

STOCKMAN FINDS PATH TO FORGIVENESS

BY RODNEY RIVERS (ABRIDGED)

Rodney Rivers (68), MoolaBulla Gidja and Gooniyandi Tribes, Musician and Translator, Perth, WA.

“G’day. My name is Rodney Rivers. I come from the Kimberley in northern Western Australia. My passion for Australia is one day I’d like to see the glory of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

I first heard about the Lord in 1954. I was on Moola Bulla [a cattle station in the Kimberley], I was about seven-and-a-half years of age. And an old missionary came there with a friend. His name was Ern Faulkner and the story he told me about how Jesus went to the cross and died in my place. And it was that story that really impacted me that day.

Because before that, we didn’t even know who Jesus was. We used to worship the spirits, worship the environment. But when this guy came, Mr Faulkner, and told me about Jesus, my heart was broken that day. And then he left the property but the seed, the Word of God was sown in my heart that day.

And in 1955, that same settlement closed down. I went on a truck with 20 other kids to Fitzroy Crossing in 1955, but then in 1956, I was fast asleep in the dormitory and I heard this voice, it was like a majestic voice.

And I went back to sleep again, then the person called my name again. And I said to this person, “Who are you?” And I didn’t know who the person was. It was like Samuel in the Bible, but this voice was really majestic, it was friendly. It was the voice of the Holy Spirit.

And then I asked the man, the Superintendent, “Actually, there was a person came to me the other night. I don’t know who He is, but this person would keep calling my

name.” But this guy said “It’s the Lord Jesus. You need to ask Him to come into your life.”

My mum came to the Lord in ’57, she got baptised in a little muddy waterhole there. She was sent to

this mission we call Moola Bulla as a stolen generation and she had bitterness and unforgiveness, but when she met the Lord, she forgave what happened.

My grandmother



Stockman and talented musician/singer-songwriter Rodney Rivers is fluent in four Indigenous Australian languages.

came to the Lord as well. She was living in Fitzroy at that time but we couldn’t really mix with the full-bloods because they separated us. They used to call us half-castes or coloured people and we couldn’t mix with them.

The Lord told my mum not to have any bitterness or grief against the white man, but my grandmother

had had a chain put around her neck and tied to the horse’s saddle of a policeman.

But then when she heard about the Lord, she gave her life to the Lord but she had to forgive those policemen, for what they did. And my grandmother said to my mum, “Well, I want you to forgive as well.”

I went to a church here back in the

70s when I was at Bible college down south in Perth, and they wouldn’t serve me communion. It was really wrong what they did and I had to forgive them.

People get hung up on little things like that. And I said “No, mate, we’re all going to the same place whether you’re black, white or brindle.

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HEALING AFTER YEARS OF AGONY

Vani Marshall was a high-caste Brahmin, classical Indian dance teacher and law lecturer, but her life brought her no joy.

Vani’s body was riddled with an illness nobody could identify, let alone find a cure for. The pain was excruciating — she woke up with it, went to bed with it, and often collapsed from it halfway through lectures.



Vani Marshall

She prayed day and night to be healed. As the daughter and granddaughter of Hindu priests, and as a temple dancer, there were more than three million gods she could pray to. But her pleas went unheeded.

Dedicated to a pagan goddess by her parents when she was born, Vani says she was a committed Hindu for the first 26 years of her life. “I was totally under the control of the demon goddess,” she shares in a YouTube video. “When I danced in the temples I would be totally under the power of the Hindu gods.”

The millions of deities felt lifeless to her, but with her family lineage, Vani did not dare share her feelings with anyone. It would have been unthinkable for her to

step into another religion.

“From childhood I always had a deep hunger and thirst for the one true God,” she reveals. “I could not find God in the so-called Hindu scriptures or the temples. I joined the Sai Baba cult and was involved in Hindu witchcraft and the occult but I could not find God.”

She had heard of Jesus before. She remembers her childhood in Malaysia, when people would come to her door and hand out ‘Jesus Saves’ tracts. “I ignored them because I already had more than 3 million gods of my own, thank you.”

Meanwhile Vani’s body continued to torture her. “I was sick, so sick and in so much pain I had thoughts of suicide.”

One night as she lay in pain on her bed, she remembered those tracts, sat up and called out to Jesus. At first nothing happened.

“I tried again — ‘Jesus! The Christians call you God. I am a Hindu and I worship many gods. If You are the one true God I am seeking, I want to see You! Please help me!’”

Suddenly a light filled her room. “My room light was not turned on and there were no streetlights. But

there it was, this penetrating light that filled my entire room.

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Fun for Kids

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WANTING MORE

JASON ROBINSON

Conquering cancer and Covid together

BY MARK ELLIS

In 2020 Geane Prado, 51, was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer. She started chemotherapy and had a bone marrow transplant. But when she went for her second round of chemotherapy, doctors discovered Geane had COVID-19, according to a report by Aletea.

Admitted to the hospital, her condition deteriorated rapidly. After the second diagnosis, she fully surrendered her life to God.

God gave her a strong faith, but prior to being intubated, she wrote goodbye letters to her family. She sent them all to a friend and asked her to deliver the messages if she died.

In one of the letters, she gave the following exhortation to her children:

“Under no circumstances separate from each other. Be united, live for each other.”

“Take care of your spiritual life, educate your children in the fear of the Lord, be strong, and continue to be beautiful, loving children of good character.”

“There are no words to describe how proud I am of you.”

“Never abandon your father, take care of him with love.”

Geane’s condition got worse. While intubated, she endured a pulmonary embolism, cardiac arrest, renal failure, and bacterial pneumonia. Her

fever would not decrease. Doctors told her family she had 48 hours to live.

When her children learned of the grim prognosis, they mobilised a massive prayer chain.

“They took friends to the hospital door to pray, and asked for prayers through WhatsApp and social networks. People from all over Brazil joined the movement of faith. They always added a word of encouragement during their prayers: ‘Get up, Geane,’ according to Aletea.

God heard their cry, answered their prayers, and within a short time her fever disappeared and her condition gradually improved. Doctors described it as ‘a miracle.’

“The doctors said that my family could prepare for my death, because medicine had nothing more to do,” Geane told Aletea. “No medicine was capable of curing my fever. But God was on our side. One doctor even said to my daughter, ‘Your mother



Geane Prado (black dress) celebrates her full recovery by ringing the cancer ward bell, as her children (top photo) and staff look on.

can consider herself a victor.’ And I’m here because all of this was really a great miracle.”

During the coma, she had a “supernatural” experience.

“I was on the other side. I saw my cardiac arrest, I saw the doctors reviving me ... I remembered afterwards ... I remember a doctor saying: ‘Don’t give up, don’t give up’ ... And God wanted me to stay here.

After nearly 40 days, Geane left the hospital.

In addition to her healing from Covid, doctors discovered the can-

cer cells in her body are no longer detectable.

“I don’t know what God wants from me, but whatever He wants, I will do it,” Geane said. “I always had a life of service. And that’s why God left me here, to lift up His name.”

In overcoming cancer and Covid, Geane learned to trust God.

“I learned that we have to live in the now, to improve even more as a human being, not to hold grudges, not to leave anything unresolved, to live each day, and to live each day for God,” she concludes.

HEALING AFTER YEARS OF AGONY

• From page 1

“Then I saw a form – not a face, but a form – and heard a voice. It was so loud and clear ‘I am Jesus, I am God’. This was the first and only time I have ever heard His audible voice. I felt a warmth in my body and in an instant, my pain was gone.

“I felt no fear, just great peace. I had worshipped the gods of Hinduism for years but nothing happened. Jesus healed me in an instant and I felt like the lyrics of [the hymn] *Amazing Grace* ... I was blind but now I see.”

Vani spent the rest of that night basking in the presence of God, but in the morning reality came back to bite her. It was Friday, when the family would go to the temple for prayers. “I told my mum ‘Mum, I can’t go because I saw Jesus’.

“My mum looked at me like I had lost my mind. When she came back from the temple, she brought priests to exorcise me.”

The priests gathered round her, mocking Jesus and her newfound faith. Her father watched as his daughter refused to be intimidated and shook his head in deep disappointment. “Why?” he asked her.

Vani remembers to this day how crushed she felt when she saw her father’s displeasure. “But I knew I couldn’t go back. Jesus had taken away my pain. He was real and that was the truth.”

Halfway through the “exorcism” one of the priests stopped and said: “We cannot help her. Whatever has gotten a hold of her is more powerful.”

Vani felt she had won the battle, but her victory was short-lived as her mother packed her a bag and told her to leave home and “stay with your Christian friends”.

That estrangement lasted for years. “I would call my mum on her birthday and Mother’s Day. She would hang up as soon as she heard my voice. She felt so betrayed.”

Eventually, about a year later, her father and two brothers committed their lives to Jesus as well. At the time of his conversion, her father said to her: “Is this why you left everything to follow Jesus? I don’t blame you.”

Mother and daughter have reconciled, though Vani’s mother has not yet become a Christian. Vani believes, however, that the ice is melting. Her mother has asked her to pray for her painful knees and has brought flowers to a neighborhood church, telling the pastor “these are for Jesus”.

“The greatest miracle of all,” she says, “was not that my sickness was healed. All other miracles pale in comparison to God coming to live inside of us.”

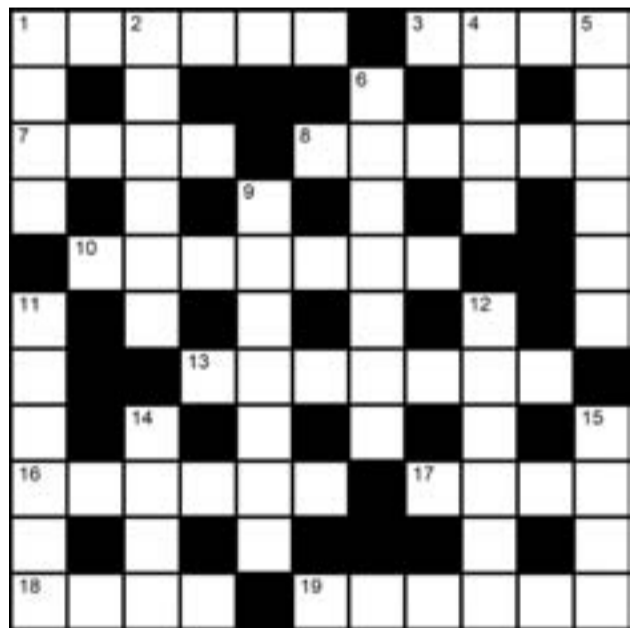
Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

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- 3 Tall, woody plant
- 7 Dust ___ allergy
- 8 Area dense with trees
- 10 Total of salaries
- 13 Shipwreck litter
- 16 Fruit and colour
- 17 Pond resident
- 18 July 1, 2017, for one
- 19 Car radiator covering

DOWN

- 1 Biceps locations
- 2 Catch with a ruse
- 4 Coral formation
- 5 Bible queen
- 6 Put pages in correct order
- 9 Three book series



- 11 University location
- 12 Victory wreath leaf
- 14 Blowgun missile
- 15 Shrek, for one

Stockman finds path to forgiveness

• From page 1

You’ve been bought by the blood of the Lord, we’ve got the same Holy Spirit living in us, we eat the same spiritual food.

I think the Lord sees me through His Son, the Lord Jesus, as righteous and without sin. And I think that’s how God sees us.

The Lord died for us and He sees us like that – spotless. The Lord sees me as His son, you know? And we’re joined here with Christ and we’re working here together with God.

From time to time, I go and pray for sick people in the hospital here [in Perth] and I’ve seen amazing results, you know. I’ve seen a person here last year, their legs were going to get chopped off and the Lord healed him. Someone with kidney stones came to Fremantle hospital here and the Lord

healed him.

There was a kid paralysed who came to Princess Margaret Hospital here, he was totally paralysed on one side and me and my wife went there and prayed for this kid and the Lord totally healed that kid and he’s back in the Kimberley.

The Lord says *‘By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’* (John 13:35). And the Lord says *‘love*

the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might and thy neighbour as thyself’ (Luke 10:27).”

[Rodney then explains John 3:16 in (Aboriginal language) Kriol]: *“For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Taken from an interview with 40 Stories.



SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



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Broken in body and mind, falsely accused and in despair, and yet...

Growing up, Rob Decker's home was filled with arguments, drinking, smoking, drugs, and physical abuse.

Rob would regularly escape the toxicity of his home by staying at friends' houses or out on the street — anything to get away from what he knew was waiting for him at home.

By the time Rob started high school, his life revolved around alcohol, drugs, girls and fighting.

"As a first year university student I would pick fights with seniors and I spent a month in juvenile hall," he confesses. "I was constantly looking for outlets to numb the pain of the neglect I felt at home."

This continued into his adulthood as he attempted to bury his pain with constant partying and fighting.

"By 28 my life was a complete mess and I had written myself off as a lost cause," he explains. "I was an unemployed alcoholic and drug abuser."

He recalls a Christian friend who consistently encouraged him and invited him to church.

One night he decided to go to a men's Bible study and was surprised to find everyone there so accepting. When the men offered to pray over Rob, he agreed. He says as they asked Jesus to come into his life, he felt a sense of peace for the first time.

He left the Bible study feeling refreshed and ready to make a change in his life, but two months later he found himself returning to his previous lifestyle. He was in a toxic, co-dependent relationship and any money he and his girlfriend made went to support their drug and alcohol habits.

Rob's girlfriend turned to selling herself as an escort and she was attacked by a "client". However when she contacted the police she accused Rob of being the perpetrator.

"It felt like I had been hit by a ton of bricks," Rob says. "That betrayal stung deep and my mind raced as I thought of what would happen to my life. I lost all hope. I felt I could not go on — I was done. I didn't want to feel this anymore, I didn't want to feel anything anymore."

With that thought, Rob jumped head-first through a third storey window but his foot clipped an awning on the way down and he hit the concrete on his left side. He shattered his left arm, collapsed his left lung, broke his right wrist and severed a vertebrae in his lower back.

Upon arriving at the hospital Rob underwent an eight-hour surgery.

When he was back in his hospital room, a police officer informed him that he was under arrest and being charged with rape and attempted murder.

"The doctors told me that I would likely never walk again due to the severe damage to my spine," Rob remembers. "I wasn't allowed any visitors because I was under arrest. I was all alone."

As he lay shackled to the bed, trying to make sense of what had happened, Rob remembered when he felt God's peace in the Bible study. He

cried out to God, asking Him why He would allow this to happen.

"I heard this small still voice reply, 'The charges will be dropped, your bills will be paid and you will walk again,'" Rob remembers.

He says he felt an overwhelming peace, calm, and hope.

It wasn't long before Rob's ex-girlfriend withdrew her allegations against him and all charges were dropped.

A week after his first surgery, Rob's therapists wanted him to try to stand for the first time, something that felt like an impossible task for Rob.

He felt immense pain surge through his entire body as the nurses lifted him to his feet. He was able to drag his left foot across the ground before collapsing back on the bed. The nurses and doctors were discouraged and told him there would be another surgery but Rob just smiled as he remembered God's promise. He knew everything would be okay.

Rob's hospital bill of over \$840,000 was miraculously paid for by the state and after six weeks he was released from the hospital.

"I was taking six different pain medications and drinking to help numb the pain," Rob says. "I felt myself slipping back to that dark place I had been before all of this so I turned my focus to God. I began praying all the time and reading my Bible. I surrounded myself with other Christian friends that would come by and take me to church."

Rob had a third eight-hour back operation where half of his back was fused together. Over the next few years Rob focused on building his body back up again and he was eventually able to come off all pain



Rob Decker

medication.

Wanting to return to work, he decided to return to his passion for fitness where he could use his experiences to make a difference in other people's lives.

He applied for a position as a personal trainer at a local gym where he met his future wife, Alyssa.

"Today, my life is in a vastly different place because of God's transformative love and grace," Rob says. "God has continued to bless me and my family over the years. Alyssa and I now have two young children — a son named Caleb and a daughter called Gianna — and I try every day

to lead by example and raise them in a godly house.

"My journey is now the fuel that drives me to share the power that God can have in people's lives. God promised me from the beginning of this journey that He would take care of me, and He has. If God can take someone like me and bring me back from literally falling to the lowest of lows, He can do the same for you. If you fall, He will catch you."

Rob is also a recovery/substance use coach, and recently got a position working with at-risk youth.

He is also a speaker and is working on his first book.

I FELT I COULD NOT GO ON — I WAS DONE.



PSYCHIC HAS EPIPHANY DURING CRISIS

BY JENNIFER NIZZA

I started having premonitions at age 12. I'd see an event in my mind and soon after, it would come true. Curious about the spiritual realm, I started visiting tarot card readers at the age of 13 and two years later, I got my own deck. In my early twenties, I began seeking out mediums. I kept going back and kept going back, in the hopes of finding some sort of peace. Before I knew it, I was hooked.

At age 24, I became a mother. I loved my daughter, but I was restless. Unfulfilled. I had so many unanswered questions about my identity and my value. It didn't help that I was having all sorts of strange spiritual experiences. I was seeing dark figures and other things, hearing things, and receiving information about strangers. Many of the things I saw and heard were terrifying.

Eventually, I decided to turn this "gift" into a career; I became a professional psychic medium. There was all sorts of recognition and praise, so I was easily convinced that I was doing "God's" work — even though I neither truly believed



Jennifer Nizza

in nor knew Him. I still encountered the darkness and strange things, but I tried my best to look past it.

Then, as I was approaching my late thirties, I suffered a major physical trauma. In the heat of the moment, I cried out to Jesus, though I'd never known Him. I remember being surprised by that, because I could've cried out to a deceased loved one or a "spirit guide." But ... I'd

called Jesus. After that, I found myself disinterested in my medium work. I kept working, because I was the breadwinner, but something in me had changed.

Crazily enough, a few months later, a psychic friend of mine told me that she'd become a Christian! She invited me and my husband to her church; he went, but for some reason, I stayed back. After he'd been going for about a month, I decided to join him. I remember being so intimidated by all the people with their hands raised, the beautiful music, and the lyrics on the screen. But when I heard the lyric "Jesus saved me," I was instantly transported back to the moment I'd cried out to Him months earlier.

All of the sudden, the knowledge of His existence and goodness hit me and I started bawling. When I got home, I did something that I'd never done in my life: I read God's Word. When I saw His direct condemnation of psychic practices, I told my husband that I was quitting my job.

That day was the first day of my new life in Christ. I picked up my cross and followed Him — and I still am, six years later!

As told to and edited by Adira Polite and originally published on Then God Moved

"We discovered that faith is not expecting that the Lord will miraculously give us whatever we ask, or feeling the security that we will not be killed and that everything will turn out as we want. We learned that faith is putting ourselves in His hands, whatever happens, good or bad. He will help us somehow."

— Twentieth-century Christian martyrs Felipe and Mary Barreda

"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer."

— WW2 survivor Corrie ten Boom

HAPPINESS DOES NOT GROW US

BY KARL FASE

MOST of us are searching for happiness but it can be such an elusive emotion. It is also intriguing that it is not necessarily happiness that grows our character. Social researcher Hugh Mackay writes in his book *Right and Wrong*:

"Most people report that their most significant personal growth and development has come from pain not pleasure."

While we love the joy of peace and happiness, our character and lives grow and develop through times of pain.

For those of you struggling through some difficult situation, can I encourage you to stay with it. Don't give in to despair and defeat.

Know that through whatever you face, your character is being moulded. This period of time in your life is helping to define your values and teaching you what is important.

God is aware of your pain. If you turn to Him, He will stand with you in the tough times and will help form your character and change your circumstances — or at least your ability to cope with them. While some lash out in anger at God, the wise turn to God for strength and hope.



Apisit Viriya, who calls himself Ide, sharing his story on YouTube.

In from the cold

Bundled up in several layers against the strange cold he'd been feeling for the past two weeks, Apisit Viriya tried to sleep. The 30-year-old American had been battling depression and an obsessive-compulsive disorder for years but this ever-present chill was something new.

Suddenly his eyes flew open in fright – he felt hands touching his body but there was nobody with him. His blood ran cold at what he saw next – a pair of disembodied eyes staring down at him.

Ide, as he is known, tells his story on the YouTube channel Delafe Testimonies, recounting how he and his younger brother were raised as Buddhists by their Thai parents even though they grew up in America.

Ide was no stranger to supernatural encounters. He and his brother had experienced uncanny things like doors opening and closing on their own and heard voices calling their names from the time they were children.

But this incident was something much more alarming. It had begun a few weeks before, when Ide says he realised a ghostly figure was following him.

He asked a monk at his family temple about the apparition. The monk told Ide what he'd seen was a dead person whose spirit did not have enough 'merit' to move to the next world.

"The next time you meditate, give him some of your merit," the monk said.

Ide did exactly that but immediately he knew something terribly wrong had happened.

"After I said that this cold came into my body. For the next two weeks I was constantly cold. I would be wearing my jacket and hat gloves indoors even with the heater on and I still felt cold."

The monks had no answers. "I asked them about God and they told me there is no god in Buddhism," Ide shares.

Instead they led Ide in rituals and appeasement offerings. When those didn't work, they told the increasingly distraught man there was nothing else they could do.

Thanks to a friend who shared the Christian message of salvation, Ide had heard of Jesus Christ but the dyed-in-the-wool Buddhist was adamant he would never become a Christian.

However, one night while Ide

was driving, a preacher came onto the radio.

"The preacher started with this question: 'Do you ever feel like you're in the middle of the ocean and there's waves hitting you from every direction? Do you ever wonder why God would put you in this situation or allow you to be in this situation?'"

"Sometimes God will allow you to be in those situations so that those waves will push you closer to Him."

An amazed Ide went to his friend's church that Sunday.

"At church the worship music started and I immediately started crying, like bawling," he says wryly.

"The pastor's message was on demons and how to tell if there is demonic activity around you. He said one sign was if you feel a cold breeze and I was thinking he's describing exactly what I'm going through!"

At the end of the service, Ide went forward for prayer. "We can pray for you and you may feel better but the only way to be truly free of what you're going through is if you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour," said the pastor.

Out of respect for his parents, Ide still refused to renounce his Buddhist beliefs. He says he did feel better after receiving prayer and was hopeful that his suffering was finally over.

That night turned out to be the most terrifying of his life. "That was the night I saw those eyes and felt that hand," he says.

In desperation he asked his parents for permission to become a Christian. To his astonishment they said: "If you think that's going to help, go for it."

Ide rushed to the pastor's house and there in the pastor's kitchen he committed his life to Jesus Christ. Just before he bowed his head Ide says he heard a low growl, barely audible. After the prayer, it left and has never returned.

Gone too are the apparitions and the numbing cold. Ide shares that warmth returned to his body like an electric current that began at his feet and worked its way up to his head.

"It finally clicked that Jesus is real!" he exclaims. "The One they told me about 10 years ago is real and He is with me right now!"

"Put your trust in Jesus. He loves you and He's ready to forgive you. He's never going to disappoint

Iranian's face shone

BY DANNY O'NEILL

The dead bodies hanging by a noose on public streets and markets traumatised Ramin Parsa, a child growing up in Iran during the strict Shi'ite Muslim regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

"I could not eat for two weeks, I was so shocked," Ramin says on a video posted to his channel.

Deeply motivated to live for Allah, Ramin went to the mosque every morning at 5:00 am for the earliest of five callings to prayer a day. Every morning at school, they shouted, "Death to Israel! Death to America!"

But when his dad died, life dried up for Ramin. He was no longer able to go to school.

"I started questioning my faith," he admits. "Is this really the truth? I started going down and down into hopelessness, into depression."

Death haunted him after his father's death because Islam offers no assurance that you will be admitted into Paradise. The Muslim is constantly warned to do more, to pray and fast – and even join jihad – to curry Allah's elusive favour.

"I came to the conclusion that Islam is empty," Ramin says. "I said, 'If there is no god, then who made this creation, who made the stars, who made the heaven, who made the humans? If there is a God, then why isn't He helping us?'"

In spite of it being illegal, almost every house has a satellite dish. So



Ramin Parsa with his wife.

Ramin turned on the Trinity Broadcast Network. He heard about Jesus. It contradicted everything he heard through Islam about Jesus: The Son of God did indeed die for our sins; He was more than just a prophet.

Importantly, Jesus rose from the dead.

Ramin didn't immediately believe. He had been taught it was "rubbish," but later again watched the "heretical" channel.

"If you give Jesus your heart, He will change your life. He loves you," the man was saying. "He died for you and rose again from the dead."

That day, Ramin relented. "I just opened my heart and I said, 'Jesus I do not know You. I've been told that you are only a prophet. But if you are the Son of God, if You really died for me and rose again, today I open my heart to you.'"

Asking to be forgiven of his sins, he started weeping. He felt a warm

feeling fill him.

"All my body was shaking and trembling," he says. "There was such a peace and joy in my heart. It was like somebody lifted off a 200-pound weight off my shoulders. I felt like I was about to fly. I was rejoicing."

He rushed to see his mother.

"Why is your face so shiny?" she asked bewildered. She knew her son had been feeling a great sense of hopelessness. The transformation was dramatic and immediately noticeable.

She had been battling cancer for years. Now Ramin laid hands on her and prayed. His mother, a devoted Muslim, was instantly healed.

"My sister saw the change in me. I was so nice. Before that I was grumpy. I was arrogant. I was hopeless. I was angry," he says. "Now my sister saw me so respectful, so nice, so kind."

His siblings have also since become Christians.

Next, Ramin went on a search to find a Bible. He pored over the Gospels, and they filled him with elation.

"I was just reading it and reading it – and I was crying. Why is this book illegal?" he wondered.

The Koran is filled with death and destruction, he says. As he read the Gospels, he saw a striking contrast: Jesus conquered the grave.

Now Ramin is no longer afraid of death. And he is no longer disappointed and hopeless.

This article first appeared on godreports.com and is used with kind permission.

I found out God loves me!

BY JUDY ADAMSON

It's one thing to say God loves you. It's another to know it in the depths of your soul.

For Patricia Barton, God's personal, all-encompassing love was something she really didn't know for many, many years. So much so that when she published a memoir about her early life in 2013 it was called *Why God Hates Me*.

The book's title had been the idea of her friend and writing mentor Bryce Courtenay, but Patricia truly felt that she had done the wrong thing by God as a young girl – when, as a devout Catholic growing up in small-town Canada, she spat out the host during her first Communion because the size and texture of it made her gag.

"I thought God would never forgive me because that was the body of Christ, so I had rejected God," she recalls. "I felt that guilt for many years and it really influenced my life."

Patricia ended up becoming what she calls "a submarine Catholic – I would surface for weddings and funerals, Easter and Christmas, but I wasn't going every Sunday. I did believe in God the Father Almighty – creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only son, our Lord, but I wasn't practising it."

Fast forward to 2020. Patricia,



Patricia Barton



now in her 80s, had known many joys, sorrows and some extraordinary experiences in her long life, but was now living by herself in Marrickville. She got a card in the mailbox with an offer of pastoral care, so she rang the number and began having regular contact with Anglicare community chaplain Pip Russell.

Pip gave me a few books ... one was a Bible, and one was *Nearing Home* by Billy Graham," she says. "So, I read and I read and I read. ... and then I met Ross from the church and he started coming here once a week to read the Bible with me."

On July 3 last year, Patricia was reading *A Fresh Start* by John Chapman and through it became a Chris-

tian and dedicated herself to God.

Patricia is now a member of Marrickville Road Church and in regular, joyful prayer throughout the day: when she wakes, when she's on the way to church, during one-to-one Bible

time in person or over the phone, and when she sits with her cat Johnny and a cuppa.

"I just count my blessings," she says. "I don't worry any more. I'm not fearful – as you get older there are things that can frighten you, and I'm no longer fearful. I have joy and I feel that God is caring for me and I don't have to think or try to make things happen ... I just let it flow."

"People have noticed the difference in me ... I had lunch with a close girlfriend, and she said, 'You know what, Patricia? You're not growing old; you're just growing.' And I thought that was a lovely thing to say to someone."

Patricia is now working on a second volume of her memoir. The title? You may have guessed it already: *Why God Loves Me*.

This article is from Southern Cross magazine. It is used with kind permission.

YOUTH TRUTH

FINDING FREEDOM

BY FAITH

I was born in South Korea, but at five months old, I was adopted by a family in Alaska. A few months later, I was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury. The physical effects are similar to the effects of a stroke: I have very little control over the right side of my body, so I move differently. I also struggle to pronounce some sounds and words. But despite the difficulties, I grew up happy and full of laughter. I always had a strong sense that God had a plan and purpose for my life. I trusted that He would use me, just in a different way.



Faith

But once I entered high school, my faith wavered. I was left out, left behind, mocked, and betrayed so many times that my heart hardened. The emotional and physical pain was overwhelming — and the more I suffered, the angrier I got. Quite honestly, I thought that God was cruel. I couldn't see a future, I couldn't see a purpose, and I certainly didn't feel any hope. With time, I became depressed and began battling suicidal thoughts.

But when I turned 16, God brought me back to Him. One day, I opened up my Bible to Psalm 139:13-14, which reads, *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”*

MY LIFE WASN'T BY CHANCE OR A MISTAKE

As I read this, I realised that my pain was not going unseen or unheard. God had been with me since the very beginning! My life wasn't by chance or a mistake — all of it, even my pain, was a part of a bigger plan that I could not see. Through me, God was revealing His glory!

Finally, I let Him have the pen and I trusted Him to write my story. With that surrender came so much freedom, as well as the joy that had been missing.

Hard days still come, but God is stronger than any fear, doubt, or trial I ever face. I never walk alone! With every step, God is right there, guiding me and holding my hand. As believers, we can trust that no matter what comes, we can trust in Him. God isn't just good, He's PERFECT! So, trust in His plan for your life...whatever He has for you will be a thousand times better than anything you've planned for yourself. •

As told to and edited by Adira Polite and originally published on Then God Moved

My questions were answered

Eric Field was a philosophy student on a mission to discover if there was something more than just the physical world. It was a journey that led him to explore New Age ideas and practices. But, instead of being answered, his questions multiplied, and so he turned in a different direction.

In a video on YouTube, Eric shared that he had been an atheist but became convinced there was a spiritual dimension when he started studying philosophy and science.

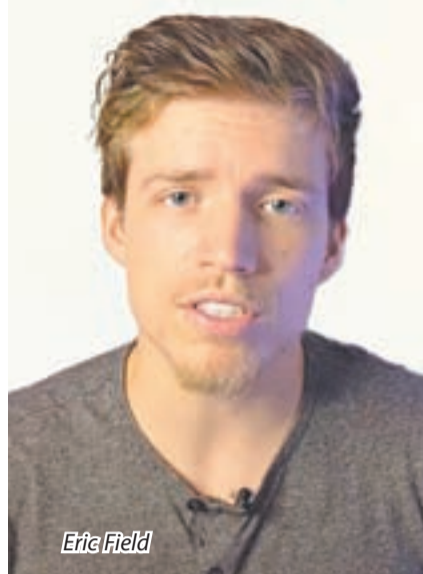
“I was looking at metaphysics and self-help books, where people were talking about the world from a spiritual perspective,” he remembers. That led him to discovering meditation, astral projection and lucid dreaming. He now refers to these practices as ‘New Age’.

“Little did I know that I was walking down a very dark road to a horrible destructive place,” he shares. “At this time in my life I was so prideful. I thought everything revolved around me. My ideas about New Age spirituality were all just to help me progress and grow, to gain further knowledge and wisdom.”

Eventually, Eric realised that his questions about life, origin, meaning, morality and destiny were not being answered by the New Age spirituality ideas.

“I'd run into ideas like karma, in the sense that every birth is a rebirth paying for your last life's karma that you have built up,” Eric explains. “[I thought] if every life is paying for a past life, then when you had your first life, what are you paying for? And I would bring these questions to others and they would give me lofty answers that didn't really hit on the truth.”

At the same time, some Christians Eric met started asking him questions about whether he believed in Jesus'



Eric Field

existence and resurrection. “Eventually I looked into these questions myself,” he says. “I was seeking after the truth and I thought, if I can disprove the resurrection, then I'd have more data to know what the truth of reality is.” Eric spent the next 18 months studying whether Jesus really rose from the dead.

“I came to the conclusion after all that

study that Jesus really did rise from the dead, that the Gospels are historically accurate early accounts — not legendary accounts but early eyewitness testimony,” he attests.

When he became convinced the Gospels were historically accurate, the next step was for him to read them.

“I started in the Gospel of Matthew and I remember reading about Jesus for the first time and thinking, wow, this guy's answering the questions that I've been asking in such a true and poignant way... I kept reading the Gospels, learning about Jesus, learning about sin, depravity, what

is evil, how God means for us to live, how pride leads to destruction and humility as a way of flourishing for the human person.”

As he read, Eric said he could see a path of light out of the darkness that he was in.

He realised that when he practiced New Age spirituality, he was trying to be his own saviour, but no matter what he did, it wouldn't be enough.

“I can never do enough work on myself to build myself back to God — the work that needed to be done was done by Jesus Christ,” he explains.

“He was the innocent perfect Lamb. The strong Lion of Judah who paved that way for me to enter back into a relationship with God. This person of Jesus changed everything in my life.”

Eric explained that Jesus was not an impersonal force like the New Age ideas of ‘prana’ or ‘the universe’.

“God made Himself personal in the man Christ Jesus, and showed us the true character of God ... Jesus saved me from a life of pride, narcissistic isolation and the burden of a messiah complex. And now, I realised that it is Jesus alone who saves and if there is anything in me to boast of, it's to boast of the knowledge of Christ Jesus and what He has done for me, to boast that I am a recipient of that grace and I'm set free.

“New Age spirituality promises everything that Christianity promises, but it comes up short, where Jesus fulfils all those promises. If you are looking for truth, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. If you're looking for joy and happiness, and some sense of purpose, it is only the Creator of the universe that can give you true objective real purpose, not some fake fairy tale purpose that people are making up for themselves ... Jesus freely gives, just like He freely gave Himself on the cross for you and for me. And that's why I gave my life to Him, and I'm never going back.” •

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE?

CONSIDER a hammer. It's designed to hit nails. That's what it was created to do. Now imagine that the hammer never gets used. It just sits in the toolbox. The hammer doesn't care.

But now imagine that same hammer with a soul, a self-consciousness. Days and days go by with him remaining in the toolbox. He feels funny inside, but he's not sure exactly why. Something is missing, but he doesn't know what it is.

Then one day someone pulls him out of the toolbox and uses him to break some branches for the fireplace. The hammer is exhilarated. Being held, being wielded, hitting the branches — the hammer loves it. At the end of the day, though, he is still unfulfilled. Hitting the branches was fun, but it wasn't enough. Something is still missing.

In the days that follow, he's used often. He reshapes a hubcap, blasts through some sheetrock, and knocks a table leg back into place. Still, he's left unfulfilled. So he longs for more action. He wants to be used as much as possible to knock things around, to break things, to blast things, to dent things. He figures that he just hasn't had enough of these events to satisfy him. More of the same, he believes, is the solution to his lack of fulfilment.

Then one day someone uses him on a

nail. Suddenly, the lights come on in his hammer soul. He now understands what he was truly designed for. He was meant to hit nails. All the other things he hit pale in comparison.

Now he knows what his hammer soul was searching for all along. We are created in God's image for relationship with him. Being in that relationship is the only thing that will ultimately satisfy our souls. Until we come to know God, we've had many wonderful experiences, but we haven't hit a nail. We've been used for some noble purposes, but not the one we were ultimately designed for, not the one through which we will find the most fulfilment.

Augustine summarised it this way: “You [God] have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

A relationship with God is the only thing that will quench our soul's longing. Jesus Christ said, *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”* Until



we come to know God, we are hungry and thirsty in life. We try to “eat” and “drink” all kinds of things to satisfy our hunger and thirst, but yet they remain.

We are like the hammer. We don't realise what will end

the emptiness, the lack of fulfilment, in our lives. Even in the midst of a Nazi prison camp, Corrie Ten Boom found God to be wholly satisfying: “The foundation of our happiness was that we knew ourselves hidden with Christ in God. We could have faith in God's love... our Rock who is stronger than the deepest darkness.”

Usually when we keep God out, we try to find fulfilment in something other than God, but we can never get enough of that thing. We keep “eating” or “drinking” more and more, erroneously thinking that ‘more’ is the answer to the problem, yet we are never ultimately satisfied.

Our greatest desire is to know God, to have a relationship with God. Why? Because that's how we've been designed. Have you hit a nail yet? •

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YOUTH TRUTH

Search for love ends unexpectedly

BY DAHLIA GONZALEZ

By the time Alyssa Gordon went to high school, her mum had been thrown in jail for too many DUIs.

"My family was pretty dysfunctional," she says on her Wonderful Acts YouTube channel. She was a military brat born and raised in Italy. Her mum was an alcoholic. Plagued with suicidal thoughts, she ran away from home from time to time and grew up seeking in guys the love she felt was missing in her family.

Alyssa played the part of the social butterfly party girl with a smile facade but internally she was frustrated that guy after guy just took advantage of her and never wanted a true and lasting relationship.

"I began to get in this cycle of me really desiring love, to have someone genuinely care about me," she says. "I would give myself to these men physically looking for that true love that I never got. I got really dark, it got really depressing and the cycle just kept continuing. The last guy who I thought genuinely cared about me cut me off...would act like I didn't



Alyssa with her husband Sudan

exist."

This guy broke her heart badly and she took it out on God.

"I'm cursing at God, I'm throwing things," she relates. "I was yelling and screaming, 'God if You're real, I need

You to show me ... right now!'"

She had attended church, but with her mother's example speaking louder than her words, Alyssa didn't respond to God's offer of grace and love.

As a second year in college, she luckily had a friend who encouraged her.

"I don't know if God is real anymore, because if He's real where is He?" she asked him.

"Alyssa, God has you in the fire right now and gold has to go in the fire to be purified," he replied.

Once again, she cried out to God in her dorm room. His response was terse: *Alyssa, your boyfriend never really loved you to begin with.*

Oh. She was taken aback. What might appear obvious to anyone was a thunderbolt epiphany for Alyssa. And the weight lifted from her shoulders.

From that day onward, Alyssa read her Bible.

"It was alive, every word was speaking to me. Every step of obedience I took, He was there. I did not know how good God was."

So on May 20, 2010, in her bathroom, Alyssa prayed to ask Jesus to take over her life and she began to experience God in a whole new way. She stopped looking for love in all the wrong places. Jesus was her best friend.

"The depression went away," she says. "He built up my self-confidence."

Alyssa became celibate and kept herself pure for six years until she met and married a man who truly loves her.

Then at Howard University, she studied communications but went to the sciences library to study because that's where the serious students were. Sudan was a pharmacology major who Alyssa thought was cute.

But when she found out he had a girlfriend, she immediately limited him to the "friends" category.

They were both Christians and frequently studied together at the

library. They compared notes on the Christian activities they were involved in.

After a few years of this, they found themselves in a car with two of Alyssa's girlfriends.

"So Sudan, what are you looking for in a wife?" one girlfriend in the front ventured to ask.

"I'm looking for someone who is a combination of my mother and Alyssa," he responded matter-of-factly.

The girls up front squealed.

Well, this is awkward, Alyssa thought at the time. She began to aim dagger eyes at her friend for broaching the subject.

"I feel like this is a God moment," then Alyssa's girlfriend continued, ignoring the dagger eyes. "Is there anything else you would like to say,

Sudan?"

"Yes, I have been praying for a long time," he said, turning to Alyssa, "to see if you would like to enter a courtship relationship to see if we might get married."

It was more than Alyssa could process. She had never thought of Sudan as anything more than a friend. The levels of awkwardness were now registering off the meter.

"Ok, I'm going pray about all this," Alyssa said. It was the best answer she could come up with at the time. And, having arrived at her waitressing job, she got out of the car.

Now they're married.

"I am pursuing my dreams and the calling that God has given me in my life," Alyssa says. "I have purpose, I have meaning, I have joy and it's all because of Jesus."

I discovered my own identity

BY HARRIET COOMBE

"As a young person I always struggled with feeling like a failure," says Nissi Chiasson. "I always felt inadequate because I was always standing in the shadow of my parents' powerful faith."

Nissi's parents were missionaries and from a young age she was encouraged to read the Bible and pray, and one day follow in her parents' footsteps. She felt under pressure to believe and live as they did.

Like many teenagers,

Nissi rebelled against her parents and, when she was 15, she started dating in defiance of their rules.

As missionaries, relying on donations, her family often didn't have enough money for food. When this happened, they would pray together for God to provide, and He did.

Nissi saw many answers to prayer - miracles and healings. But it still was part of her parents' faith, not her own choice to follow Jesus.

"Some nights I felt the presence of Jesus in my room giving me peace," she remembers. "This began to help me know that Jesus was present in my life... The missionary staff used to come and babysit us and they always inspired me to know Jesus through their deep passion for Him."

After watching a play called *Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames* when she was seven, Nissi had prayed the salvation prayer. But, she admits, her motivation was her fear of being separated from her family when she died. She said she didn't truly understand what it was to be a Christian.

The turning point came when she was invited to help out at a Christian summer camp for children from troubled homes. "I decided to go mostly to get away from my family and be able to find who I was apart from them," she admits. "Little did I know, I would meet Jesus in this time away. I found Him and this time I felt for the first time that I understood that He loved me and that He longed for me to know Him. Simply as myself, nothing to do with my family. I felt able for the first time to



Nissi with her husband

believe in Jesus because He had truly shown Himself to me. The pressure of being a missionary kid faded away in His love for me."

Nissi now found her identity in Jesus instead of her parents.

"I began to blaze my own path so I could be myself and not always live in my parents' shadow," she says. "God helped me overcome lots of my fears with my dreams. He helped me find all I needed in Him."

Nissi said she also learnt that in the storms of life, God is close to the broken-hearted.

Later in her life, ironically, she began working with the same missionary organisation her parents had been a part of. "I was in full-time ministry overseas in Asia, when I heard from my mother that my father had been unfaithful," she recalls.

"Now seven years later, my parents' marriage has sadly ended in divorce. My father chose His sin over Jesus. Going through this, being away from my family, the Lord gave me this verse, *'Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.'* (John 16:33). The Heavenly Father held me so close in this time.

"Being married myself, God has used my marriage to bring forth beauty and a renewed sense for how to be married in a godly way. Although I am still in a healing process, I know that nothing is impossible for Jesus!"

Nissi has these words for those suffering the pain of having their parents separate: "I encourage you to find healing and fulfilment

in the arms of a loving Saviour who died for you and wants to heal and mend your broken heart. Only in Jesus is full healing possible. Lean into the loving arms of Jesus who bore every pain you ever have gone through, or will go through. Take it to the cross and nail it there. Let His greatest sacrifice bring forth beauty from your ashes as He brought beauty by rising from the grave, so that you might rise as well into who He has created you to be all along."

I BEGAN TO BLAZE MY OWN PATH



LOVE IS AN ACT OF THE WILL

IT IS interesting the way we talk about being "in love".

When we say we are in love we are describing something we feel. It is referring to love as something that overtakes us as passive recipients. For example:

"I feel like I love you."

"My emotions are all churned up."

"I can't help but feel this way about you."

The trouble is that feelings change. We then

assume that we are not in love anymore and that there is nothing we can do about it. Love is reduced to an uncontrollable urge that comes and goes of its own accord, like the common cold. We are victims of the urge to love or to withhold love.

But the Bible talks about love as something we have agency over - something we do. It's not that we don't feel anything, but it is primarily an action, not a feeling.

When the Bible refers to love, it is about being patient and kind and never giving up (1 Corinthians chapter 13). Loves does. Love gives. Love is costly. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus, up to die for us (John 3:16).

In the same way that God's love is not just in words but also with actions, so ours has to be too. Jesus said, *"If you love me, you'll obey my commandments."*



Rocking the boat on billions of years



Biography

Dr Andrew Snelling completed a BS in applied geology at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, graduating with first-class honours in 1975. His PhD in geology was awarded in 1982 by The University of Sydney for his research thesis titled *A Geochemical Study of the Koongarra Uranium Deposit, Northern Territory, Australia*.

By the time Andrew finished his undergraduate program, he was convinced that his area of focus and research should be creation and the flood. During this PhD he met young Earth creationist and biochemist Duane Gish and Answers in Genesis president Ken Ham.

Andrew worked for six years in the exploration and mining industries in Australia as a field, mine, and research geologist. He was a research consultant to the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation for more than a decade.

Andrew then began working in full-time creation ministry. He worked with Creation Science Foundation of Australia (which later became Answers in Genesis-Australia) for 15 years.

He was also involved in research projects and writing scientific reports and papers that were published in international science journals and books.

He was the professor of geology at the Institute for Creation Research where he taught master's degree geology courses. He wrote the sequel to *The Genesis Flood* by Whitcomb and Morris called *Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation, and the Flood* (Dallas, TX: Institute for Creation Research, 2009).

Andrew is also the editor-in-chief of the online *Answers Research Journal*.

Andrew Snelling's interest in geology began when he was a child during a visit to a mine on a family vacation in Tasmania.

"All the bright shiny rocks and minerals caught my attention," he recalls in a presentation at the Is Genesis History conference in 2017.

After this Andrew began collecting rocks and would bring them in to school for show and tell.

"It wasn't long before I knew more than anyone else in the class – even the teacher – about those rocks and minerals... By the time I finished in primary school, I was convinced I was going to be a geologist."

In high school, Andrew recalls spending his lunch times in the library reading *Principles of Physical Geology* by Arthur Holmes. But the librarian threw him out, telling him to play outside in the sunshine. When Andrew won a book voucher for an academic prize at the end of the year, he bought the book for himself.

"It was during those teenage years that I began to realise there was a conflict between what I was reading in the geology textbooks and what I was reading in my Bible," he recalls.

Andrew had been raised in a Christian home and attended church regularly. He says from a young age he had a "good head knowledge of the scriptures". He recalls his attendance at a church camp just before his eighth birthday being a turning point in his faith.

"It was during that week, that in the midst of all the fun that God really spoke to me. What [was] head knowledge went to the heart,

and I remember vividly on the Friday night, the last evening of the camp in tears at my bedside with the counsellor there, committing my life to the Lord, repenting and seeking His forgiveness."



When he was a teenager, Andrew's church had come to embrace the gap theory – a form of old Earth creationism that posits that creation involved six literal 24-hour days, but there was a gap of time between two distinct creations in the first and the second verses of Genesis.

"There was that tension for me trying to figure out where the fossils fit in [with] Noah's Flood," Andrew explains.

But when he read *The Genesis Flood* by Whitcomb and Morris, the puzzle pieces began to fit.

"I got really excited, because here I had confirmation that the evidence in God's world definitely fitted with what I read in God's Word."

In a presentation called "How Old is the Earth?", Andrew looks at the different processes that are being used to date the earth and the universe.

"About 90% of them yield a young age for the earth and only about 10 percent yield an old age," he says.

One example shown was short period comets, which slowly disintegrate as they orbit the sun.

"Halley's Comet returns every 70-80 years and we know from historical records that it was a more spectacular display in the past simply because it was larger and had more material streaming off and so it was brighter. As [time has gone on] when it passes by the earth it's less spectacular and that's because it's disintegrating. It's slowly wearing out. As it goes past the sun it's losing some of its dust and ice and so over time these comets are eventually destroyed or completely disintegrate. The Levy Shoemaker Comet got too close to Jupiter and it actually broke apart and slammed into Jupiter. These short period comets are disintegrating. If they only last for 200 years and they're disintegrating then in time they're going to disappear but we've still got comets in the solar system today then where are they coming from?"

He says they have been there since the origin of the solar system, which according to evolutionists, is 4.5 billion years.

"The comets should also be of similar age yet we can determine how quickly these comets disintegrate. Assuming they've always disintegrated at the same rate that we observe today then the short period comets may likely only last less than 10,000 years. So if they date back to the origin of the solar system then the short period comets are not four and a half billion years old, they're probably less than 10,000 years – which dates the solar system, which

dates the earth."

Another example of evidence for a young earth is the energy of the earth's magnetic field loses half its energy about every 1400 years. He explains that historic measurements indicate rapid energy loss.

"Because of the catastrophic activity the earth's magnetic field

would have lost its energy much faster during the flood because there were things happening on a catastrophic rate inside the earth that resulted in catastrophic processes on the earth's surface with plates moving around

and colliding sediments moving around. There were reversals of the earth's magnetic field during and after the flood. We can actually find evidence of the strength of the earth's magnetic field even in pottery and archaeological sites. When the clay is baked sometimes you get the magnetic minerals in the clay. If it's hot enough it will lock in the direction of the earth's magnetic field and virtually fossilise measurements of the earth's magnetic field at the time."

He also referred to evidence of magnetic reversals recorded in ocean floor basalts, which erupted during the flood.

"If we extrapolate the rapid field energy loss back into the earth's history, taking into account the fact the flood will cause some major disruptions, the further back you go you get a stronger and stronger magnetic field. It gets so strong that it becomes intolerable for life on the earth and so that puts an upper limit – a maximum age of 10,000 years."

ABOUT 90% OF [THE PROCESSES USED TO DATE THE EARTH] YIELD A YOUNG AGE FOR THE EARTH



Believe it or not

Fantastic flea beetles

BY GAVIN COX (ABRIDGED)

A POWERFUL catapult mechanism has recently been discovered in the hind legs of certain beetles, astounding researchers. These 'flea beetles' have been observed to display incredible jumping abilities, surpassing that of fleas and leaf hoppers. A recent paper, published by the online peer-reviewed scientific journal *ZooKeys*, describes their ability:

"*Blepharida sacra* can jump up to 70 cm or 100 times more than its body length, while *Longitarsus anchusae* reaches a jump of 289 times its body length; the average acceleration of *Psylliodes affinis* during take-off can be up to 266 times the acceleration of gravity."

Scaled up to human size, that would be like a 6 ft (1.8 m) tall long-jump athlete leaping more than half a kilometre! When we consider that fighter pilots can sustain no more than 9g for a few seconds, it is remarkable how these beetles survive nearly 30 times that force. Furthermore, these bouncing bugs can perform more than 30 consecutive jumps without tiring.¹

Regarding *Psylliodes punctifrons*, the authors report: "The jump pushes individuals to a final velocity of 5.58 ± 0.5 m/s. The peak instantaneous power output (per unit mass) calculated for the hind legs in this species was ... approximately 449 times that of the fastest-known muscle ... and some 100-200 times that of a powerful rally car engine."¹

The authors of the paper claim: "Flea beetles have evolved an enormous independent spring to aid the storage of elastic potential energy."¹ But such an evolutionary explanation begs the question as to how they survived before they evolved this ability — beetles that fail to escape predators don't leave progeny, so their genes are not passed on. It makes much more sense that they were designed that way!

1. Ruan, Y. et al., The jumping mechanism of flea beetles (Coleoptera, Chrysomelidae, Alticini), its application to bionics and preliminary design for a robotic jumping leg, *ZooKeys* 915:87-105, 24 February 2020 doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.915.38348.

Dar and Winny

By Richard Gunther 7



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

BY ROB FURLONG

The more heated the disagreement, the more our inner steam tank builds to the breaking point, and it is all we can do to keep a level head through the whole explosive episode."

Every honest person reading the statement above by Clyde Murdock will agree they have struggled with this in times of "heated disagreement" — including the person writing this column!

However, if we are truly prepared to make changes in the way we express our anger and communicate, and commit to the process of change over the long haul, how and what we communicate will wonderfully transform our relationships.

Let me share with you what I call **The Principles of Healthy Communication.**

Be a listener. God gave us one mouth and two ears, so which should we use the most? Do not interrupt the

other person and do not try to second guess what they are going to say — you will seldom be correct. Be polite and allow the other person to finish. "Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."

Be an empathiser. As much as possible, try to put yourself into the other person's shoes and honour the fact they are making themselves vulnerable by opening their hearts to you. "Put on a heart of kindness."

Be accepting. Never treat the other person as being inferior to you. Accept them for who they are and do so with love, grace, and compassion. Remember, Jesus saw people in their distress and misery, and was moved with compassion for them. "Put on a heart of compassion."

Be understanding. Remember the other person has a point of view, just like you! They may not be fully acquainted with all the facts, or they may have a faulty understanding — but so may you! "Put on a heart of humility."

Be liberating. In other words,

don't try to control the situation or the other person. Don't raise your voice, attempt to drown the other person out, or try to monopolise the conversation. And as we said last month, don't explode, sulk (be silent) or resort to tears to win or make a point. "Put on a heart of gentleness."

Be a clarifier. Ask questions to clarify a point made if necessary and don't simply assume you know or understand exactly what has been said. Make sure the question/s you are asking are relevant and not merely an attempt to put your point of view across. "Put on a heart of wisdom."

Be attentive. Give the person your undivided attention and interest while they speak to you. Body language is important here, so don't fiddle with your watch, look out the window or "zone out." And for goodness' sake — put away your phone! "Put on a heart of discipline."

Be forgiving. A frustrated husband once said that when he and his wife had an argument, she "became historical!" In other words, whenever



they argued, she would remind him of all his past failures. Never refer back to past incidents that have been settled. It reveals a lack of forgiveness on your part, and it keeps the other person in a prison of failure. "Put on a heart of forgiveness."

Be patient. Give the other person the gift of your time. Counsellor David Augsburger once said that for some people, receiving the gift of another person's time is how they deeply experience being loved. Give time for a meaningful conversation to take place, in relaxed circumstances. "Put on a heart of patience."

Be a listener. Remember that the other person is a person — just like you — with hurts, joys, disappointments, and dreams. Love listens, whereas self seeks to be vindicated. When we can express ourselves to each other in a caring atmosphere, strong and lasting bonds are made.

Put on a heart of love and transform your communication ... and your relationships!

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

What? Salvation is an eternal relationship with God — now on Earth and, after we die, in Heaven.

The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in Me has eternal life." John 6:47

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Who? Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

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

Why? Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

How? The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:8b-10

Ready to change your life forever? Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude — which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.

Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn't, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank You that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You — I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Saviour and my Master. Amen.

What now?

1. Tell someone — either a Christian that you know or email us at info@challengenews.org
2. Use the resources in the green box on this page to find a Bible to read and more information regarding Christianity.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

AS A NEXT STEP:

I have prayed this prayer. Please send me: Bible Some 'starting off' literature Information on a helpful church

* Please tick and write clearly *

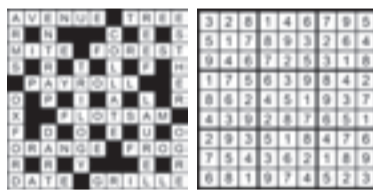
Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email address _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985
info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



Want to explore more?

Here are some free, helpful, Christian online resources:

Online Bible - Olive Tree app (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - Bible.is app , or Youversion Bible app	
Christian radio station - CBN radio app (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app	
Christian movies/TV shows - Good. app	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - the Bible Project on YouTube .	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app	
Comic book Bible online- goodandevilbook.com	
More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online	

What will you do with Jesus Christ?

BY WIL POUNDS

OUR acceptance before God depends entirely on what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross and our response to Him.

The Bible makes it emphatically clear if you accept Jesus Christ, God will accept you. If you reject Jesus Christ, God will reject you.

"He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

It does not matter who we are, what we have been, or what we have done in our past, because our eternal destiny deals with one question alone, what was our personal response to the demands of Jesus Christ?

There is only one basis upon which an individual can be declared right with God, and that basis is the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross. When any person believes on Christ as his personal Saviour, accepting the fact that He bore our sins in His body on the cross, God declares us acquitted. In that moment all of our sins are forgiven and we experience peace with God.

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

God provides us with a right relationship with Him, peace with God, and a deep and satisfying joy because of what God has done for us in Christ. The reason for this joy and peace is because our becoming children of God depends entirely on what Jesus Christ did for us and what we do with Him. The apostle John summarised beautifully this great truth in these words: *"This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son has not life" (1 John 5:11-12).*

Just think of it, the very moment you accept Jesus Christ, you receive God's kind of life. There is no other way in which anyone can get eternal life in Christ. We receive eternal life in an instant by simple acceptance of Jesus Christ. It is God's free gift to us in response to personal faith in Christ.

We become the children of God and receive His kind of life by one simple act of believing on Jesus. *"As many as receive Him to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12).*

The instant you accept Christ, you will become a child of God.

However, if you refuse to receive Jesus Christ, there is nothing else you can do that will make you right with God. The gift of eternal life and becoming His child depends on receiving Christ personally.

Pontius Pilate's question: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" is still a haunting question that every individual must answer for him or herself. Your response determines where you will spend eternity. Your acceptance before God depends entirely on what you decide to do with Jesus Christ.

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I WANT

WHAT

HE'S GOT!

**Challenge
SPORT**



Jason Robinson of England on his way to scoring a try during the England Legends against Australia Legends match at Twickenham Stoop on October 31, 2013 in London, England. (Photo by Tom Shaw - RFU/The RFU Collection via Getty Images)

LIFE hasn't always been sunshine and roses for legendary English rugby player Jason Robinson.

Long before the 48-year-old was awarded his OBE (Order of the British Empire) or won the World Cup or became the first black man to captain the England team, he was a heavy drinker who one night found himself alone in his bedroom wanting to use a meat cleaver on himself.

This was in the early days of his sporting career, while he was playing for the rugby league club Wigan.

"I got into a situation where I was drinking sometimes six nights a week," he says.

"Monday it was Wakefield...Tuesday I would be over to Liverpool, Wednesday it would be Oldham. Thursday it would be Wigan. And after the game we would go out wherever.

"When I split up with my girlfriend [Amanda, later to become his wife] after already having a kid with another girl, I admit that for a moment I thought about taking my own life.

"I didn't want life to go on in this way. That night when I contemplated doing it, I wept like a baby.

The funny thing was that on the field everything was going really well. But off it everything was out of control."

Enter Va'aiga Tuigamala, the huge and powerful winger from Samoa who joined the club in 1994 and who would have the most profound influence on Jason's life.

"Had it not been for him coming into the environment I was in and putting a different slant on it, I certainly wouldn't have the hope that

I've got now," says Jason.

That different slant was a joy and an attitude he'd never seen before.

"I used to just watch Inga (Va'aiga's nickname). I used to think 'why on earth is

IT WASN'T WHAT [INGA] SAID, BUT THE WAY HE LIVED



he coming to training with a smile from ear to ear? What on earth does he have to be happy about? He doesn't go out drinking all the time, he doesn't go to parties, he doesn't sleep around."

"I watched him and saw he was at peace. I was chasing things all the time. A house, a nicer car — and never satisfied. You get one car, you want another car. He wasn't chasing anything. I wanted what he had."

What "he had", Jason realised, was Jesus Christ. Inga, who died in

February 2022, was a born-again Christian but he never made any attempt to convert Jason. Instead he let his life do the talking.

"It wasn't what he said, but the way he lived," Jason shares. "What he did have was a dream about me.

"He said that in this dream I stood on top of the world — which I was, my career was going really well. But then, as he watched, the world started crumbling from under my feet. And that was my life off the pitch.

"Things were crumbling, and things were going wrong. I used to drink an awful lot. I was trapped, and I was sucked into a way of life that I now realise was wrong.

"And I thought to myself, what benefit am I getting going out and getting drunk? It's not doing anything for my career, nothing for my health. Is this all we're here for?"

"I realised I wanted Christ." Almost overnight Jason turned his back on his wild life. He gave up the booze (though he still has an occasional drink), got married and settled down. He was 21.

Still, Jason doesn't want it to sound like this radical change was easy.

"I still had problems, I still had the same nature. It wasn't like, hallelujah, everything's okay. I used to think, 'well, I'll go out but I won't drink', so I'd take the car to stop myself drinking, but within half an hour I'd had one, two, three

drinks, and just tossed the car keys to someone.

"Then I read a book which said 'you can't sit on the fence. You either choose God's way or you don't.'

"I want to be and live my life like Christ did. I want to be a good husband and a good father."

It can be difficult to be the kind of father Jason wants to be. Life as a professional rugby player involves so much travel for touring, training and tournaments. But Jason has never been one to shy away from challenges, and indeed his commitment to his parental duties is remarkable.

He once spent his Lions tour fee to fly them out to join him in Australia and every night his habit was to go to their hotel and see the children off

to bed before returning to eat with the team.

"I saw in Inga what I really wanted. A family, peace in myself. And morals, to be morally right and live a good life. People say ... you're a Christian, you're goody-goody. But surely, isn't that what we should be?"

"I want people to be nice to me, to my kids, to do unto others as you would have done to yourself."

It isn't just talk, either. Jason is also involved in charitable work and has been known to spend Sunday nights giving out food and clothes to the homeless in Manchester.

Asked in a recent newspaper interview what his motto in life is, Jason answered: "A biblical one, 'in everything, do it as unto the Lord'".



Prince Harry (R) and former England international Jason Robinson OBE pose together at the RFU All School Programme Coaching Event at Twickenham Stadium on October 17, 2013 in London, England. (Photo by Samir Hussein/WireImage)

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