

## HOMELESS ADDICT'S NEW HOPE

Now a happy and confident mum of (nearly) nine, Catarina Threadgold came from a dark and difficult childhood.

As a four year old girl I had experienced many struggles. My father and mother had separated as my biological father was a heroin addict, and there many people around me from a young age who were emotionally abusive and physically aggressive toward me. I had already been mishandled by a man as a three year old. I was a scared young girl, and felt very alone.

At this point in my life, my mother, having become a Christian as a teenager in Perth in the 70's, told me about Jesus. She told me He was knocking on the door of my heart and that if I asked Him to come in He would be my friend forever and never leave me. That night in my

room as I asked Jesus to come into my heart and forever be my friend, my dark lonely bedroom seemed to fill up with light. I felt so much peace and love, and I could see in my mind a face that was smiling at me, with no hate or anger, but just pure love. I heard a soft voice speaking to me about how loved I was and that there was a plan for my life. This voice and love never left me.

Nothing changed my faith in Jesus. In my childhood there was much abuse, and I was surrounded by broken people doing broken things, like drinking, brawling, drugs, sexual immorality and more. I knew these were things that did not please God but sadly at 14 years of

age I too became embroiled with this lifestyle and I found my life spinning out of control on every level.

By 15 I had a drug, cigarette and alcohol addiction, and I had done a short stint in foster care after a beating by a family member. At 16 I had nearly been strangled to death by another family member and so I fled to the streets where I thought I would find safety. I was wrong.

Many terrible things happened in those days of homelessness, but Jesus was still there, speaking to me at nights when I would lie and listen into the quietness for the voice I always knew would speak to me, no matter how deep into the gutter I fell.

At 17 I had become a regular user and dealer of heavy drugs and I had a long string of criminal charges. My life was a mess but God still protected me, stopping me from getting into a car with a now convicted serial



Catarina Threadgold

killer and sending angels to protect me from a man who had taken me out into the bush with a gun.

At such a young age I was already tired and felt completely hopeless. I thought there was no other option than to take my own life. I was hospi-

talised under police watch and then transferred to the city for psychiatric assessment. Funnily enough, the psychiatrist at the hospital was a Christian who had only two weeks left before retirement, so he gave me a fiery blast of what it means to be a Christian and told me "Don't give up, the Devil will try to kill you but God has a plan for your life."

At this point I began to pray for God to either "Kill me or save me". I knew I couldn't be the way I was but I had no power to get myself out of the ditch I was in. I truly thought He'd have no use for 'a wretch like me' and expected that He would strike me dead before He saved me. But I was wrong.

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## 'PARAMEDIC' TO THE WORLD

On 21 February 2018 world famous evangelist and preacher William Franklin (Billy) Graham died at the age of 99.

In over 75 years of ministry, Billy had preached to nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries – more than any other evangelist in the history of Christendom.

And yet, as a 15-year-old in May 1934, the farm boy from North Carolina wanted nothing to do with the "fanatics" holding a crusade on his father's dairy farm.

One of the men in attendance, however, a salesman named Vernon Patterson, was praying that God would raise up someone from Charlotte to preach the Gospel [good news about Jesus] to the ends of the earth.

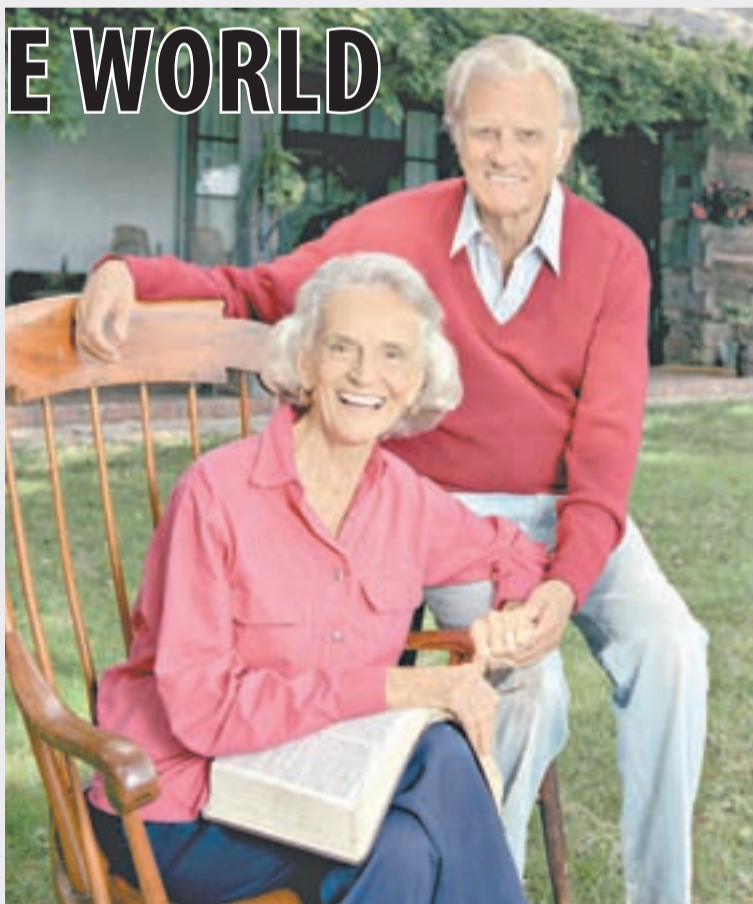
Billy was not unfamiliar with Christianity. He had been previously baptized and confirmed.

He went to church each week, his family had Bible reading and prayer together, and he was vice president of the youth group at his church. But his real interests lay elsewhere. He hoped one day to play professional baseball and his hero was Babe Ruth.

Although not initially interested, on hearing how big the tent meetings were and what a "fighter" preacher Dr Mordecai Ham was, Billy attended one night.

He didn't like being told that he was lost and going to hell though, so he got out as soon as he could and said, "I am through". All that night and all the next day Billy was miserable, he writes in his autobiography *Just as I am*, and admits,

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Ruth and Billy Graham at home in Montreat, North Carolina in 1996. PHOTO: Courtesy Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.





# 'Paramedic' to the world

From page 1

"I couldn't get there soon enough the next night!"

He attended night after night, dutifully taking notes as Ham preached—and becoming increasingly convicted that he was a sinner who did not know Jesus Christ. He began to realize that neither his baptism and confirmation nor his church attendance would save him.

"Our family Bible reading, praying, psalm-singing and church-going—all these had left me restless and resentful," writes Billy. "In a word, I was spiritually dead."

During each service, Ham invited people to come forward and receive Christ. On November 1, six days before his 16th birthday, Billy responded to that invitation, repenting of (expressing a genuine sorrow for) his sins.

Although he felt no great emotion, he knew he was a new person. His mother recalled later that when she arrived home from the meeting that night, Billy threw his arms around her and said, "Mother, I'm a changed boy!"

Another famous preacher, Dwight L. Moody, is credited with saying: "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him", but in Billy Graham the world certainly got a glimpse of the impact one God-fearing individual can make.

A. Larry Ross, who served as Billy's personal media spokesperson for more than three decades, wrote

recently, in an Assist News article that he could sum up the man in four words: humility, integrity, authenticity and love.

"Each one of which I have observed consistently in my travels with him," Larry writes.

Wow! What an incredible testimony to God's keeping power over a long life in the public eye.

Larry goes on to give examples of where he has witnessed these attributes in Billy.

## HUMILITY

After giving an autograph in July 1999 Billy turned to Larry and said genuinely, "I have never understood why in the world anyone would want my autograph."

Larry at first thought he was joking but then realised "Billy's puzzled sincerity was reflective of his self-identification as 'a country boy called to preach', who could not fathom why the Lord chose him to be blessed with such spiritual responsibility and global opportunity."

## INTEGRITY

There are many examples of Billy's personal, spiritual and financial integrity.

One example goes something like this: In 1949 or 1950, after one of his famous evangelistic meetings, Billy returned to his hotel room to find a naked woman lying on his bed, ready to seduce him in an attempt to destroy his ministry. Billy, cautious and humble as usual, fled the hotel room and immediately implemented a rule: never to travel (including by car), eat or meet alone with a woman



Billy and Ruth Graham celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in 1993 with their five children. Left to right: Virginia "Gigi" Graham, Anne Graham Lotz, Ruth (daughter), Ruth (wife), Billy, Franklin and Ned.

PHOTO: Courtesy Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

other than his wife, Ruth.

Billy's integrity lifted him through the dark days of the late 1980s, when sex scandals befell other TV preachers, and the safe-guard that bears his name has since been adopted by many pastors and executives.

Financially, Billy's integrity is demonstrated in the fact that, instead of taking a share of the offerings at his crusades, he drew a modest salary from his ministry, which was governed by an independent board, instead of by friends and relatives.

## AUTHENTICITY

In August 2005 Larry went to visit Billy, now in his eighties, worried that Billy, although he still had his wife of 61-years, Ruth, to love and had work to do on his new book, might be lacking in another essential for happiness – something to anticipate. Just two months before, Billy had retired from crusade preaching with his last event in New York City.

"While sitting together on his back porch I asked Mr. Graham how he felt. He replied, 'I have never been more at peace in my life. My wife Ruth has been there for me as I travelled the world. But with her recent medical needs, it is now time

for me to take care of her. God has enabled me to do that, and I am looking forward to spending more time together.' Ruth passed away in 2007."

Even recently, despite the ravages of age and Parkinson's Disease, Larry reports that Billy was still filled with passion and purpose to deliver yet one more sermon about the need for renewal in the Church.

Billy told Larry that when he got to heaven he was going to lay any awards and rewards received in this life at the feet of Jesus.

## LOVE

In March 1998, at a TIME gala dinner, organizers were in crisis mode because nobody would sit next President Bill Clinton, in the wake of his recent impeachment by the House of Representatives. Minutes before the event was scheduled to begin, no celebrity in attendance would accept that seat.

When Billy Graham was approached about the situation, he declared, "I'll sit next to the President. He's my friend!"

"What mattered most to Mr. Graham," Larry recalls, "was to faithfully lift up the name of Jesus with authenticity and integrity to the great

## Quotes from Billy Graham

- "Salvation is an act of God. It is initiated by God, wrought by God, and sustained by God."
- "Don't ever hesitate to take to [God] whatever is on your heart. He already knows it anyway, but He doesn't want you to bear its pain or celebrate its joy alone."
- "Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion - it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ."
- "We cannot ask forgiveness over and over again for our sins, and then return to our sins, expecting God to forgive us. We must turn from our practice of sin as best we know how, and turn to Christ by faith as our Lord and Savior."
- "When God forgives us and purifies us of our sin, He also forgets it. Forgiveness results in God dropping the charges against us."
- "The very practice of reading [the Bible] will have a purifying effect upon your mind and heart. Let nothing take the place of this daily exercise."
- "Heaven is real and hell is real, and eternity is but a breath away."

and the low, the high and the humble. Though he never compromised the Gospel or the dimension of the reality of God's judgment, ... in my experience Mr. Graham always functioned as a 'paramedic,' rather than a 'policeman,' for the Kingdom of God. "Billy Graham represented a balance of grace and truth. He was a man of humility, integrity, authenticity and an agent of God's love, who despite his gifts and ability, the Lord used more for his availability. He had an audience of One, and would consistently 'suit up and show up', leaving the results to the Lord he served, and giving all the glory and honour to God." •

# WHY SO MUCH ANGER?

BY ALAN BAILEY

**PEOPLE** seem to be flying off the handle in all directions today. Have you noticed it? There's road rage that seems to show up almost every day. People are often irritated by small things, such as being beaten to a parking spot or being upset by a queue jumper. In the home, short fuses cause untold damage with words and even fists flying to make a point. Alas, weapons are used for vengeance and murders are committed out of anger. Why have we become an angry society?

## Living on the merry-go-round

There are many uptight people today who feel a compulsion to try to pack more into their lives than will reasonably fit. They are harassed by schedules, by children, by spouses, while they try to work to earn some money, to play sport for recreation, socialise, and yet have some time to themselves. Thus they are always in a hurry, always cursing delays, angry when their plans are upset. While some of their schedule is for the sake of others, they nevertheless are flat out trying to gratify inner urges that are basically selfish. Mix this kind of person with others who live the same way and the sparks will fly sooner or later.

Modern living seems to demand of people that they have everything that is going. If it's there and available, I should have it, is their way of thinking. Smart things around the home, plenty of food and drink, the best of

entertainment. These become mandatory.

One of the complications of this life-style is fatigue. So many people are just plain tired and unable to cope with contingencies. A bit of quiet, a few nights of long, sound sleep and time to think, can make all the difference.

## Rundown relationships

Why do people fight – especially when they are meant to love each other? Somehow, closeness and communion have been lost and distance and lack of understanding have taken their place. The causes of this situation can be many and varied but once the distance has come between people, small problems can escalate into large ones.

## What is the great need?

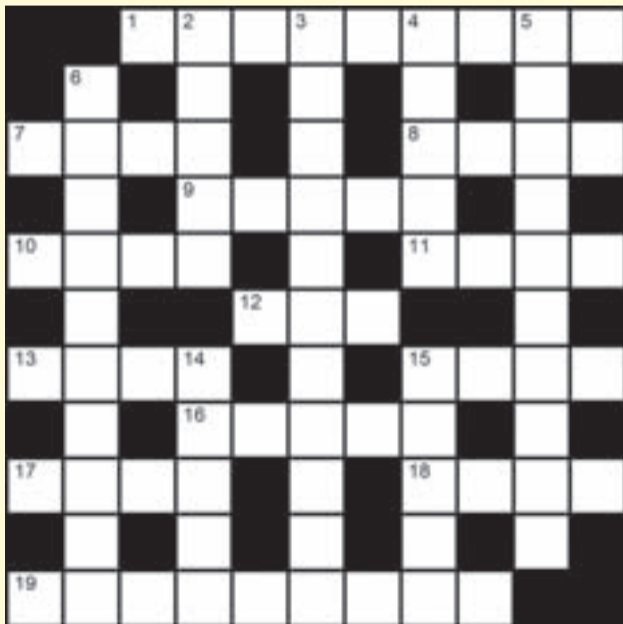
To put it bluntly, people are at war with each other because they don't have peace with God. He provides the anchorage they need in an uncertain world. He gives a peace that remains when upsets come our way. He shows us by His own love and kindness and forgiveness, how we should treat other people.

Jesus is the perfect example. Yes, He was angry at prejudice, injustice and evil, but was never ruffled into selfish anger at any time. Even when He was subjected to torment and terrible suffering, He was patient, praying for His enemies.

We can't even approach that standard without a personal relationship with Him. Such a relationship is not beyond our reach. It is constantly on offer. •

## Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Never-ending story (like on TV) (4,5)
  - 7 Trailing the pack
  - 8 Tibia
  - 9 Dead right
  - 10 Short rail line
  - 11 Chimney clogger
  - 12 Web browser entry
  - 13 Canyon effect
  - 15 Stalk in a swamp
  - 16 Geneva's river
  - 17 Multicolored
  - 18 2004 Brad Pitt film
  - 19 Trial venue



- DOWN**
- 2 'Tarka' was one
  - 3 Soldier: he jumps
  - 4 Bothersome bugs
  - 5 Charging horned animal
  - 6 Frothy coffee
  - 14 Court command
  - 15 So out it's in

SOLUTION PAGE 8

## Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

6 3 8  
4 2 9  
7 5 1

SOLUTION PAGE 8

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



nudge  
WITH KARL FAASE

## Sacred cathedrals

**MANY** people work on the assumption that faith is dead and secularism reigns in western countries. But the evidence that people who don't attend a church are purely secular in their thinking is off the mark.



A British group did research on people's response to visiting cathedrals. When they asked those who don't attend church their response to being in a cathedral, 84% agreed with the idea that you get a sense of the sacred in a cathedral, 79% a sense of the sacred from cathedral music and 56% said they feel they experienced God through the calm and quiet of the cathedral.

This is a long way from a complete disregard for faith and belief.

Many people who say they are unbelieving individuals and would not attend a church are much closer to experiencing God than they realise. •

# Anorexic dying to be thin

BY IAN WHITE

**W**hen Lizzie McNaught was greeted with the words "Hello, Fatty!" at her new school, it was to have a devastating effect – almost costing her life.

"Words hurt ... they can set up thought patterns that go on to have a damaging ongoing impact on mental health. I know how destructive this can be, from my own experience," says Lizzie – now a doctor – and writes in her new book: *Life Hurts: A Doctor's Personal Journey through Anorexia*.

Speaking from the unique position of both a patient and a doctor, she says 86 per cent of people with eating disorders report that bullying contributed to the onset of their illness.

Lizzie was just 14 when her mum took her to hospital with abdominal pain.

The doctor's diagnosed her with anorexia nervosa.

"What was wrong with losing weight? That was how to be attractive, that was how to look good, how to be good. I thought the doctors had it wrong," she reflects.

But they hadn't got it wrong, as Lizzie was in danger of cardiac arrest, with dangerously low levels of electrolytes in her blood and abnormal and irregular heartbeats. She was

hospitalised for five months.

Such was the disease's control over Lizzie's young mind that she'd hardly eaten or drunk anything for days – even brushing her teeth was out because of 'intrusive thoughts' telling her that toothpaste contained calories.

Lizzie would do anything to get out of hospital, other than eat: food was a 'dangerous temptation' to be resisted.

Yet life hadn't started that way. Lizzie's parents are Christians who enjoyed sharing good food – not just

with the family but with outsiders too.

Lizzie feels their protectiveness from the cruel words of others right from the onset [she was born with a birthmark on her face] 'unwittingly' prepared the ground for her thought patterns.

So even an innocent comment about her being 'stocky' left her sensitive to criticism about her body.

After a horse racing accident, Lizzie found comfort in food. Returning to school a bit heavier, she felt victim-



Lizzie McNaught (left) has found freedom from her food obsessions, as detailed in her book (above).

ised and bullied. Even when moving to a new school, a boy made that 'fatty' remark.

Lizzie felt the only way to be accepted was through a very strict diet. The desire to lose weight gradually took over her life.

Lizzie had become a Christian herself after discussions at home led her to exploring what it means to be a Christian. Baptised [immersed in water as an outward sign of an inward commitment] in 2006, she says: "I wanted to trust God with all my heart. But my heart was also home to the dreadful illness of anorexia, which was causing me to lie and cheat, and to damage my body."

Even as Lizzie cried out to God daily to help her to trust Him, she kept on restricting her food intake until she became so ill that, six months later, she was suddenly admitted to hospital.

Despite her realisation that God and her family loved her, Lizzie "still struggled to even consider letting go of the anorexia. It was still my best friend."

But a dramatic turning point came when Lizzie lunged towards her dad with scissors in the kitchen when he tried to make her eat.

"I stopped myself, with the blades inches from my dad's chest. I took control. That was me, the real me. From that moment, I had power over the anorexia.

"No matter how strong the drive in my mind not to eat, I knew I could take control. Anorexia could be beaten."

It wasn't the end of the battle for Lizzie, but during therapy, "I began to see how my faith in God could change my perception of myself, and the world around me.

"For too long I had been focused on food and weight, as if that was all that life was about, but now I saw that, in God's eyes, those issues were tiny compared to the opportunities to live for Him and make a difference in the world."

Lizzie realised that if God loved her whatever she was like, then it didn't matter whether other people liked her or not.

Her focus switched to the good she could do, with an increasing passion to qualify as a doctor to help others with eating disorders. She is currently a 25-year-old junior doctor, working in the UK. •

## CHOOSING WHOM TO SERVE

BY RICHARD WINNES

**THE** atheist says there is no God. The agnostic says you cannot know if there is a God or not. The pantheist says everything is God. The polytheist says there are many gods. The deist says there is a God, but He is an absentee God – like a watchmaker who made the universe, wound it up, and left it to run by itself. The dualist says there are two principles, good and bad, with two divine beings equal in power and authority. And the monotheist says there is only one God.

Who is right? And if there is a God, how can we find Him?

I once knew a retired air force colonel who had seen a lot of the world, and who claimed to be an agnostic. He felt that you could not know whether there was a God or not.

"Do you believe in God and life after death?" he once asked me.

"Sure do," I replied. "When I look at the incredible vastness and the intricate harmony of the universe, it would take a lot more than faith for me to believe that all of this just happened by chance rather than to believe in a Master Creator."

"But you cannot prove there is a God or eternity or life after death," said the colonel.

"True," I replied. "I can't and I wouldn't. [But] neither can anybody disprove them. And I know which side of the fence I'd rather be on, because if I'm right I have everything to gain, and if I'm wrong, I have nothing to lose. But if you're right you have nothing to gain and if you're wrong you have

everything to lose."

"I can't argue with that," he agreed.

Recently I attended a party and was pleasantly surprised to be seated opposite a man whose religious persuasion was totally different from mine. His lady companion was a self-proclaimed atheist. We had a very stimulating evening.

"Why do you believe in God?" the atheist asked me, "Is He merciful? Does He forgive?"

"Yes, God is merciful," I answered.

"He does forgive, and I believe in Him basically because I choose to do so.

"And why are you an atheist?" I asked her.

"Well, you can't prove there is a God," she rightfully said, "and there are too many unanswerable problems."

"But," I stated; "the problem is never the problem."

"What do you mean?" she queried.

"When it comes to God," I answered, "what we think is an intellectual problem that stops us from believing in God, or feeling close to Him, is often a defence that we use to avoid facing a moral and emotional problem we'd rather not give up or resolve. There's always a reason behind the reason."

As the night progressed, I learned that the atheist's father had died when she was a very young teenager and that she felt hurt by her mother and still hated her.

Without realising it, she had just given one probable clue as to why she didn't believe in God. As counsellors tell us, our feelings towards God are very much conditioned by our relationships with our parents and especially our fathers.





# Ball tampering and sanctimony

RICK LEWERS

LET he who is without sin cast the first stone. I offer this confession. I used to pick with my fingernail the seam on the Kookaburra so the ball would swing or cut better. IF you are not a cricketer then that last sentence probably makes no sense. Perhaps you would be more familiar with the expression "ball tampering". Yes, sadly I must confess to being a one-time ball tamperer.

I have just returned from Bali where "ball tampering" has obviously become world news reaching the small surfing village of Canggu. Who would have thought that a nation's pride, its moral integrity, and its hopes and aspiration would hang on a piece of sandpaper and cricket ball? Why such is the moral outrage even the Prime Minister, among other political leaders, believed the matter to be of such national importance he needed to address it. God help us!

I have not been privy to all the information surrounding this cricket tragedy but it is always worth hearing the words of Jesus Christ in such contexts, "Let those who are without sin cast the first stone." Such "world shattering" wrongs are so often the playground for self-righteous and sanctimonious commentary by those whose personal failures have not yet been revealed. Such people even seem to be able to assess whether the tears of a David Warner are real or show but are unable to recognise the inconsistencies in themselves. And on a hill in South Africa, spectators on the events showed their own deeper depravity by launching their attacks on the player's wife, tampering with the human dignity of another. It would seem that we live in a world where nothing is sacred and none of us are holy.

Public office comes with public scrutiny and I have to admit that the contrition of our one-time Aussie Captain, Steve Smith, may well be his finest innings even though it was played through tears. While the footage was damning, his confession, without attempts to cover up, was refreshing. The acceptance of responsibility, irrespective of what limited involvement Smith may have had, is admirable in an age where people are constantly ducking their responsibilities. Smith's no blame response is highly unusual when you consider the "everyone else is to blame" culture in which we live. Not arguing the umpires decision, accepting the punishment, not making excuses or claiming privilege are lessons worthy to be observed. I live in hope that his responses in the future will be of equal dignity.

The Steve Smith interview is footage worth showing your children. Not a perfect off drive or square cut, but the right response of a man who failed in his duty to do the right thing. It takes a lot to teach us the most important lessons in life but thanks to the model of our one time Aussie Captain there is hope for a better future.

When Steve Smith met the media's questions I noted that he was never without his father's support. That's what dads do! They support their children even in times of failure. Well done Mr Smith and thank you for modelling fatherhood in an age of absentee fathers.

All of us tamper with life in ways that bring it into disrepute. There is nothing better when facing up to our foolishness than to know the support of our Heavenly Father. He offers forgiveness rather than condemnation and supports us for a better future. The great thing about God is that although He does not miss wrongdoing and He will take disciplinary action, He always offers mercy and grace.

Not that the Cricket Australia Board would ever listen to a ball tampering, Anglican Bishop from Armidale, but I would encourage those among them who can't throw stones to offer a merciful and gracious response to the Australian players involved that exemplifies other qualities we also wish our children to learn and that our culture needs. •

# Homeless addict's new hope

• From page 1

His love is unlike any other love. He doesn't see our mess, He sees our potential.

After a few months of crying out to God, I was still drinking and taking drugs but found they weren't working anymore.

I could take twice the amount of pills and other drugs than other people but I would still stay sober.

One day a few months after the suicide attempt, I felt what I can only describe as a lightning bolt hitting me. In a few seconds God had set me free instantly from all addictions and immorality and I walked away from a pending prison sentence a few months later as there was no prior record on my file. I had been charged with several assaults and grievous bodily harms, but once I gave my life to Jesus He wiped my record clean. I was 18 years old and finally set free and living as a Christian.

That was in 1999 and since then I have had a passion to see God set other people free from the darkness I faced.

I am passionate about praying for our region (South West WA) and nation, and am currently in the process of publishing my story as a book.

I love sharing my story at any opportunity. I also have a Facebook page for prayer called Beauty For Ashes Prayer Group and a blog at [www.catthreadgold.com](http://www.catthreadgold.com) on motherhood, marriage, home and faith.

Praise God! He is faithful and his love never



Cat Threadgold pregnant with number nine.

ends. As the Bible says in Isaiah 61:3:

"[He will] bestow on them 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.

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour."

# 'Animal' now a 'new creation'

SHONISANI Mushiana compares himself as a young person to "an animal controlled by instincts".

"I was prideful, dishonest, jealous, ungrateful. I had a bad attitude, pretending to be humble and good but revealing my true colours when under pressure," he confesses. "I stole my father's money, I got into fights almost every day at school and I enjoyed hurting others."

Shonisani knows that there was nothing in him seeking God and no way he would have found Him if left to his own devices. "God searched for me, sending His messengers to tell me about Jesus," he admits.



Shonisani Mushiana

"At school there was a Student Christian Movement and they had a visiting preacher come to preach the Word of God, and I accepted Jesus Christ in 1983," Shonisani explains. "God's Holy Spirit convicted me in a miraculous way and my conscience changed. I repaid what I could of the money I had stolen and I apologised to people I had hurt."

Shonisani finds it important to remember 2 Corinthians 5:17 in the Bible, that says "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

He started his own church in 2007 and now works full time spreading the good news of the radical change following Jesus can make to a person's life. •

# From greyhounds to goodness

## Graham Tamsett found memorising Bible verses was a key to getting rid of all the baggage in his life

I grew up attending a church and was really involved with things, but I didn't have a relationship with Jesus and took some wrong paths with the wrong people. Along the way, I became addicted to gambling, mostly dog racing.

I would work at my government job for a few minutes each morning, play poker until lunchtime, be seen by the right people over lunch, and sleep in my car all afternoon to be ready for the night's gambling. I went to different greyhound racing venues each night and would visit friends with dogs. I was also abusing alcohol and cigarettes – I had been smoking for 15 years.

Christine and I got married and then children started coming along. Christine asked whether I was going to continue to live like this in front of my children and although I said no, change didn't happen for a while.

However, I soon felt that it was time to change and began attending a church. I went to a seminar and there was a challenge to memorise three Bible verses. I thought I'd give it a go and it changed my life.

One of the verses was 1 John

chapter 5, verses 11-12: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Here was I, a person who had been in church all his life, but who had never shared that conviction. The leader asked who had never invited Jesus into his heart and life. I was that person; I had been around but never done those things, and had never become a Christian.

I invited Jesus into my heart and life and started learning more scriptures. I learned to ask God about things. That's when things changed, and joy became a part of my life.

I was sometimes tempted to do some of the things I did before, but then I realised I can have victory over temptation. All I had to do was read 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can

Graham at work in his church office



bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

I had so much baggage, junk and rubbish in my life, just like the people I have been able to help since, but I now knew I could be released from that.

I claimed the promise of 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin."

This promise was for me and it changed my life.

Proverbs chapter 3 verses 5 to 6 tells us to acknowledge God in all our ways so He will make

our path straight, but most of us don't do this because we don't want to submit to God in all our ways. However, if we do – always, and not just when we feel like it – He will make our paths straight, but they won't be easy!

As I grew spiritually, my work ethic changed and I tried to work harder, and make up for what I had taken. I heard God telling me to leave that job and become more involved in my church. Eventually I obeyed Him and have been on that journey ever since. So I challenge you to do whatever it takes to get your life pointed in the direction it needs to go. •



# Free from addiction

Billy's childhood was relatively easy ... until the day his Mum passed away from cancer, when he was 13.

"Life turned sour for me," Billy remembers sadly. "My Dad was verbally abusive. Depression and drugs fuelled his anger and hate. I felt unwanted and loved."

Billy left home as soon as he could and was led by peers, drugs, alcohol, and confusion. He was always on the run. He was desperate for something more, but says that his pride, unforgiveness, and a bad attitude stood in the way.

Billy soon got together with a girl who eventually became his fiancé but three to four years into the relationship, he broke it off. "I felt she only wanted me for what I could give and not for me being me," he explains. "All my time was spent striving for her acceptance."

"I struggled – and still do – with sexual immorality, being addicted to porn, even while I was still in the relationship."

After breaking up with his girlfriend, Billy drowned out his sorrow and self-pity with more drugs and alcohol than before, even going off his anti-depression tablets.

"I was angry - very angry," he says. "I had come to the end of myself ... [I had to] to choose life or death."

"I went to my ex-fiancée's in tears, pleading for mercy because I might die," he remembers. "She called a friend, who was a Christian, and since it was Sunday, that friend took me to her church."

"I never really thought about God or spiritual things before this point," he admits.

Billy felt himself drawn to Christ in a way he'd never before expected. He prayed. "I asked the Lord to work on my heart and make it soft so love could enter into it again."

"All of my previous life I was terrified to be alone," he says. "Now I have found Jesus and know I will never feel alone again. It is so satisfying I cannot explain it."

Although Billy admits he's not perfect, he is confident that when he walks through trials and hardships, he won't have to face them alone anymore.

"I feel my chain of burdens has broken," he proclaims. "I can experience joy! Now, I am more discerning and have no desire for drugs or alcohol. My lusting for women has become less and less."

A Bible verse that Billy says has encouraged him is 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, the new Creation has come, the old has gone, the new is here."

"I declare that the Good News is powerful and will change anyone who steps in Jesus' Way," Billy states in conclusion. "He will guide you, giving you an abundant life as He has done for me."

"Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the life and light of this World." (John 14:6) •



Billy Joe Greasley has been transformed from terrified and angry, to free and joyful.

## Healed inside and out

"I struggled immensely with suicidal thoughts and a deep desire to die, as I didn't want to live with my M.E. illness."

Rachel Ward, aged 25, from Oxfordshire, in England, was a lonely, bedbound young woman with few friends, and most of those via online chats, and due to her chronic fatigue syndrome. She nearly took her own life but recalls "I was too afraid to act on it".

Rachel was too unsure

about what would happen after she died and wanted to understand some of the "awful things I'd gotten myself involved with".

One day, she typed "what is sin" into Google and found a website explaining that Jesus Christ died in our place, allowing Himself to be punished for all the evil that happens in the world - offering us all hope with renewed life.

Rachel said: "As soon as I read the basis of the Christian faith, I was completely and utterly broken so I prayed the 'sinner's prayer', and found that many of the questions I had suddenly made sense and had distinct, easy to understand answers."

"I didn't have a powerful, single moment of salvation – no thundering voice or wind, no earthquake, or falling down in a fit of laughter."

It took time for Rachel to develop 'true' faith because her logical mind needed time to analyse facts about the Christian message.

She added: "I am very analytical so spent hours upon hours each day studying the Bible and what its various aspects meant and, eventually, my faith began to grow properly."

Last year (2017), Rachel experienced an incredible miracle. She was healed of M.E. on her wedding day (April 22). The illness had blighted her from childhood.

At the age of 11 she caught glandular fever and the symptoms got so bad, that Rachel couldn't look after herself.

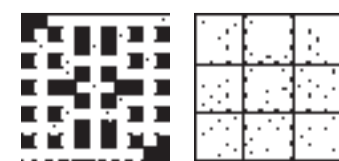


Rachel Ward was healed of severe ME on her wedding day.

"I couldn't wash my own hair, or prepare my own food, and had days where I couldn't roll over in bed on my own due to chronic pain and fatigue. I became housebound very rapidly and even bedbound at points."

"My body was wracked with pain from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. It felt as though every joint and muscle was being torn out and ripped apart, and I was exhausted constantly, as though I had been poisoned. My concentration was non-existent and I suffered severe short-term memory loss. This went on for years."

She was diagnosed with a severe form of M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis), for which there is no medical cure. •



MORE THAN JUST A FEELING



"FEELINGS, nothing more than feelings," goes the 1974 classic by Morris Albert, and sometimes our actions seem to be governed by nothing else.

How many marriages have ended because "I just don't feel like I love you anymore"? How many people have committed suicide because they feel that life is not worth living? How many people are addicted to various substances because "it makes me feel so good"?

Our physical feelings are essential to life. Hunger, thirst, tiredness and pain are all part of the body's warning system to ensure that it stays alive and avoids damage.

However, our emotional feelings can be very deceptive and are often influenced by false information from our senses (like an amputee's ghost pains), hormone imbalances (ask any woman with PMT!), sleep deprivation (ask any parent of small children), chemical influence (like drugs) or environmental manipulation (like advertising).

What we feel is not necessarily the truth: a person may feel they are a girl when every cell in their body is declaring they are a boy; a runaway may feel no one cares for them when their parents are distraught at home; a drunk may feel witty and interesting when others see them as babbling and pitiful.

Toddlers are entirely governed by their feelings and well-known for the tantrums when those feelings are challenged. However, with maturity comes the understanding that we have some control over our feelings. Adults get up and go to work even when they feel like sleeping in, they listen politely although they feel bored, they don't eat the whole tub of ice-cream, although they feel greedy, and they don't lie down in the supermarket kicking and screaming although they feel frustrated with the queue.



Controlling one's feelings is not only a sign of maturity, it is praised in society. We celebrate long marriages, where people have no doubt had to overcome feelings of misunderstanding, boredom, sexual temptation, unforgiveness and resentment in their many years together.

War heroes overcome their feelings of fear to save others, great athletes overcome feelings of exhaustion to break records, and people like inventor Thomas Edison make breakthroughs by overcoming their feelings of failure and disappointment to keep trying.

Morality, at its core, is about overcoming our natural feelings – not scratching every itch, not taking what is not ours, not giving into our fury at someone else etc.

In post-Christian Western society, however, morality and duty are giving way to a pleasure-seeking world-view where everything is justified by "because I want to" or "because I feel like it".

People leave their families because they "feel trapped", sue others because they "feel slighted" or commit crimes because they "feel uncontrollable anger". Everyone is very quick to jump on their high horse if their feelings are offended in any way.

In the Bible we see that God, in whose image we are created, also has feelings. He displays anger, jealousy, joy, pride, compassion and regret, among other things, and we learn that our feelings are God-created and important. However, we are also instructed not to be blinded and controlled by our feelings.

One of the promises of Christianity is that, because God puts His Holy Spirit within us at conversion, we have access to a power greater than ourselves to help us manage our feelings. While our feelings are often involved in bringing us to Jesus - for instance regret at our past and hopelessness at our future - once we make Jesus Lord of our lives, He becomes Lord of our feelings too and we are no longer a slave to them.

Not only does God give grace to control negative emotions and impulses but He gives Christians new feelings and desires that they wouldn't have had naturally.

That is why many Christians have forgiven great offences, loved society's unlovable, spent their life in service in inhospitable places and bravely stood up for their faith in the face of torture or death.

The world may 'feel' that they are foolish but the truth is they have exercised their will and self-control over their feelings to serve a higher purpose – making the name of God great. •

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# Magnolias, marriage and makeovers

**Chip and Joanna Gaines have made a name for themselves as renovators and 'house flippers' through the TV show *Fixer Upper*, but reading their book *The Magnolia Story* one glimpses a little bit of what underpins their remarkable creativity and surprisingly resilient relationship.**



Chip and Joanna Gaines discuss their new book, *Capital Gains: Smart Things I Learned Doing Stupid Stuff* at Build Studio in New York City in October last year. Photo Rob Kim/Getty Images

Joanna was a conservative introvert, who was financially cautious and liked that which was stable, safe, punctual and traditional.

When she was 23 her life plans were turned upside down by a 'chance' meeting with Chip Gaines, a talkative, unpredictable, people-loving, hard-working dreamer who had very little regard for closed doors, expectations, or budgets.

Their relationship got off to an inauspicious start when Chip was 90 minutes late for their first date. He also didn't apologize, had no idea where they should go and was beet-faced from working in the sun all day and bald from shaving his hair off for a good cause!

But in the middle of that date, when Joanna was tuning out of Chip's verbal onslaught and thinking

he must be crazy, she heard a voice in her head that said, "That's the man you are going to marry."

"Honestly, if it wasn't for that voice, I'm not sure I would have stuck it out through all the ups and downs of dating a guy like Chip," she admits. She knew it was the still, small voice of God.

Joanna had grown up going to church every Sunday and learning all about God but didn't really enter into a relationship with Him until she left home.

"From the age of five to about twenty, religion to me was a matter of 'you do this, and you don't do that, and you do your best to walk the

straight line'. I was good at that. I'm good at following the rules – most of the time," she grins.

But then she moved to New York to pursue a TV journalism career and "once I was on my own my faith became something very personal," she shares. "It was no longer about what my parents knew or what my

pastor knew. I came to think of God as more of a gracious friend who was accompanying me on this journey, a friend who wanted to carry my burdens and speak into my life and shape me into who I really was and who I would become."

That gentle voice that guided Joanna into a relationship that was in equal parts exciting, terrifying, exasperating and energizing, was to speak to her again, a few years later, with words that were just as challenging and unexpected.

At the time, Joanna and Chip had been married a few years, flipped a couple of places already and had two children, Drake and Ella Rose. Joanna had a little business called Magnolia that sold unique interior design items.

"I loved that shop. I loved being there every day. Yet once I was pregnant with Ella, I heard the same voice. But this time it was saying, 'Jo, it's time to stay home with your babies.'"

Even as Joanna obeyed, locking up for the last time with tears rolling down her face. She kept asking God, "Are sure this is the right move? If it is, why does it seem so painful and hard?" Then she heard Him again. "Joanna, if you trust me with your dreams, I'll take them further than you could have ever imagined."

That promise was mightily fulfilled years later in October 2015 with the opening of Magnolia Market at the Silos – sixteen thousand square feet of space that is constantly filled with customers!

In January the year before Joanna had been spending some time journaling when she heard that voice tell her; "It's time to reopen your shop."

Again, it was an out-of-the-blue and life-changing idea, that she knew didn't come from her own mind. "Are you serious?" she said out loud. "I have four kids now, a business [house redecorating and remodelling with Chip] to run, and a television show. How on earth could I do that?"

"There is always a peace when I finally decide to obey that voice," Joanna writes. "Although I may wrestle with Him at first like a little kid, in the end I always know that He knows best.

"He turned my little mustard seed of faith into all this. Not even a decade after I made that difficult decision to close my shop ... God delivered on the promise of making my dreams come true in ways that were bigger than I ever imagined."

Joanna and Chip's journey, with each other and God, is ongoing and they have recently entered a new phase of life by deciding to stop filming *Fixer Upper* in order to focus on their family and their other businesses. Besides the Market, they have: paint, carpet, wallpaper and furniture lines; a quarterly magazine; a real estate company; a luxury vacation rental; a soon-to-open restaurant and now a recently released second book, *Capital Gains: Smart Things I Learned Doing Stupid Stuff*.

From what she has learnt so far though, Joanna closes her book with this advice: "Don't quit, and don't give up. The reward is just around the corner. In times of doubt or times of joy, listen for that still, small voice. Know that God has been there from the beginning – and He will be there until the end."

## An illustration from Leonardo da Vinci

BY DR JIM DENISON (REVISED)

I'D like you to consider what is now the world's most expensive painting!

Leonardo da Vinci painted the *Salvator Mundi* ("Savior of the World") for Louis XII of France. His depiction of Jesus was passed to King Charles I of England, then it was auctioned off. It was purchased by a British collector in 1900, but it was damaged and with unclear authorship. The collector's descendants sold it in 1958 for forty-five pounds (around sixty dollars).

Over the years, artists altered the image, turning it into a black-and-white drawing. Restoration of the painting began in 2005. After years of painstaking work, including infrared analysis, the painting was returned to its original state. Experts in Leonardo's work were then able to authenticate it as his.

Recently, Christie's sold it at auction for a record \$450 million.

Leonardo's image of Jesus was present on the canvas for five centuries. But lesser artists marred his masterpiece, rendering it far less expressive. Once these obscurities were removed, the true face of Jesus was visible to the world.

### WHY RELIGION DOESN'T WORK

Let's consider the *Salvator Mundi* as a parable. Leonardo's depiction of Jesus is available to all who wish to see Him, but we must remove flawed layers that mask and mar His image.

Pascal noted that there is a "God-shaped emptiness" in every person. As St. Augustine observed, our hearts are restless until they rest in Him. Because we were made for personal relationship with our Maker, we each long to experience Him for ourselves.

Across our history, humans have devised thousands of ways to fulfill this longing.



Some center in laws and regulations, as with the Jews who pray fervently at the Western Wall and keep their 613 laws with precision. Some center in regular prayers and rules, as with the Muslims who pray five times daily in Jerusalem and around the world. Some center in prayers, Scripture readings, songs, and chants, as with the Christians who gather at the Holy Sepulcher.

But no religion, not even a religion based on the teachings of Christianity, is sufficient to achieve oneness with God.

We have no holiness in ourselves, so we cannot make ourselves holy. And "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14 NIV). As the Biblical writer Paul noted, "if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose" (Galatians 2:21).

Does this mean we should not engage in

religious activities? Not at all. We first of all must enter into a right relationship with God because it is out of that relationship we have the means to live a life that honours God. Then we look to grow in our relationship with God.

Peter urged us to "be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15). God calls us to "consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44).

Here's the balance: as we seek God through Scripture, prayer, worship, and obedience, our actions position us to experience His presence. And then, as Craig Denison notes, "Holiness is the direct result of openly and continually encountering the nature of a perfect, loving, and available God."

So "seek the Lord while He may be found" (Isaiah 55:6), not to fulfill religious duties but to experience the God whose gracious presence meets your deepest needs (Philippians 4:19) and transforms you into the character of Christ (Romans 8:29).

### CONCLUSION

I am reading Walter Isaacson's biography of Leonardo da Vinci. Commenting on the *Salvator Mundi*, he makes a fascinating point. Note the glass orb in Jesus' hand. An image viewed through such a sphere becomes inverted. And yet, Jesus' hand and robe seen through the orb are not changed.

Could it be that Leonardo was unaware of this visual phenomenon? Isaacson doesn't think so. He notes that the great artist was studying light and optics at the same time he painted the *Salvator Mundi*; his notebooks reveal an obsession with the way light reflects and refracts.

Rather, Isaacson suggests that Leonardo was "subtly trying to impart a miraculous quality to Christ and his orb." What would be upside down is right side up in Jesus' hand.

Are you resting in His hand today?



# Making sense of life

Carl Wieland chats to medical biologist Dr Yves Bergeron

**Y**ves Bergeron, Ph.D., works for the Infectious Disease Research Centre (IDRC) at the Centre Hospitalier de l'Université Laval (Laval University Hospital) in Quebec City. He is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Medical Biology at Laval University.

Raised in a religious family in the French-speaking Canadian province of Quebec, Yves Bergeron ("Yves" is pronounced like the English "Eve") told me that from an early age he believed that God existed. "I believed that God, you know, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, had created the world. I believed that Christ lived a holy, perfect life on Earth, that He died on the cross to forgive our sins, and that heaven and hell are real. But something was missing. I had no interest in reading the Bible, for instance."

When Yves was 18 years old, a woman showed him Ephesians 2:8–9, which says: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

"Immediately, I had a desire to buy a Bible and read it," he said. "I became born again, and my life changed from that instant."



The Infectious Disease Research Centre where Dr Bergeron works in Quebec City.

"A few years later, a pastor showed me how the Old and New Testaments link together, and how all that the Bible teaches about God's incredible grace hangs together by reading the Bible from beginning to end."

Yves, a bachelor, says church "is my family". He sees Quebec province, where attitudes towards the Gospel are "very hard", as a real and difficult mission field for the Gospel of Christ.

Interested in science from an early age, Yves said, "I always felt that God created the laws of science, and we are under the laws; He is above them. Learning science is discovering what God has created, the laws He has given, the order needed in His creation. A chemist cannot change water into wine; no-one can walk on water. But doing those things was, for God, not a contradiction of Himself."

#### HELPING OTHERS

A grim childhood experience directed Yves' interest toward medi-



Yves Bergeron at work in his office.

cal science in particular. At eight years of age, he was seriously poisoned by an insecticide. "I was so sick, I was off school for a whole year. Eventually, I benefited from a new medicine. So I've always been interested in how the body works, blood cells, and so on. I always wanted to be a part of providing cures for people, especially kids."

So Yves is happy to be working in a large medical research centre where some 1,200 people are helping to discover new treatments and diagnostic tools.

Yves said that though he studied "all the evolutionary hypotheses" at school and university, he never really believed in the evolutionary story. "Even if you add billions of years, it makes no sense that all these things got organized by themselves without the intelligence of the

Creator." For Yves, a world created in six ordinary-length days a few thousand years ago makes perfect sense of the data of the real world.

In his own field, things like bacterial toxins that induce shock and death are consistent, though, with a creation where things "went wrong". He said, "Obviously the Fall has broken all kinds of aspects of the creation. But as I studied microbiology, these bacteria, they are so stunningly complex, it's totally inconceivable that we are not looking at the handiwork of God's creative intelligence. We are discovering new molecules continually. The more we study, the more we find out about the amazing nanotechnology<sup>1</sup> in what some still call 'simple' bacteria."

While on nanotechnology, Dr Bergeron told me enthusiastically that the IDRC was working on a CD "for the genetic identification of microbes". Using incredible nano-

technology engineering, the researchers were putting an ultraminiature laboratory onto a normal-sized CD. This was then inserted into a "reader" machine that would be able to identify bacteria from their DNA "fingerprints", all in less than an hour.<sup>2</sup>

It normally takes two days to get such information by growing the bacteria on culture plates.

"The objective, once the CD is fully operational, is that you just put a drop of the sample—blood, urine, saliva, for instance—onto the disc," said Yves, "and then the equipment on the disc cracks open any bacteria in it, and processes their DNA. Then you put it in your machine; it tells you which bacteria, and what resistance genes they are carrying, so you know which antibiotics won't work."

A commercial portable version of the reader "small enough to put into your luggage" is expected by 2020 at the latest.

#### HARDNESS – THE CAUSE AS MUCH AS THE EFFECT

Such breakthroughs in real science obviously have nothing to do with belief in evolution, which, Dr Bergeron thinks, is ultimately because "people don't want to believe in God and give Him glory for who He is and what He has done."

Dr Bergeron says he has always accepted the six-day creation account just as the Bible teaches it. "I would not be scandalized if He had done it any other way—He could have done it various ways. But that's not what He told us happened. And if I think about the consequences of accepting 'God-directed evolution', it raises huge questions. A lot of things do not hold together. How did evil come into the hearts of human beings? If there were millions of years, then death (and suffering) would have existed before Adam and Eve. This makes no sense in a biblical framework. Death was a penalty from God for our sin. The world was corrupted at the Fall, because of our corruption.<sup>3</sup>

"I know there are many views and theories. I have read on these issues, and have found that they don't stand up theologically or scientifically, and they are not satisfying," Yves says.

Believe it or not

## UK politician: cull the weak

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

**UK POLITICIAN** Colin Brewer has reportedly compared disabled children to deformed lambs with five legs or two heads that need to be killed. In an interview with Disability News Service, he reportedly said, "We are just animals. He [the farmer] obviously has got a point ... You can't have lambs running around with five legs and two heads. ... It [the lamb] would be put down, smashed against the wall and be dealt with."



His reason apparently is financial. According to Disability News, when asked if there was any difference between killing a lamb or a human being, he reportedly said: "I think the cost has got to be evaluated." One is reminded of Hitler's railing against humans he called 'useless eaters'. (See [creation.com/eugenics](http://creation.com/eugenics).)

How tragic that so many have swallowed the lie of evolution—the erroneous theory that says we are all animals, and that God does not exist, so we will not be called to account for how we have treated our fellow human beings. (See [creation.com/darwin-vs-compassion](http://creation.com/darwin-vs-compassion); [cf.creation.com/atheists-credit-christianity](http://cf.creation.com/atheists-credit-christianity).)

• UK politician: we should kill disabled children like we kill deformed lambs, [lifesitenews.com](http://lifesitenews.com), 15 May 2013.

• Disability rights: Cornish Councillor Colin Brewer compares disabled children to deformed lambs, [huffingtonpost.co.uk](http://huffingtonpost.co.uk), 11 May 2013.

#### AFTER THEIR KIND

"A lot of my colleagues," said Yves, "try to justify their belief in evolution by the fact that bacteria change, they can acquire genes (from other bacteria). But this does not mean that bacteria gave rise to more elaborate organisms. That would require adding a lot of new information that was not previously in the world, not just borrowing something that already exists. Bacteria change; so do horses and humans, but I believe that bacteria have always been bacteria, and humans human. Even though there is a lot of change possible within each kind, bacteria are not capable of turning into horses or humans."

"It's clear that people are simply avoiding facing up to certain realities," said Yves. "Just looking at the growth of human population, for instance, it's obvious that we have been here for only a few thousand years. Genesis makes sense of every aspect of life."

#### References and notes :

1. A term for a relatively new field of ultra-miniature engineering (1 nanometre = 1 billionth of a metre).
2. See [cimonline.ca/index.php/cim/article/view/4873/1741](http://cimonline.ca/index.php/cim/article/view/4873/1741).
3. See Cosmic and universal death from Adam's fall: an exegesis of Romans 8:19–23a.

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CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



# Building Better Marriages

## GOD VALUES WOMEN

BY ROB FURLONG

IN OCTOBER 2017, following allegations of sexual assault brought against movie producer Harvey Weinstein by several high profile actresses, the #MeToo campaign was launched and went viral around the world.

Since that time, thousands upon thousands of women have been empowered to tell their own story about unwanted sexual advances and sexual violence that they have endured over the years.

The World Health Organization has estimated that one third of women worldwide are affected by sexual violence.

Two 2017 polls conducted in the United States revealed that 54% of women reported that they had received "unwanted and inappropriate sexual advances with 95% saying that such behavior usually goes unpunished."

And there have been similar claims made in various parts of Australian society.

It may seem an odd way to begin

an article, especially given that May is the month we celebrate our mums, and women in general.

But it asks us a question that demands an answer:

*What do we, as men, really think of women?*

In answering this question myself, there are two thoughts that shape my thinking.

**Women are full image bearers of the God Who created them.**

Genesis 1:27 states that "God created mankind in His own image... male and female He created them."

This does not say that women bear part of the image of God – they are full image bearers.

This means that by virtue of their relation to the Creator, women have inherent worth, value and dignity.

I have grown tired of the old cliché remarks about, "It was the woman who led the man astray in the Garden!"

The undertone seems to be that all the problems of the world can be blamed on women.

Interestingly, when the Genesis account is properly understood,



Adam was right there beside Eve when she took the first bite of the forbidden fruit...and he did *nothing* to dissuade her.

Equally, I dislike the statement, "After God made man, He said, 'I can do better!'"

God never intended to set men and women up in opposition to each other, but to support, encourage and strengthen each other.

This begins when we embrace the truth that both the sexes bear the full image of their Creator!

**Women share equally in all the promises of God.**

What a ground breaking, revolutionary statement Paul made when he declared that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile...slave nor free... male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In other words, at the foot of the Cross, your racial pedigree, your social standing and your gender count for nothing when it comes to being accepted by God in Christ Jesus.

This is Good News for everyone

living on planet earth because God accepts everyone who comes to Him in humility and repentance!

I am not on a crusade here for more women's rights!

The proponents of the #MeToo campaign have encouraged men with some simple steps to demonstrate respect for women in their personal world:

- Men can intervene when they witness or hear of behaviour that demeans a woman.
- Men can take a clear stand against behaviour that objectifies women.
- Men can listen to the pain of women who have been mistreated. I agree with all of this.

But the treatment of women will not change until there is a fundamental change in the heart and that change can only be brought about by God Himself.

When we see a woman, or a man, or a child or a disabled person, what do we see? A person made in the image of God or a "non-person?"

Looking through the eyes of God will fundamentally change the way we see each other – as image bearers of our Creator God, worthy of our love and respect.

So thank God this Mother's Day for the women in your life and love them through His eyes.

They will thank you for it!

## Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 14)

BY JODY BENNETT

I HAVE been suffering from back pain for the last few months, which has been quite debilitating. Last night, as I sat on the couch with my sausage dog on my lap, my daughter set me a poser: "Mum, would you rather have no pain and no dog, or have Carrie but continue to have pain?"

A choice between my comfort and my beloved pet – I had to think, but not for long. "I would keep things the way they are," I told her. "I'd keep the pain for the sake of keeping Carrie."

It occurred to me later that Jesus, and His Father God, made the same choice.

God chose the pain of our betrayal and rebellion, and Jesus chose the pain of torture and the cross, just to be in relationship with us.



They didn't need us. The triune God is complete within Himself. But He wanted relationship with us despite all that it cost Him, and the pain of rejection that it would expose Him to.

We are creatures created in His image - relationship is really important to us too. Every time we allow ourselves to love someone, we risk pain. Every time we adopt a pet, there is near certainty that (unless they outlive us) we will be bereaved at some point and hurt. A parent knows that each child holds a little bit of your heart, making you vulnerable to intense pain. And yet a life without these connections to others is not worth living. Who would want wealth, health, good looks, vast knowledge and even eternal life without someone with whom to share it?

God deeply longs for relationship with us and has undergone agony in order to have us as His children and be able to spend eternity with us. The often quoted verse John chapter 3 and verse 16 says it all; "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

How humbling to understand that He has gone to such great lengths for faithless and rebellious me. As John Newton wrote in his famous hymn: "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

And in response to such great love, what can we do but surrender our lives to Him?

## How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through 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)

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

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:

<p><b>If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box</b></p> <p><b>I have prayed this prayer.</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some 'starting off' literature</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information on a helpful church</p>	<p><b>If you have NOT prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box</b></p> <p><b>I would like to think about this.</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have a problem (see attached letter)</p>
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\* Please tick and write clearly \*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Age and occupation (it helps) \_\_\_\_\_

Challenge Literature Fellowship  
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**WONDER** tells the story of Auggie Pullman (Jacob Tremblay), a boy born with severe facial deformities who is about to enter the daunting world of middle school. Having thus far been home-schooled by his mother Isabel (Julia Roberts), this will be Auggie's first extended exposure to other children.

When school starts, we see that most of the kids have no intention of interacting with Auggie because, as rumour has it, even touching him will give them "the Plague". As difficult as the first few days are, Auggie begins to acclimate to life in middle school, slowly but surely starting to win friends with loyalty, smarts and a good dose of the sense of humour he gets from his father Nate (Owen Wilson).

A third of the way into the movie a shift in narrative occurs, as the view-point switches to Auggie's older sister, Via who has many of her own problems to deal with.

We hear from Via that in their world, Auggie is the Sun and everyone else revolves around him. This isn't the fault of Auggie or his parents though. It's understandable. But the movie reminds us that there are other stories within the story, other ways people may be impacted that aren't as obvious or on the surface. So, we began to see the story through their eyes, and the movie takes on a much



deeper, richer feel. It gives us more stories to connect with and characters with whom to identify.

Sacrifice is a theme that works its way throughout the film. Auggie's mum sacrifices a career to be with and care for her son through many surgeries and then to provide him with a solid educational foundation for when he does eventually start school with other children. Via sacrifices a relationship with her parents so that they can provide for Auggie every step of the way.

We also see the themes of kindness and acceptance, both from the people surrounding Auggie and, at times, from Auggie himself.

Auggie is able to withstand the perils of being out in public because he is strong like his mother, funny like his father, kind and thoughtful like his sister.

This movie is not one of the best films ever made, but it is certainly one of the loveliest and most family-friendly movies produced in a while.

Wonder, based on a New York Times bestselling book by the same name, is rated PG for "thematic elements including bullying, and some mild language."

Released in theatres late last year, Wonder is available on DVD and download.

Source: Christiananswers.net



# RUGBY STAR REVEALS WHO PLAYS CENTRE



29 SEPTEMBER 2017,  
LEEDS: Leeds Rhinos Jamie Jones-Buchanan celebrates a win against Hull FC. Photo: Martin Rickett/PA Images via Getty Images.

Rugby star Jamie Jones-Buchanan has been described as ‘one of the most passionate, honest and competitive players in the Leeds Rhinos squad’.

He has picked up a bucket load of medals in a glittering Super League career spanning half a lifetime.

Displaying sacrifice, perseverance and teamwork, Jamie has played 371 games, scored 73 tries, won six Grand Finals, three World Club Challenges, two Minor Premieres, three League Leaders and the Challenge Cup.

The 36-year-old has overcome many setbacks in the process, which he says have refined his character and taught him what is most important in life.

“The mental challenge is rock hard. It’s disgusting,” Jamie says.

“It’s hard to appreciate it unless you’ve experienced it.

“The pressures you go through as a player... when you’re doing it when you’re in agony, it can be really tough. You’re going into a game and you can hardly walk for the full week, and then you’re expected to play a game like rugby league – it can be pretty nasty.

“For me, I was quite a late developer and it took me a while to cement my place and you start to doubt yourself. You start to worry because when I came through, about 20 years ago, you did not have the facility in place to go do education or get a trade so if you failed to become a professional player, you didn’t have much to fall back on.”

Everything changed for Jamie when, one day in 2004, a New Zealand player and fellow second-rower Ali Lauitiiti invited him to church.

“I knew there was something different about him,” Jamie admits. “He wasn’t shy

about his faith. I did not have a Christian background (although I’d always believed in God) and thought everybody would be dressed in their Sunday best, but in fact they all just shared a common love for Jesus.”

Jamie began reading the Biblical Gospel of Mark, undertook a Christianity Explored course and became a committed member of the church where he was baptised in 2009. Now he says, “I want Jesus to be right at the centre of everything in my life. I even have ‘In Christ Jesus’ written in Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke) on my wedding ring.”

Jamie is married to Emma, whom he met when he was 14. They have four sons – Bane, Lore, Dax and Kurgan, each named after science fiction characters.

“I’m proud of the fact that they’re growing up in a ‘Jesus-focused’ home,” he says.

Acknowledging that religion gets a bad press, Jamie blames the media for giving a wrong impression of Christianity. “They’re constantly missing the point. I want to encourage people to find out the truth about faith. There’s a lot of difference between religion and the Christian faith – the former is about the process, not about the heart.”

Although he has reached the pinnacle of sporting success, also representing England and Great Britain, Jamie’s Christian faith has become the focus of his life.

“Come and be a part of it and understand what faith is,” he offers. “There is no lasting value in material things like medals. Jesus is the only thing in life that is eternal. I’d encourage people to understand who the person of Jesus is and why He had to die for our sins.”

Besides his career in rugby, Jamie has also taken up journalism and acting, and become a governor at his former school.

He regularly attends Christian worship services across the country to speak about his own life journey.

“Whenever I speak, I use a lot of Winston Churchill quotes,” Jamie laughs. “One of my favourite motivational quotes from Churchill is, ‘Success is never final, failure is never fatal. It is having the courage to continue that counts.’

“If you win a trophy, it only lasts a month before someone asks you when you’re going to win the next one! It makes you realise that there’s nothing in life, success or failure that lasts forever. What you’ve got to do is use either experience as a learning experience; get out of bed the next morning, just keep going and be the best version of yourself.

“While negative experiences and challenges may hurt us physically and emotionally,” Jamie says, “they actually refine us if you’re strong enough to come through it. Every challenge is actually a blessing if you look at it that way.

“I’m getting to the end of my rugby career,” Jamie concludes, “God willing it will be at least another year. I am not sure where God’s leading me next, but I am sure it will involve people and hopefully, the Leeds Rhinos, because it’s a real hook to reach out to a wider community and that’s what I really enjoy doing.”



16 MARCH 2018, ST HELENS: Leeds Rhinos Jamie Jones-Buchanan in action against St Helens. Photo: Martin Rickett/PA Images via Getty Images.

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