

TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

BY JANICE TEO

It was just past 3.30pm when Mike Keating got home from school. The 14-year-old was hoping his mum would have an afternoon snack for him but she was nowhere to be found.

He heard water running in the bathroom and knocked at the door. Getting no reply, he forced it open - and screamed.

His mother was lying unconscious in a bathtub full of water. She had shaved her head and slit her wrists. There was blood everywhere. Mike nearly passed out but held it together enough to call his father.

His mother survived her suicide attempt but the unhappy marriage didn't and his parents got divorced soon after.

Mike left home a week later after a fight with his father, who had brought his girlfriend into his mother's bed. "I never had any sense my father loved me," says Mike, who is now 63. "He was very emotionally absent. And he was a harsh disciplinarian."

So at 14 and hardly able to read or write, Mike left home. For the next two-and-a-half years he lived on the streets of Perth, working as a garbage collector. When money was tight and he needed more drugs, more alcohol, a new watch or just somewhere to



Mike Keating (left) as a young man, and (above) today.



sleep, he turned to prostitution.

"I learned the hard way that when a man offers you

a beer and a bed for the night, he may want something in return," he grimaces. "I was sexually exploited."

He sank deep into depression. There were a few suicide attempts.

"Emotionally I was completely cut off," he recalls. "I didn't have the coping skills for the kind of trauma I was exposed to."

Finally, one night on the way home from the pub, a desperate Mike did something he had only done as a child - he prayed. His mother, now in the advanced stages of dementia, had been a Catholic.

His memories of church were not happy, but he did remember hearing that God loved him. So that night he muttered: "Lord, if you're real, give me a ride on a motorbike." Then he stuck his thumb out.

"The next thing I heard was a Harley-Davidson engine - and a member of the Coffin Cheaters bikie gang pulled over on his motorbike and gave me a lift!" he laughs.

Mike returned to live with his father, but after a week of violent disagreements he packed his bags again.

That was the week the man who would change his life went to his house. His name was Len Peretti, a tradesman who was so happy the long-haired teenager was convinced he was on drugs.

"Are you on something?" Mike asked him. The tradesman answered: "Yeah I'm on Jesus." Odd to name a drug after God, but what did Mike care? "Where can I buy some of those?" he asked.

The tradesman guffawed and invited him to church instead. After the service, he asked if Mike would like to give his life to Christ.

"I was at ground zero; I was already in a living hell," Mike recalls, "I prayed but didn't believe anything would happen." And that's when God surprised Mike again. "God literally invaded my life as I was praying.

"I had a vision of Jesus and He looked at me with complete love and acceptance. The gaze of my Saviour held no shame, no recrimination. It was immediately life-transforming.

"I cried and cried. I had bottled up all my emotions just to survive and I swore nobody would ever make me cry yet there I was sobbing

uncontrollably."

Silver-haired Mike, who has recently retired as the senior pastor of a church in Perth, says he knew "something really deep had broken. I'd been to court-mandated counselling before, and they were kind but they had no answers. This was different."

He stopped his drug and alcohol addiction without rehab. His language was cleaned up - "that in itself was amazing!" he laughs. "God also told me to get rid of my music collection, which had records by bands like Black Sabbath."

He read the entire Bible within the first few weeks but admits "I was not instantly changed - my salvation was instant, but my sanctification took a bit longer."

For example, he had to learn it wasn't a good idea to go to church drunk because it could lead to punching the youth pastor for looking at him the wrong way. "I still have wobbly bits but thankfully the wobbles are further apart and my walk is much steadier," he grins.

The uneducated 14-year-old ended up graduating dux of the Bible College he attended in New South Wales and holds a doctorate in Theology. He founded Western Australia's State Bible College, has been a board member of Teen Challenge for 30 years, has written books and held major leadership positions with Australian Christian Churches for 35 years.

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We need to talk about death

BY MURRAY CAMPBELL

JULIE Power, writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald**, has highlighted how Australians are "reluctant to think about death or make plans for how they want to go".

According to a recent survey conducted among 1,100 people in NSW, 70 per cent of Australians prefer to avoid addressing the issue of death.

Power's suggests that "the ... pandemic highlights the need to talk about what constitutes a good death."

I agree, we need to talk, but who among



us is keen to discuss our final days and to make decisions about funerals? Contemplating death is altogether horrible, even more when we are considering people we know and love. Death is, to quote the Bible, "the last enemy".

Unlike most cultures for much of history, we have managed to sanitise death with our modern medicines, clean white sheets and closed doors. We have successfully delayed death through vast improvements in medicine and technology, with greater standards of living, by educating people about health, and through legislating thousands of laws guarding public and workplace safety. Despite all this, we

cannot account for the unexpected accident, a natural disaster, or the coming of a pandemic.

Even when we evade such tragedy, our bodies have been in motion since birth, taking the road of gradual deterioration and decline.

One thing this pandemic has proven is how much we wish to rage against the dying light, to fight and resist it with all our might. Death is not a friend, it is an enemy to struggle against.

It is one thing to have discussions about dying well, as Julie Power is urging, but it is quite another to die with or without hope. Hope doesn't evade death, and neither does it remove painful grief, but it makes all the difference in the world.

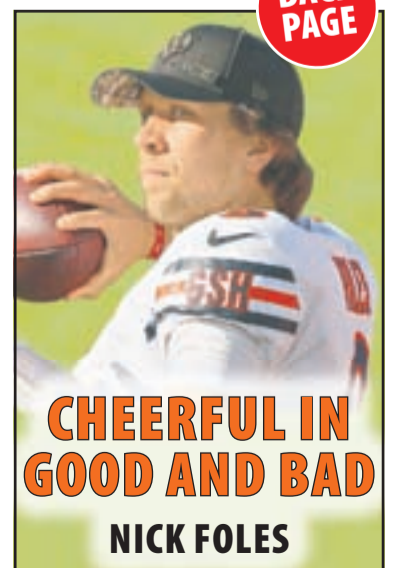
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Fun for Kids

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BACK PAGE



CHEERFUL IN GOOD AND BAD

NICK FOLES

We need to talk about death

• From page 1

A young mum whom I knew, died from ovarian cancer on August 1st. She grew up with an atheistic worldview, but when confronted with cancer and receiving a poor prognosis, she began asking questions and searching for hope. Suffering didn't reinforce her atheism, it led her to seek out God.



Murray Campbell

In learning about the person and work of Jesus Christ, she didn't feel repulsed or angry at God for her cancer. Rather, her life was transformed by the beauty and warmth of Jesus.

This wasn't Christianity offering her a placebo in the face of death, but her becoming convinced about the reality, goodness, and certainty of the Christian Gospel.

"He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces." (Isaiah 25:8)

There is never a good time to talk about death. Conversations about funeral arrangements and taking care of those who remain behind are important. These are difficult discussions we need to have

with close family members; not because death is imminent for most of us, but because we do not know when the hour will come.

As a pastor of a church, it is my great privilege to spend time with people who are facing their final days on the earth and to sit with grieving families in their homes and to stand with them at the graveside. The question of hope is rarely left alone as people grapple with the reality of the grave.

On one occasion Jesus arrived at the home of his friend Lazarus, who had died some four days earlier. Visiting the tomb of his friend, we read the shortest sentence in the entire Bible: "Jesus wept."

Mingled with grief, Jesus also spoke confidently of hope, not only for Lazarus but for all who look to Him – "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Murray Campbell is a follower of Jesus Christ, a husband, a father, pastor in suburban Melbourne and formerly a classical pianist. He blogs at MurrayCampbell.net.

*Even in a pandemic, most people shun talk about death and dying, August 11, 2020.



Carol Adriaansen

Thank you for the paper!

A FEW months ago I was thinking about some past events in my life. There were years of clinical depression that started after post-natal depression and brought on by a medical oversight. Over more than 30 years I had quite a few visits to the psychiatric hospital, sometimes staying for weeks at a time and tried to take my life a few times.

As I thought about these things I felt that I had failed God, and myself, and was feeling quite condemned. So I asked some of my friends to pray for me. One, who was not aware of these past events, said he believed God wanted me to know the depression was not my fault and that I needed to forgive myself.

One week later I picked up *Challenge Newspaper* and read the words in large typeface on the front cover: "Forgive Yourself".

I knew immediately that God was telling me to forgive myself. So right then I did!

Well, what a difference, how wonderful I have felt ever since! It was like a huge weight has lifted off my life.

The whole world looks brighter and lighter and I have started doing things not done for years. I actually vacuumed my car for the first time in 10 years! I also started making cakes and icing them, pulled weeds from the garden and I am now doing a big de-clutter of the house.

All praise to Jesus my Lord, I feel my whole life is being restored and He is carrying the burden of the past. I can say there is a new peace that is beyond understanding.

God bless, Carol

Has Challenge News impacted your life?

Please tell us how at jodyb@challengenews.org

FAITH AND MATHEMATICAL PROBABILITY

BY ALAN BAILEY

IN our last issue, the story of Lee Strobel's journey from atheism to faith was told, featuring some mathematical evidence. It is demonstrated in an amazing way in Peter Stoner's book *Science Speaks*.¹

Stoner, a maths professor, tells how he worked on prophecies found in the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah. With his students, he looked at forecasts such as the family and the birthplace of this One who was to come. Including, His triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the fact that He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver, and the description of the crucifixion in Psalm 22 (this method of execution being unknown at the time).

The prophecies were spoken over a long period of years and most were very specific and unusual events.

Working on conservative estimates of the probability of each prophecy being fulfilled in the life of one man, Stoner employed mathematical principles of probability to calculate the odds involved.

His methods were endorsed by the American Scientific Affiliation as being sound and reliable.

Each prophecy calls for multiplication, as there is a compounding effect. Eight chosen prophecies came to a figure of 10^{17} , which means 10 with 17 zeros following. This is saying that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight at any time in history is vanishingly small.

To illustrate the figure, he suggests covering the state of Texas with silver coins two feet deep (60cm), with one

marked one in the mix; then asking someone to blindly select one from the pile, expecting it to be the marked one.

Now, sceptics will wish to rebut these claims:

First by suggesting that the prophecies were not old but written around the time of their so-called fulfilment. This is out of the question. The prophecies range from 1000 to 400 years BC. The Old Testament is old.

Second there will be the claim that the figures are too high, even grossly exaggerated. Then consider what happens when we add another eight prophecies, easily done for there are scores of them. That doesn't double the numbers. Stoner calculates 10^{48} . This is an astronomical figure, quite incomprehensible. Now if we were to slash this figure to one millionth of its size, it is still an amount way beyond our grasp.

Third. Someone might say Jesus set out to fulfill the prophecies, which He knew. So, would He arrange for a friend to betray Him and then hang himself? Would He walk into his own agonizing death, and see to it that the Roman soldiers gambled for His clothes? All was foretold and much more.

There is no escape for the sceptic. Nor for any of us. Any reasonable person would agree that the future cannot be known in such detail and that we are looking at the supernatural, not the natural.

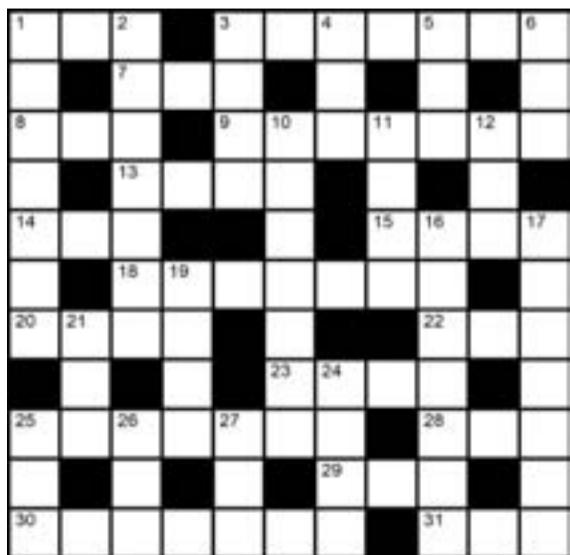
We are faced with the fact that the Bible is inspired, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that Christian claims for the deity of Christ cannot be denied. •

1. *Science Speaks*: Peter Stoner; Moody Press 1963.

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Catch red-handed
- 3 Mind minors
- 7 Logger's tool
- 8 Daytime warmer
- 9 Non-professional sports person
- 13 Facts and figures
- 14 Historic period
- 15 Final word in church!
- 18 Full of gristle
- 20 Joy
- 22 Sit
- 23 To fail to include
- 25 An edible mollusc
- 28 I problem?
- 29 Balloon filler
- 30 Bad school mark?
- 31 Wild, shaggy-haired ox



DOWN

- 1 Savings
- 2 Wound covering
- 3 To strike
- 4 Sheep's cry
- 5 Seek damages
- 6 Driveway material
- 10 A large stately house
- 11 Shade of blue
- 12 Treat shabbily
- 16 Whodunnit, murder ...
- 17 Make professional connections
- 19 Bona fide
- 21 A laboratory
- 24 Butcher's stock
- 25 Do sums
- 26 Chair part
- 27 Paddle

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



"Dad, I made you some snow tyres."

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Trauma to triumph

• From page 1

He has also planted numerous churches overseas, including two in Islamabad, a milestone he is particularly thrilled about.

But amidst the highs there has also been heartbreak. Mike's younger sister died of alcoholism last year and his daughter has made some poor life choices. She has overcome them and now serves with Mike at his church.

"It hasn't always been easy, but when I think of what could have happened to me - I mean I was a dead man walking at 16," he reflects. "I was completely broken. God saved me and has given me the most incredibly fulfilling life."

"This will sound like a cliché but for me it is absolutely the truth - if God can save me and turn me into an almost reasonable person He can fix anybody. Nobody's too broken or too busted."

Suicidal teen finds true Life



Isaac Tredrea

As a young man Isaac Tredrea had to make the difficult choice between his family's expectations and the freeing faith he had experienced for himself.

"My parents divorced when I was five and my stepfather moved in soon after," says Isaac. "When I was 15 we moved from New Zealand to Australia and my life changed as I plunged into rebellion and depression. "It was within the first year in Australia that I tried to commit suicide by cutting my wrists. I became very angry. I felt lost as my life seemed to lack direction."

He decided to leave school to pursue his dream of becoming

a businessman and ended up working in a music store. It was there that things started to change for the better.

"There were two Christians who worked there and they began to share with me what it meant to be a Christian. They challenged me about my beliefs and nominal religious values," Isaac explains.

"I wanted what these genuine Christians had, as they showed me true unconditional love, even after I tried to get them fired for sharing their faith with me in the workplace. I am so glad they didn't give up on me."

Isaac went along to their church and made a commitment of his life to Jesus Christ, but things became more difficult, rather than better in his life. "I was 17 years old when I made my decision, but pressure from my Catholic parents and girlfriend made me drift from my commitment for about a year.

"During this time things became darker than previously. Everything

that I had clung onto and valued more than God was stripped away from my life. Things like my job, my girlfriend, all the idols I valued were taken away," says Isaac.

When he hit rock bottom he began to think back when he had made his initial commitment to Jesus Christ almost a year earlier. "I remembered how alive I felt when I became a Christian.

"Then a year to the day I was walking down the street where I had worked at the music shop, with the Christians. I tried to turn around and walk away from the shop but I felt two hands push me all the way into the shop, where one of them saw me and invited me to their church that night," Isaac says.

He arranged to meet both of them

at the shop that night but he was delayed and didn't get there on time. "So I cried out to God for help as I wanted to come back to God that

night, but I didn't know where the church was other than a particular street on the other side of town. So I started driving trusting that God would get me there and by a miracle I found the church. "That night I got my life back on track with God much to the horror of my family, who then gave me an ultimatum; the Catholic church or Jesus. My mother said that I would be cut off from the family as well."

A week later Isaac made the big decision to move out of home at the age of 18 with no life experience to draw on. "I chose to live for Jesus based on the promise of eternal life and a secure future, rather than follow the path that my family wanted and have their approval. I chose Jesus that day and that was 20 years ago," Isaac recalls.

Isaac left home with a handful of clothes, a saxophone, his stereo and his car. He didn't have a bed to sleep on until he prayed. "Someone from my church gave me a bed for free as God miraculously met all my needs. Folks from my church started giving me sheets, towels, a desk and even a cupboard. Then one of the guys who shared Jesus with me at the music shop let me move in with him, even though I had tried to get him fired.

"To me this was real Christian forgiveness and love," Isaac declares. "I had never seen this in the home I was raised in or the church I grew up in. I was blown away by the support and kindness I received from total strangers.

"[Since becoming a Christian] I have experienced good health and peace of mind, wisdom beyond my years and an understanding of God's will for my life.

"I have made some bad choices which have led to bankruptcy among other things. However, with Jesus in my life I have the strength to face that which would have surely crushed me otherwise," Isaac continues. "I have had the opportunity to see my talents developed and my life grow in unexpected ways.

"I have for example been able to overcome my childhood stutter, and seen God heal me of asthma and various allergies that severely impacted my quality of life. God has also delivered me from issues like anger, lying, lust and laziness.

"Jesus has not only forgiven me but He has given me a whole new character and a second chance to live in the way I was created to do."

I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY THE SUPPORT I RECEIVED FROM TOTAL STRANGERS.



Unhappy bully's burden lifted

Sorry...it's hard enough to say the word when you mean it; downright impossible when what you really want to say is 'drop dead'.

For Sarah McTear, the struggle was real. The Perth woman was a teenager at the time and, by her own admission, a most unpleasant person.

"I was a real bully," she told *Challenge News*. "I used my friends and family to get what I wanted and when things didn't go my way I did everything I could to get back at them."

The more she tried to work up the moral fortitude to apologise, the more she just couldn't do it....unless. A twisted plan hatched in her mind. She would say sorry by baking an Easter egg for her friend; but she would bake it with chocolate laxatives and leave her gift to run its course!

"In what world was something like that right?" Sarah exclaimed. "I feel so ashamed when I think back to that episode."

Sarah is 34 years old now and remembers her formative years as being a time when she was extremely driven; a perfectionist and uptight to boot.

"I strove for perfection and acceptance," she said. More than anything, she desired praise from her parents, who separated in 1998 when Sarah was 12 years old. "But even getting straight A's or becoming the dux of the school didn't get me the lasting praise I wanted from them," she said.

Sarah actually had a happy childhood even though the family moved often as her father was in the Australian Army. "My sister and I were loved by our parents, and we shared

some wonderful times together." Sadly, her parents' marriage did not last, and after the divorce Sarah, her sister Steph and their mother moved back to Perth.

Sarah went from happy youngster to anxiety-ridden teenager, her relentless pursuit of perfectionism masking a deep insecurity which manifested itself in her bullying behaviour and need to be 'liked' by the 'right people'.

She said her parents had told her and her sister the true meaning of Christmas and Easter and that most of the schools she attended offered scripture classes, but all that meant nothing to her. "God and Jesus just seemed like fairy stories," she said.

By now she was exhausted from the strain of needing to be the best. "I was also tired of never being good enough for my family, my friends or myself," she confessed.

"I felt I could never trust anyone around me to love me unconditionally and that nothing was certain in

life – things could be demolished in an instant, like my family was when Mum and Dad divorced.

"I focused even more on my studies as I felt that was the only certain way of getting a known outcome, but even that began to feel yuck."

Then a friend invited her to a meeting of his youth group at church. "I had heard about Jesus my whole life, but it wasn't until I attended those meetings, that I actually understood what a sinner was and how Jesus was the way to be rescued from the death I deserved," she said.

Soon she committed her life to Jesus, but old habits die hard and during a youth camp Sarah said she



Sarah McTear

was soon her old bickering self.

"There was jealousy, pride, hatefulness and pure selfishness between me and some of the people in my group," she said. "Even after spending the whole week in God's word I still fought to find validation and attention."

Hauled into the youth pastor's office at the end of the camp for prayer and a good talking-to, Sarah said she finally laid it all down at Jesus' feet.

"As the pastor prayed I suddenly felt a huge weight lifting off my shoulders and my heart," Sarah recalled. "I knew I had to release control. Nothing I was doing was working; my relationships were failing. I was still so full of self-interest and pride."

That afternoon she prayed for God to use her life for His purposes. "I remember walking away from the office with a different heart and focus," she said.

It has been a while since that lightbulb moment and Sarah says God has changed her heart. "I'm definitely still a work in progress, but now my heart is filled with thankfulness and trust," she said.

"God has calmed my heart and taught me to fully trust in Him. Close

friends have told me I've become more Christ-like over the years. This is all by God's grace (undeserved kindness of God) and I am truly thankful to Him for that. Words do no justice to what He's done in me and for me."

Sarah's favourite verse is Proverbs 3:5 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

"What I've learned is this: surrender everything to God and He will look after you in ways you can never imagine. You cannot do life on your own."

It's a decision she's never been sorry for.

ST. AUGUSTINE noted that "sin is believing the lie that you are self-created, self-dependent and self-sustained." Freedom from sin therefore comes from believing the truth that you are God-created, God-dependent, and God-sustained.

THERE is no spiritual Switzerland, no neutral ground. We must be in God's will, or we are out of it. We must be obedient to His Word, or we are disobedient. - Jim Denison

TIM KELLER: "The human heart is an idol factory that takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them."

C. S. LEWIS warned: "When poisons become fashionable, they do not cease to kill."

Amputee forgives drunk driver responsible



Darrin Ray with his wife and daughter.

Darrin Ray's life had never been easy but just as it came together, he was the victim of a head-on car crash.



"I knew I needed to forgive him but I didn't want to. I wanted to make him suffer, like he had made me suffer. Like he made my family suffer," Darrin Ray shares on a *I am Second White Chair* film.

Born with a bilateral cleft palate, meaning he had no roof of his mouth or upper lip, Ray's early years were defined by a series of surgeries, relentless bullying from his peers and loneliness. Despite being raised in a Bible-believing home, the constant pain he endured as a child left him questioning God's goodness, and feeling very bitter.

One night in church Darrin asked his mom why God made him so ugly. She told him to look at the stained glass windows that were now dark and unattractive. No one would give them a second look now but when the sun shines through them they are glorious. She explained that if Darrin allowed God to shine through his life it would be beautiful. He realised then that he had choice of whether to trust his mum and God or not.

Years later, Ray finally reached a point where life seemed to be coming together. He was happily married, living in California with his wife and three-year-old daughter, and well-off financially.

"Life was good," he said. "I was a deacon and leader at our local church, and I was learning so much through the Scriptures and studying

Christian counselling."

All of that changed on August 20, 2006.

"I had gotten up that morning to go to church," Ray, 50, recalled. "My daughter was in the backseat, when a man who was intoxicated and high on prescription pills came the other way over a blind rise. He swerved over the double yellow line and hit me head-on going 60 miles an hour."

The front of the car came down on Ray, crushing both of his legs, covering his arms in battery acid, shattering his left hip, collapsing his right lung and giving him a major concussion.

"I was bleeding to death," he said. "Paramedics had to use the Jaws of Life to peel the car from around me. It was a terrifying experience. Thankfully, my daughter had nothing but a

scratch."

Ray spent months in hospital. "They told me I entered the hospital in the body of a 36-year-old man and left in the body of a 70-year-old man," Ray recalled. "They told me that even after years of surgeries, my right foot and ankle might never heal. My other option was amputation below the knee.

"I didn't know what I should do. I couldn't see God's good plans. I wanted to die," he said. "And then, Jerry Roberts, the chaplain at the hospital who had been a huge support to me, said: 'Darrin, I know God has a calling on your life. Do you think that calling is to be a professional

patient? Make the decision that's going to allow you to do what God wants you to do.'

"I chose amputation. Limb loss is not equivalent to life loss," Darrin decided. However, he was still full of anger toward the man who had devastated his life.

It was the man's fourth DUI. The state revoked his license, threw him in jail and awarded Darrin \$2.5 million in restitution.

When reading the Bible, Ray came across the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus prayed, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and later said, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

"I didn't feel like forgiving the man," Darrin admitted. "But I knew it was what God wanted me to do. I trusted Him to help me forgive.

I prayed, 'Lord, I don't want to forgive. Help me to do what you want.'"

At the court restitution hearing a short time later, Darrin went before the judge and asked him to write off the debt the man owed his family directly.

"The judge looked at me and said, 'Why do you want to forgive this man that debt?'" he said. "I told him, 'Because I have a Saviour who forgave me my debts that I could never repay.'"

The judge then made the stenographer transcribe everything that Darrin had said and send it to the drunk driver, so that he would know. "When I learned how to forgive this guy, it made me better, and not bitter," Darrin continued. "And it really, really helped me to heal."

Three years after the crash, Darrin returned to seminary and earned his degree. Today he is a pastor to senior adults and the disabled.

"It took me years to realise that God was teaching me that I could come along side others and help them in their moment of pain.

"Growing up, all I saw were broken pieces. But God took those pieces and put them back into something completely different to make me whole again" – like a stained glass window.

"Oh, what life He gives! What a life he has given me!" Darrin ends with a crooked smile.

Ex torture victim now advocate for the persecuted

BY TRACY AGNEW (SUFFOLK NEWS HERALD)

Egypt native Majed El Shafie had an experience very like the familiar Bible story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. He shared his story at a meeting in Suffolk, England two years ago. El Shafie was raised in a prominent Muslim family in Egypt. As he grew up, however, he began to be troubled by Muslim beliefs and practices, including the lack of women's rights and persecution of other religions, he said.

When he went off to college, he met people who were Christians and was amazed by the peace that they had. One of them gave him a Bible, and he opened it to John 8, the story of the woman found in adultery whom Jesus forgave.

"That was the first time I saw the forgiveness and love of Christ," El Shafie said.

He soon became a Christian and became one of the leaders of a network of underground churches and publisher of a Christian newsletter. Because Islam is the official religion of Egypt, he said,

they had to conduct their activities in secret to avoid persecution.

However, the government soon found El Shafie out and arrested him in 1998. He was imprisoned in the notorious Abu Zaabal and tortured there for seven days after he refused to give up the names of others in the group.

On the first day, he said, his torturers alternately dunked his head in buckets of hot and cold water, holding him underwater for up to a minute each time with little time to breathe in between. This went on all day with only 20 minutes of rest in between hours of torture, he said.

The next day, he was beaten while strung up by his feet. He recalled the smell of his own blood and having to be dragged back to his cell because he could not stand.

His captors warned him the next day's punishment would be three vicious dogs released in his cell.

"What do you do if you're in my place?" he asked. "You pray."

El Shafie said he prayed to die prior to the morning. But when morning came, the three dogs were released into his cell – and did nothing.

The dogs were replaced with another set of three, and one of them approached him only to lick his face.

His captors offered to



Majed El Shafie talks to persecuted Christians.

GOD MADE ME WHOLE AGAIN ... LIKE A STAINED GLASS WINDOW



When doing the right thing costs everything

It would have been a chilly day at Stadelheim Prison in Munich on February 22, 1943, the day 21-year-old Sophie Scholl was executed by guillotine for being part of the Nazi resistance in Germany.

Sophie, a student and an artist, was part of a group known as The White Rose, a student-led resistance organisation at the University of Munich, where she was studying biology and philosophy.

She and the other members of the group secretly printed and distributed leaflets discrediting Hitler and pointing to the Bible as the ultimate source of authority.

Together with her brother Hans and another member of their group, Sophie was beheaded four days after they were spotted by a janitor at the university as they distributed the sixth edition of their fliers.

Since the summer of 1942 the fliers had reported on Nazi crimes, including the mass killing of Eastern Europe's Jews.

Her discovery meant certain death.

Sophie's strong Christian faith, nurtured in particular by her devout mother was an important cornerstone of her opposition to the Nazi regime - and was unshaken even as she faced the end.

Everyone, from the minister who visited her to the supervisor of her execution, testified to how brave and honourable she was in her last moments.

Her final words allegedly were: "How can we expect righteousness to prevail when there is hardly anyone willing to give himself up individually to a righteous cause? Such a fine, sunny day and I have to go, but what



WE FIGHT WITH OUR WORDS. SOMEBODY, AFTER ALL, HAD TO MAKE A START.

does my death matter if through us thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action? God, you are my refuge into eternity."

The White Rose's last leaflet had not yet been published when Sophie died, but a draft was smuggled to England. Millions of copies of the leaflet were printed by the Allies and dropped across Germany by plane. This leaflet is now famously called The Manifesto of the Students of Munich.

Surprisingly, when 12-year-old Sophie joined the League of German Girls (the girls' wing of the Nazi Party youth movement) years before, she was a very enthusiastic Hitler supporter.

Raised by Christian parents, she chose to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus and, later on, her heroic actions would reflect her steadfast faith in Him.

In 1933, when Hitler rose to power, Sophie's parents were critical of him. Her father told her: "All I want is for you to walk straight and free through life, even when it's hard."

Slowly but surely, Sophie's conscience got the better of her and by 1937 she was a firm resistor of the Nazi government.

Sophie began to see some of the consequences of Nazi control personally. Her brother, Hans, was arrested for participating in an anti-Nazi movement and her father was sent to prison for speaking against Hitler.

Through the growing difficulties in her life, Sophie leaned more heavily on Jesus for support and courage. She was further motivated in her cause by listening to speeches from anti-Nazi pastors.

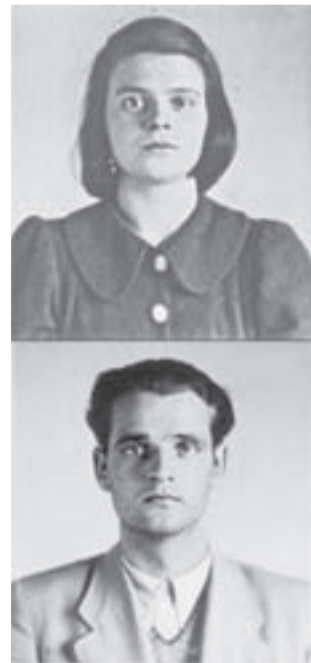
Of her work with The White Rose, she said: "We fight with our words. Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did."

Hans agreed: "It's high time Christians made up their minds to do something. What are we going to show in the way of resistance when all this terror is over? We will be standing empty-handed. We will have no answer when we are asked: 'What did you do about it?'"

After Sophie and Hans were arrested, four days of interrogation followed. Sophie's courage so impressed the Gestapo interrogator that he tried to convince her to blame everything on Hans so he could let her go. Sophie refused to betray her brother and so they were both sent to trial and condemned to death.

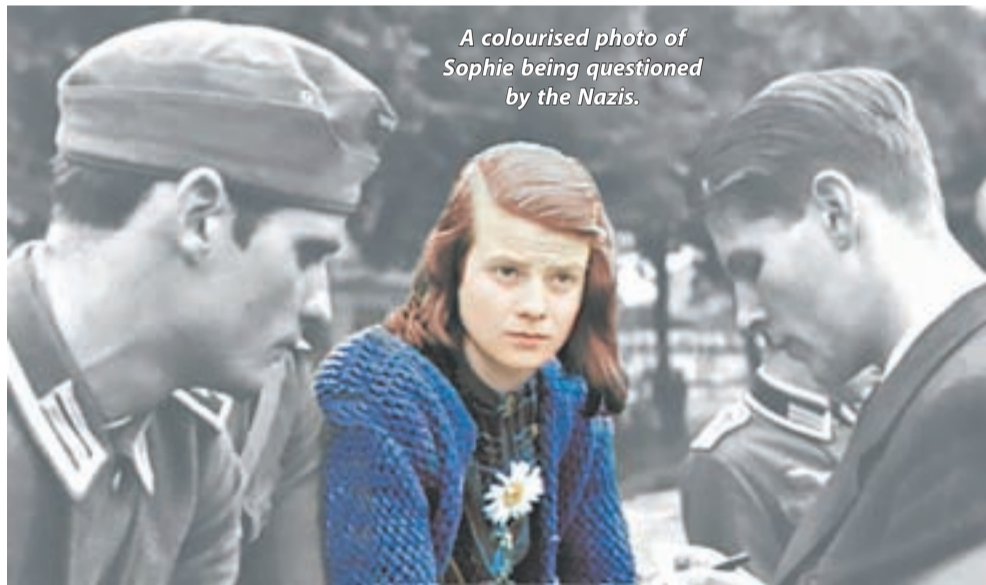
Their parents were allowed to visit them beforehand and the last words Sophie told them were, "Remember Jesus."

Today, Sophie is celebrated in Germany as a national hero. She is on postage stamps, has places named after her, and has been honoured with a special coin on what would have been her 100th birthday. These words, a quote of hers, are printed on the coin: "A feeling for what is just and unjust."



Mug shots of the siblings, Sophie and Hans Scholl.

Sophie fought hard for the values of justice and truth even though it cost her her life. To the very end, she stood as an amazing witness to what Jesus can do through one person's life and their determination to follow Him.



A colourised photo of Sophie being questioned by the Nazis.

Life hacker

BY JODY BENNETT

"ONE of the greatest tricks the devil ever pulled was making people believe he didn't exist," says Kevin Spacey's character, Kaiser Sosa, in the movie *The Usual Suspects*.

Of course, today it seems ridiculous to believe in a bad guy in red tights with horns and a trident. But that was just an image Middle Age artists developed to try to convey evil in a way that spoke to their audience; what if we use an image for evil that speaks to us today? What if I said Satan is a hacker?

Imagine him as a spiritual hacker - looking for weaknesses in your life to exploit and using your personal information against you.

Every day thousands of computers are hacked and huge amounts of data are compromised, but people never think it will happen to them and some are not diligent about the precautions they take to avoid falling victim.

In the same way, Satan invades and ruins millions of lives every day, and many of those people are unaware, unconcerned or foolishly ill-prepared.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Like a hacker, Satan disguises himself as something appealing - an online date or a Nigerian banker who wants to give you millions. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 11:14: *For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

Like a hacker who can look through your search history and work out what scheme is most likely to catch you, Satan's minions (demons) have been watching you your whole life, and he has been studying humanity for centuries - he knows what temptations will lure you most effectively. He kicks you when you're down, when you're tired or sick or emotionally vulnerable. Just like a hacker looking for weak spots in your firewall.

We leave our lives open to Satan's hacks when we sin. Sinning is like going onto dodgy websites - we know we shouldn't but it seems interesting or harmless at the time, until we find ourselves compromised, and that there are consequences we could not have imagined.

If your computer is hacked, at first you may be unaware and the effect on your performance may be minimal. Maybe you just see a cute icon or avatar. When first you play with sin, allowing Satan to hack into your life, you may not notice any harmful side effects - it may seem quite fun and innocent.

But soon your performance will be inhibited, you will experience glitches, and the information you receive will be polluted by the rubbish in your system - whether your life or your computer. Like many people in this paper, your life may completely crash because of the destructive power of sin.

But regardless how many viruses your life has, how hacked it's been or whether you are experiencing 'the blue screen of death', Jesus can fix it. He can sort out the hacked mess we make of our lives and His rules for living defend us from future attacks, teaching us to close the firewall against sin.

Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Why not let Jesus reboot your life today?



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Coping with Covid ...Coping with Covid ... Coping with Covid... Coping with Covid...

Cheerfully serving others

Ponder

BY PETER BRAIN

DURING the Covid-19 pandemic many people around the world have had to sacrifice much.

Even in normal times, our lives are built on the sacrifice of others - parents working two jobs, mothers giving up paid work to invest in raising their children, volunteer fire fighters defending properties, rescuers at sea and many volunteers serving in schools, community and youth groups, to name but a few.

Sacrifice and service go together. Both enrich us all. They are the glue that holds disparate, and desperate people and communities together. But what is seen in national emergencies, like the recent East Coast floods or the pandemic, is not always present in the mundane and unnoticed aspects of life.

Ironically, it is easier to make grand gestures than to suffer the little irritations and deprivations. Goethe noticed this when he commented: we can offer up much in the large, but to make sacrifices in the little things, is what we are seldom equal to.

The pandemic has required us to do unnoticed things for the common good, like washing our hands and self-isolating, and irritating little things, like wearing masks and signing into places.

None of us can do everything we might want or be able to do, and therefore we all end up making sacrifices at times, sometimes even of good things, in order to do the better thing and fulfil our responsibilities.

So we ought to learn how to be gracious in the face of these demands.

The point was made negatively by Gandhi that sacrifice and a long face go ill together and positively by St Paul: if it is showing mercy, let them do it cheerfully [Romans 12:8].

Sacrifice and service will inevitably require cost, whether money, time, or our own pleasures. All care for others requires sacrifice. How can we keep it up, and cheerfully, especially if we are not noticed, praised or recompensed?

We can, if we know that heaven sees and rewards us and that we are following in the footsteps of the greatest servant of all, Jesus Christ. African explorer and Christian missionary David Livingstone said: "I never made a sacrifice. We ought not to talk of 'sacrifice' when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His throne on high to give Himself for us."

In similar tone Hudson Taylor noted that every time he gave up anything for God, he found so much blessing, that he felt himself better off rather than worse off!

C. T. Studd the former English aristocrat, cricketer and, later, missionary to China, India and Africa, said: if Jesus Christ be God and died for me, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.

If our communal life is to be characterised as service-centred rather than self-centred in the ordinary unnoticed and unapplauded daily tasks, work and relationships, it will only be through a discovery of what the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, did in His coming as a man and dying for us. When we call upon Him as Saviour we can become willing servants, whose service is joyful, unsung and spontaneous, content to live for an audience of One.

The pandemic, and the stimulus schemes will need a long, team effort of sacrifice to right the economic ship. This is surely a time to seek God's help in imitating Christ in serving others without praise; and a call to stand in the breach, prayerfully seeking God's mercy in humbling us all, non-Christians and believers alike, to both trust Christ and to show our gratitude in humble and sacrificial service of others.

Radical teacher makes each child feel welcome



A LITTLE over a year ago, language arts teacher David Jamison went viral after the world caught wind of the elaborate, customized handshakes he memorized for all of his 75 students. Now that in-person school is back in session, his renowned greetings have returned with a whole new flair.

Even with masks on and with social distancing in place, David has found a way to make every student feel just as seen, known, and thrilled to walk through the door and exchange their "handshake."

He has choreographed a unique little dance with each of them that they do together as each child enters the classroom.

"Anything we can do to motivate kids, make kids want to come to school to learn, I'm with it," said David, known online as the Dope Educator.

David tested positive for the novel coronavirus right at the start of the pandemic. He said the worst part, by far,

(Above) David and his class in pre-Covid times and (left) doing a special welcome dance with each child as they return to the classroom.



was the emotional recovery.

"The aftermath of it, after you beat it ... I still can't sleep," he said. "We're so used to being busy, having control. So now I'm trying to spend more time with God, building my spirit ... to read more about anxiety and speak more words of affirmation."

The key to his recovery was taking his own advice and claiming for himself those same affirmations he has given his students so many times.

Be creative



Laugh

MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE FRIDGE



A 93-year-old man in Italy was in hospital with Covid. He got better, and then he was handed the bill to pay for the ventilator. The old man started to cry. When the doctor told him not to cry over the bill, the old man responded: "I don't cry because of the money I have to pay. I can pay the bill. I cry because I have been breathing God's air for 93 years, and I have never had to pay anything for it, but for using a ventilator in your hospital for just one day I have to pay 5000 euro. I realise now how much I owe God. I have never even thanked Him for it before."

.....
If someone has a faith worth following, I feel that their beliefs should make me feel uncomfortable for not doing so. If they share 90% of my lifestyle and values, then there is nothing especially inspiring about them. Instead of making me want to become more like them, it looks very much as if they want to become more like me.

- Ben Sixsmith

.....
God knows the minute everybody is gonna come into this world. He also knows the exact minute when we're gonna depart from this world. He knows. And in this period, from birth to death, the real issue is: What have we done about Jesus Christ?

- Pat Williams, VP Orlando Magic



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

Editor: Carl Carmody.
Staff writers: Jody Bennett, Janice Teo, Ainsley Gaebler.

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Physicist: Creation fits the facts

ORIGINAL ARTICLE BY CREATION MINISTRIES' JONATHAN SARFATI

For the last four decades, Dr Russ Humphreys has been at the forefront of biblical ('young-earth') creationist research, in geochemistry, radiometric dating, and astronomy.

Why would a busy physicist and family man devote so much time and energy to biblical creation? This goes back to when he became a Christian as a 27-year-old physicist studying for his doctorate. A major part of this was "exposure to the word of God (the Bible)," he shares.

Russ attended a Bible study and was prompted to read the Gospel of Mark, asking God to convince him if it was true.

"Within a few weeks, He did just that," he recalls. "For a few more weeks I was under conviction of my sins. Then in the woods, I gave up and asked Jesus Christ to save me."

Like many people, Russ had been indoctrinated in evolution. As a teenager, he saw that evolution was totally incompatible with the Bible. And because he thought evolution was true, he believed the Bible to be false. "I was a professing atheist until I was 27," he admits.

Today he maintains the Bible and evolution don't mix but he strongly affirms that science is compatible with the Bible and opposes evolu-

Dr Russell Humphreys was born in 1942 in Michigan, USA, and was raised in a secular household. He always had a love for science, and in 1972 earned a Ph.D. in physics on cosmic rays and ultrahigh energy nucleon-nucleon interactions from Louisiana State University. He worked in the High Voltage Laboratory of General Electric Company for six years then at Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico for 22 years in geophysics, nuclear physics, and high-voltage particle beam accelerators.



tion. He says scientific evidence for a young world is the best support for the Bible's history.

"The age of the world is a critical issue for understanding the Bible," he stresses. "The idea of evolution over billions of years cannot tolerate a short timescale. Evidence of this include: galaxies wind themselves up too fast, comets disintegrate too quickly, not enough mud on the seafloor, not enough sodium in the sea, the Earth's magnetic field and biological material decay too fast, too much helium in minerals, and too much carbon-14 in deep geologic strata."

In his book and video Evidence for a Young World, he maintains the earth has a strong magnetic field, which all sides agree is generated by electric currents. "Basic electromagnetic physics says that once a current has been set up, it should decay steadily," Russ explains.

"The energy of the electric current has been steadily decaying with a half-life of about 800 years. The amount of current (in amperes) has decayed with a 1600-year half-life. Archaeomagnetic measurements

(magnetizations of bricks and pottery) show the field intensity has been decaying steadily for the past 1000 years."

Working backwards even only 30,000 years, the electric current would have been strong enough to melt the earth!

Magnetic field measurements show that before the steady decay the field "reversed direction every few days during the year of the Genesis flood".

Russ theorised God created the solar system with an electric current and magnetic field that would decay. He also proposed how the catastrophic plate tectonics during the flood would cause rapid reversals.² One criticism of creation science is that it makes no successful predictions but Russ' theory definitely did! One, that the earth's field reversed over a few days rather than over thousands of years, was vindicated by the discovery the field had reversed in the few days it took a thin lava flow to cool top to bottom.³

Contrary to evolutionary ideas, Russ says, "Mars and the moon started with strong magnetic fields, but these have decayed now." Planetary probes later discovered magnetism in some of their rocks, something that would only be possible if they once had fields.

In 1984, he predicted the fields of the 'gas giants', Uranus and Neptune. In 1986, measurements from Uranus showed the field was as strong as Russ had said.

This was "100,000 times stronger than the [evolutionary] dynamo theory prediction," he confirms. "I couldn't find specific dynamo theory predictions

colleagues can resolve the discrepancy is by saying that God greatly speeded up nuclear decay during the year of the Genesis flood."

Russ has answered a number of critics, and further corroborated his work by diffusion research with another inert gas, argon.⁵

Another leading argument for billions of years is the time it supposedly takes light to reach us from distant stars. Russ has been working on models that start from the biblical text and invoke Einsteinian relativity.

He says his third cosmology is still a work in progress and pays much more attention to Genesis Chapter 1. He notes three details of the account strongly suggest the speed of light in the heavens until the end of the fourth day was much greater

than today, while the speed of light on Earth during that period was what it is today.

"That means that time in the heavens then was much faster than time on Earth. Things became normal after the fourth day, and the change to normalcy turns out to take care of the problems (such as an enormous blue shift) we would otherwise see in the light coming toward us.

"So we can get the light here to Earth within the time allotted."

"In all this, I'm pretty sure about what God says He did, but I only have some vague scientific ideas about how He did it,"⁶ Russ admits. •

References and Notes

1. Available from creation.com/s/35-6-614. See also Evidences for a Young World by Don Batten; creation.com/age
2. Dr Humphreys and electrical engineer Mark De Spain co-authored the illustrated, non-technical book Earth's Mysterious Magnetism, and that of other celestial orbs, available from creation.com/s/35-4-063.
3. Despite the 'retraction' by one of the co-discoverers – see Dr Humphreys' response: creation.com/reversal, 30 Nov 2014.
4. creation.com/mercury2
5. creation.com/argon-diffusion
6. See his video, Light years? No problem! Distant starlight in a young universe, available from creation.com/s/30-9-657.

This article first appeared in Creation magazine. It has been abridged here and is used with kind permission.

Believe It or Not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Did cells write their own software?

WHAT is something computers and humans have in common which constantly needs upgrading in computers but not in humans?

The answer is software. You might not have realized that you have software but inside the nucleus of each of your cells a program is written in the form of three billion DNA letters.

Intelligent programmers write computer software but what about living things? Evolutionists tell us that the information in the first living cell just appeared by itself, with no intelligent input required. But is that possible? The answer is a resounding no.

Even one of Australia's best known scientists, Paul Davies, conceded that, "There is no known law of physics able to create information from nothing."

And perhaps that's why, in a *New Scientist* article, he lamented, "How did stupid atoms spontaneously write their own software? Nobody knows."¹

Those who believe in divine creation however, know that God wrote our genetic code in His own image – which is why we have the ability to write code ourselves! •

1. Davies, P., Life force, *New Scientist* 163(2204):27-30, 18 September 1999

ANCIENT MEANS SIMPLE? → NO WAY!

In 1997, researchers found a microbe in the deep sea. It was described as "ancient" and "primitive".

Evolutionists expected to find this new microbe to be so simple it might even give them some clues as to how life originated. They were disappointed to find that even this 'primitive, ancient, simple' microbe had over 1700 genes!

The microbe was as "simple" as a brand new car is "simple". There was nothing "primitive" about it at all.

This microbe highlights one of the fallacies peddled by evolutionists, that there is such a thing as simple life. No living thing is simple. Even one cell from any plant or animal is incredibly, amazingly complex.

Even microscopic microbes that live at the bottom of the ocean.

By
Richard
Gunter

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

IN PRAISE OF GRANDMOTHERS

BY ROB FURLONG

GIVEN it is the month of May and Mother's Day is fast approaching, I think it a good idea to take a break from our series on being more present with people and focus on celebrating the women in our life!

Generally, I like to use Mother's Day as an opportunity to celebrate all women, but this year I want to especially celebrate grandmothers through the following story from James Dobson, written by a third grader:

A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own. She likes other people's little girls and boys. A grandfather is a man grandmother. He goes for walks with boys, and they talk about fishing and stuff like that.

Grandmothers don't have to do anything except be there. They're old so they shouldn't play hard or run. It is enough if they drive us to the market where the pretend horse is and have lots of coins ready. Or if they take us for walks, they should slow down past things like pretty leaves and caterpillars.

They should never say, "Hurry up."

Usually grandmothers are fat, but not too fat to tie your shoes. They wear glasses and funny underwear. They can take their teeth and gums out.

Grandmothers don't have to be smart, only answer questions like, "Why isn't God married?" and "How come dogs chase cats?"

Grandmothers don't talk baby talk like visitors do, because it is hard to understand. When they read to us, they don't skip or mind if it is the same story over again.

Everybody should try to have a grandmother, especially if you don't have television, because they are the only grown-ups who have time.

Despite me saying at the beginning of this column I would not talk

about being present in relationships, you cannot escape the fact that the description above highlights an important fact about grandmothers – they are present with their grandchildren!

"They don't talk baby talk like visitors do." In other words, they respect kids and do not treat them as if they are stupid or don't know anything. An old saying says, "You can con a con, but you cannot kid a kid!" We can all take a leaf out of our grandmother's playbook by applying this simple principle to all our relationships – treat people with respect!

"They don't skip or mind if it is the same story over again." This highlights the virtue of patience. No matter how many times she has heard the story, Grandma will always take the time to listen. There can be times in relationships where you find your patience wearing thin or you feel you have something more important to do than listen to the same problem again. But for many people, the sheer fact someone takes time to listen to them gives them the sense of being loved. Patience is an incredible gift in all relationships.

"They are the only grown ups who have time." How can such an observation be so wonderful, yet so sad, at the same time? We all know it to be true, however. From this child's perspective, Grandma is the only adult



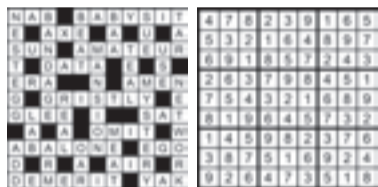
who has time for them. Sadly, it is also true for us as adults. How rare it is to find someone who will take the time to be with us, listen to us and encourage us along the way. No doubt this is why Solomon said, "Two people are better off than one. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help."

We can learn a lot from grandmothers! Respect. Patience. Time.

Every relationship will blossom and grow when these gifts are present.

To reflect on this Mother Day: What relational gifts did you receive from your grandmother?

Take the time to thank God for them, and her, this Mother's Day. •



How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

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

ADMIT

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

BELIEVE

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

COMMIT

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box



I have prayed this prayer.

- Please send me:
- Bible
 - Some 'starting off' literature
 - Information on a helpful church

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



I would like to think about this.

- Please send me:
- More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.
 - I have a problem (see attached letter)

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Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: WHAT IS ACTUALLY INVOLVED IN 'FOLLOWING JESUS'?



THE British army once used the slogan "Join the army and see the world." Their message was about what was in it for recruits. It would have been more honest to use the headline "Come and die for Queen and country."

The difference between those two approaches sums up what is on offer to those who Jesus invites to follow Him. Unlike that army advert, Jesus wants us to know exactly what we are getting into. Which is why, for a start, He calls those who would follow Him, His 'disciples'.

OK, so 'disciple' is not a word we use much today. But the word 'apprentice' is. And that's what a disciple is. Jesus is after those who, like an apprentice, will spend their time learning, observing and following instructions.

And Jesus spelt out the implications with clarity. For a start, He said, "Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

People then knew exactly what Jesus had in mind. It was a common sight to see those branded as criminals making their journey toward death with the equipment for their execution on their back.

Those who carried their cross counted themselves as already dead. They had no plans for anything else. In the same way, Jesus calls us to die to our own selfishness, vain ambitions, and personal priorities. To His would-be apprentices Jesus

also said, "If you love me, you will do as I command." So being His follower involves obeying Him. That probably evokes an image of dog training and obedience classes—and Jesus demanding we stop at the curb and respond to the command "leap." But it's a far from accurate picture.

It means a disciple of Jesus salutes Jesus' flag, marches to His commands and checks out His orders of the day—and then does them.

That involves the many things Jesus spoke about. Like forgiving those who wrong us, praying for those who are unkind to us; not fretting about how things will work out, and avoiding public display when we help others. He spoke of our need to be meek, merciful, pure in heart, and people who seek after peace. And a lot more besides.

Jesus also said that no one should think about following Him unless they were ready to do so publicly. That often means being seen to be at odds with the values and attitudes of a selfish me-centered society, where most people are swimming in the opposite direction.

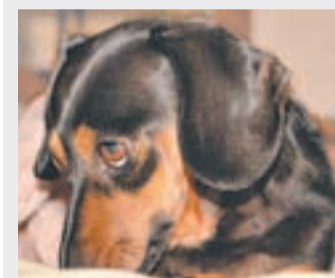
Don't follow Jesus to find fulfillment — though I guarantee you'll find it. Don't follow Jesus for excitement — yet it will never be in short supply. Instead follow Jesus because He is 'the way, the truth and the life'.

Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 12)

BY JODY BENNETT

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It reminds me not to get complacent.

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

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

More than the score

A broken clavicle is not commonly known to be an occasion for cheer. Unless you spell cheer p-a-i-n. However, nobody seems to have told American football player Nick Foles this.

NFL star Nick, currently quarterback for the Chicago Bears, fractured his collarbone in 2019 while playing for the Jacksonville Jaguars and needed to undergo surgery. The injury sidelined the then 30-year-old, who in 2018 had helped the Philadelphia Eagles to a Super Bowl victory as their starting quarterback.

Arm strength is crucial for a quarterback, so a fractured clavicle is not an injury to be sniffed at.

However, instead of complaining, Nick said suffering and disappointment in no way caused him to doubt the goodness of the God he serves. At the November press conference where he discussed the setback, his exact words were: "I can still have joy in injury."

"Right when I felt this thing break and I was going into the locker room I just realized, 'God this wasn't exactly what I was thinking when I came to Jacksonville,'" Nick said.

"But at the end of the day, I said, 'God if this is the journey you want me to go on, I'm going to glorify you in every action, good or bad.' You know, I still can have joy in injury. People hear that and say that's crazy, but it's like when you believe in Jesus and you go out there and you play, that changes your heart."

Nick's faith is strong now but he remembers feeling lost as a young adult. He grew up going to church every week in Austin, Texas, but without taking the step of committing his life to God.

He recalls feeling isolated, helpless and crying out to Jesus in repentance in a parking garage near Michigan State's campus during his freshman year.

From there, his faith grew as he studied the Bible and surrounded himself with older believers who mentored him.

This is not the first time Nick has made his faith in God a matter of public record. In 2018, he was a bench-warmer for the Philadelphia Eagles, the second choice quarterback. Then starting quarterback Carson Wentz went down with a torn anterior cruciate ligament.

Nick was catapulted from second choice to MVP (most valuable player), leading the team to a victory in a Super Bowl win the critics had pronounced impossible.

Less than five seconds into his post-game interview, Nick acknowledged God as he took in the victorious moment the city of Philadelphia had been waiting for since 1933.

"Unbelievable. All glory to God," Nick said.

"I wouldn't be out here without God, without Jesus in my life. I can



**Challenge
SPORT**

Nick Foles (centre) of the Chicago Bears is pressured by Ifeadi Odenigbo #95 of the Minnesota Vikings as Charles Leno Jr. #72 attempts to block at Soldier Field on November 16, 2020 in Chicago, Illinois. The Vikings defeated the Bears 19-13. (Photo by Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images)

tell you that first and foremost. I don't have the strength to come out here and play this game like that.

"And [following Jesus is] an everyday walk. We have struggles as people, and that's just been my rock. And my family.

"I want to keep doing great things for the kingdom, but I also want to keep growing

2019 and the temptation changed from being complacent to being despondent about his injury.

"[All glory to God is] my message when I play. The same thing happens when I get injured... we tend to make this so much about us. As human beings, we tend to make it about us, as athletes. But it's not about us. It really isn't.

"If you do make it about yourself, you're probably gonna go home at night, lay your head on your pillow

and be very alone and very sad.

"My purpose isn't football, it's impacting people," he declared at the press conference. "My sphere of influence just happens to be in a locker room. Yes, injury is difficult physically but spiritually it has helped me to grow into a better person, because of the trial I've been through.

"That's how I go through life — the good Lord has always been there."

Nick said he wants to become a high school pastor after his football career and is taking online seminary classes.

"I want to continue to learn and challenge my faith. I want to impact people's hearts," he explains.

"I can't play football forever. I've been blessed with an amazing platform and it's just a door God has opened. But I still have a lot of school left and a long journey."

Nick is married to Tori Moore. They have a daughter, Lily James. In 2018, Nick wrote his autobiography *Believe It: My Journey of Success, Failure, and Overcoming the Odds*. The couple has donated all their proceeds from the book to various charities.

MY PURPOSE ISN'T FOOTBALL, IT'S IMPACTING PEOPLE



as a person," he said at the time. "This is actually a tough situation to be in—in the sense that you achieve something so great that complacency is right there. You can feel it at times, and you don't want that to set in. You don't want to become stagnant, so I just continue to keep moving, growing and staying in the Word [reading the Bible]."

Fast forward to



Nick Foles during a game against the Tennessee Titans in Nashville last November. (Photo by Frederick Breedon/Getty Images)

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