explain why people take deliberate risks with their health? Or take an ill-considered plunge into marriage? Or take foolish risks on the road. Or try to beat the law of the land?

Perhaps taking a risk is at times a substitute for grappling with issues and trying to come up with answers. Cheating fate has an attraction for us.



EVERYTHING IS A RISK

Today, youth are educated to think that the whole world, including themselves of course, is the result of blind forces working by chance. So if the human race came about by sheer fluke, it can't have meaning. If it is the product of chance, most likely it will be the victim of it too. We will go out

into non-existence with no-one to care.

Older people are risk-takers, too. Often their preparation for death is even less than that of a base-jumper for his leap. They go out into death holding on to flimsy protests

about being good enough as they are to meet God. What a plunge! What an awful shock many will receive! And there is no coming back for a second chance. It's foolish in the extreme to gamble on eternity

PLAYING IT SAFE

What better way to find the secret to eternal security than to listen to Jesus Christ, the one who knows. No-one compares with Him, because He is Lord of the Universe. He puts beyond doubt the question of life after death. His descriptions are meant to make us fear one destination and reach out for the other.

Putting faith in Him as Lord and Saviour is no risk. It is like building on a rock: like putting down an immovable anchor.

No-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3: 11).

Saved from self-righteousness

As an intelligent, politically astute teenager John Sharpe believed he had the answer to all the world's problems if only the right people, who thought like him, were in charge.

He admits that he was "sickeningly judgemental" and, after all the church sermons he had heard, thought being good enough for God was just not doing as many bad things as his friends had done.

John was very quick to condemn and judge corrupt politicians but, at about 17, he began to realise that he was doing the very same things on a smaller scale by stealing items from his place of work.

"Something strange began to happen in my life," he recalls.

"I realised the bad things I did, which I had always found a way to excuse or justify, were just as wrong as the things that I had so angrily condemned in others."

Through the Bible he was learning that all wrongdoing is sin before God and just one sin makes you a sinner.

"God was slowly convincing me that I was just as desperately in need of his forgiveness as everyone else on the planet. Even when I really wanted to do what I knew was the right thing, it was always such a struggle – one



John Sharpe realised his bad deeds were just as bad as anyone else's.

making sense. Although, the Bible teaches that sin deserves death, Jesus has come, lived a totally sinless life, and qualified as a stand in, to take the punishment we so fully deserve.

"That is what Jesus dying on the cross is all about and that is why Christians make such a big deal about his death," John realised.

"God sent Jesus to make it possible for us, who he had created in the first place, to return to him and become part of his family."

"All I needed to do was to stop thinking that I could be good enough for God myself and acknowledge that only Jesus could and did do everything necessary to put me right with

God when he died and rose again from the dead," John proclaims.

that more often than not I lost," he admits sadly.

Knowing that when he eventually met God, he would stand before Him guilty, was a scary thing for John to face, but along with that realisation he also became aware of how very deeply God loved and cared for him.

"All He was wanting from me was to acknowledge that I could never measure up by my own efforts and if I was to ever be accepted by Him, He would have to take care of my 'junk' himself."

Finally, the sermons about believing and trusting in Jesus alone were

The power of sorry



• From page 1

Strangely, though, the words "apology" or "sorry" are not in the Bible. Instead the Bible uses the word repentance, which incorporates the concept of not only feeling remorse for what we have done or said (or failed to do or say), but turning 180 degrees from the way we were going, changing our thinking about the issue and doing the opposite. The term has a change of action built into it – one cannot repent and then continue as before.

2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." We can have a superficial sorrow like a child that is only sorry their naughtiness has been found out, or we can have genuine remorse for how our actions have hurt others and a desire to change in the future.

And it is those apologies that are hardest – that we most resist giving because they make us gulp down our pride – that are in fact the ones that are most profound.

Who do you need to apologise to this Sorry Day?

share your story

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

Strength to match Hercules

• From page 1

"It was a very happy emotional night for me," he remembers. "I felt like that was the day [I decided for myself to live for God], because it's such a marked day in my life."

But then he had been at the peak of his career, about the marry the woman he loved, a bright future staring him in the face, and with his injury came doubt as to whether God really was taking care of him.

"Lying on the couch [during my recovery] with nothing but spare time, I conversed with God and told him my problems," Kevin goes on.

"I asked His forgiveness [...] and I began using my grateful prayer again.

"I thanked [God] for the warning that September day. Although I didn't listen I wondered if He could have done it simply to let me know He was there. Perhaps that was blessing enough. I thanked Him for the gratifying workouts and the good sleeps at night. I thanked Him for saving my arm, my speech, and what I had left of my sight."

Kevin prayed; not for healing per se, but that God would help him accept his situation. "If this is the best I'm going to be," he told the Lord, "then help me fight through this every day. Because it is tough."



Kevin Sorbo in 1999 in his most famous role, as Hercules. (Photo: Getty Images)

"Although I would never measure to Hercules' strength, I [rivalled] his stamina for my everyday battle just to have a normal life," Kevin says.

"And my true strength comes from God."

After its sixth season, the *Hercules* series ended. Although Kevin still has a 10% loss of vision in both eyes he continues to act in movies and hit television series, including the fantasy film *Kull the Conqueror*, the TV series *Andromeda*, and the Christian movies *Soul Surfer* and *God's not Dead*.

Kevin and Sam have been married for nearly 20 years and have three children together.

Crossword

ACROSS

1 up stakes (move) 9 Lend an ear 10 Swelling reducer 11 Goal striker 13 Fall guy 15 Removes grime 17 Prettiness

4 Season of the year 7 Alpha's opposite 8 A Swiss army knife has lots of them

DOWN

1 Sink stoppers 2 Short-straw drawer 3 Covets 4 Store bargain times 5 Bring in, cause to meet 6 Science of artillery 12 When red-eye specials fly 14 Foot part 15 Road reflector 16 ...easter 17 Fits in 19 American symbol 21 Horse and sulky pace 22 Chucked, tossed

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Truth that saved my assassin

Michael Taut stepped into Virginia Prodan's office to kill her. He stepped out weeping.

Growing up a Romanian Communist Party enthusiast under the regime of Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, Michael was recruited to police traineeship after high school. As a police officer, Michael says he was best at spying and placing false documents in people's homes and workplaces, then arresting and torturing them.

"While in my custody, they all either confessed or died," he says in the afterword of Virginia's memoir, *Saving my Assassin*.

Michael had been sent to Virginia's office to kill her. At first, he says, he thought about strangling her but decided it would be more fun to scare her by showing her his gun.

Virginia was taken aback by how large the man was. She remembers the sneer that formed on the corner of his mouth and the eyes that seemed to bore a hole straight through her as he slowly pulled out his gun.

"I watched Virginia's reaction ecstatically," Michael recalls. "She was scared; I could read it on her face."

Virginia had made herself a target of Ceausescu's regime by becoming a Christian in the staunchly Communist country.

But she decided it was worth the risk.

Virginia was born with a desire for truth and freedom despite growing up in a land of lies and imprisonment.

She looked for the truth in law, in the government, in the justice system... Eventually, she found it at church.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus says in the Bible book of John chapter 14 verse 6. "No one comes to the Father except through me."

"I suddenly realized," Virginia tells *Christianity Today*, "that truth was something that came not from law books, but from God himself: the Creator of the universe — my Creator, the source of all life, peace, and happiness."

She had found the truth, and now she would dedicate her life to speaking it. "No matter what the cost," she says.

And the cost was great.

"I was put on the list of the secret police," she says, the Securitate that enforced Ceausescu's rules. "I was interrogated daily, I was followed by the secret police. They threatened that I would be killed or my children

would be killed."

She maintains it was all worth it. "I consider the most important thing in life to be to stand up and fight for freedom. If you don't fight because you are scared you will lose something, you will lose everything you have including freedom."

Still, she almost did lose everything.

On the day Michael entered her office to kill her, Virginia remembers "My hands shook. Fight-or-flight instincts pinged in my brain. My chin trembled.

"I was alone with my killer. And yet, I was not. I began silent, fervent prayers, recalling God's promises. His Spirit breathed peace into my panicked heart. Then I sensed his message: Share the gospel."

"As Virginia calmly shared the gospel with me," says Michael, "I was the one who was frightened — frightened of the peace and the power that came from such a petite person.

"And before I knew what was happening, I was overwhelmed by the love embedded in every word Virginia said. I don't know how she did it, but she made me want her God to be my God. Then she prayed for me.

"After I left Virginia's office, I started crying and thanking God for loving me. I cried so hard I could barely see. I lost control of my car and woke up in hospital."



Virginia Prodan tells people at her speaking engagements that standing up for the Truth is worth it "no matter what the cost."

Years later Michael met up with Virginia for lunch. He had gone on to join the seminary and his son had become a pastor.

"My intention was to kill Virginia," Michael says, "but God's intention was to breathe life into me through her."

Virginia is now an author and speaker using every opportunity to continue to share the message that saved both her and Michael that day.

"[Michael], like me, has found the Truth," Virginia says. "And neither of us will be afraid to speak it ever again."

nudge
WITH KARL FAASE

Extreme makeover

IT is a sad irony that Olivia Goldsmith, author of the book *The First Wives Club* that championed the cause of spurned older women, died on the operating table during a face lift operation. Ms Goldsmith died trying to hold onto the dream of youthful looks.

This comes at a time when television networks are multiplying various forms of makeover reality shows.

As one newspaper report said, "Be all you can be is *Extreme Makeover's* motto as yearning women with low self-esteem have their fat vacuumed,

their noses broken, their faces skinned, their chins implanted, and their teeth filed".

The new you, however, will be found not by having surgery on your body, but on your heart.

God wants to give you a fresh start, to renew your heart and your mind, not your body. To free you from the pain of the past and give you hope for the future. Don't be sold on external change when it's internal renewal that will make all the difference.

FORGIVING MY FATHER'S KILLER

Marcus Doe is no stranger to loss and pain. Orphaned at 11 years of age and feeling let down by a God who seemed to consistently ignore his prayers, Marcus' fantasies of vengeance became his only coping mechanism.

It took Marcus a long time to tell his story. The first time, he writes in his book *Catching Ricebirds: A Story of Letting Vengeance Go*, was during an interview for a teaching job.

In 2016, he not only detailed his past in a memoir but also opened up about it to *Christianity Today*.

"I was born in Liberia, West Africa," he begins. In 1990, 'Freedom Fighters' were staging a coup against President Samuel Doe, for whom Marcus' father worked. There was a target on their backs and Marcus was ordered to stay with his brother and sister-in-law.

For months they were at war, "the hardest season of my life," Marcus tells *Christianity Today*.

"The rebels were ruthless," he remembers, "murdering innocent people on the barest of suspicions.

"While we hid, we ate one small meal a day, mostly rice and greens. Meat and clean water were scarce. Hope was scarcer. As children, we prefaced every statement about the future with, 'If I live through the war, I will...' We lived on fantasies of food. We hadn't been to school in six months."

Marcus prayed every day his father

would not die, just as he had prayed his mother would not die before she had passed away from illness a year earlier.

But when President Doe was assassinated and the war ended, Marcus got news his father had been killed.

"Whenever I was by myself, I cried," he says. And he no longer believed in prayer. He was now afraid to pray for his brothers' and sister's safety.

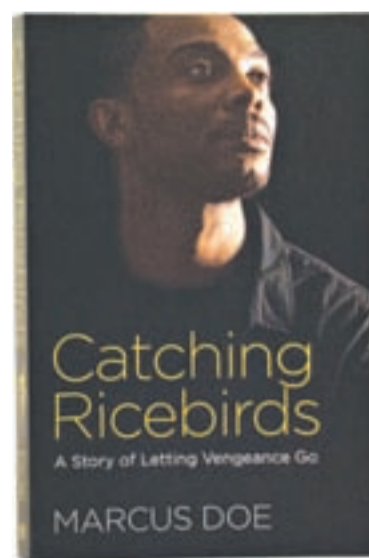
"I wanted to find the soldiers who made me an orphan and make them pay," Marcus says.

"Wartime fantasies of food were replaced by fantasies of revenge."

By 1993 Marcus was living in Boston as a refugee when his brother — his only known living relative — was taken to hospital in a coma after a heart attack.

"Someone else close to me was going to die. I had nowhere to run [for comfort]," he recalls. "For hours I wept in complete darkness."

One more time, Marcus asked God to heal and protect his brother. He confronted Him for all the things he blamed Him for — the death of his parents, the war, their suffering, his disappointments, and now his brother's illness.



The cover of Marcus Doe's moving autobiography.

But he also blamed himself and his dreams of revenge, which he knew were destroying him from the inside.

"I realized in that darkness that I could keep those fantasies alive, or I could relinquish them once and for all," Marcus says.

"I begged God to forgive me. I would let go of revenge and rage. I asked God, from the sincerest and

deepest part of my heart, to save my brother."

That prayer was answered.

Next, Marcus worked on forgiveness.

"Flowers of faith and hope bloomed," he says, "[but] they were sometimes choked by the vicious thorns and weeds of hatred. For years I had comforted myself with the fantasy of killing the man who had killed my father. The roots of that destructive pattern went deep."

He decided he would still find his father's assassin, not to kill him, but to forgive him, and he sat for hours at his dining room table practicing the words "I forgive you", willing himself to mean them.

Two decades after he had left, Marcus returned to Liberia.

"But I did not meet my father's killer," he says. "He had died in the fighting ... Even so, I forgave him."

With that came healing, and peace, and the ability to focus on the future without being haunted by the past.

He is now working to help Liberians who have suffered from the brutality of civil wars in the country.

"Wherever Jesus' words of forgiveness are spoken," Marcus says, "the future is bright with hope."

Having a cage mentality

BY JARED DIPROSE

A ZOOLOGIST by the name of Gordon R. Stephenson presented a research paper to the University of Wisconsin titled, "Cultural acquisition of a specific learned response among rhesus monkeys", describing an experiment where he put a group of monkeys in a large cage. What he found was quite interesting.

Inside the cage was a ladder, and at the top of the ladder were some bananas. When a monkey tried to climb the ladder to get the bananas all of the monkeys got blasted with water. After a while the monkeys learned that if they tried to climb the ladder they all got blasted with water, and so they stopped trying to climb the ladder.



Stephenson then introduced a new monkey into the cage. When this monkey attempted to climb the ladder all the other monkeys would stop it and beat it up.

Then Stephenson replaced all the monkeys, one by one, with new ones.

Even though none of the monkeys now in the cage had ever been blasted by water, they still would beat up any monkey that attempted to climb up the ladder to get the bananas. None of them had any idea of why, it simply wasn't the done thing.

The reason I find this study so interesting is because it speaks deeply to our human condition, that we are conditioned by 'the culture of our cage'. We do not necessarily know the reason why we do some of the things we do, we probably don't even think about half of the things we are accustomed to doing, but we know to do 'the done thing'.

LIGHT

Let's talk about light for a minute. We understand light to be a wave and a particle that travels at 1080 million kilometres per hour. It comes from the sun and from other stars, and from anything with energy.

Without light everything would be cold and dark. Basically light is vital and it is everywhere.

We could also give some less concrete attributes to light, such as being morally 'good', or to 'know', that is, to learn something can be referred to as 'shedding light' on that subject. We may even describe light as being 'heavenly', 'angelic', or even 'godly'.

JESUS

In the Bible Jesus is described as being 'the light of the world' (John 1).

John is saying that Jesus is not only 'good' but is the source of that good, not only knowledgeable but the source of that knowledge, and not only godlike but in fact God. Jesus is light, and the light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not understood it.

The main way we actually know something to be real is from light being reflected, or radiated from it. Darkness has no light. Just as we cannot know what is in a black hole in outer space, we cannot know our own darkness without light from outside us shining in on it.

JESUS MONKEY

If a 'Jesus monkey' were to enter into the cage of Gordon R. Stephenson, and were to shed some light on the situation for the monkeys, either one of two things would happen. They would either: beat him up and say, "No! This is the way we have always done it"; or they would listen to the 'Jesus monkey', and get bananas!

But what we learn from the experiment, and also from the Bible, is that monkeys (and people) love to hold on to the way they do things, even though they may have no idea why they are doing them.

The point is this: when we fail to understand the light, when we fail to grasp the new, the difficult and the wonderful, we struggle to understand how, in a violent world, with violent hearts, forgiveness and love could be the only way. We struggle to understand how, in a world of seeming scarcity, generosity is the only answer.

And so may we, in our inability to understand the light, not say "No! This is the way we have always done it" and beat up the monkeys climbing the ladder. But may we draw closer, even though we do not understand, to the God that is light. •

This article first appeared on the site Christian Today.

Beautiful healing

Beverley Wilson shares her experiences of multiple miscarriages, and why many women suffer silently through it.

BY JOANNA DELALANDE

One weekend when her husband was away Beverley Wilson anxiously went for a late night pregnancy checkup and the doctor bluntly announced, "Go home and try again. You've had a miscarriage."

The doctor's attitude appeared to be, she says, "It doesn't matter. It's just a miscarriage."

Sadly for Beverley, adopting this dismissive attitude turned out to increase the mental and emotional damage of her loss.

This view has arisen, she believes, because one in four pregnant women in Australia have a miscarriage, according to a 2012 report.

And many women dismiss their feelings, she adds, because, "They haven't learned the value of a child in the womb."

"They're told it's not a child until ... when? When it has a heartbeat, it's a human being, isn't it?"

"I just think those kinds of comments are so damaging to a woman, emotionally and mentally," Beverley continues, "and yet because we're young we seem to take it in."

"We think doctors know more than we do and that's true, but I don't think patients need to be treated in that manner."

Later she realized how greatly the loss weighed on her, and how the lack of closure affected her for years to come.

This was compounded by two more miscarriages and a termination at six and a half months because of a failure of skull bone formation.

Four babies without a name or gender. No recognition of the fact they once had a heartbeat.

Two weeks after the abortion Beverley recalls, "My doctor said he would spare me the pain of a memorial service", but moving the surgery date to two weeks earlier.

"His intentions were good," she says. "But in those many years I realized that was the worst thing that could have happened."

Years passed. Beverley divorced and remarried—"that's a whole story in itself," she says—and about 18 months ago her husband passed away.

Some months later when she went to a hospital chaplain to talk through her grief at the loss of her husband, her grief at a different loss was brought up.

"I decided to tell him about the babies I had lost," she says.

"That set me on the journey of preparing a memorial service for those babies, and that was hugely healing. It was just amazing."

The first step, she explains, was to name the babies.

"I think [that] was the most amazing part of it," she says. "It just made such a difference, recognizing they actually were live children even though they were still in the womb."

"It meant I was acknowledging them, I was owning them as my children. My babies."

She describes the memorial with fondness — Beverley had been a Christian for 55 years, and she says she could see on that day how the Lord had brought everything together.

"I think the moment I walked through the chapel at Royal Perth the presence of God was so real," she describes. "When I went through it, step by step, I felt so clearly the Lord was with me."

"I sat down after I had lit the first candle and it was like the Lord said to me 'I have been watching over these children, and they are alive'."

"Jesus was there, He was present in that place. You may have heard of the song *He Made Something Beautiful Out*

"I just want people to have hope"



Beverley Wilson says that naming her unborn children made such a difference in her healing process.

of My Life. That was what I felt that day."

Beverley says she is working on a short memoir with the hope of reaching women who have been through the experience of losing children.

She says she wants to focus on the grief associated with losing babies that were in the womb, because it is not generally talked about.

"Well, I hadn't heard it talked about," she says. "And I just wonder how many women suffer because of that. Silently suffer."

"Oh, that's a good title: *Silent Suffering!*" she says in sudden excitement. "I think that is the one."

"Because it is silent. Nobody is talking about it, so you don't talk about it. I just want people to have hope that their life doesn't have to continue as it is, wondering about things," she adds.

What about people who have never heard the gospel and don't know what happened to their children?

"All I know is Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to them.'"

"If He is the giver of life, He can take care of the rest of it. That's what I think," she says, and laughs. •

A word of rest for weary mums

BY JODY BENNETT

I WAS struck recently, when reading the children's report cards that "good" is no longer good enough; "satisfactory" just isn't; and "average" is almost equivalent to poor. In Australia, "ordinary" has become a slur.

Now the expectation is that everything has to be "excellent" or "outstanding", 3 out of 5 is just not acceptable. Even Uber drivers get canned if their ratings fall below 4.5, or so I've heard.

Our children cannot just pass, they must excel; our homes cannot be just clean, they must be spotless; our bodies cannot be aging and comfortable, they must be super-fit and model-thin; our friendships cannot be part-time, we must be BFFs; and our marriages cannot settle into peaceful uneventfulness, they must be "smoking".



This puts an awful lot of pressure on women. We constantly feel we are not good enough, not working hard enough, not attractive enough and not producing enough results.

Many of us are exhausted, drained and depressed by the constant weight of expectations that we seemingly are not fulfilling.

When I was a new mum, I heard the phrase, "stop trying to be the best mum you can be and just be good enough", and it seemed to me to be such a cop out. It is

only with maturity I can see the wisdom of just doing what you can do, and not pushing yourself to breaking point to achieve standards that probably no one else will notice or appreciate.

Jesus has words of comfort for mums everywhere: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble

in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt 11:27-29)

Many people think that Christianity presents us with just another list of impossible goals to attain and unrealistic expectations to meet, and they rightly balk. But Christianity is, in fact, leaving our "To do" and "I must be more ..." lists at the foot of the cross, where all that was needed for our perfection has already been done; and instead taking up the call to follow meekly in the footsteps of Jesus and just do as He says, with the power that He so generously gives.

So, this Mother's Day, take a deep breath, put down the figurative cat-o-nine-tails with which you beat yourself for all the things you are not, cannot do, forget, waste time on, can't fit into to, or haven't quite achieved; and accept a great dollop of the unconditional love of God.

"But [Jesus] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9) •

Two years after Andrew

**“He was not scared – just sad”.
Feby Chan opens up about her
husband Andrew’s execution.**

It was two years ago now that Australian Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran were executed in Bali’s Kerobokan Prison on drug-trafficking charges.

On April 28, 2015, the eve of that fateful day, death staring him in the face, Andrew stood in a chapel and married the young Javanese woman who had helped him with his prison ministry and with whom he had, in the process, fallen in love.

Feby Chan spoke to journalist Simone Worthing about her pain and heartbreak, and how she manages to go on after a tragedy stole the man she loved.

On how she met Andrew:

After spending time in Singapore, I returned to Indonesia at the end of 2011. My best friend Linda and I prayed for three days and God spoke to us about Bali and prison ministry.

I went to Bali and started a prison ministry there. I had no experience and I didn’t want to go to the prisons, but I felt God wanted me to go.

A friend asked me to go and visit a friend of his in prison – Andrew Chan, who wanted to start a prayer room in the prison.

Andrew was already a leader, a pastor, in prison and I started as a partner in this and we encouraged each other. He had his own struggles. He always tried to live according to biblical values in prison, which was not easy. I would just encourage him to stay strong, despite what he saw around him. We supported each other, picked each other up. He gave me insight into things. We were really good friends – best friends.

On Andrew’s faith in the face of execution:

Andrew stayed calm no matter what. It doesn’t mean he wasn’t sad, but he learned from day one to put his faith and trust in Jesus. That is what really affected me then, and still does now. It’s hard to believe that when he knew he was going to be executed he was not scared – just sad.

He wanted to get married. Have kids. Make his parents happy. He was so sad knowing he would not be able to enjoy this. That was the saddest thing when it came to our last moment before the execution. He was just so sad to leave me and was begging God for the chance to have a family with me. But he trusted God and knew He was his only hope.

On the moments before he was killed:

When it was announced that 72 hours remained until execution, I chose to trust God, knowing only God could save Andrew. I never thought that he would be executed. Only on the last day, when I had to say goodbye, did I start to think about what would happen if he really were executed.

That moment, when I allowed my heart and mind to cross that path, that was hard, because it affected my



would never leave me. My heart opened and I could see the big picture again. Slowly, and even though I will never fully understand, I am learning to trust in God’s perfect plan for my life, just like Andrew did.

On learning to forgive:

I know that forgiveness is not about feelings, it’s about decisions. Like Martin Luther King Jr. said, “hate is too great a burden to bear”. And that’s why I choose forgiveness.

That is also one of Andrew’s legacies. He spent 10 years in prison, facing people who lied and betrayed him every single day. Andrew decided not to be bitter, but to forgive. And that’s why he had a full and complete life in the prison hell. And so I choose the same thing. It’s the only way I can have a full and joyful life.

On continuing to love life through the pain and headache:

The beauty of life is to see God unwrap things – it’s so beautiful when all the pieces

of the puzzle come together. I’m waiting for this. It’s the only thing keeping me alive. God always has a purpose and a plan, and I am enjoying seeing that come together.

Used with permission. This article first appeared in Pipeline and Wacry.

PHOTO:
By Lena
Pobjje.

faith. I couldn’t understand what God wanted from me. It was like a bomb to my life and I was shaken to the core of the foundations of my faith.

I couldn’t accept the word of God for some time. I only knew that God

Virtual reality can ease the pain

ACCORDING to a recent news report from *The Atlantic*: “The idea of using VR to reduce the distress of medical procedures was pioneered at the University of Seattle, Washington, where cognitive psychologist Hunter Hoffman and colleagues have developed a VR game called *SnowWorld*, to help patients endure wound care for severe burns.

“The researchers hoped that the illusion of being physically immersed in a three-dimensional computer-generated scene would move patients’ attention away from their real-world pain. It worked: Hoffman’s team has

since shown in trials that *SnowWorld* reduces patients’ pain during wound-care sessions by up to 50 percent, as well as reducing pain-related brain activity.

“VR is now being studied by teams around the world to relieve pain in medical situations such as wound care and dentistry, as well as in chronic conditions such as phantom-limb pain.”

Isn’t it interesting how being immersed in a different world has the ability to alleviate pain? The Bible offers us the same escape.

As we read it we are reminded of another reality where evil, pain and headache will not exist and there will

be no more suffering or tears. A place where goodness and justice prevail and where God reigns without opposition. Where the lion lies down with the lamb and the sword is turned into a ploughshare. Where there is no sin or desire to sin. A place where death and sickness no longer exist.

That reality is not virtual, it is future and eternal, promised to those who give themselves over to God in this life.

Then with our eyes fixed on the forever promises of God, we can endure whatever life throws at us with

far less pain than if we believed this world was all that existed. As

the Apostle Paul says in the Bible: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).”

In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 he elaborates: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

What are your eyes fixed on? •

How safe is your soul?

HERE’S a quick test to see how safety-conscious you really are...

Do you buckle your seatbelt up every time you get into your car?

Do you check the use-by date on meat and other food products before you consume them?

Do you hire a qualified electrician when you need to change a light fitting rather than attempt it yourself?

Are you cautious not to dive into water before testing how deep it is?

Do you look both ways before crossing the road?

These are simple questions among dozens of others that could be asked to confirm how safety-conscious you are. While some might be seen as a bit reckless in a few areas, I am sure we can all agree that to some extent we value our safety and follow the set-out rules, regulations and guidelines of governing bodies that will ensure we do not endanger ourselves and others.

While safety is in the back of our minds as we live daily, many have never even considered the safety of their souls.

Even if we live by the rules and “bubble-wrap” ourselves to the world around us, one thing is inevitable no matter how safely you try to live: death. And what then?



Many believe nothing awaits them after they are buried six feet under and others hold to the vague hope that they will end up

in heaven or some other good place. Despite this, many have never thoughtfully considered their death at all. And we all know that it can be sudden. Here one day and gone the next.

Jesus put it plainly when He said, “If anyone wants to keep his own life safe, he will lose it. If anyone gives up his life because of Me and because of the Good News, he will save it. For what does a man have if he gains all the world and loses his own soul? What can a man give to buy back his soul? Whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words among the sinful people of this day, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in the shining-greatness of His Father and His holy angels (see Mark 8:35-38).”

Basically, Jesus spells out that our safety on this earth is worth nothing compared to that of our soul. If our soul is eternal, life on this earth is less than a drop in the ocean.

Although we should be concerned over our safety now, we should be more concerned about the safety of our eternal souls.

Even if you are doubtful of the existence of God, heaven and hell and an eternal soul, famous philosopher, mathematician and physicist Blaise Pascal argued that it is in one’s own best interest to behave as if God exists, since the possibility of eternal punishment in hell outweighs any advantage in believing otherwise.

This is not advocating a “blind faith” but is an encouragement to search for the truth, to examine all angles, to keep an open mind to God and to not let it rest until you have found answers.

In the Bible God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah saying: “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart (See Jeremiah 29:13).”

If today is unknowingly your last day on earth wouldn’t you like to know for sure your soul is safe for eternity? Jesus Christ is the only one who can offer you certainty of salvation. Read the Bible’s Gospel books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to see what He has to say about your soul’s safety. •



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DUTY DISCOVERS DESIGN

Mechanical Engineer Chad Duty has no problem in ascribing all the brilliance of nature's design to a Creator God. But it wasn't always that way.

BY GARY BATES

Growing up in rural Virginia, USA, Chad Duty was not overtly confronted by evolutionary teaching. But during his higher education at university it infected several subjects. And looking back, he realizes how subtle the indoctrination was.

"It's everywhere. The idea of slow gradual processes—fish to man, etc. Go to a natural history museum—the icons of evolution are endemic. It's easy to believe this stuff as science when you are never exposed to any alternative views," Chad admits.

Thus, Chad allowed room for the idea that the God he made a commitment to as a young man may have used evolution to create mankind (theistic evolution).

Chad did not grow up in a strong Christian home, however, he recalls that his parents read him Bible stories. This helped lay a foundation, and when Chad became a Boy Scout he found that one of their precepts was reverence to God.

"I noticed I wasn't reverent and it troubled me," Chad said. So, he accepted an invitation from a friend to attend Vacation Bible School (VBS), which is an entrenched summer tradition in the conservative 'South' of the US. Unlike the Bible stories he'd heard at home, here Scripture was laid out in the context of the big picture of the Gospel. The concepts of sin, repentance and salvation hit home, hard.

A few years later, at that same friend's church, Chad accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and at age 18, he was baptized in water as an outward sign of his inward commitment to God.

Later, the idea of theistic evolution created an internal conflict for Chad. He believed that God was real and his faith was correct, but he also believed that evolution was fact.

"Looking back, I was never really sure how both worlds fit together. So, I kind of kept them separate. I just hoped and believed that our



has "blown minds".

The problem that Christians are often not able to defend what they believe is not lost on the Dutys, and it is a reason why they decided to homeschool their children. Chad remarked, "My wife was very career-driven. You don't work for a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering without being that way. However, Angel has laid that aside to train our children" (Proverbs 22:6).

knowledge was perhaps limited and that one day all would be revealed," he shares.

And, for Chad, it was. **A LITTLE BIT OF INFORMATION CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE**

Creation Ministries International played a large part in Chad's conversion to biblical creation. He attended a men's conference at a large church in Atlanta where this author had been given an opportunity to make a short presentation.

Chad recalls the moment. "It was when I saw an illustration of Adam and Eve on a pile of bones that supposedly represented millions of years of death and suffering. The point was made, 'How could God have called this all good?' I could immediately see the problem."

Sometime later he spoke to a CMI representative manning a booth at a homeschooling conference. "I still had a lingering issue with the length



Chad and Angel Duty with Brandon (10), Alaina (8), Carina (3), and Caleb (1).

of the days in Genesis and suggested that it was perhaps figurative. The representative showed me the scriptural disharmony with that theory, and the problems it causes for the rest of Scripture.* They encouraged me to take the Bible at face value. As I gradually learned to see the facts through a biblical lens, the scales started falling away."

Chad now fully believes the account of Creation in the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

He adds, "Of course, one hears the creation story in children's Sunday School, but we are rarely taught why it is important to the Gospel." So Chad and his wife Angel have become more active in helping others make this connection. They started teaching adult Sunday School for young married couples in their church. He said that the questions about creation come thick and fast, and the information they have shared

CHAD DUTY obtained his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Tech (US) in 2001. He is currently employed at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in Tennessee in the Manufacturing Demonstration Facility, where he helps develop technology for 3D printers.

GARY BATES is CEO of Creation Ministries International (US) based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Stanford scientist: Humans are getting less intelligent

MUTATION plus selection is how we are supposed to have evolved, but new research shows that mutations are making humans less intelligent and less able to relate emotionally, according to Stanford University's Gerald Crabtree.

In a recently published paper, he estimates that in the past 3,000 years, i.e. about 120 generations, every person has sustained two or more mutations harmful to intellect or emotional functioning. (See *Human*



gene mutations "arose in the last 200 generations").

But not to worry: he suggests that in the future "we may be able to magically correct any mutation that has occurred in all cells of any organism at any developmental stage. Thus, the brutish process of natural selection will be unnecessary."

'Magic' may be the appropriate word to describe a process which can stop or even reverse the inexorable degradation of the entire genome (not just the genes related to brain function).

In reality, the entropy of the genome of all multi-celled organisms fits far better with a world that was created perfect then fell, than with a world that is getting 'better and better' through evolution.

(See *Plant geneticist: 'Darwinian evolution is impossible', Time—no friend of evolution, and New DNA repair enzyme discovered.*)

• Study suggests humans are slowly but surely losing intellectual and emotional abilities, medicalxpress.com, 12 November 2012.

Beliefs about where we come from are the foundation for everything



The CMI graphic that made such an impression on Chad Duty.

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Freed from fear of men

James Parker believes he became a social activist out of necessity after coming out, the only openly gay man in his London university course.

"I actively preached against anyone who dared to suggest that being gay was a choice, or wrong," James says.

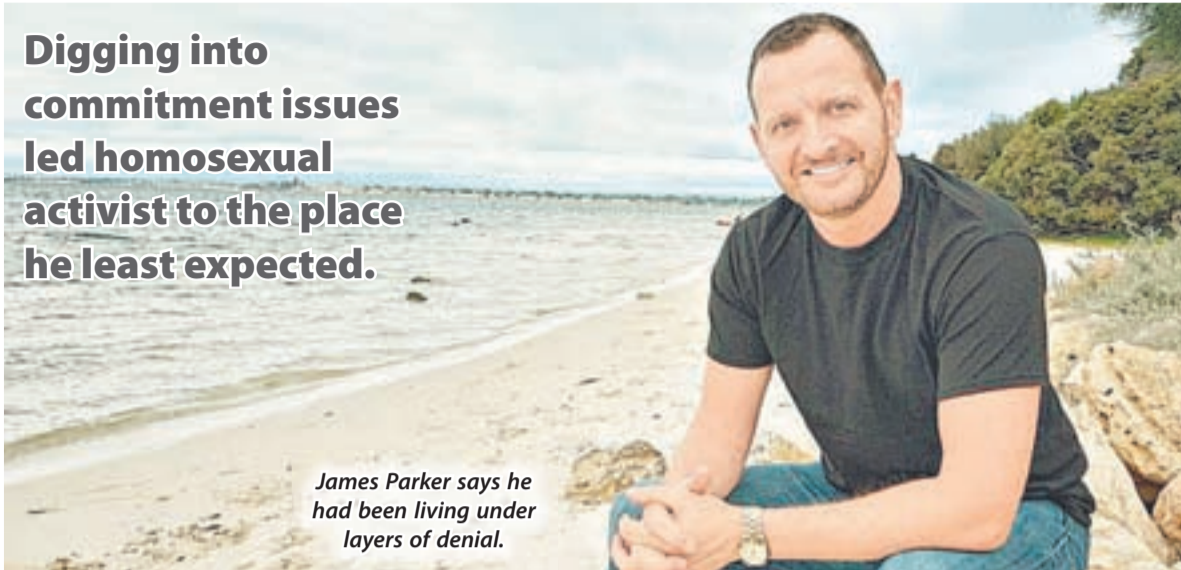
He attended a gay-affirming Christian group because he was from a church-going family and says he "had always felt a sense of the divine in my life".

He withdrew from a promiscuous lifestyle, settled down with a long-term boyfriend and planned to tie the knot in a Dutch gay church.

But these plans unravelled when, he says, "a powerful sense of God's presence" in this gay-affirming group encouraged him to "enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ".

"As I began to slowly develop a spiritual life [with God], within months I realised I had a deep-rooted

Digging into commitment issues led homosexual activist to the place he least expected.



James Parker says he had been living under layers of denial.

fear of rejection and had used others for my own pleasure."

He clearly saw that he "had been living under layers of denial [about] my real intrinsic fear of normal heterosexual men."

James took a friend's advice to seek professional therapy and this exposed a myriad of childhood events, including three years of consistent abuse James believes robbed him of "innocence, healthy sexual development and the dignity and sacredness of my body".

James decided to end the long-term relationship and investigate in therapy "where I had built walls within myself against significant others in my life".

He believes the abuse and feelings of rejection caused him to vow as a child to never deeply trust men again.

"Only later did I see that my father and older brothers had reached out to

me, but I had distanced myself until they eventually gave up. No wonder men and all things masculine had become a mystery to me."

He believes changes in testosterone during puberty combined with his inability to enter the masculine world to produce a misplaced erotic desire towards men.

"In failing to take my place among men, I threw myself wholeheartedly into everything feminine. As I peeled back the layers I came to see that I despised women because I was not born to be one of them, lacking the natural ability to woo and engage every aspect of a heterosexual man."

James then realised, "I needed to ask God to forgive me for my past mistakes and then receive His forgiveness."

"I found resolution to past hurts, mostly through extending forgiveness [to others] and receiving forgive-

ness [from God], but also through periods of intense grieving related to my lost childhood."

Miraculous changes in his life then became clear to James and others.

"My fears and anxiety levels steadily decreased. My sense of acceptance among both men and women began to rise. A [new] strong sense of dignity and self-respect began to take hold of me."

"As my heart joined the world of heterosexual men they ceased to be a mystery to me and the erotic attraction slowly dwindled away."

The more his friendships became inclusive of other men, the more he began to desire an exclusive friendship that included "mystery".

James says he discovered women were truly "wholly different and mysterious" to him and, he adds with a smile, "I began dating women and am now a married man and a father."

The key to his journey, says James, included a loving, non-judgemental Christian community and his self-elected therapy.

"I was supported by men and women who saw me as an individual and their purpose was always solely to love me. They believed in the 'true man' buried within the core of my person."

"I chose the path of therapy and received what I had unconsciously pushed away as a child, namely the gender affirmation necessary to form a boy in his basic male identity and to assist him in maturing into responsible adulthood."

James admits, "At times I swing from being deeply secure in my male identity to being tempted to compare myself to other men."

But he says he now reacts to these doubts very differently than before.

"I rarely stay long in this place of questioning and I am now practised in processing my thoughts and reciting what I am experiencing and feeling."

There is new freedom, James says, in being released from his past fear of both genders and led towards real love.

"I have exchanged my homophobia and heterophobia for a healthy, life-giving passion for all men and for women."

"I experience a connection of heart and soul with other men without the erotic connected to it, which is much better than I could have imagined when I was a practising gay man. I also get the added bonus of enjoying the mystery of woman as I now believe it was created to be." •

Jesus said: 'I am the Way'

BY ANDREW HALLOWAY

HAVE you ever heard someone say, 'I lost my way in life'? It is usually when they have made a mistake or done something they regret, which has had serious consequences.

But a more common problem is simply lack of direction. Some people are certain of their aims in life, but most of us simply 'muddle through', doing the best we can. Others are confused, simply not knowing which way to turn.

I am sure it was little different in Jesus' time, so to hear someone stand up and confidently say 'I am the Way'* must have been pretty shocking. Not just, 'I know the way', but 'I am the Way itself'.

What did Jesus mean? It is quite simple. He was saying that He was the way to God. In His very next sentence, He said: "No one comes to the Father [God] except through Me."

Now that's quite a claim. Today, it is controversial – as it clearly means that Jesus is the only way to God. And it was no different in Jesus' time – most of the Jews who heard him say this could not get their heads around it either.

But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Millions of Christians today and down through 2,000 years have found by experience that Jesus' claim is true. When they have put their trust in Jesus as the Way, they have found God. They have come to know Him for themselves – a personal relationship where they have felt God's presence, His love and His guidance.

If you don't know what life is all about, or worry that your life is going nowhere, Jesus is the Way. His path is not always smooth – but it is the right path, and it leads to everlasting life with our Creator. •

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

Thirst for attention quenched

Victoria knew something was wrong when her obsession with a boy caused her to contemplate suicide

The line between harmless crush and unhealthy infatuation can be thin.

Victoria Zambia vividly remembers a night when, watching television with her parents, she saw an advertisement for a deodorant a boy she liked sometimes wore.

She remembers running to her room and crying all night about how deeply she "loved" him and how he did not care.

She says on more than one occasion she refused to eat and barely slept thinking about him.

At this point you could say Victoria had crossed the line from mere desire to intense passion and obsession.

After three years of longing after this particular boy she did eventually go out with him and had her first kiss at age 14.

When he sought to keep their relationship a secret, she agreed, because at least she finally "had" him.

But he stopped talking to her sweetly and eventually the relationship "fizzled out". Then he started dating her best friend instead.

"I remember in my diary comparing the pain to being stabbed in the throat with a spoon," Victoria says.

"It wasn't until I started contemplating suicide, that I realised this wasn't a normal crush and something was genuinely wrong with me."

In her quest to get over him she says nothing worked, neither willpower nor self-help books nor her mother's council.

Eventually Victoria realised she needed to turn to God for his supernatural help, hoping He could

either "make him fall in love with me, or help me forget the whole thing".

Victoria's parents were Christians but she says she only thought about God because she had learned He would decide her fate, whether she went to heaven or hell.

"He was just another someone I needed to have happiness in my life," she says.

But she was very conscious of her own human imperfection, which is why the promise of God's grace (undeserved love) appealed to her.

"From experience I knew that if being good was what I needed to do to get into heaven, I wasn't getting into heaven because I just wasn't good," she says.

"I needed the judge (God) to have mercy on me, and I needed someone to take my punishment in my place."

"The explanation of grace and what Jesus did, [dying for me] on the cross, prompted me to live for a King who loved me enough to sacrifice His own Son for me instead of living for a boy who only seemed to notice me if I dressed provocatively or teased past a certain hour of night."

Victoria says she prayed and begged God for forgiveness for turning her back on Him, and praised and thanked Him for Jesus' sacrifice that would allow her into Heaven even though she had "messed up so much".

"I still get sucked in from time to time," she confesses. "But I no longer depend on the approval of men for my sense of self-worth. My identity is firmly rooted in Christ choosing to die for me."



Victoria Zambia is precious to God

She says she has less hate and far more compassion in her heart, and her unhealthy sentiments towards men have been healed.

"[God] has helped me see me, men, and Him for who we are," she says.

"I now know I am a girl who Christ sees as precious and whom He has called His own. I know nothing in the world, not any amount of male approval or acceptance, will satisfy, but real and final satisfaction is in Christ."

"I am no longer overly caught up in male attention, and I can be realistic in my expectations of men knowing some time or another they will let me down and hurt me, not deliberately but because of their sinful condition."

"There is freedom, acceptance, genuine affection and love in Christ," Victoria concludes.

"He is tormented by your pain and your desperate search for love and it grieves Him that your heart is being ripped apart. He is continuing to desperately and fiercely love you."

"He is willing to wait for you. Do yourself a favour – what have you got to lose?" •

Building Better Marriages

THE BRIDGE OF FORGIVENESS

BY ROB FURLONG

MAY IS THE MONTH in which we honour our Mums, but I also like to think it is a good opportunity for us to show our appreciation for women in general. (And not just once a year – showing respect and care for women is something that should be a natural part of our lifestyle, regardless of our age or gender!)

And one of the women I admire the most is a lady whose story I first read about over 40 years ago – the late Corrie ten Boom.

Corrie and her family gave shelter to Jews in their home in Haarlem, Netherlands during WW2.

When their activities were discovered, Corrie and her sister, Betsie, were arrested and subsequently imprisoned in Nazi

Concentration camps. Betsie died in the camp but Corrie was miraculously released and after the war she went on to speak to countless people around the world about the love, forgiveness and grace of God.

She also wrote about her own very personal encounter with forgiveness: "It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanching face.

"He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. 'How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein,' he said. 'To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!'

"His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I who had preached so often to people ...of the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

"Even as the angry, vengeful



thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? 'Lord Jesus,' I prayed, 'forgive me and help me to forgive him.'

"I tried to smile. I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. 'Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.'

"As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

"And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing

hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to know that bitterness and resentment destroys relationships and I have seen many times how this has fatally eroded marriages.

Philip Yancey said: "Ungrace causes cracks to fissure open between mother and daughter, father and son, brother and sister, between scientists, and prisoners, and tribes, and races.

Left alone, cracks widen, and for the resulting chasms of ungrace there is only one remedy: the frail rope-bridge of forgiveness."

Faced with her hurtful past and former tormentor that day in Munich, Corrie ten Boom chose to travel the path of forgiveness and both she and the man before her were set free.

How are your relationships today, especially your marriage?

Faced with past hurts and angry words, will you choose to hang on to them or will you choose to forgive?

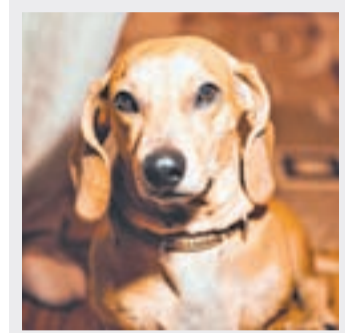
"He who cannot forgive another breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself."

Perhaps it is time for you to take a walk over the bridge of forgiveness...

Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 3)

BY JODY BENNETT

THE favourite thing in my day is sitting on the couch after the dinner dishes have been done and reading a book or watching television with my sausage dog curled up on my lap.



Carrie's presence is a great tonic after the stresses of the day and I find every little stretch or sigh so cute that I constantly want to reach out and cuddle her.

If you are an animal person, then you know that our pets don't have to "do stuff" for us to make us love them, we love them simply because they are part of our family.

Just their very presence and affection for us is enough to warrant all the money and effort we spend on them.

Have you ever thought that God might feel the same way about those who love Him?

In the Bible, the book of Zephaniah 3:17 says "the Lord takes great delight in you, He rejoices over you with singing" and Psalm 147:11 says "the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love".

Delight? Singing? Is that how you picture God? Or do you think of Him more as waiting with a rolled up newspaper to smack you every time you "mess the carpet" or "dig up the lawn"?

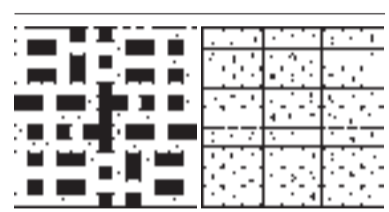
My relationship with Carrie has made me realise again that I don't have to perform for God or always "get it right".

The fact that I return His love for me – even in a sometimes very inadequate and inconsistent way – and out of that love desire to do the things that please Him, is all that He requires.

That is why you might hear some people saying that Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship.

A religion implies that you have to do lots of rituals or jump through lots of hoops to get God's approval, but Christianity teaches that Jesus has jumped through all the hoops for us and all we have to do is accept His love and sacrifice on the cross for us, and bask in God's love.

Go on! Stop chasing your own tail trying to "be good enough", instead curl up on God's lap and hear Him singing over you and delighting in your very existence.



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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

Bible

Some 'starting off' literature

Information on a helpful church

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

I would like to think about this.

Please send me:

More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.

I have a problem (see attached letter)

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

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There's an APP for that ...

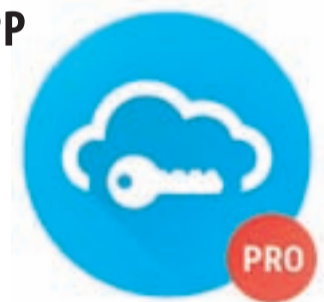
PASSWORD MANAGER APP

HOW do you remember your passwords? Some people write them in an address book, make an Excel spreadsheet on the computer or use the same password for everything.

A far safer and more streamlined way to keep all of your passwords secret yet accessible is to use a password manager app. This also has the advantage of being able to generate unique passwords and remember them all, so that all you have to remember is one strong, long master password to access your vault.

There are many good options out there, some of the best include 1Password (\$3/month for individuals, \$5/month for families), Lastpass (\$12/year for premium access), openource option KeePass (free) and Dashlane (\$42.57/year for premium access). Each have much to recommend them, depending on how much you want to spend and whether you are happy with your "vault" of passwords being stored by their website or not.

However, based on all points of



comparison, Safeincloud is the one we recommend. At only \$7.99 for the app with free download on PC and Mac and no monthly fees, it is great value for money. The interface is clean and intuitive, highly customisable, and the same across all platforms. It allows for password generation and even lets you choose to make them memorable; it tells you when your passwords are too weak and reminds you when your credit cards will expire; you can allow fingerprint unlocking; it has multiple templates to make inputting credit card details etc. easier; it allows you to add images and tags, star favourites, change colours and rearrange in different groups, for example business, personal, shared etc. It also has a search function to easily find things and a recycle bin. All your information is encrypted with 256-bit Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), which is the industry standard; and you can get the app to autofill your info on forms and websites, avoiding hours of annoyance. It does not store your information itself but allows you to share between your devices via Dropbox or Google Drive etc., effectively giving you two-step authentication.

In choosing a password manager app remember, it is a balancing act between security and convenience. The most secure options will not be as convenient, and vice versa. But in the end the tech experts agree that any app option is better than a paper alternative.

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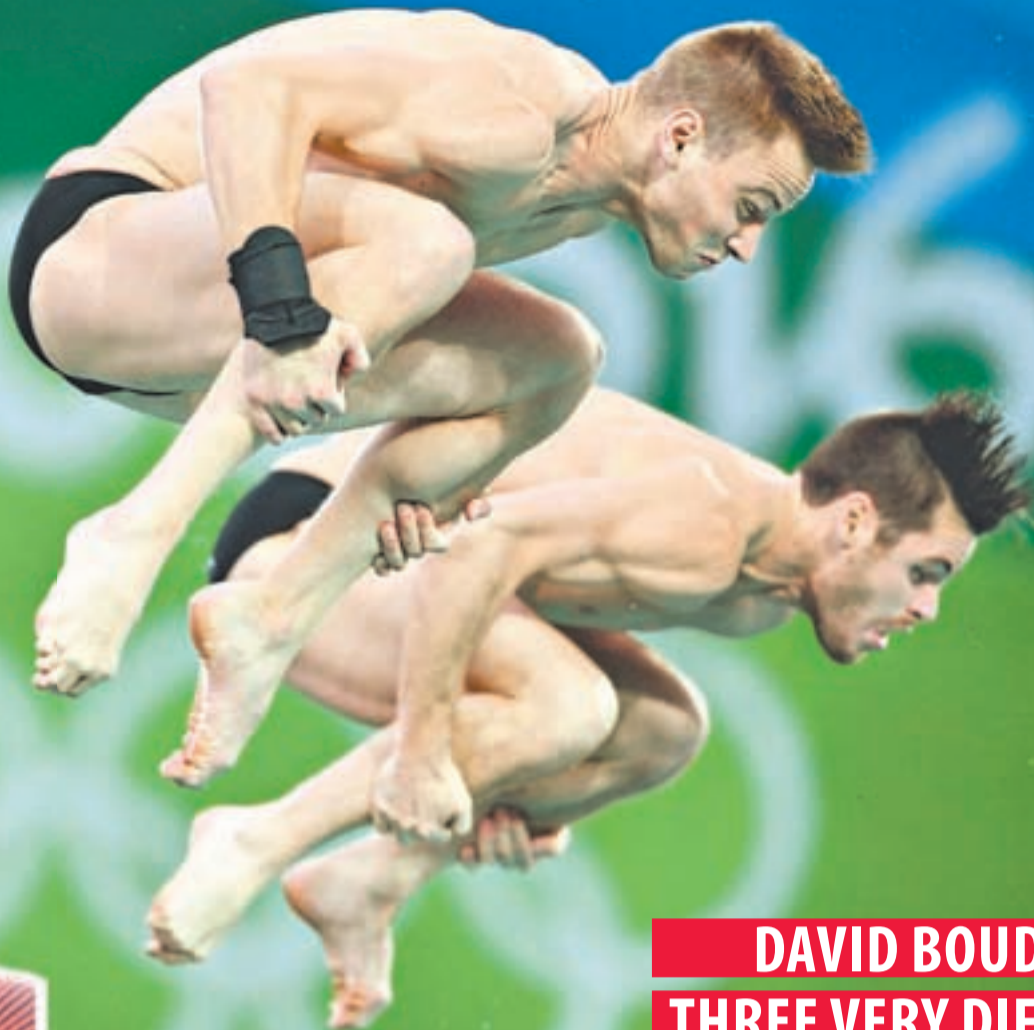
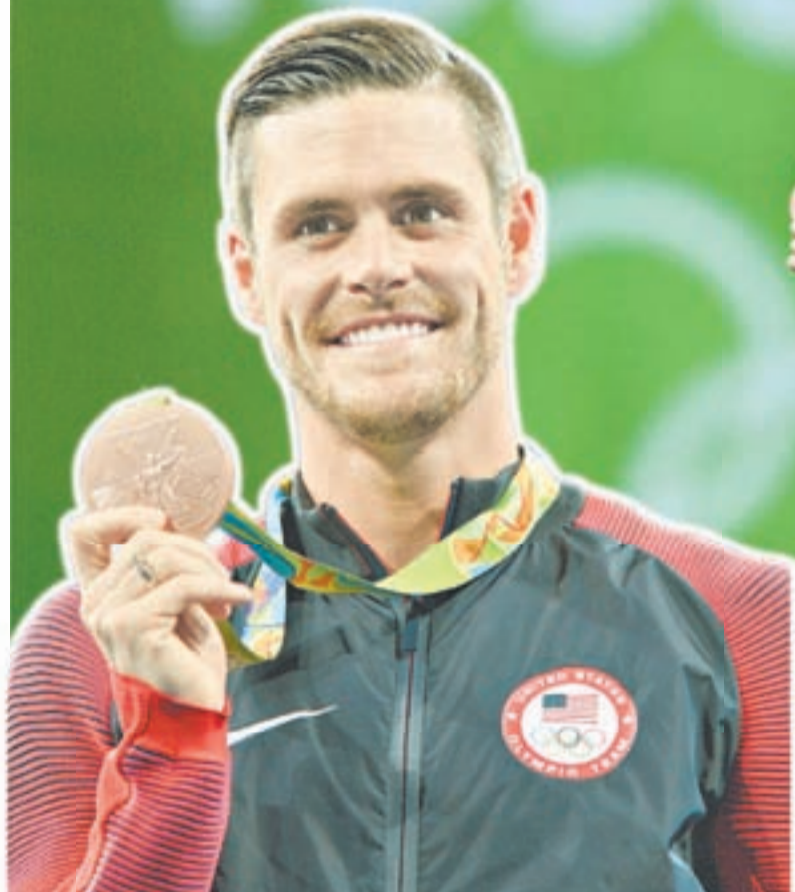
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**DAVID BOUDIA'S
THREE VERY DIFFERENT
OLYMPIC EXPERIENCES**

ABOVE: RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AUGUST 8, 2016. Silver medallists David Boudia and Steele Johnson of the United States compete in the Men's Diving Synchronised 10m Platform Final. (Photo Laurence Griffiths/Getty Images)

LEFT: RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AUGUST 20, 2016. Men's 10m Platform Diving Bronze medallist David Boudia (USA) during the podium ceremony. (Photo: Martin Bureau/AFP/Getty Images)

GREATER THAN GOLD

Eight years can make a whole lot of difference.

In 2008 U.S. platform diver David Boudia went to the Olympics in Beijing with high hopes that he would achieve all his dreams of wealth and success but left with only depression after finishing 10th.

"For much of my life, I bowed at the feet of gods fashioned of gold, silver and bronze," David admits on his website. "I bought into the American dream of health, wealth and success as a kid and I thought that was all I wanted. I thought the Olympics in Beijing in 2008 would deliver this to me.

"But the Olympics didn't supply me with any joy. They didn't provide the happiness that I thought they were going to bring. [Not medalling] was like a punch in the gut. My world was completely shaken."

In his book *Greater than Gold: From Olympic Heartbreak to Ultimate Redemption* David reveals what made all the difference in his life and took him from failure and suicidal thoughts, to the success and satisfaction he enjoys

today – his faith.

"I met Jesus in college in 2009 when I was severely depressed and it changed my perspective dramatically, and more and more as I dove into God's Word (the Bible)," he says.

[Hearing the truth] was like plugs popping out of my ears

His diving coach, Adam Soldati, and Adam's wife were instrumental in helping David to understand what being a Christian meant.

"I was drinking heavily by my sophomore year and one Saturday in the fall it all came to a breaking point. I was so hungover that I couldn't even get out of bed to go to a football game. My life was in chaos," he admits.

David texted his coach, Adam, who invited him around. Instead of giving David a quick answer that would fix what was happening in his life, Adam gave him Jesus instead.

"Adam and his wife began sharing the gospel with me – the good news that though I was a sinner, and though my personal problems were a direct result of my rebellion against a holy God to whom I was accountable, the Lord nevertheless loved me

and had done everything necessary to secure my salvation. God himself came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ to live a sinless life and die a gruesome death on the cross – taking my sin upon himself and bearing God's wrath against it for me. Christ then rose from the dead, conquering sin and hell and Satan forever. They told me what the purpose of the cross was and what Christianity was all about.

"As I sat in their rocking chair listening to them talk, it was like plugs popping out of my ears.

"I don't think I was converted that night. I don't think I fully understood what my sin was. I still don't, for that matter. But from the time they talked to me that Saturday, I was broken over my sin. I felt filthy, and ultimately cried out to God for his forgiveness."

Initially, David's conversion had a detrimental effect on his diving. His sport seemed so insignificant and unimportant compared to the weighty, eternal matters he was investigating. But after a while he realized that God had given him his athletic ability and platform for a specific reason – and that was to bring God glory.

"Because of the work that Christ had done in my heart, my diving was transformed. I continued to develop my skills, and in 2012 I once again made the Olympic team. This time,

however, things were different. I didn't go to the London Olympics desperately seeking to win a gold medal. I went to London desperately seeking to honour the Lord, to minister to my teammates and fellow competitors, and to enjoy the experience for what it was."

And strangely enough, with that as his new focus, God saw fit to give David the one thing he had dreamt of since he was seven – an Olympic gold medal. He won in the men's 10m platform dive, the first American to win the event in 24 years.

And last year in Rio, where he won two more medals, four years on from his London success, David's life was different again after having married,

had a daughter, Dakoda, and written his book about how faith is infinitely more satisfying than worldly success and the American dream.

What a lot of difference a few years can make!

No one knows where they will be eight years from now or how God can turn their lives around, that is why the Bible encourages us to call on God while it is "today" as only He can give us "a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair". (Isaiah 61:3)

Greater than Gold: From Olympic Heartbreak to Ultimate Redemption by David Boudia is available from Amazon

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