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DEFYING DEPRESSION

Thirty-three-year-old carpenter Joel Hammond knows what it is like to look into the abyss of depression and self-loathing – and what it is like when a strong hand reaches in, rescues you and sets your life on solid ground. Here is his story in his own words:

I was married in 2011 to my wife Joanna. The first few years of our marriage was everything I thought it would be. As well as working full time, I was also a worship leader at a church near Adelaide.

By mid-2014 I had slipped into a fairly deep depression. It was a very gradual process that had been a downward spiral for some time.

One of my many weaknesses is being a “yes man” because I wanted people to think I could handle anything that came my way. I see now that this stemmed from my insecurities.

So half way through 2014 I was drowning in overdue deadlines and un-met priorities. I had many nights where I couldn't sleep as my mind was constantly thinking of all I had to do. My anxiety got so bad that I would go weeks with only a couple hours sleep a night, or none at all.

During this time I ruptured the AC joint in my shoulder playing indoor-soccer. I started using painkillers at night to help me sleep. Soon I realised the painkillers also helped me relax and switch my mind off. After about three weeks of using codeine every night I decided it was probably time to stop but my body was in more pain than ever. I realised that this was no longer the injury but withdrawal from the codeine. I was addicted.

I loved my role as music leader at church. I had been aware of God from a young age, and went to church for most of my childhood until I started playing under-16 soccer on a Sunday.

When I was 17 and had my driver's license, I thought: 'either God exists or He doesn't'. I believed He existed. He had to. I couldn't look at the world and believe that it came about by pure chance.

I decided to start going back to church on my own. It was the first time that God didn't seem like just an idea my parents believed in. At a youth conference a preacher spoke with passion and purpose and I realised that God wasn't just an idea to him either.



Out of the abyss of depression, Joel Hammond can smile again.

The preacher spoke about how God had a purpose for my existence, that I wasn't an accident, that God knew me before I was even born and my life had meaning.

The pastor of my church mentored me and helped me grow spiritually and musically. I couldn't understand why someone would care so much for me, he had an excitement about life that I wanted to have.

The selfless way that Jesus lived became more than just a philosophy; it became extremely freeing to love like I had

been loved and to give as I had been given. What kind of Creator would sacrifice

His own life to take the guilt and shame from someone like me? That God, in the man Jesus, would give up His own life to pay the price for my sin blew me away.

Now, years later in 2014, I was completely burnt out. I stepped down from my position at church and took some time off work. But my mental health didn't improve. I went back to work, taking pills to get me through the day and drinking to help me sleep at night.

One morning in March 2016 I woke up and vomited blood repeatedly.

Two years of pills and alcohol had led to a massive stomach ulcer that ruptured an artery, pumping my stomach full of blood. The paramedics had to smash through my front door to get me to hospital, where I was later told it was a miracle I had survived.

I spent four days in the Intensive Care Unit, got nine units of blood and spent a week in hospital, but six months later, I was back at the drugs and alcohol, worse than ever.

By April 2017 my marriage had deteriorated dramatically. I stopped showing up for work and I battled suicidal thoughts constantly. I was drinking heavily and saw no way out.

On my mum's recommendation, as a last ditch attempt to avoid suicide, I entered One80tc, a young men's Christian rehab in Sydney on 1 May 2017. It was a 12-month program where you live with 40 other guys in close community.

I thought it might be a good time to read my Bible, play my guitar and re-kindle my relationship with God, whom I barely spoke to anymore.

THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS GIVEN UP ON YOU ... IS YOU!



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All aboard the Love Boat

ALLAN GEORGE SEE'S life was all at sea in the mid-1970s. Middle aged, divorced, alcoholic and suicidal, he decide to end his woes by driving off the edge of Mulholland Drive in Hollywood, “but something told me to stop and I slammed the brakes on”.

Just as well he did, because the best still lay ahead for the bit-part actor. You may know Allan's famous mug by his stage name Gavin MacLeod, captain of the well-known '80s TV series *The Love Boat*, a role he got shortly after his brush with death.

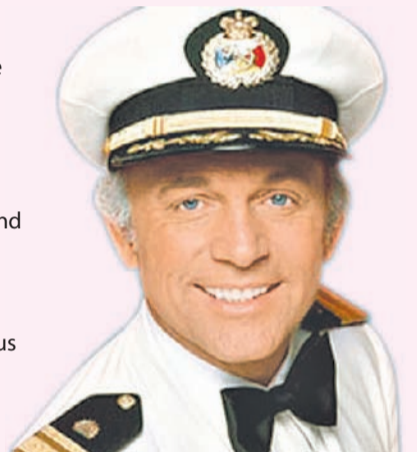
Gavin's career took off when he landed the role of Captain Merrill Stubing in 1977 but he faced another divorce, from second wife Patti in 1982, and the near-death of his mother in 1984 before he realised it had been God holding him back from the edge years before.

“In 1984 my mother became seriously ill and I prayed,” he explains. “I told God that I would give my life to Jesus if He would only give my mother a bit more time.”

His mother recovered and lived another 20 years, finally dying at 97 in 2004. Gavin kept his promise to devote his life to God and got baptised (immersed in water) as a public declaration of that commitment.

Meanwhile Patti had joined a Christian women's movement led by Shirley Boone, wife of singing legend Pat Boone, set up to support divorced women. She was fervently praying for Gavin and their marriage.

About the time of his mother's illness, Gavin felt he needed to get in touch with Patti, whom he hadn't spoken to in about three years. “So I found her number and I called her. Her first words were: ‘I've been



Gavin MacLeod

thinking about you today.' I asked her if we could just be friends and she said: 'Of course.'”

The rest sounds like a plot from *The Love Boat*.

“We fell in love all over again, re-married in 1985, and have been together ever since,” says the now 88-year-old. “In that time the Lord has given us endless opportunities to serve Him together and we feel blessed every day.”

These opportunities include hosting a TV show about marriage on Trinity Broadcasting Network for 17 years called *Back on Course*, a chance to share his story on CBN's *The 700 Club* and appearing in Christian movies by director Rich Christiano, namely *Time Changer*, and the 2009 film *The Secrets of Jonathan Sperry*.

Younger readers however may only recognise Gavin as a face on one of Air New Zealand's hilarious in-flight safety video's from 2013.

In 1987 Gavin and Patti published a book recounting their romantic second chance, called *Back on Course: The Remarkable Story of a Divorce That Ended in Remarriage*, and in 2013 Gavin published a memoir entitled, *This is Your Captain Speaking: My Fantastic Journey through Hollywood, Faith and Life*. ●

Football to farmer
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OOPS! Mistakes can be serious

BY ALAN BAILEY

OF all the things we value, truth and certainty must take a prominent part. Trusting in something dodgy or untrue can have serious consequences.

It's a bit disconcerting to realise that the thing we trust most to deliver truth, that is science, can be wrong. Indeed, history is full of examples of things once believed but now thrown out. Sure, it's all part of the development of knowledge, but alas, lies and half-truths are in the mix and are embraced even by the masses, who are then unwilling to let them go.

Here are some examples. In 1999, experts were warning of disastrous digital consequences of the turn of the millennium. Panic began as the time drew near. Y2K was to cause widespread disaster as computers crashed. We all know now that it was a false alarm.

The flat earth notion lasted a good while and, I believe, still has its adherents despite pictures from space. Then there was the problem, until the late 19th century, that doctors, ignorant of germ-theory were spreading disease by going from patient to patient without hand-washing. They, tragically, would not believe the warnings of men like Louis Pasteur, who possessed the truth of the matter.

Several decades ago, thalidomide was prescribed for expectant mothers to help with morning sickness. Too late, doctors realised it caused very sad deformities in the babies.

A few years ago, scientists were excited to receive a fossil from China which indicated a dinosaur with feathers and bird characteristics. It soon became known as the Piltown Chicken. However, it was a hoax - as was the Piltown Man many years before.

Even more serious

Some modern mistakes that are widely believed need attention. Here are a few:

- That God doesn't exist or it doesn't matter if He does.
- If God is there, He won't have much against me as I live a decent life.
- The Bible is a very old book and isn't relevant for today.
- Science has shown that religion is unscientific.
- The church has nothing to offer.

It is urgent and important to find solid ground in these matters. If the Christian Gospel is true, a huge amount hangs on it for you. If it is untrue, the sooner that is exposed the better. But 2000 years have been unable to overthrow this message because it is not a human thing, subject to error. It is God's Word to mankind. A word of love, of sacrifice, and of future glory.

Go to the Bible and read for yourself. Have an open mind and ask God to show you the truth. There is certainty and security in this statement: *I am the way the truth and the life; no-one comes to the Father except by me* (Jesus). •

A Jewel in God's crown



21 October 2011: Jody Wainwright of British jewellers Boodles UK. (Photo Jonathan Wong/South China Morning Post via Getty Images)

Wealthy, attractive, successful businessman, father of three and heir to 220-year-old English jewellers Boodles, Jody Wainwright's life would be most people's definition of perfect.

Jody, who hails from Chester England and is a director of the company his family has been running for six generations, is in charge of choosing and buying gemstones. He spends his life surrounded by beautiful, valuable objects, but he also knows where true worth lies.

Jody committed his life to pursuing things of eternal value when he became a Christian at age 19, a step that was unusual in his family. After working for his church for a few years, Jody went to Bible school in London for two years and then spent about seven years in the family business, during the last two of which he was in Ireland, overseeing the establishment of a new branch. By the end of these years, he was married to Kirstie with three small children.

Everything seemed to be picture perfect but, beneath the surface, the Wainwright's marriage was under strain due to the pressures of a busy lifestyle and Jody's verbally abusive anger issues.

The family decided to leave Ireland and the business and joined Youth With A Mission (YWAM), going to a missionary training school in Hawaii and then Samoa.

Jody relates that he spent the first six weeks wondering why he was always so angry, frustrated and pent up. After his dramatic conversion to Christianity ten years previously, he wondered why he was still battling with such a basic issue.

He acknowledged that some of the anger came from his childhood and feeling abandoned by being sent to boarding school as an eight year old.

One weekend, early in their stay in Hawaii, Jody remembers being on an idyllic beach. Everything around him was serene but he felt so on edge, like he was ready

to erupt.

They were staying in a hut with paper thin walls, with a crying baby and it all just felt like a pressure cooker, Jody recalls. He and his wife took a walk on the beach and he started "being vile" to Kirstie. He stopped and asked himself "what on earth is going on?" Jody realised he needed to seek help.

The Wainwrights went and spoke to an older couple and Jody admitted he had a problem and needed advice and prayer. He humbled himself by laying bare the sorts of things he was saying to his wife. That was January 2009 and Jody says after confronting the issue in prayer for several nights in a row, his anger was miraculously and instantly broken.

I WAS A DIFFERENT PERSON



"It was a very quick change. I was a different person and now I had peace."

To others, who may have already given their lives to God but who are still struggling to get free of certain issues, Jody has this advice.

Right after you've fluffed it is the time to come straight to God in repentance because He loves you so much.

Take your sin seriously, but Jesus died for your sin so don't kill yourself over it.

Jesus has the power to deal with stuff we have given up on trying to fix.

Don't stop knocking on heaven's door in prayer, asking God to free you. "It is lovely to be free," he smiles.

Jody's favourite Bible passage is Psalm 139, which he has memorised. It begins with the lines:

O Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.

Indeed, God sees into our deepest being. He knows the treasure within us and He knows the blackest part of our sin. However, it is only by submitting to Him that the best within us will be revealed. •

Crossword

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

ACROSS

- 1 Never wearying
- 5 Small salamander
- 7 Speeder's bane
- 8 Cargo rescue
- 9 Professors and such
- 13 A strong wind
- 16 Road surface
- 17 Golf term
- 18 Temper, fury
- 21 Posh (4,5)
- 25 Yacht, warship
- 28 Theatre worker
- 29 Appear to be
- 30 Fast food

DOWN

- 1 Large packed crowd
- 2 Tyre variety
- 3 Grub
- 4 Hot springs
- 5 Eleventh month
- 6 13 - 19 year olds
- 8 Ocean
- 10 Coloured outcrops on reefs
- 11 Palm tree treats
- 12 Steep or rugged rock
- 14 Policy opponent
- 15 Make engravings
- 19 By whatever means
- 20 Wind farm production
- 21 Database attacks
- 22 Wildebeest
- 23 Balloon filler
- 24 Barbecue condiment
- 26 Doctrine / tenet
- 27 Consume

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

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

DEFYING DEPRESSION

• From page 1

After a couple of weeks, I prayed: "Lord, I know I've screwed up. I know I will never be able to be used by You the way You had originally intended and it's all my fault. However, if You are willing, please use me again somehow. Please use what I have gone through to stop somebody else from going down that road."

I felt God reply: "The only one who has given up on you... is YOU! Before I called you, I knew exactly what you would go through and it was so I could use you the way I want to use you. I can use you now like I couldn't before,



Joel Hammond

because now you know that you can't do it on your own. Your strength isn't strong enough, your talent isn't deep enough and your capacity isn't large enough to do what I want you to do. I am the God who creates life and restores the dead."

When I entered the program I thought it would just be a good chance to get back with God, what I didn't expect was to

fall in love with people again. It was the most unbelievable change in me.

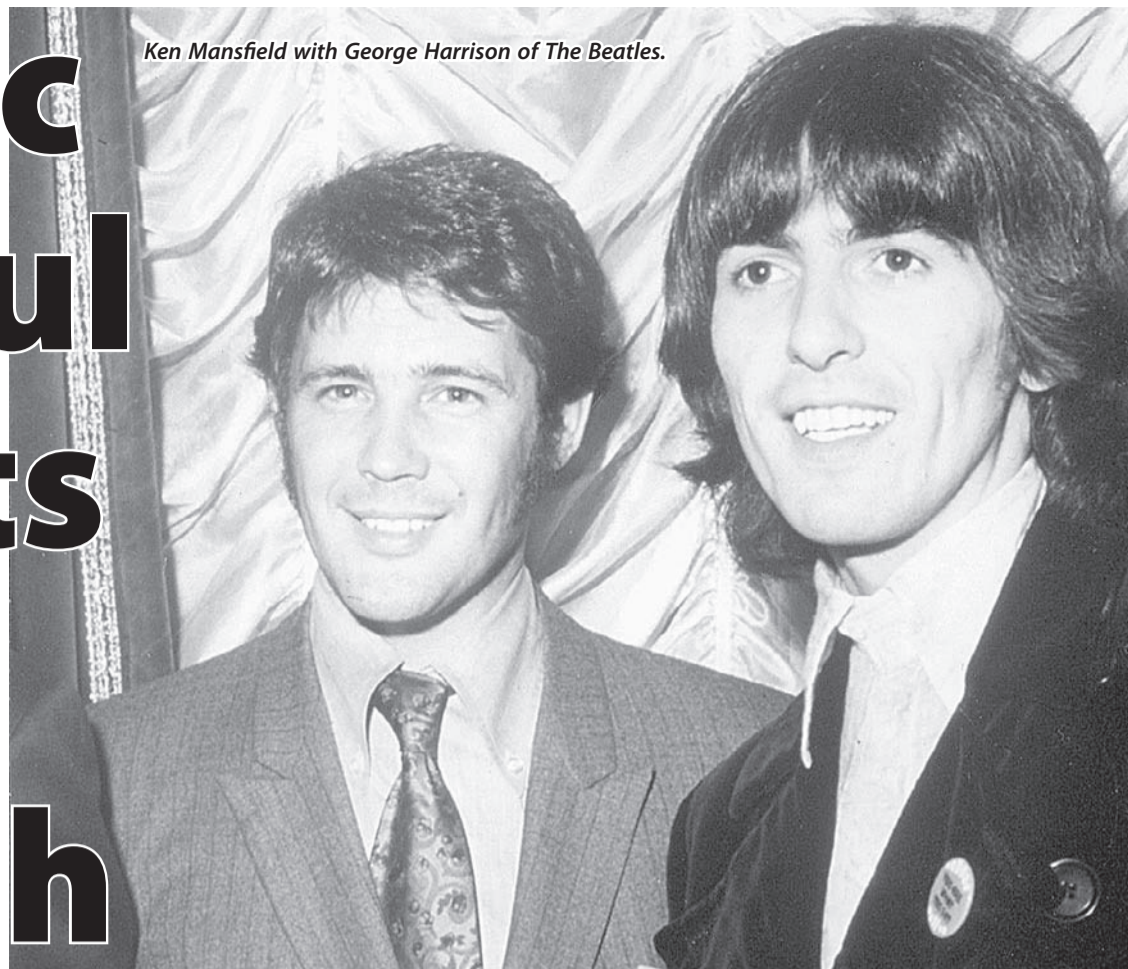
As of the time of writing, I have been back in Adelaide for nine months. My marriage is definitely the happiest and strongest it has been in four years. I am now on staff at my church as the music director.

Depression and addiction are rampant and I thank God for what I went through and learnt, so that I can help others.

To be honest, there are still hard days. There are times when I struggle with my emotions or desires to use substance. But these are the times that I realise I am broken. But I know now that God completely understands and it won't last forever. It's God's love that lasts forever! •

Music mogul meets his match

Ken Mansfield with George Harrison of The Beatles.



Ken Mansfield used to work with The Beatles. But years ago, he went from listening to John, Paul, George, and Ringo to reading about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Ken grew up on Indian reservation lands in northern Idaho and was determined as a young man to go to California and live the high life.

"Sex, drugs, rock and roll, wine, women, money, cars, and homes. It was going to be only the best of the best for Mr. Mansfield. Thank you very much," he explains in an online message given to Calvary Church, Albuquerque.

"It worked for me. I was always in the right place at the right time. I always had the right stuff for every situation. I got hooked on the world's ways. I made success my god."

But when that success turned to failure, Ken found himself alone and confused.

"I found myself in such a deep, down, dank, and dirty place that there was no way I was going to get out of there on my own. But I learned something down there," Ken says with a smile, "I learned when you're down to nothing, God's up to something."

"I thank God every day for those circumstances that drew me to Him. Because I know me. And if it wasn't for those circumstances, I would have never come to Him," he admits.

Ken was in the music industry for 30 years, five at Capitol Records. Within months there he was made a director. Then he started working

with The Beatles; they hit it off and the Fab Four asked him to become the US Manager of their record company.

Later, Ken left and became a vice president of MGM Records, then president of CBS, before setting up his own corporation called Hometown Productions.

After initial success, his company, quite suddenly, fell apart and Ken found himself broke and unemployed. He went back to the big music corporations cap-in-hand.

"I was the kind of guy that didn't make enemies on the way up, and half the people that were running these companies were guys I'd hired. I thought it would be easy. But I couldn't get a job in LA.

"I moved to Nashville to try there but doors closed again. It didn't make sense. I couldn't get a job in the mailroom of the companies that I used to run!"

Eventually, Ken finally did work at Nashville's new Starwood Amphitheatre - as a stagehand.

It was deeply humiliating for him. He relates how he encountered singer James Taylor, whom he had previously worked with in London and Hollywood as a powerful music executive, onstage at the Starwood. This time Ken was a sweaty, smelly stagehand asking 'Mr. Taylor' where

he would like his mike placed.

This was shortly after Ken had made a decision to give his life to God.

"One thing that God hates is pride. And I had a boatload and He'd gone after that right away," Ken admits. "But I'll tell you when He really humbled me was the night of the Whitney Houston concert.

Whitney comes out on stage and she sings her first song. And then she signals for a stage hand to come out and sort out the monitors.

"Now I'm not about to go out

there because I used to be a big man in that town. I start to shove one of the young dudes out. And I felt God say, 'Hold on. We're going to take a big chunk out of that pride tonight, so you get out there because you work for me now.'"

Ken took a deep breath, and walked out on stage.

"Whitney made me get down on my knees to arrange those monitors. I look up. Sweat's dripping down my face and there's all the record company presidents and famous producers and executives that I used to be one of. I used to sit in those seats with those people.

"They've been wondering what happened to Ken Mansfield. Now they knew."

Ken says he prayed right there on his knees as he adjusted the monitors, "Lord, Father God, this is the single most embarrassing moment in my life. I've never been so humiliated. But Father God, I love you more than anything I've ever loved. I want what you want more than anything. Father God, I understand what we're doing here. I'm with you."

Ken explains: "God loved me so much that He knew I had to be broken. Now here's the good news: God will use our past--good, bad, or indifferent--for His glory."

IT JUST TAKES ONE WORD FOR GOD TO WIPE OUT DECADES OF DECADENCE



The power of prayer

Ken Mansfield was speaking at a large church in Southern California when a woman right at the back of the auditorium stood up to say something after his message.

She said that when she was a young girl in that church, the youth pastor asked the girls on a youth group retreat to commit to pray for the salvation of a very decadent group of young people.

He passed around a hat with the names of The Beatles members and those who worked with them in it and asked the girls to promise to pray until they knew the person on their slip of paper had made a commitment to Jesus. This woman and her friends all picked the same name-- Ken Mansfield.

"Who's Ken Mansfield?" she had said at the time, "I want to pray for Paul McCartney."

That's what she wanted to do, she said, but she had promised, so she took that slip of paper with Ken Mansfield's name on it, put it in her Bible and prayed faithfully for this stranger's salvation all through junior high, all through high school, all through college and when she started working.

Then gradually she got too busy. "I didn't have quite as much time to read the Bible, quite as much time to pray. Then I really started rocking and rolling. I turned my back on my walk with the Lord entirely. I couldn't have cared less," she told Ken. "And I just got deeper and deeper into the decadence."

"But about a year ago, my life fell apart. I have never been so miserable in my life. This last year has been - I can't tell you how horrible it's been."

Then, about a week before, God had started to remind this woman of her faith and how sweet her life had once been.

"I got up this morning, opened the newspaper," she said "and there's an ad in there that said Ken Mansfield, who used to be with The Beatles, is giving his testimony at this church tonight. That ad jumped up at me. It was like God was saying, 'Hey. You think I ever left you? You think I don't answer?'"

The woman had seen that evening the answer to all her prayers for Ken over those many years and it had restored her faith in her faithful God.

"I've come here tonight," she said, "for one reason. And that's just to tell you I'm back [in church and in relationship with God]."

God had used her prayers to bring Ken to faith, and used Ken's faith to bring this woman back God!

haunting emptiness with stuff.

"Then I lost the world, but I got on the right side of eternity. Eternity, you know, is going to be the long part of our existence. I think it's worthwhile asking yourself "where do I want to spend the long part?"

Since then Ken, now 81, has endured two serious battles with cancer and a stroke but that has not shaken his strong conviction that "God is always there. He's always with me. He's got all the answers. No matter what happens, I have His promises that He will turn evil into good."

Ken has written four books about his experiences: *The Beatles, The Bible, and Bodega Bay; The White Book*, which looks like The Beatles' White Album; *Between Wyomings*; and *Stumbling on Open Ground - Love, God, Cancer, and Rock and Roll*.



Ken Mansfield with his wife Connie.

Sports addict becomes a fan

At the age of 35, sports fanatic Mark Blythe realised with “shock” that his take on reality was false and that something he had never had much time for was in fact true. His life did a 180 degree turn around and suddenly so many things made sense.

Mark was born in Australia but his parents returned to the UK when he was two, and he was brought up near Middlesbrough. He was completely devoted to sports: “represented my school at everything, and county at three sports”.

After his parents divorced, he only went to church on Christmas Eve with his mum: “That was it, no other churchy input and that was more than enough for me.”

Mark married a religious lady at the age of 24 but “fought against attending church” during the marriage, which ended after 10 years, mainly due, he confesses, to his own selfishness.

So Mark had little experience of church when he met “a gorgeous woman” who “disappointingly” was a committed Christian.

Six months later, in October 1995, he found himself Down Under and was invited to church by his ex-soccer manager.

“He couldn’t believe it when I said I would go and I was equally surprised. I didn’t know why I wanted to go, I just felt drawn.”

During the meeting Mark went to the front to invite God into his life and found himself crying.

“Being a tough northerner I tried to stem the flow but couldn’t. I felt an amazing warm sensation inside that I now know to be the Holy Spirit. It was a shock to find that God really existed and could be felt in a tangible way, I had an amazing inner peace.”

Mark’s son Dan, from his first marriage, was a Christian and he felt God tell him that his father had become a Christian.

“So when I rang England from Australia they already knew! Wow, that made me realise that there was something real about this!”

Mark found his priorities and outlook changed dramatically following

his decision. Money and success were no longer his main goals.

“The saddest thing about becoming a Christian late, was realising that I missed 35 years of peace and joy. Understanding that Jesus did walk on the earth and that the Easter and Christmas stories were actually real history was my biggest surprise.

“Since that day, God has helped me to understand faith and answered many prayers. I have had so much to learn. It has been a roller coaster of emotions but it’s been fun and the single best decision of my life,” he declares.

Mark is now married to ‘a very patient wife Lesley’ with three married sons, three married step-children and 10 grandchildren. “I am mightily blessed,” he acknowledges.

Mark has found that his love of sport has only increased since he became a Christian.

His has been fortunate to enjoy many “mind boggling” sports opportunities: charity football matches against former players of Spurs, Arsenal and Chelsea;

doing a full Ironman Triathlon; refereeing at Wembley; helping his church to become National Church Cricket Champions; taking part in a London 100-mile cycle ride; swimming the Serpentine two-mile classic course; being a torchbearer at the 2012 London Olympics; playing Walking Football at the England FA HQ in

St George’s Park and at the London Olympic Stadium. He has also represented Chelsea and West Ham at Walking Football.

“I’ve had quite amazing experiences for someone with such little natural talent,” Mark says modestly.

“I believe nothing on Earth can give you as much lasting peace and enjoyment as realising that there is a God who loves you, He gave you free will to choose Him - that is love. He is ready and waiting... will you go for it?”

Ever the football fanatic, Mark sees life as a match: “We can’t score after the final whistle has gone and we don’t know how long our game of life is, so I say just go for it now!” •



Mark Blythe says he has had amazing opportunities to shine in many sports.



Drew Holcomb and Ellie Bannister Holcomb of Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors perform onstage at That Tent during the 2013 Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival in Manchester, Tennessee. Photo: FilmMagic/FilmMagic/Getty Images

Folk singer learns value of truth

Ellie Holcomb is an American folk-singer-songwriter whose music specialises in acoustic guitar and inspiring lyrics, which come straight from her own experiences with loss, disappointment, and fear of the unknown.

Although the thirty-six-year old has written Billboard hits and earned a Dove Music award, Ellie calls herself “a very reluctant musician.” Having had two children since starting her last album, she knows the pull of creating and touring while also being a mother and wife.

Ellie was born in Nashville, Tennessee to Brown and Debra Bannister. Her father is a noted music producer but, as a young girl, Ellie had no interest in doing music for a living.

Instead, she earned a master’s degree in education at the University of Tennessee. There she met her future husband, Drew, a talented musician, “who convinced me to quit my teaching job and join him on the road,” she remembers.

Ellie had grown up in the church but even though she knew that Jesus loved her, she thought that “following Jesus was all about me being good enough and about me really loving God and other people. I know that’s a part of it but that it is not really the heart of the Gospel.”

“What I learned was the Gospel is literally God’s goodness to us when we’re running hard and fast in the other direction,” she says. “There’s this invitation from Jesus to be both fully known and fully accepted because of what He did on the cross. What I’ve learned is Jesus didn’t come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people alive. That’s what He’s done in my life so I cannot speak about it enough.”

In 2005, Ellie joined her husband’s band, *Drew Holcomb and the Neigh-*

bours, and travelled all over North America with them playing mandolin, keys and guitar.

After three years in a Volvo together, Ellie and Drew started having marital problems. “I’m a conflict avoider, a recovering perfectionist,” Ellie admits. “I landed in intensive counselling and my counsellor kept saying, ‘Where there’s truth, there’s freedom’. So I learned to be vulnerable and broken in front of my husband and it absolutely changed everything. It served our marriage really well.”

At the same time, Ellie began writing her own songs as she worked out her faith. She says she would be reading the Bible and then a verse would stand out to her, shortly followed by a melody.

When her father and her husband heard the songs, they convinced her to make a record. “I thought that I would put it out on iTunes and release it,” she says. “I never imagined I would be getting to do this as my job.”

She released her first solo album, *Magnolia*, in 2011, followed by three others including her most recent, *Red Sea Road*.

In 2017, just before Ellie started recording *Red Sea Road*, her father went to the doctor for a routine check-up that turned into a cancer diagnosis.

“It was so strange because I remember my mom and dad had a lot of peace [about it],” Ellie recalls. “They said, ‘We’re going to choose to praise God, and at the end of the day, no matter what happens, healing is ahead. Whether it’s this side of glory

or the next, we have hope. We have hope because of Jesus.”

When her father went in for surgery, Ellie wrote the words to the album’s first single, *Find You Here*, in reference to God:

“Here in the middle of the lonely night

Here in the middle of the losing fight

You’re here in the middle of the deep regret

Here when the healing hasn’t happened yet.”

Today, Ellie’s father is cancer-free and even though she knows “that’s not the end of every story...it was a really sweet gift to our family. My prayer is that *Find You Here* would

help bring peace to anyone walking through a season that is overwhelming or heartbreaking.”

When asked which of her songs captures her story the best, Ellie responds, “It would be *The Broken Beautiful*. If there’s anything I’ve seen God do in my story, it is that He has taken the parts of my life

that have been the most broken, the most messed up, the darkest, and He has shown up in those very places that I never even expected Him to ever be. He’s breathed healing and life and hope in the places that were dead and barren and deserted.

“I have no qualms about being broken and being a mess,” she clarifies, “I am a mess. I’m a wreck without Jesus. It’s been a beautiful thing to basically go and sing songs and be really imperfect in front of people that I don’t know, and to say, ‘I really don’t have it all together but Jesus, but Jesus, but Jesus.’” •

[GOD] HAS SHOWN UP IN THOSE VERY PLACES THAT I NEVER EVEN EXPECTED HIM TO EVER BE

Boyfriends do not get husband privileges

BY MEGAN AARON

BOYFRIENDS do not get husband privileges. Period.

He's your best friend, a partner in crime, cuddle buddy, motivator, and encourager. He's your boyfriend. That's it. Don't give him things that his title in your life doesn't include.

Sure, he can have your kisses, hugs, support, affection, attention, and appreciation, but anything beyond that is too much for him and you to be dealing with solely as each others' boyfriend and girlfriend.

You should be spending time together learning new things about each other, spending time with your friends, and making memories. He doesn't and shouldn't be

providing for you yet. He shouldn't be choosing you above everything else in his life just yet. Sure you should be priorities in each other's lives, but you should still both be able to spend time with family and friends just as often. He shouldn't be living with you yet - otherwise you're gonna miss out on girl nights with your friends or 'me-time'. Therefore, he should in no way be receiving all of you physically yet.

Notice the word "yet" at the end of every sentence I just listed above.

He's still just your boyfriend. As your boyfriend he has potential to be your husband, but it's not until he has reached that potential and has the capability to provide for you, make you his #1 privilege, create a home with you, and love you till "death do you part," does he earn the husband privileges of your forever affection, companionship, and love beyond just hugs and kisses.

Think of it this way, you're saving something JUST for him. Only he will receive every single one of the privileges and gifts you've been holding onto. That's how special he should feel. Give him something to look forward to. Something to work towards and for. Because he's just your boyfriend right now. And he does not and should not be receiving husband privileges, period.

This article originally appeared on The Odyssey. Used with kind permission of the author.

Anorexic teen finds bread of life

BY CHRIS EYTE

The joy in April Shipton's voice when she sings in church now shows no hint of her dark past when she stood in front of a mirror with self-hatred raging in her heart - and heard a voice calling her 'disgusting'.

That was the curse of anorexia and depression but April has been healed after reconciling with her Creator.

April, a married singer-songwriter from the UK town of Ross-on-Wye, had loving, Christian parents but began arguing with her mum when she was 17. In fact, they argued about everything.

April recalls: "I am so grateful for that wholesome, spiritual start in life with my parents. It kept me rooted throughout my childhood years, but as a teenager I rebelled and sought independence from a deteriorating relationship with my mum."

The tension at home, alongside pressures of comparing herself to her fellow teenagers, triggered anorexia.

April enjoyed the secret of being in control of her body, or so she thought. She'd eat just an apple one day, a bit of toast the next - and liked the attention of people commenting on her weight loss.

At first, April thought she controlled her lack of eating but it soon controlled her as a mental illness.

"In this dysfunctional world I was in, thin was good and fat was wrong. You don't want to get better when anorexic because if you're better, you're fat. And that's how I saw it."

April faced her worst nightmare when her GP put her on a course of pills for acne. The medication had a side-effect of weight gain. She continued to skip meals and avoid food but gained weight anyway because of the tablets.

"I just started to absolutely plummet. I looked in the mirror and I was just beside myself. I was hysterical about what I saw in the reflection and I could almost hear voices telling me that I wasn't good



enough and I was disgusting."

For April the situation got worse when her doctor told her the acne pill had made her officially obese. She broke down in floods of tears in front of the GP and her mum took her home. In the car, on the way back, April told her mum everything about the deceit and control of eating.

Her tearful mum prayed with her and then took her to a mutual friend who had a prayer ministry.

The friend guided April in forgiving anyone who had ever mentioned her weight. She was also led to apologise to Jesus for trying to control her life in her own way. April received prayer for healing and felt free immediately.

The next day, she was able to eat and drink without restriction. She also chose a Fanta instead of her usual calorie-free alternatives. It was a landmark for April, who now calls Fanta her 'freedom drink'.

April concludes: "Jesus' name is so powerful, so holy, so incomprehensible, that simply speaking it over your situation can bring breakthrough.

"I became free from anorexia immediately, and with it, all the thoughts of

self-comparison and pride stopped. I no longer look at others and compare myself to them; I am truly happy in my own skin and feel completely at peace with my appearance.

"Knowing Jesus as the one who literally saved my life that night, has made me a more thankful person and changed my perception about everything; I am constantly just grateful to be alive and in awe of what He did."

April Shipton has released a rock-piano ballad debut EP, *Wherever You Go* and her music is regularly played on UK radio. Find out more at aprilshipton.co.uk

April explains:

"If Jesus isn't your Lord, you can't pray in His authority and use that position as son or daughter of God to move the mountains in your life.

However, God has already accepted you and paid the price for you to make that incredible privilege possible. If you accept His love and His way of doing life, He adopts you as His own child and places a crown of authority on your head so you can pray in His name for healing." •

Walking in his dad's footsteps

Many preacher's kids (PKs) end up rebelling against their upbringing and leaving the church, but Malachi Cole was impacted by the integrity of his pastor father and soon wanted to follow him in the faith.

"My father was the same man at home as he was in the pulpit," Malachi remembers. "From his genuine and con-

sistent walk with Jesus, I knew there was a God, and that He loved me too."

So at seven years old, "when I realised that I could not do enough good to get into heaven" Malachi asked Jesus to be his Saviour to save him from the consequences of his constant tendency to do the wrong thing [sinful nature] and desire to be his own boss [rebellion].

Strangely, it was not in a church that Malachi prayed for Jesus to be Lord of his life, but at a restaurant! In the Bible many people invited Jesus to eat with them and came to know him in the context of a meal, proving that He is not just Lord of spiritual things, but Lord of the everyday too.

"I prayed for Jesus to enter my life as

Lord and Saviour. I confessed that I was a sinner and turned away from my sin and asked Jesus to be the master of my life," Malachi explains.

That was 16 years ago now and Malachi can see how "over time I have grown spiritually. I have a hope and assurance of who God is and what He has done in my life. God teaches me, He leads me by His Word [the Bible] and I obey."

However, perfection is a long way off, he acknowledges. "I still mess up, I will always mess up, but I learn from those mistakes. God set me straight and He is faithful and just to forgive.

"I especially struggle with pride and trying to steal glory from God by taking credit for what He has done in my life. But it doesn't work. When I do, God reminds me who He is and humbles me."

Malachi reminds readers: "You cannot save yourself. Your good works and good

conduct will not give you life, unless Jesus is your Lord. Life after Christ is wonderful!"

As an example of how God has worked in his life, Malachi tells the story of how, from a little kid, he always wanted to be a worship leader [head up the singing in church] but never had the talent. However, at 17, he was laid low for a season with a back injury, which kept him from his regular football and wrestling.

"During that time God gave me a chance to lead worship. From that December day I have been leading worship ever since. God had a plan and with that injury He gave me a new purpose."

Malachi has even been able to release an EP of worship songs that he has written himself.

"God has given me incredible opportunities and I am extremely grateful for all He has allowed me to do," the 23-year-old concludes. •

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Malachi Cole

Keeping your eyes on the prize

Aussie icon Cliff Young epitomised a persistent endurance we would all do well to emulate.

POTATO farmer Clifford Young became an Australian legend in 1983, winning the ultramarathon between Sydney and Melbourne ten hours ahead of his nearest competitor.

But what made Young's win truly astonishing was that he was 61 years old at the time, and showed up for the race wearing overalls and gumboots, minus his dentures! Cliff, as he became affectionately known, also ran with a slow, loping shuffle, and, compared to all the younger, kitted out athletes with their fast pace, it didn't look like he had a hope.

What Cliff did have, though, was endurance. Over the five-day race, while his competition slept for six hours a night, Cliff just kept running, sustaining an average speed of 6.5 km/h (4 mph), and eventually finishing almost two days faster than the previous record.



It sounds like the story of the tortoise and the hare doesn't it?

It is also, I believe, a great analogy of the Christian life. Some of us start this journey of faith woefully ill-equipped, certainly not looking the part and maybe even very late in life. Our walk of faith

may be more an ungainly shuffle than a sprint. But the lesson Cliff teaches us, is that perseverance is more important than performance.

At the end of the first day, Cliff was way behind the other runners. He could have given up discouraged, deciding he just wasn't good enough. But he just kept going.

He could have got anxious about his running style compared to others' or tried to change it to match theirs, but he just kept doing what he did well. In fact, what has been dubbed 'the Young Shuffle' has since been adopted by other ultra-marathon runners, as it expends less energy and is thus more sustainable.

After the race, Cliff told reporters he had imagined that he was running after sheep, trying to outrun a storm. He focussed on the goal, he didn't fall asleep on the job and he just kept on.

At the end, Young said he hadn't realised there was a prize, and that he felt bad accepting it as each of the other five runners who finished had worked as hard as he had - so he split the \$10,000 equally between them, keeping none. Cliff didn't even run for a prize! He just ran for the joy of running and the sense of accomplishment at achieving a goal. Christians can also enjoy the journey of life, exercise of faith and the sense of achievement at accomplishing things for God.

However, those of us who have put on our faith-wellies are additionally promised the prize of eternal life, which will be shared by all who successfully complete the race. With Cliff's example in mind, let us follow the advice of the apostle Paul:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:1-2a)

Thy will be done - really?

From praying for her dog to losing part of her colon, Kathy has found God in the deep places of despair.

Kathy Keller is the wife of a well-known U.S. Christian preacher and author, Tim Keller.

Kathy's journey to Jesus began when she was a teenager, and her long walk with God through suffering has taught her how to praise Him and make His name great no matter the circumstances. Here is her story in her own words:

"God will use any means to seek and save us; in my case it was my sick beagle, Pepper, who was dying of a degenerative disease, and me trying to pray for the first time in my life. I only knew the Lord's Prayer, so I would race through that, and get to the part where I cried and begged God to heal my dog.

"One night I was rushing through '...Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven ...' when I felt as if I had just run full tilt into a brick wall. What on earth had I just said??? That I wanted God's will to be done? No, not at all. I wanted MY will to be done; God was just a means to accomplish that.

"But ... that's not what the prayer Jesus taught said! I felt frozen in a moment of eternity, with giant spotlights trained on me while all the heavens waited to see which way I would move. What would it be? Thy will be done - and of course that would mean that my dog would die, and I would no doubt end up a missionary in a pith helmet, unmarried and alone in a humid place filled with bugs (or so my imagination told me.)

"Or would I demand my will be done, even though that would be futile, trying to fight with God. Still, I could try! I could go my own way and try to wrest whatever happiness life had to offer by insisting on my will.

"How long this moment lasted I will never know... it felt like a long, long time that my soul debated between Thy/My. In the end, knowing I was signing Pepper's death warrant, I dissolved in tears, yielding to God, and embracing His will and all the suffering and unhappiness it was sure to bring.

"And for the only time in my life, I heard (in my head) God's voice saying 'It's not your dog's life I wanted; it's YOUR life.' Astonished, my tears stopped, and I leaped out of bed, rushed to the basement where my poor ailing dog had her box, and told her that she was going to be OK.

"And, of course, she was. God wasted a perfectly good miracle and healed my beagle, much to the



puzzlement of our veterinarian, who claimed that severed nerves don't regenerate and backbones don't re-grow."

Kathy, like so many other Christians, found out that when we give up what we want most to God, we get back so much more than we could ever have wished for. Far from wanting to steal our happiness, God wants to give us unwavering joy and abundant life - although it may look very different from what we imagine, as she goes on to explain.

"After that time, I recognised that I had been claimed by God, and had yielded to that claim, but I knew not one thing about being a sinner who needed forgiveness or what God had done to procure that forgiveness. It wasn't until college that I met serious believers who trusted the Bible as God's Word. And it wasn't until seminary that I heard about substitutionary atonement [Jesus dying on the cross to pay for our sins]. In between I was a raging self-righteous goody-two-shoes, judgmental and lonely.

"In 1991 I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, an autoimmune condition that fit right in with my family's collection of autoimmune conditions: I had sisters with Birt-Hogg-Dube, RA, Hashimoto's, Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis, and I was able, over the years, to add Sjogren's disease, psoriatic arthritis, and thyroiditis to our collection.

"What began as a mild case was exacerbated by receiving exactly the wrong medication (prescribed by a doctor) for my version of Crohn's, plus what I was later told was a 'gut killer' antibiotic (prescribed by another doctor) when I had a MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) infection caused by another doctor performing minor surgery.

"By 2002 things were so bad that my surgeon recommended a 'tem-

porary ileostomy' and he removed more than a foot of my colon that he described to Tim as looking like a burnt match. Seven surgeries later, the attempt to rejoin my colon succeeded for a space of two weeks, and then failed, leaving me with peritonitis and a permanent stoma.

"In the 17 years since then I have had numerous follow-up surgeries, some of which caused perforations, others peritonitis and month-long hospital stays - two of which left me with open wounds that took months (in one case, 12 months) to heal, even with additional surgery and 13 visits to the hyperbaric chamber for oxygen therapy.

"Apparently people have prayed for me around the world, for which I am profoundly grateful. What I wish I could tell them is this: God has pushed me to the edge with these crippling medical conditions and occasional brush with death. And I am so grateful to Him for it.

"I can't imagine any other way of breaking through my religious busyness or my confidence in my superior understanding of the ways of God.

"I grieved over the lost years of service to God; grieved over my sins of omission - my failure to love my husband, my children, my neighbours, the people I knew were crying out for connection. I

repented for the massive failure of my life, for gifts unused, grace untasted, opportunities to love wasted.

"What God gave to me was the recognition that I could glorify Him just as easily in my bedridden, shrunken life, as I could have on my feet and healthy. Better, far better, in fact, because all that health had been squandered on me, my agendas, my plans, my calendar. With nothing to give, I could still glorify God by yielding my trust to Him, by believing that He loved me and was still willing to use me.

"This became my refrain: 'Lord, I don't see how this (botched surgery, stubborn infection, unhealed wound that needed to be dressed and packed for over a year) will glorify You; but if it does, then I embrace it. If it glorifies You to have me here, in this place, then OK. I accept it. I embrace it. I am so happy to have a way to testify to Your love, and wisdom and grace that is not above my microscopic abilities. Be glorified, O Lord, in me.'

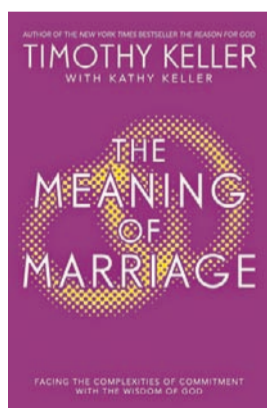
"I am on my feet again, and nothing that I know of is waiting to land me in hospital, or bed or grave, but that will come. For me, for all of us.

"Meanwhile, I marvel at how I missed this for so long. I Corinthians 10:31 says: 'Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.'

"Whatsoever' is a BROAD word, encompassing not only our active life, but our passive, suffering life.

"I can glorify Him, I WILL glorify Him, from whatever depths He ordains for me," Kathy concludes. ●

I COULD GLORIFY [GOD] JUST AS EASILY IN MY BEDRIDDEN ... LIFE, AS I COULD ... HEALTHY.



Kathy Keller and husband Tim discuss their marriage and ministry on Youtube.

Plant scientist knows the importance of strong roots

Dr Don Batten was for over 17 years a research scientist (plant physiology) with the Department of Agriculture in New South Wales, focussing on tropical plants. In 1994, he joined Creation Ministries International (CMI), and now serves as their managing director. But he says it took ten years of study to come to understand that the Darwinian ideas he had been taught at school were not facts and that the Bible was more reliable than evolutionary 'science'.

Don was born and raised in a rural area of Australia in the 1950s, when locks were not necessary and divorce was rare. He believes the rampant social decay which now afflicts Australia accelerated with the introduction of systematic evolutionary indoctrination into school curricula in the 1960s—indoctrination to which he was also exposed.

Don heard all about the Bible at Sunday school and never questioned as a child that there was a Creator. He became a Christian at 10 years of age after hearing a street preacher explain 'the gospel': how Jesus Christ, who was God in flesh, came to earth, lived a holy life, died as a substitute for humankind's sin (including Don's) and rose again from the dead, promising new life to all who believe in Him.

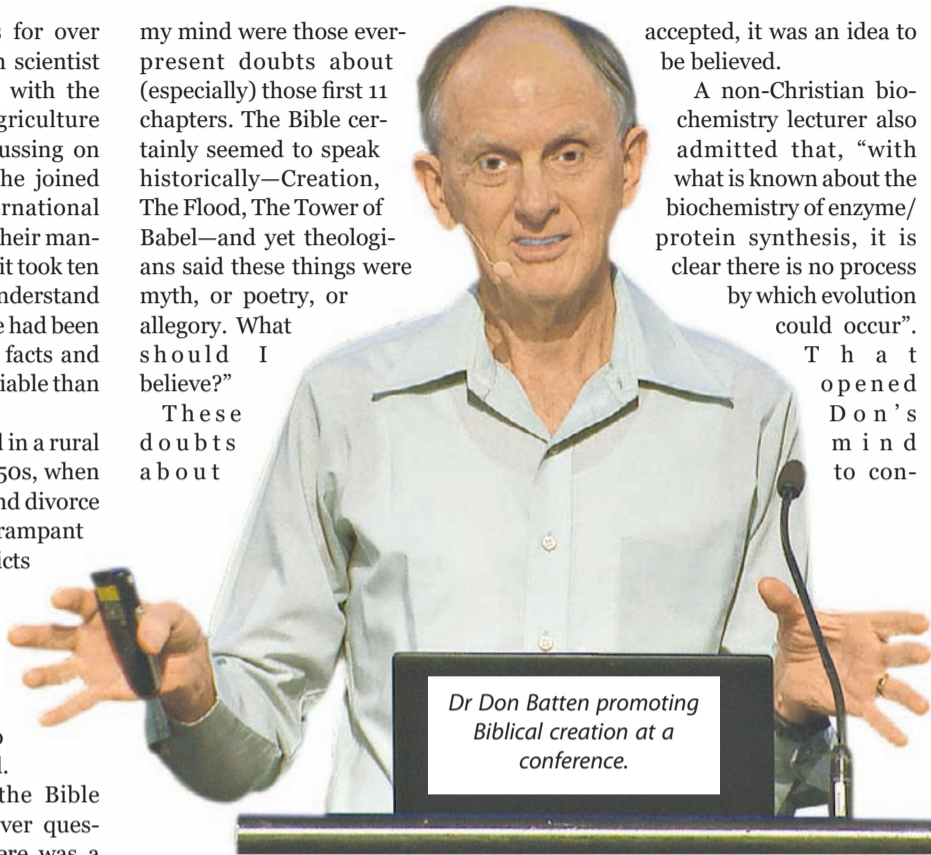
As a young Christian in boarding high school, Don was taught 'science as facts' and so tried to believe in both evolution and the Bible by accepting the notion that 'God used evolution', days-are-ages, 'progressive creation', etc. At the time, no pastor or youth leader had a satisfying answer to the evolutionary ideas being touted.

"I could never see how the gap theory [that there is a huge space of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2] solved anything, or that it had any basis in the Bible.

"Thus, as a young Christian, I had my feet knocked out from under me. I believed the Bible was the Word of God and the authority over my faith and life. I wanted to believe the Bible was reliable but in the back of

my mind were those ever-present doubts about (especially) those first 11 chapters. The Bible certainly seemed to speak historically—Creation, The Flood, The Tower of Babel—and yet theologians said these things were myth, or poetry, or allegory. What should I believe?"

These doubts about



accepted, it was an idea to be believed.

A non-Christian biochemistry lecturer also admitted that, "with what is known about the biochemistry of enzyme/protein synthesis, it is clear there is no process by which evolution could occur".

That opened Don's mind to con-

the reliability of the Bible caused Don to be cautious about sharing his faith. "How could I tell others about Jesus boldly and confidently when filled with doubts about the very Bible that was the basis of my faith? How indeed could a strong, persevering faith be built when the very foundations were riddled with termites?" he wondered.

I really chose not to think about 'science' and the Bible because I guess I knew that evolution did not go with the Bible at all. I arrived at university with this attitude.

Then a Professor of Zoology made an off-the-cuff remark in a lecture: "Some of you are worried about this evolution stuff. Don't worry too much about it, I don't know whether I believe it myself."

Something 'clicked' for Don when he said this. Suddenly he realised evolution wasn't a fact to be

consider what creationist debater Dr Duane Gish, a biochemist, had to say in his lectures at the university soon thereafter.

Then Don read extensively on the subject. *The Genesis Flood* by Drs Whitcomb and Morris helped him to begin to see things through different eyes.

"Although this book is somewhat old now (published in 1961) its scientific and theological arguments are still compelling. These authors confronted me with the grave theological problems associated with theistic evolution. For example, if evolution was the 'how' of God's creation then He used a process at odds with His character; a process of struggle for survival and death (that is, natural selection)—and all this when the creation was supposed to be 'very good' before Adam sinned (Gen 1:31, 3:17–19, Rom 8:18–22, 1 Cor 15:20–26)."

EVOLUTION IS REALLY A BELIEF SYSTEM PARADING AS SCIENCE



ISN'T CHRISTIANITY JUST ANOTHER RELIGION?

EVER had someone say to you "No, I'm not religious, I'm a Christian" and not know what they meant? Isn't Christianity a religion? Think of it like this: if religion is climbing a stairway to heaven, then Christianity is admitting we don't have the strength – we have to be fireman-carried up on the back of Jesus. It may sound pedantic, but the two are quite different.

RELIGION	GOSPEL (GOOD NEWS OF JESUS)
"I obey; therefore I am accepted"	"I am accepted; therefore I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get things from God.	I obey God to get God – to delight and resemble Him.
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God, since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know that while God may allow this for my training, He will exercise His fatherly love within my trial.
When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is essential for me to think of myself as a 'good person'. Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticised, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a 'good person'. My identity is not built on my performance but on God's love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of asking for stuff and only heats up when I am in need. My main purpose in prayer is to control circumstances.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with Him.
My self-image swings between two poles: proud and judgmental when I am doing 'right' or full of self-loathing when I fall short.	My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ, I am at once sinful and lost, yet accepted. I am so bad He had to die for me, and so loved He was glad to die for me. This leads me to deeper humility as well as deeper confidence, without either snivelling or swaggering.

Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

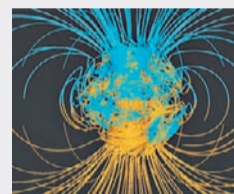
Quick flip turns magnetic field on its head

THE earth's magnetic field could be reversed in as little as 100 years according to researchers who uncovered evidence for a 'recent' event.

The team measured the magnetic field alignment in layers of now-exposed lake sediment in the Apennine Mountains east of Rome, Italy.

"What's incredible is that you go from reverse polarity to a field that is normal with essentially nothing in between, which means it had to have happened very quickly, probably in less than 100 years," said Paul Renne, director of the Berkeley Geochronology Centre and a UC Berkeley professor-in-residence of earth and planetary science.

"We don't know whether the next reversal will occur as suddenly as this one did, but we also don't know that it won't."



Rock records show that earth's magnetism has reversed itself multiple times in the past, which has been used to argue against the biblical timescale (by alleging that a reversal has to take tens of thousands of years).

However, this latest announcement is not the first time that evidence has shown that the earth's field can in fact flip very quickly. In fact, an article in *Creation* magazine [13(3):46–50, 1991] highlighted a report from secular experts suggesting that such a reversal had taken place in the time it took for a very thin layer of lava to have cooled, namely about two weeks.

In any case, long-age models have difficulty explaining how the earth's field, which is decaying rapidly, could sustain itself for billions of years.

• Earth's magnetic field could flip within a human lifetime, sciencedaily.com, 14 October 2014.

GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS



ARE YOU MISSING YOUR MUM THIS MOTHER'S DAY?

BY ROB FURLONG

THIS Mother's Day will be the first for me since my mum passed away late last year and like many of you, for me it will be a poignant one.

At a time of year when mums are celebrated along with other women, it can also be a time tinged with sadness for those of us who have lost our mothers.

Is there a way that we can still celebrate our mums, in spite of the deep sense of loss we are experiencing?

I believe there is!

When it comes to your emotions, I have been learning that it is helpful to "go with the flow."

In the normal run of life, there is a natural ebb and flow to our emotions.

We experience times of happiness,

anger, joy, fear and sadness.

And it is the same with our grief.

There will be times when we experience a certain numbness – where we feel nothing at all – but on other occasions we will feel our loss deeply and intensely. I am finding that occasions such as Mother's Day have a way of bringing my sense of loss for my mum to the fore.

When you find this happening to you, instead of suppressing it, allow yourself to feel it.

If you find yourself wanting to cry on Mother's Day, then cry.

Giving yourself permission to feel these things is another way of acknowledging how special your mum was to you, that you miss her and that you are thankful for her having been in your life.

It also means that you are human! When we suppress our emotions or convince ourselves that we should not be feeling this way, all we succeed in doing is to close ourselves off from reality and the supportive relationships of others around us.

It will also help to recall many of

the wonderful moments in life that you shared with your mum.

These moments will often centre on the funny stories you have about your mum or some expression or saying that you heard her say regularly in your growing up years.

I remember many times when my mum would scold me for something stupid I had just done and I would mount as my defense that "my friend thought it was a good idea!"

This was always followed by Mum's retort, "Well, if you're best friend told you to jump off a cliff, would you do that?"

It's hard to argue with that kind of logic.

Recalling the stories of the past is a very therapeutic way of working through your grief.

Laughing at the funny moments and taking time to remember the meaningful and memorable ones releases us from the fear of thinking it's wrong to speak about the person who has died and enables

us to better come to terms with our loss.

As you gather with your family this Mother's Day, don't be afraid to spend some time sharing around the meal table in this way.

You will all be blessed by the different perspectives about your mum that each person brings!

It may even be helpful to write a letter to your mum and include in it the things you would like to say to her if she was here, perhaps even some things you wish you could have said when you had the chance.

Above all, allow God to fill you with His peace.

There is a wonderful encouragement in the Bible that says:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.

His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

You are special to God and you are deeply loved by Him.

He knows your sadness this Mother's Day – invite Him to fill you with His peace!



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G	A	L	E	C	A	S					8	7	1	5	3	6	4	2	9
N	E	T	A	R	T	I	E	A			9	3	6	4	8	2	1	7	5
T	C	A	E	R	A	G	E				1	8	3	9	2	7	5	4	6
H	I	G	H	C	L	A	S	N			5	2	4	1	6	8	9	3	7
A	N	I	A								7	6	9	3	4	5	2	1	8
C	R	U	I	S	E	R													
X	S	A	C	O	G														
S	E	E	M	T	A	K	E	A	W	A									

How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

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

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

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

ADMIT

BELIEVE

COMMIT

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

Bible

Some 'starting off' literature

Information on a helpful church

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

I would like to think about this.

Please send me:

More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.

I have a problem (see attached letter)

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985 / Fax (08) 9453 3006 or email info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 18)

BY JODY BENNETT

MY little dog, Carrie, made me very cross this last week. I opened the front door to get the mail and she dashed out, across the road to chase a cat, which isn't a problem, but then she refused to come back when I called her.

I tried to cajole her, to put a stern note in my voice, to shout at her and to ignore her and pretend I was leaving her outside. But none of it helped, the dog was on a mission to find that cat and wasn't interested in me or my commands.



Now, I don't assume from that, that Carrie doesn't love me. I am cynical enough to realise that my dog probably only 'loves' me because I feed her, pat her, scratch her and let her into my warm bed. I don't think animals are capable of love as humans know it, because love involves more than just gravitating towards someone who meets your needs. Love has to do with selflessness and being prepared to put another's needs above your own.

Many people say they love God. The Bible is clear though that the litmus test for whether someone truly does love God, is not what they profess to feel, but whether they obey what God says.

1 John 2: 3-6 says, "Now by this we know that we know Him [Jesus], if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him', and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

1 John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" and 2 John verse 6 reiterates, "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments."

So, I can't be like my naughty dachshund and claim to love my Owner, yet refuse to turn away from my own pursuits to obey His commands. I need to show my love for my Master by living according to what He says and bringing my life into line with His will.

Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: If I become a Christian what will I have to give up?

IT is tempting to think there is a kind of 'check list' that goes with the step to become a follower of Jesus. And in a sense there is.

After all, if Jesus came to forgive us the wrongs we have done, it would rub His face in it if we willfully kept doing what we know to be wrong.

Yet there is a far bigger answer, and one that's a foundation for our whole future. What we are to give up is ourselves. Or, to put it another way, to give up having our own plans and needs at the centre of all our thinking.

Jesus left no doubt by saying "Any of you who does not give up everything cannot be my disciple". And for good measure He added. "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple."

That may make you gasp. Surely Jesus doesn't want you to sell everything down to your underwear and launch a hate campaign on those you love the most?

No, He doesn't. Jesus used a style of Jewish speech that exaggerates something to the point of unreality to make sure the point gets home. He did much the same with stories

about people with planks in their eyes and camels going through the eye of a needle.

In this case He was making the point that there is nothing worth clinging to if it keeps us from following Him. We are to have the same attitude to life as our Master. Jesus owned heaven and all its splendor. But, for our sake, He chose to let it all go to become one of us and die in our place.

The implication for us is that when what we own, or the plans we make, conflict with following Him, there is only one choice. His way, not our way.

Of course, if we see this simply as a matter of obligation it is going to be drudgery. It has to be out of love. What causes athletes to give up everything in search of a gold medal? It is not duty, but love for the sport they have dedicated their lives to.

It is the same way when it comes to following Jesus. We respond out of love because of what He has done for us and who He is.

Following Jesus is not about joining in His causes, cleaning up our act or going to church on a Sunday. It is about putting our whole life under His control and making Him the ultimate ruler of all we are, say, and do.



LEFT: Centre Jason Brown #60 of the St. Louis Rams prepares to snap the ball at the line of scrimmage during the game against the Houston Texans at Edward Jones Dome on December 20, 2009 in St. Louis, Missouri. Photo: Dilip Vishwanath/Getty Images

BELOW: Former NFL centre Jason Brown works with volunteers as they harvest sweet potatoes for the needy on November 1, 2014, at his First Fruits Farm near Louisburg, North Carolina. Photo: Robert Willett/Getty Images

FAME NOT WORTH A PILE OF POTATOES

There is a quote that says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”¹

Top American football player Jason Brown came face to face with that question on his 27th birthday and realised that his priorities had to change.

Jason, the highest paid center in NFL history after signing a \$37.5 million dollar contract with the St. Louis Rams in 2009, had everything – the MTV-style mansion, the status, the power to do anything he wanted. Having achieved seemingly everything, Jason still felt empty inside.

“[My wife Tay, who was a dentist, and I] were “a power couple” living in style. But when I got to the top of the mountain, it was very lonely,” Jason describes in an episode of Oliver North’s American Heroes. “I had bought into the idea that money could buy you happiness, although people warn you it can’t. I thought I was special, just like everyone else thinks they’re special. I was no different. I was gaining the world, and losing my soul.”

He calls his 27th birthday a turning point in his life when all his allusions came tumbling down. He woke up and says he should have been happy, but was really struggling inside.

“Twenty seven was the same age my brother Lunsford was when he was slain in action while serving in

Operation Iraqi Freedom back in 2003,” Jason explained. “I began to measure up my life and everything I had accomplished over 7 years in professional football, in contrast with Lunsford’s life. There was no comparison. He had lived a life of service, while I was living a life of selfishness and entertainment.

“The kicker was when I looked in the mirror... and I saw his reflection looking right back at me, and he asked, ‘What are you doing with your life Jason that’s so great? What are you doing with your life that’s so special?’ And I couldn’t answer. And for the first time in a long time, my heart was wide open.

“All of those seeds [of faith] from my youth that had fallen on rocky soil and by the wayside² – about love and loving thy neighbour and being selfless. All of a sudden they began to take root and germinate.”

The light bulb went on. He knew his priorities were out of order and something had to be done. “I went to my wife and I said, ‘Dear, we’ve got it all wrong. We’ve got to get back to faith and family first.’”

But they weren’t exactly sure what that meant. “I knew [throughout my football career] that God was preparing me for something greater, but I had no idea what it was,” Jason said.

Over the next three months, through returning to the Bible reading and prayer he had practiced in his youth, there was an awesome

transformation in Jason’s priorities.

He began to understand that God was saying to him, “Jason I haven’t been blessing you so that my blessings can stop at you, I have been blessing you so that my blessings can flow through you.”

He felt that, like Joseph in the Genesis story had been given seven years to stockpile food in Egypt for the famine ahead, his seven years in the NFL had given him the resources to meet the practical needs in his community. So, in 2012, Jason gave up professional football and his fortune to buy a farm in North Carolina.

And, in a leap of faith, without knowing anything about farming, he, Tay and their young children moved to First Fruits Farm to raise livestock and grow food to give to people in need.

Over the years since, although they have been extremely successful, Jason says people have criticised him and argued that he could have continued playing football, made millions and donated money to buy much more food for the needy than he has grown.

However, he replies, “God didn’t call me to finance the war (against poverty), He called me to be there on the frontline. He called me to give my best. Many people throw money at problems, but money doesn’t solve problems, it’s people that care and give their best that solve prob-

lems. I have to be faithful to what God has called me to do.”

“There are no regrets,” he says. “It’s not easy but no one said this road and this life [of God following] would be easy. But I will tell you one thing – it is worth it.”

As Colonel North says on his program, the definition of a hero is someone who puts himself at risk for the benefit of others and Jason’s radical lifestyle change has certainly made him just such a hero.

1. The Bible, Mark 8:36
2. a reference to the parable Jesus told in Matthew 13



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“... it’s people that care and give their best that solve problems.”