

SUPERPOWERS IN YOUR SCARS



Elly Brown displays her trachyotomy scar.



Elly has a scar on her leg where muscle was removed to make her a new tongue.

Elly Brown was a professional singer, actress, on camera host and model until oral cancer took half of her tongue in 2018. Doctors removed her tumour and rebuilt her tongue and jaw out of bone and muscle from her leg.

A year later they told Elly she has bilateral breast cancer too. This second diagnosis came the same week that she lost her father to pancreatic cancer.

But listen to how Elly describes her ordeal: "Cancer is one of the greatest gifts I have ever received in my life. Cancer comes in an ugly box. But when you unwrap it, the gifts are overwhelming."

In a beautiful clip on Youtube, she sings the famous hymn *It is well with my soul*. Although she has a scar through her lip and down her neck, her jaw doesn't move like it used to, and her range has been affected by radiation treatment, Elly still sings a whole lot better than

most of us could.

"At the end of the last surgical procedure, I couldn't really breathe on my own, I couldn't walk on my own and I couldn't eat on my own," she said. How incredible that she has learnt not only to swallow and talk again but to sing!

In the subtitles of her post, she explains her astonishing perspective on all she has been through.

"Cancer deepens friendships. Reveals priorities. Clears out people and things that don't belong.

And while it certainly causes loss and heartache, it can also teach us about true beauty and love.

"And while life is never without problems, we can look at our problems through the expectation that they are valuable gifts. What if every problem was a gift? A carefully chosen, perfect-for-you gift given from the heart of God ... it is life changing!

"Cancer has brought the most amazing people into my life. It's taught me how to take better care of myself, and how to turn my fear into peace. Cancer forces me to slow down and enjoy every beautiful thing, from food to friends.

"And best of all, cancer teaches me true gratitude for every breath, every moment of being alive.

"There is still crying and sadness, and mourning of what once was. But never a wish to go back. What we get in return is worth more than diamonds.

"There are new friends, a

new perspective, new understanding, a new way to relate to people, a chance to help others and be their light, a chance to make a difference in my community and help others feel a bit less lonely.

"It was a lot [to deal with]," she said, describing her recovery. "But there was never a question in my mind that I would recover. I just knew I would. I had the Holy Spirit [invisible presence of God] in my ear every single day saying, 'Look, I know today is tough but just wait. Wait

and see.'

"I'm grateful for that period of time too because that's when you put yourself firmly in the palm of the Lord," she said.

She says singing the hymn is her way of thanking God for "reshaping my life through cancer". And ends with a hope that "if you or a loved one has cancer, I pray that you can remove the lid and see the treasures." In another clip, Elly movingly sings another well-known hymn, *How Great Thou Art*.

Singing was instrumental in introducing Elly to Jesus as a young child too. She grew up hearing the great truths of the Bible through song at church.

"I found that whenever I felt lost, music would bring me back to God. I found that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit reside inside every perfect chord created when a group of people lift up their voices together," she shares.

"When I found out I had tongue cancer, I kept thinking about how every experience we get from God is a gift and even though this was not my plan or my choice, I could use

WHAT IF EVERY PROBLEM WAS A GIFT?



Elly Brown before her cancer, with fiancé Rick Lax at Disney World.

this gift to become closer to Him and the things that matter the most.

"If I could tell people anything, I'd say trust in God to give you the thing you need at the time you need it most. Sometimes the biggest gifts come disguised as a disaster, when it's really God hitting the re-set button and asking you to put your faith in Him."

The lump found in Elly's left breast has proved not to be cancer and, since her genetic tests have come back negative, she elected to have a lumpectomy and possible radiation.

"I'm putting it all in God's hands!" she told *Challenge* before her successful surgery, which took place on August 27th.

The 41-year-old is engaged to author, magician and entertainer Rick Lax.

Check out her inspiring, light-hearted yet achingly honest website at www.reallyellybrown.com or her social media presence on Instagram and Facebook, where her tagline reads "Your scars are your superpower."

Fun for Kids
Pages 5,6 & 7



BACK PAGE



BIGGER THAN BATTING
KATIE PERKINS



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TRUTH WINS THE DAY

BY ALAN BAILEY

WHAT a great range of stories we read in this paper! The life journey of people varies so much depending on where you were born, what kind of upbringing you had and a host of other factors. So failure and success, happiness and sadness, wealth and poverty, acceptance and rejection all have a part in the fabric of ordinary lives. What is common to all is the desire to find contentment, an answer to the questions and problems we face as individuals and communities.

Those who read these pages regularly will know that the solutions people have found over and over again have been in a new relationship, finding Jesus as Lord and Saviour and friend. Past mistakes have been wiped out and a new strength experienced. Lives have been turned right around.

The cry is often heard that this is just religion which takes various forms. It is popular to believe that all religions say much the same thing and that they are equally unbelievable. But is this a true assessment?

A GREAT DIFFERENCE

An honest examination of even elementary things will show that Christianity is very different from all other faiths. To deny this is to show lack of understanding. Here are three truths that reveal a huge contrast.

ONE: Religion is the result of mankind seeking God (or some equivalent). This has resulted in the invention of deities and their rules and demands, which are then laid on the backs of devotees.

Christianity is based solely on what

God has revealed. He gave the Ten Commandments; He became man and lived among us to teach us truth. So Christianity is *God seeking mankind*.

TWO: The message of all religions and cults is summed up in the word "do." The individual must save himself or herself. All destinies rest on performance. Only when you pass the tests will you have any hope at all. Sink or swim. It's all up to you. Your good must outweigh the bad.

The Christian Gospel is summed up in the word "done." At the centre of the message is Christ on the cross. He cried before He died: "It is finished." The price was paid for sin, the door into God's presence and favour was opened. Jesus rose from death and is able to save all who come to Him in faith. The good news is that the work is done; what we do is receive the benefit. *The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life.* (Romans 6:23)

How can He be compared to the various religious leaders? He is utterly beyond them.

THREE: Followers of religion have no certainty about their status. The teachings themselves disallow any assurance that they are right on track to some future heaven. All that can be done is to keep trying, hoping and inevitably doubting.

Christians can rest on the promises of God's Word. *God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* (1John 5:11-12)

No wonder Jesus could say "I am the way, the truth and the life."

ONE DAY AT THE PEARLY GATES ...

HAVE you heard the joke about the man who died and went to heaven and met St Peter at the Pearly Gates?

St. Peter asked: "Joe, if you can answer one question, I'll let you into heaven."

Joe: "Sounds easy enough."

St. Peter: "Ok, who is with you always?"

Joe: "Oh, that's easy: Andy!"

St. Peter: "Andy?"

Joe: "Yeah, haven't you heard that hymn 'Andy walks with me, Andy talks with me?'"

Even if you have never been in a church and don't know much about Christianity, you might be familiar with this idea of having to give an account of yourself at the gates of heaven in order to earn your way in. There are lots of jokes and cartoons about it.

Would you be surprised to know that that will never happen to anyone and is not a biblical concept at all?

First of all, the Apostle Peter being the gatekeeper of heaven is just a pious fiction.

However, the Bible does talk about heaven having twelve gates each made of a single pearl, so the "pearly gates" are there. Also, the Bible says the streets are made of gold.²

There is also a book – the Bible calls it the Lamb's Book of Life, but



it doesn't record all your sins, it just records your name.³ If you have accepted the free grace of God [the undeserved gift of salvation and right-standing with God], your name is in the book.

People who accept Jesus as Lord of their lives and become Christians will never have to convince God of why they should gain admission into Glory. Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, their wrongdoings are washed away⁴, and the Lord has prepared a place for them⁵. They are a shoo-in, not because of what they have done, but because of what Jesus did for them.

Christians will never have to give an account of their sins. Their sins are separated from them as far as the east is from the west⁶, and God remembers them no more⁷.

The followers of God will, however, have their works judged with fire at the end of the age to determine their rewards⁸. The Bible says that not the smallest act of kindness will go unrewarded in heaven⁹.

On the other hand, those who have not accepted the invitation of God and the payment for their sins, will never get anywhere near the Pearly Gates.

At death their spirits go down to the fiery pit and at the end of the age they will stand before the God at the Great White throne judgement, and the Book of Life and another book, a record of their lives, will be opened. Then the dead whose names are not in the Book of Life will be judged according to their works and be punished for each and every sin they have ever committed¹⁰. None of the good they have done will be able to save them because no sin, however small, can be allowed to pollute heaven. They will spend all eternity in hell.

Now that is no joking matter.

Footnotes:

1. The words are actually "And He walks with me" (referring to Jesus).
2. Revelation 21:21
3. Revelation 20:15
4. 1 John 1:9
5. John 14:2
6. Psalm 103:12
7. Hebrews 8:12
8. 1 Corinthians 3:12-13
9. Matthew 10:42
10. Revelation 20:11-15

A mapbook through the madness

BY JODY BENNETT

I SAW a headline yesterday that made me want to both laugh at its absurdity and cry for the state of our civilization: *Trans Male YouTuber's New Complaint: Feminine Hygiene Products 'Very Female Oriented'*.

Is it just me, or does it feel like we have fallen down the rabbit hole and are now at the Mad Hatter's tea party? Even 20 years ago could you credit that such a bizarre headline would ever be possible?

If you wonder how on earth we got to this place as a society and how to understand the philosophy that governs the path we're on, the book *Love Thy Body* by Nancy R. Percy is a fanatatic resource. It is a well thought through, thoroughly researched and articulately presented exposition of liberal secularism – the philosophy that drives today's western culture.

The author points out that what underpins all the moral touch points of the age – transgenderism, abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and promiscuity – is the underlying belief that our bodies are somehow separate from our true selves and not really part of who we are. That they don't define us, that they don't have meaning in themselves and that what we do to them doesn't affect the "essential" us.

In contrast, Percy argues, Christianity has a profoundly integrated view of personhood. Who we are inside and outside is one and the same. Our bodies are good, they are an essential part of us, they are part of what defines who we are and they, along with our spirits, are offered redemption and eternal life through the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross. What we do to and with our bodies, according to Christianity, impacts our souls and has an eternal consequence.

Percy points out the absurdity of denying biology to such a profound degree that 'human being' is no longer synonymous with being a person. Once personhood is separated from our humanity, unborn babies might be humans but not persons until some undefined and completely subjective point, which ultimately becomes determined by the state.

The state will also then get to decide when your personhood ends and your 'quality of life' is no longer worth sustaining into your old age.

If male and female are not determined by biology then what is their definition? If we are going to define truth not by objective, scientific means but by subjective feelings, what will be the end of such obvious self-deception?

What is the point of feminism if anyone can be female and men can take over women's sports and fill female quotas? How do we fight to protect women and girls who are trafficked, raped and beaten up at much higher rates than men, if any man can claim to be one?

Transgenderism is in fact narrowing the definition of what it is to be male or female, not giving those non-typical men and women freedom to be themselves. If you don't fit a specific idea then you must be the other,

instead of allowing a breadth and depth of difference within each biological sex that God intended. Why can't you be a sensitive, slightly built, artistic man, without being a girl?

If children are taught to question the obvious truth of their own anatomy, how will they ever grow up integrated and secure? We are asking them to 'choose a gender' when we should be reaffirming the biological building blocks that God has given them on which to

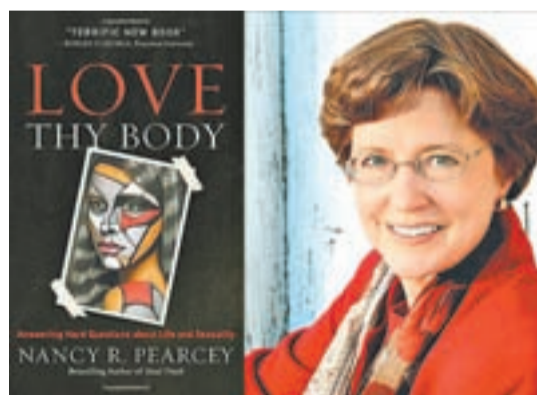
construct their identity.

What is the result of turning the body into an instrument and severing it from the soul? (Also known as dualism, based on the ancient heresy of Gnosticism). Deeply unhappy, disorientated and unfulfilled people, who are turning to drugs, alcohol, self-harm, pornography and suicide in record numbers out of desperate hopelessness.

The good news of Christianity, unlike what any other philosophy or religion offers, is that although you are more than your body, your body IS you; you are an integrated whole. Your biology is important, your body was made with a purpose, it says something about who you are and form indicates function. You are an integrated, beloved creature, who was made with intention, whose life has meaning and value. Sex is not meaningless but sacred. What you do to yourself matters. You are an eternal soul, but even your body is promised redemption and eternal life in Christ.

Love thy Body is engaging, relevant and informative, holding a mirror up to the madness of modern thinking and showing us a better way. As one reviewer stated "Percy takes us beyond the 'thou shalt not's' to show why God's ways are best."

Find it online in paperback or ebook.



Crossword

ACROSS	11 Public-health concern	23 Fearful anticipation	30 Bullet train stop
3 Furry river mammal	12 Battery fluid	26 Fall ____ place	DOWN
8 Oolong and rooibos	13 Fable writer	27 Inspired with confidence	1 Tranquility
10 Bicker, quarrel	14 Detest or dislike	28 Of the navy	2 All jokes ____
	20 Achieve, reach	29 Major Italian city	4 Childish goodbye (2-2)
			5 Put to the test
			6 Swollen heads
			7 Speak at length (3-2)
			8 Former rulers of Russia
			9 Licorice-like flavour
			15 Leafy drink
			16 Tropical fruit
			17 Battery knob
			18 Start of a billiards game
			19 Chocolate source
			21 Sparkling headgear
			22 Agenda parts
			24 Spite and resentment
			25 One not using his brain

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

Comic book art imitates Life



ABOVE: A PAGE FROM THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

RIGHT: Simon's illustrations are based on historical documents and artifacts.

TOP RIGHT: Simon Pillario's self-portrait

BY CHRIS EYTE (AMENDED)

Even if you are not a Bible reader, you will probably be aware that there are many different versions of the Christian Bible – varying very little in meaning but differing in language and strictness of translation (some translating word-for-word and some translating thought-for-thought, in more natural language for the modern reader).

Unless you frequent Christian bookstores though, you might not be aware that there are also a whole lot of Bibles in pictures – apart from classic children's Bibles.

For instance, there is a Lego Bible, depicting the stories in Lego figures, and the Minecraft Bible. These are accessible to kids and adults alike. There is also a Manga Bible in the Japanese art style. These Bibles have fewer words and focus on the narrative

parts of the Bible to tell the story of God. How He made all things good, how people rebelled against Him, and how He has spent the rest of human history calling us back to Himself, and making a way for our forgiveness through the vicarious death of Jesus on the cross.

Now comic book artist Simon Amadeus Pillario from Bristol England, has begun to draw an illustrated Bible with a difference. The Word for Word Bible Comic does not change the words of the original, or leave out any text. Using the World English Bible translation, it includes every verse but cleverly uses speech bubbles and the margins of the cartoons to make it punchy and easier to read.

Simon also doesn't put in any extra words, except for sound effects. This is the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible, just as a comic.

With the drawings, Simon has been just as careful with accuracy. His comics are based on historically accurate places,



styles of dress, and artefacts, with care taken that they don't imply more or anything other than the words of the Bible do.

Simon, now 37, came to believe in the words of this sacred text in his twenties. Before that he didn't think much about religion and believed he was a 'good person' – which for most of us means just 'not as bad as the next guy'.

Up to this point "I didn't think lying, cheating, film piracy and things like that were a big deal", the artist recalls.

His assumptions about himself were challenged when he did a well-known introduction to Christianity course called Alpha through his local church, in 2005. He hoped it would straighten out "what little I knew about Christianity from Sunday school" when he was a boy.

The highlight of Alpha was a weekend that focused on how the invisible presence of God, called the Holy Spirit, comes to live within Christians to empower them to change.

Simon recalls: "The leaders of Alpha invited us to stand and ask God to fill us with His Spirit. I stood and thought, 'Well, here I am doing it. God, if you are real and I can experience you like these people say I can, I guess now is the time.'

"Then I had a powerful encounter with God, which turned my life around and I became a committed Christian. I'd recommend the Alpha course to anyone who wants to know about God, Christianity and more, no matter how much or how little you already know about it."

Simon says the decision to live for God has totally transformed his life. The realisation grew that he needed to make better choices in life and "rely on God for provision, not my own craftiness".

When Simon read the Bible he found complex adult themes in books such as Samuel and Kings, which he thought would be more accessible if presented visually.

"I realised that if there was no film or TV show of the Bible, and if preachers didn't preach on these passages, there is no way that I, nor people like me, will ever hear these stories unless they pick up an actual 2,000 page plain text Bible and read it for themselves.

"I thought, 'Someone should make a comic which has every word included'. It was only a short time later that I felt God saying: 'Yes... you!'"

So far, Simon has produced comics of the Bible books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Esther and Mark, with more to come. While they are not suitable for younger children due to the bloody violence, adult themes and alcohol use, there is no explicit nudity and sex, and each book has a helpful age rating.

His soft cover, glossy, full-colour books can be ordered at www.wordforwordbiblecomic.com. See previews and promos on Youtube. •



Bad choice haunts US runner

Sanya Richards-Ross is a former track and field athlete who has won ten gold medals and was the best 400 metre runner in the world for a whole decade.

Sanya was at the top of her game in 2008. She was the new face of US track and field with over eight national brand sponsors. Her college sweetheart had just proposed to her and she was the heavy favourite to win gold at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. She was 23.

Sanya "felt like nothing could go wrong" but a month before the games, "I found out that I was pregnant. I had a [choice]: to have a child out of wedlock at the prime of my career or to have an abortion. But how could I? It went against everything that I stood for and everything that I wanted to be."

Nevertheless, the day before Sanya boarded her flight to Beijing, "I terminated my pregnancy and a little piece of my soul."

"I didn't tell my Dad or my coaches," she says with tears pouring down her cheeks. "I just kept chasing my dream but nothing I did could remove the shame and guilt I carried in my heart. I kept moving forward ... but I could not outrun my broken spirit."

Sanya says she started running when she was seven. Her whole life she dreamt of being an Olympic champion.

Then, the 2008 season rocked Sanya's world. "It reshaped my

RIGHT: Sanya Richards-Ross, four-time Olympic Gold medalist, entrepreneur, and author attends the Fast Company Grill on March 08, 2019 in Austin, Texas. (Photo Rick Kern/Getty Images for Fast Company)

INSET: Sanya's book.



understanding of God," she recalls. "I had only ever had a 'church pew' experience of God. It's where you witness other people pray and you imagine that you know the same God. It's where you believe what the pastor says but you long to know that God for yourself. I knew God was good and that His love was everlasting but I hadn't truly experienced Him for myself."

The night before the finals, Sanya could not sleep. "I stayed up all night begging God to forgive me and to allow me to have the moment. Although I kept asking for it, I'm not sure I really wanted it or if I felt like I deserved it."

After finishing the race and earning a bronze medal, Sanya tells that the weight of it all brought her to her knees. "I wished I could just die and fall below the surface of the track."

That night, Sanya wanted to get back to her family and boarded a bus to their rented apartment. But she

was "in such turmoil" that she got on the wrong bus and ended up lost in the streets. "I was in the middle of a strange country where no one spoke my language," she tells.

As she stood there, broken and lost, a miraculous exchange occurred. "I felt the loving arms of my Saviour, my Father, my Healer, and my Redeemer hug me and whisper, 'You'll be alright. I love you forever.'"

"I wept. God had offered me His forgiveness for my brokenness. In my valley, in the pits of my hell God was right there with me. He'd never left me. Not in the clinic, not during the race, and certainly not in the streets of Beijing. All my life I thought I had to be perfect or close to it to earn God's love and His grace but on that day I knew with all certainty that God gives it to us freely."

Since this amazing revelation, Sanya has recommitted herself to following Jesus and is able to confidently tell others about her jour-

ney to faith. "The worst experience in my life, the one that the devil had intended to use to keep me in despair and shame, God used to reveal His perfect love. When life gets grey, when you feel like you've crossed the line and that there is no return, God is

still waiting for you with open arms.

"We actually can't do this life without Him," she continues. "When we commit to our life plans without God, our humanity and our sinful nature is impossible to beat. But with God, isn't it a blessing to know that we mean so much more to Him than our poor choices? And isn't it true that our God is so much greater than our shame?"

Sanya still has difficulty talking about her abortion but she handles the situation with openness and honesty. "It wasn't like, 'Okay, cool, I'm healed, I'm recovered, I feel great about this journey.' It took a long, long time, to understand that I am not the sum total of my decisions and choices but I am a child of God. I am capable of any sin. God loves me in spite of my sinful nature. That has helped me to heal."

Now, Sanya is married and has a son. She has retired from sport and juggles running a business and enjoying life with her husband and family.

More of Sanya's inspiring story can be found in her book *Chasing Grace* available in paperback, ebook and audiobook. •

Former Iranian politician finds more than freedom in the West

Dr Daniel Shayesteh, author, academic and speaker is also a poet, classical Middle Eastern musician and an expert on the difference between Islam and Christianity.

Daniel and his wife Mary were born into nominal Muslim families in a small city in Northern Iran in the 1960s.

Daniel grew up in poverty, went to university in Tehran, joined the army and became part of the revolutionary movement that helped to overthrow the Shah and bring Ayatollah Khomeini to power in 1979.

The couple became fully involved in the fundamentalist Islamic movement. Their common religious and political interests drew them together and they married. Daniel ran for the Islamic Parliament.

He became a leading politician but was soon disillusioned with the cruel dictatorship of the mullahs.

The bitter rivalry of Islamic politics often leads to people being killed for their beliefs, so when Daniel stood as an opposition candidate in elections he was kidnapped by Khomeini's Revolutionary Military and placed in a political prison – a place of torture and torment - to await a death sentence.

"The other four men in my cell were hanged but God in his love and graciousness had other plans for my life," Daniel reveals.

"Unexpectedly I was temporarily released, but I was not allowed to work in my city, and neither was I allowed to leave my city to seek work in other areas, or leave the country. My family and I were interrogated, monitored and constantly under pressure from the authorities.

"Finally, after two attempts, I escaped into Turkey in 1988 - homeless and without family or friends. My loneliness was overwhelming at the time and I feared for my family's safety because of my escape," Daniel recalls. "A few months later I decided to study at a Turkish university. That kept me busy and helped to get rid of some sadness. I also had a thought that, as part of my studies, I should find some time to investigate other religions, to see what their gods are like."

A number of months later, through a business deal that went wrong, he came into contact with the Iranian Christian Fellowship in Istanbul.

It was a surprise to Daniel when he first saw a New Testament in Farsi, as he didn't know that there was a Bible in his own language, and had never heard of Muslims converting to Christianity.

"When I first entered a church, I was shocked: people were playing music (music is evil in the Muslim world, especially in worship) and everyone seemed happy; women were standing, singing and lifting their hands. After the church service I was warmly welcomed and loved.

"One day alone in Turkey I was overwhelmed by the injustice of the world and felt very sorry for myself. I started to complain to God, saying: 'Aren't you the Almighty God? Should I suffer all my life? Why don't you help me? What is this life for? How can I get out of this life?'"

"That night I heard Jesus' voice in a dream, and the following Sunday I heard the preacher saying the exact words Jesus said to me in the dream: 'Come out of your father's old house [of tradition, superstition and fear] and live in a new house on the rock of Jesus' (based on Luke



Daniel Shayesteh in front of a picture of himself as a younger man.

6:48f). At the time, I didn't know that there is only One Almighty name by which man can be saved.

"Yes, only one name, Jesus."

By reading the New Testament, he discovered that the God of the Bible, unlike all other gods who are impersonal, is personal and people can have a personal relationship with Him in their lives on earth.

"I understood that Jesus is love as much as God is. The way Jesus looks at sinners is the same way God does. God the Son is God, as much as God the Father is. He came down for us. He was crucified for us. He died for us. He rose from the dead for us and He is living within us. This is the plan of God in the Bible.

"After reading the Bible for about three months I noticed that Jesus is my God. He is my Creator. He is my Saviour. He is my Father. He is my judge. He is the King of my life and there is no end of His kingdom.

"I read hundreds of prophecies about Messiah in the Old Testament and saw their fulfilment in Jesus in the New

Testament."

Later Mary and the children joined Daniel in Turkey. When he told her he had found a friend in Jesus, his conversion was a shock to her. "How can a person change his or her religion?" were her words, yet she recognised that Daniel was indeed a very different man.

Daniel was afraid he would lose his family, however Mary began reading the Bible and discovered that it said that men and women were equal and women were not inferior to men, which made her interested in this new faith. Previously, she had thought all religions were the same.

Months later Jesus appeared to Mary in a dream, saying: "Come my daughter, do not be afraid. Just take the first step." In the dream, as she did so, all the obstacles before her disappeared. Through God's goodness and grace Daniel's wife, once a fundamentalist Muslim, became a Christian.

Daniel is now director of an organisation called "Exodus from Darkness" aimed at helping Muslims to find the Truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to heaven. Check it out at www.exodusfromdarkness.org.

Or find his autobiography *The House I left Behind: A Journey from Islam to Christ* on Amazon. •



Farsi Bible



Sam Leeds and his wife Amanda.

Magician turns into millionaire benefactor

BY IAN WHITE

Self-made millionaire Samuel Leeds put his money where his mouth is.

Inspired by people he's met, including Alan Sugar, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone, Sam gives away thousands of pounds to help impoverished villagers in Africa.

And, living up to his biblical name as a man of endurance, he's not giving up seeing where his aid goes for himself – even after a horrific rafting accident.

Despite warnings of not being able to walk properly again after shattering his kneecap during the freak rafting incident on the River Nile last year, the 28-year-old entrepreneur seems as determined to carry on as Rocky Balboa.

Sam started out as a magician before making his money in property investment, and he's under no illusions about the grit and determination needed to get back on his feet.

As Sam told the media once back home in Lichfield: "It's like Rocky said, it isn't about how hard you hit, but how hard you get hit and keep moving forward."

While in Uganda visiting villages benefiting from rain water collection tanks he'd paid for, Sam went white-water rafting.

But the raft capsized and Samuel was thrown 20ft down a waterfall, his kneecap hitting rocks. He spent a week in hospital in the capital, Kampala.

While rehabilitating at home with his wife Amanda and daughter Ruby, Sam said: "My knee might be broken in various places, but my spirit remains."

He puts that unbroken spirit down to his firm faith in Jesus Christ.

"I have tremendous faith in God, a loving family and a huge passion for

my work. I'm determined to prove the doctors wrong."

Samuel's strong faith began when he became a Christian aged 17.

He told *Challenge*: "I had lots of anger following being attacked and badly beaten up aged 14. I was determined to seek revenge.

"But aged 17, I was about to go to sleep one night when the presence of God entered the bedroom and I felt God speaking directly to my heart, saying: 'Follow me'.

"I made a decision that night to come to Jesus and my heart was immediately overwhelmed with love and forgiveness, even for all the people I had hated."

Sam started reading the Bible and it "became alive" to him. The message of Jesus "became as clear as crystal and so powerful it blew me away."

He adds: "Since then my life has been completely different and I have grown in

my faith and love for God and people. God's presence is everywhere and I don't see it possible to have a wonderful creation without a supreme Creator."

Meanwhile, about the same time, Samuel bought a house under market value and rented it out. This proved the initial step toward the multi-million pound business he runs with his brother Russell, with a monthly turnover of £250,000.

But Sam, who now lectures and writes books on investment, certainly invests in others far less fortunate than himself – helping Africans with hardly anything to their name through his Good News All Round organisation.

Giving ten per cent of business profits and personal wages away, for over five years the organisation has undertaken projects in Zambia and Uganda such as water tanks, borehole wells, free business start up loans, and given out food and clothes.

No broken leg is going to stop Sam from helping others. •

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS ... BLEW ME AWAY.



SMILE
STORY

Child refugee reunites with helper 24 years later

WHEN Mevan Babakar was 5 years old, she was living in a refugee camp in the Netherlands with her parents. It was a scary time, but 24 years later, she's never forgotten the kindness of one camp worker.

"Out of the kindness of his own heart, [this man] bought me a bike," wrote Mevan in a tweet, along with the only photo she had of him. "My five-year-old heart exploded with joy. I just want to know his name."

Amazingly, the tweet was liked and shared thousands of times in the next 24 hours. What's more, she received messages from others who said the man and his wife helped them as well. But the best part? Mevan finally found the camp worker, whose name she learned is Egbert. He lives in Germany now and has been helping refugees since the '90s.

Even more amazing? Mevan and Egbert were near enough to reunite.

"He was so happy to see me," wrote Mevan in a follow-up tweet. "He was proud that I'd become a strong and brave woman. He said that was his wish for me when I was small. He thought the bike was too small a gesture to make such a big fuss about but he's really glad that it was the key to bringing us together again."

"The kindness that Egbert and his family showed me will stay with me for a lifetime, and it continues to shape me as a person. That's the magical thing about kindness, it changes the world one person at a time."

From Inspiremore.com

What sled dogs taught me about body image

BY CORINNE SANDERS

LIVING in a society with unrealistic standards and cookie-cutter images of the perfect body makes it hard to accept the physical differences that make each of us unique, let alone celebrate them.

But what we often forget is that our bodies aren't meant to be the same. It's a simple truth we've all struggled to believe —

and one Blair Braveman learned to embrace with help from an unexpected source: sled dogs.

The dogsledder and self-proclaimed adventurer was taught growing up that all bodies are different but says it was training and caring for dogs with individual needs that really drove the point home for her. Since then, she adds, it's done wonders for her body image. And she wants to share that gift with others.



Blair with some of her charges.

That's why Blair recently took to Twitter, sharing photos of many dogs she works with and how they've taught her about every individual's beauty. Read below as she imparts her wisdom, beginning with the simple statement, "Get this: All bodies are different."

"All of the dogs' bodies are so different. Some of them eat thousands of calories a day and are still complete stringbeans. They eat literally three times as much food as

everyone else. Some of them can eat, like, a tablespoon of kibble, and the next day they need a bigger harness.

"Some of them can start training in September and are immediately ready for long runs. Some of them need to ease into training slowly.

"Some of them have disabilities. Some of them were born with bodies that make everything harder for them, and they need extra care and understanding to really shine.

"The point is, THEIR BODIES ARE SO DIFFERENT. But the differences aren't good or bad. They just are."

With that observation, Blair says, came an incredible, life-altering epiphany.

"The dogs' bodies aren't up to them, just like ours aren't. There's no value judgment. They are what they are," she wrote. "And every single one is magnificent."

Dogs are such wonderful companions, but who knew



caring for them could teach us so much about ourselves? Thanks, Blair, for blessing us with this much-needed reminder. Every body is unique, and that's what makes them all beautiful.

Editor's note: Thousands of years ago, someone else who worked with animals — the shepherd David — also knew the truth that God made all bodies different. In Psalm 139: 14-16 he wrote: "I praise You [God] because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be."

This article from Inspiremore.com

NOT DEFINED BY DISABILITY

Jerry Robinson was born with cerebral palsy and, as he grew up, he found it very difficult to make friends or feel comfortable and secure with himself. Eventually, he realised that he couldn't overcome his fears on his own and found out where true strength and security comes from.

"When I was born, I was not breathing and the doctors had to resuscitate me. That resuscitation took a few minutes and by that time something had happened to my brain which caused my disability — cerebral palsy," Jerry explains.

By the second grade, Jerry was moved to a normal curriculum and integrated with students who didn't have disabilities. "It was difficult sometimes," he admits. "Other kids would steer clear of me. It was hard because, as a young child, all I wanted to

be was something.

"I really thought that God made a mistake with me," he says. "I used to think: 'God, you could've easily made me like everyone else. How could you do this to anyone? How can You love me if I have this condition?'"

The pain of those memories brings tears to Jerry's eyes. "I remember that I would sit by myself at lunch and it was hard because I would see all the other kids having fun and laughing and enjoying their lives together and I'm all alone off in the corner somewhere."

When Jerry was a teenager, he wanted to be a friend to others so badly he ended up being hurt by several people. "I wanted to pursue true friendships. I didn't always get that. It was hard not having that as much as I desired it."

Seeing his struggles, Jerry's sister wisely advised him: "Everyone has something that they deal with. Everyone. Sometimes you see it. Sometimes you don't. Anyone that God puts in your life will be there because they can see the person God is making you into. They see the heart that God has formed in you and is forming in you. They'll be true friends for all the right reasons."

Although Jerry struggled to have friends, he did very well academically, thanks to the help and encouragement of one of his teachers. Her kindness and her belief in him really stuck out to Jerry: "She worked with me and she encouraged me to strive and to work hard and do the best I could in all my work. I made straight A's that year. Ever since then, I kept it going."



Jerry Robinson

After college, God opened a door for Jerry to move to New York to work. In doing so, God surrounded him with a church, loving Christian people and an opportunity to give his life to Him.

"God removed every security I ever relied on," he smiles. "I couldn't rely on any of that anymore. It was just me and God face to face. It was being face to face with God that I saw Him for who He really is. In heaven, my insecurities are stripped away. In

heaven, my comfort is taken away. I realised that He is my comfort, He is my security, and He is my strength."

Jerry explains how he felt after he turned away from his sins and gave his life to God: "I've never felt constrained in my praise and worship of God. I never felt that I had to hold anything back. I felt like I could open my heart to God and it's been such a blessing — the many times that God has shown up when I've opened my heart to Him."

"We sing a song in church called, Worthy is the Lamb," he says. "I love that song. It means so much to me because I think of how much Jesus has given me and how much love God expresses to me personally. He deserves all my praise. No matter what I've been going through in my life personally, Jesus deserves so much glory and praise and honour from the world — from me."

"My body, me, everything that I am is a living sacrifice for God. Everything I do, everything I say and everything that I am brings God honour and glory. I'm thanking God by the way I show love to others, by the way people see me in my everyday life. They see Christ, not me. That's worship."



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Zombie jailbird finds true spice of life

BY CHRIS EYTE

Spice- known as ‘the zombie drug’ - is destroying addicts. Countless media reports have shown users sprawled out on pavements, either listless and lifeless, or unpredictably violent.

Police have reported their concerns about this vicious drug. It’s ruining many lives.

One man who knows firsthand the danger it poses is Richard Foyle, 40, originally from Swansea, Wales.

Richard took drugs such as heroin and amphetamines from the age of 17 to 37, living a life of crime that earned him 40 prison sentences over a 20-year period.

Richard’s first prison sentence happened when he, as a teenager, stabbed his dad in the face.

The judge showed empathy towards him because the stabbing followed years of abuse by his father, including putting Richard in a bath of boiling water when he was a toddler - facts reported in the court session at the time, according to Richard.

He added: “I had never been so angry like that before. I was in supported lodging and dad didn’t turn up to meet me at a reconciliation meeting. All I wanted was for him to say sorry. So I went to find him.”

Richard hadn’t understood that his father had mistreated him until he attended a therapy session at Cefn Coed (psychiatric) Hospital in Swansea, aged 14, and heard his mother mention it. He thought the beatings he’d received were a normal part of life.

The stabbing didn’t help. Richard says that taking revenge for the alleged abuse just made him feel worse and he ended up with a three-year prison sentence for malicious wounding with intent.

“I regret it to this day,” he adds and recounts how further prison sentences followed as he stole money for drugs and also assaulted a security guard. He was also put on the public protection register, which meant he could be recalled to prison at any time.

Richard’s behavior up to that point had already been difficult. Now he plunged into a life of crime and drugs over a 20-year period, trying to escape his pain. The most time he had out of prison during that period was six months.

“I got worse. I couldn’t cope.”

One day he took Spice and didn’t know what happened afterwards. Relatives told him he was found on the street, lifeless like a zombie, having a cardiac arrest.

For Richard, who was put in prison yet again after medical treatment, the shock of the event marked a turning point after years of feeling hopeless. He asked to be put into a drug rehab for the first time.

“The Spice really, really shook me up,” Richard recalled. “Lots of people had seen me on the street and I couldn’t remember, even my niece saw me. I felt so lost.

“At that point I knew it was now or never. I had never asked for help before. The police picked me up at the

prison gates and took me straight to the rehab center.”

Richard’s choice to go into rehabilitation, in 2015, led him to Victory Outreach (VO), a Christian rehab residential center in southern Wales known for instilling love and discipline.

“I had never listened to authorities so to go there, I wasn’t fully aware of what I was going into.

“All the boys there [other rehab clients] went out of their way to help me. In the life of drugs and crime I’d had, you cannot trust anyone. You suspect ulterior motives but there was none of that in this Christian place.

“I just had the clothes on my back when I arrived there, but at the end of the day I had a wardrobe full of clothes given to me by the boys at VO.

“I thought to myself, something’s working for these guys. I knew about Jesus from school days but I didn’t know Him personally. These boys though, were so full of joy.”

Richard could see that God’s love was changing the other men. He was intrigued and wanted the same joy in his life.

One day, he went to a church in Newport. The preacher invited people to give their hearts to Jesus Christ. Richard responded to the ‘altar call’ and received prayer.

“I felt something different inside me and burst into tears. I knew at that point that Jesus is real. I just



God’s love has changed Richard Foyle after years of drugs, crime and prison.

INSET: Richard in the bad old days.

became passionate. I really started feeling Jesus then.”

A changed man now, Richard is adamant that ‘feeling Jesus’ wasn’t just a hyped-up feeling at a religious meeting, adding: “I still get it now - three years later. It’s not a hyped-up feeling, it’s more than that.”

Richard was at VO for eight months and then started a new life in the market town of Abergavenny, where he is a member of a local church. He is also hoping to rebuild his relationship with his two daughters. The oldest was born while he was in prison.

Challenges still face Richard as he untangles from the drug addictions, which enslaved him for so long. He is following a 12-steps programme for continued recovery, using methadone on a detox programme. Richard is realistic about the challenges ahead and did have a temporary relapse. He finds the discipline he learnt at VO really helps.

Every morning he prays in bed and reads his Bible, as soon as he wakes up: “I won’t do anything else until I have done that”. He also likes watching sermons on YouTube.

“I’m now in an amazing position. I have everything I longed for apart from my daughters.”

Richard is feeling very positive about the future and hopes to work for his church on a social project.

He added: “The only confidence I have is in God. Every day I focus on Him and I do well. When I take my eyes off God, I fall.

“I know God has plans for me. He answers my prayers, speaks to me and corrects me.

“I would still be in prison or dead if it hadn’t been for Jesus Christ.” •

Abused daughter healed as she forgives

BY ANNETTE SPURR

Carolann’s life began on the devastated, post World War II streets of London, when Londoners still shook with fear at every loud noise, believing that war could reignite at any given moment.

In fact, the government of the day encouraged Londoners to take up cigarettes and alcohol to self-medicate.

It was into this environment that Carolann was born. The result of a failed abortion, as her mother reminded her daily.

In her book *The King’s Daughter*, Carolann Kelleher documents her life story.

Unwanted, uneducated and sexually abused by her father from the age of three, Carolann wondered if there really was such a thing as love.

When she told the local priest, at age seven, what her father was doing to her, he told her, “Go home and be a good girl and stop making trouble for your family.”

Finally, just before her 18th birthday, Carolann found the strength to say ‘no’ to her father. The result was a broken nose and fractured cheek. Knocked unconscious, she awoke in a pool of her own blood.

Somehow, she made it to hospital, but when she told police what her father had done, their response was “we don’t get involved in family issues”.

So, upon her release, Carolann wandered the streets of London in ill-fitting hand-me-downs, desperate to find work and refuge. There were no Domestic Abuse shelters at the time, so starving and vulnerable, she fell into the arms of a male acquaintance who offered her shelter and ‘love.’ But the love he offered was much like her father’s; angry and violent. Eventually, he became bored with Carolann and she was once again alone, ashamed, unloved and unwanted.

Carolann took her self-loathing and her children



Carolann Kelleher found healing and purpose in Jesus.

anchor around her neck, holding her down as she strived to move forward with her new life.

As she continued growing as a Christian, she became less broken and more filled with God’s love. She discovered the freedom that comes with forgiveness. On her father’s death bed he said, “Carolann, I have always looked upon you as just another woman, and I now look upon you as my daughter. Can you please forgive me?”

Overwhelmed by God’s love, she found it so easy to forgive, as she had been forgiven so much.

“If victims of abuse don’t forgive,” says Carolann, “they can never leave the past behind them and take that step forward into the future. You can’t move on until you forgive.”

Released from her burden of bitterness, Carolann was free to embrace life to its fullest. She went on to obtain a degree in Christian ministry, and is now a pastor in Western Australia, a Justice of the Peace, and a visiting justice in the prison system. She teaches English as a second language, and has become a prominent member of her community.

Carolann advises people in abusive relationships “Don’t stay. Seek help. The longer you stay the worse it gets. There is help out there. You really don’t have to stay. Your situation is NOT normal and there are alternatives.”

Now in her seventies, Carolann has written her story, titled *The King’s Daughter*, about her restoration and finding the perfect love of God that heals all wounds. The book is available through Ark House Press. See her interview with Annette Spurr on Youtube by looking up “The King’s Daughter”. •

Believe it or Not

BY PHILIP BELL
FOR CREATION
MINISTRIES

'Evolution' of stick insects rewritten

AS a university student, the lack of evidence for insect-flight evolution contributed to my rejection of evolution, in favour of Biblical creation.

I was therefore recently intrigued to read that the latest research on this topic is causing evolutionists to 'rewrite the rules' of evolution.

Evolution is not meant to run in reverse—at least, this is a basic principle of evolution that is widely accepted. Evolutionists believe that complex genetic instructions, once encoded in a creature's DNA (by natural selection of random mutations¹), are unlikely to be undone², even less likely to be regained later on. A recent report on stick insects in the prestigious journal *Nature* is forcing evolutionists to rethink this fundamental belief.³

Today's stick insects (or phasmids, as scientists call them) show great variety; e.g. some have wings and some do not. The conventional idea holds that a winged insect ancestor gave rise to different groups of winged stick insects, with many of these later evolving to a wingless condition.⁴ From their studies of DNA in 59 stick insect species, the authors of this latest research came to a completely different conclusion: wings were lost in a 'primitive' ancestor of stick insects, reappeared at least four times (independently), then were lost yet again on two or more occasions!

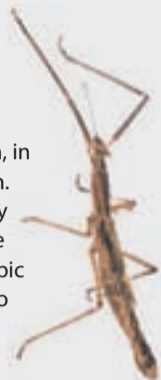
So, these exquisitely complex structures we call wings (not to mention the associated muscles, ligaments and nervous control systems) are now said to have evolved, devolved and 're-evolved' several times.

Moreover, these ups and downs in the evolution of insect flight allegedly spanned 300 million years, with periods of winglessness lasting up to 100 million years.

Genetic information for wings, no longer serving any selective purpose, should be lost and/or should degenerate through disuse by virtue of mutations.⁵ Aware of this, the authors speculate that the instructions for wings were somehow linked to those for legs, so they could be switched on again later. Shoe-horned by their unquestioning belief in evolution, they fail to question whether these non-functioning genes could really have existed for so long!

References and notes

1. Mutations are rare genetic mistakes that may occur when cells divide or when DNA is damaged by something harmful in the environment.
2. This principle was first formulated by Belgian biologist Louis Dollo and thus called 'Dollo's Law'. See: Dollo's Principle: Irreversibility [sic] of evolution, in Milner, R. (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of evolution*, Facts on File, Oxford, p. 143, 1990.
3. Whiting, M.F., Bradler, S. and Maxwell, T., Loss and recovery of wings in stick insects, *Nature* 421: 264–267, 2003.
4. Approximately 60% of living species of stick insects lack wings.
5. As there would be no selection against mutations in unused genes (for wings), mutations would accumulate in these genes so that they would become completely scrambled and no longer able to specify how to make wings. With such a long period proposed (100 million years), this would be inevitable.



For evidence of creation - use your brain!

BY PETER LINE

While the 1.4 kg mass (3 pounds) of tissue that makes up the brain might not look impressive, it is often described as the most complex arrangement of matter in the known universe.

The human central nervous system (CNS) consists of the brain and spinal cord, including roughly 100 billion nerve cells, and about 10 times more neuroglia, or supporting cells. The nerve tissue outside the CNS is called the peripheral nervous system. It delivers sensory information to the CNS, as well as carrying commands from the CNS to organs, such as muscles and glands.

The 3D world we experience, with sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and bodily sensations, is essentially constructed by our brains. Every second awake, signals from our environment of one kind or another are converted into electrical currents (of ions—called action potentials) by sensory receptors in the skin or by special senses (like smell, vision, and hearing).

These currents, bearing no obvious resemblance to the information they carry, travel into the brain via nerve fibres (cables, if you like), and there somehow the information is decoded.

The original signal is interpreted so that a person sees the world in vivid colour, hears the sound of a waterfall, experiences the heat of a hot summer's day, feels a breeze on the skin, and smells the sausages on the barbeque. And this can happen all at the same time; i.e., really fast. How does the brain do this? No one knows, but it must involve signal processing way beyond our current understanding.

Brain mythology

One myth is that we only use about 10% of it, and if we could only learn to use the rest then we would become savants. However, we do use the rest of our brains, only not all of it at once. If all your cerebral cortex were active simultaneously then you would most likely be having some sort of generalized epileptic seizure rather than experiencing special mental powers.

The brain uses about 20% of the body's energy, most of it by nerve cells generating action potentials to communicate with other cells. Hence, using only the resources required to do a task is an energy-efficient design feature.

Different regions of the brain perform different tasks. For example, if you are having problems with your Internet connection, you call your Internet service provider, not the post office.

Similarly, if the motor areas of your cortex are planning a movement of your foot, the command to move is sent to the muscles via motor neurons located in the spinal cord, not to a sound processing area in the temporal lobe. Brain activation is very dynamic; the areas processing information changing constantly, as the situation dictates.

Often the brain is compared to a computer, and while they both contain complex circuits that carry current, the analogy only goes so far.

Consider long-term memory. Computer memory uses transistors to store information, with each transistor capable of two states (on or off, equivalent to one or zero respectively), and so with billions of these tiny electronic devices you can store a lot of information.

But in the brain, it does not appear to be in any specific region, but is rather spread across the brain. The hippocampus appears critical for the consolidation of long-term memories, with the strengthening of synaptic connections between nerve cells thought to be how long-term memory is stored.

However, how exactly this allows information to be stored or encoded, and later retrieved, is a mystery.

A biological 'computer'?

Both computers and brains will malfunction if physically damaged. However, the brain, depending on the nature of the damage, often has enough built-in redundancy and neuroplasticity (the ability to reorganize its connections) that other parts of the brain can

take over the role of the damaged regions. As an extreme example, consider the removal of a cerebral hemisphere (essentially half the brain) as happens in the treatment of some extreme seizure disorders (an operation pioneered by the creationist neurosurgeon Dr Ben Carson¹). Where this happens

at a relatively young age, the long-term effects on cognitive function are often minimal, due to the amazing neuroplasticity of the brain. On the other hand, if a computer is physically damaged, it cannot repair itself. Since there would not have been any half-brained 'hominids' (ape-men), how could 'evolution' create the ability of the brain to reconfigure itself when half is removed?

The consciousness conundrum

No satisfactory explanation exists for consciousness. In fact, there is not even a satisfactory definition of it. However, it certainly involves the quality of awareness. When talking about consciousness, issues such as the mind-body problem often come up, concerning the connection between mental processes involving the mind (e.g., consciousness) and physical processes involving the brain. The mind can be thought of as being the ability of an individual to think, reason, feel, will, perceive, be aware, etc. As such, it seems intertwined with consciousness, and is also difficult to define in scientific terms.

In the words of Richard Restak, a world expert in neuroscience: "Mind is not a physical structure like the brain; it is not a 'thing'. Mind has no visible form, no aroma, no taste; it can't be held in the hand like the brain. Thoughts, the products of the mind, do not require physicality to



Photos: iclipart.com

exist. Thoughts, however, are meaningless without minds that can think and interpret them."²

No one knows how the mind works and how it links with the physical activity

NO ONE KNOWS HOW THE MIND WORKS



of the brain. Claims that the mind is simply the product of the evolved brain are simply Darwinian pledges of allegiance, not statements conveying knowledge. The materialist (or reductionist) insists that everything can be reduced to matter and its movements. This means that in the brain, mental events, such as thinking, emotions, and awareness, must break down to merely interactions between nerve cells and asso-

ciated molecules, if mind and consciousness are 'physically' part of the brain.

It is ironic that the device (mind) used to devise this nihilistic junk falsifies the very philosophy it espouses, since it cannot be described in reductionist terms, or reduced to 'just matter'. We are clearly not mindless accidental robots whose actions are determined by our genes or a chain of chemistry since the so-called big bang. ●

References and notes

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ALONE

AS he prepares to leave Hobbiton for the final time, Bilbo Baggins, one of the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings*, gives an insightful description to Gandalf about the way he is feeling at that moment in his life:

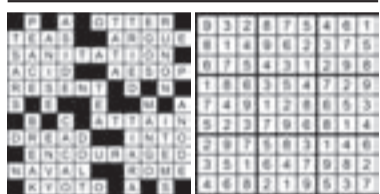
"Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can't be right. I need a change, or something."

Despite being a work of fiction, it accurately describes how many of us feel when we come to the end of ourselves.

We have reached a point where we have nothing left to give, especially in our relationships.

Is there an answer to this?

There is, but it will surprise you!



US author, Sherry Turkle argues that one of the keys to maintaining healthy, flourishing relationships is to ensure that we carve out times of solitude for ourselves.

Her reasoning makes good sense. *"In solitude we find ourselves; we prepare ourselves to come to conversation (with others) with something to say that is authentic, ours. When we are secure in ourselves we are able to listen to other people and really hear what they have to say."*

It's a powerful thought that seems quite contradictory on the surface, but when you think it through, it makes good sense.

The greatest challenge to this however, lies within ourselves.

Turkle quotes recent research to show that people today are not comfortable with being left alone with their thoughts for even a few minutes.

One experiment required the participants to sit quietly for fifteen minutes without a phone or a book.

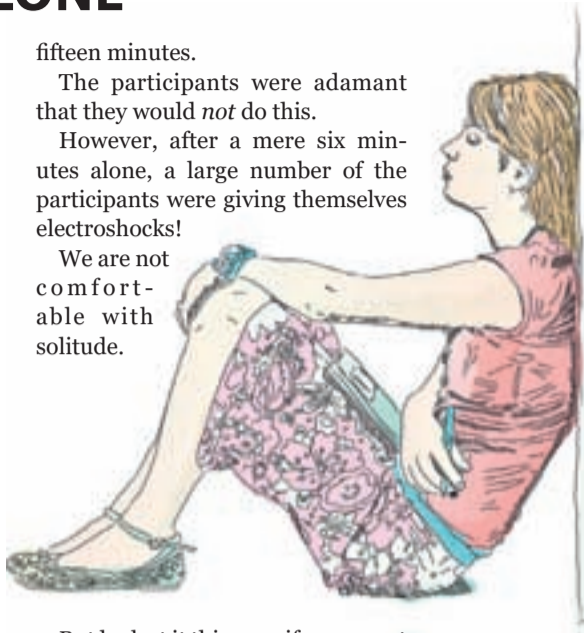
They were instructed at the outset of the exercise to consider self-administering electroshocks if they became bored at any point in the

fifteen minutes.

The participants were adamant that they would *not* do this.

However, after a mere six minutes alone, a large number of the participants were giving themselves electroshocks!

We are not comfortable with solitude.



But look at it this way: if we are not comfortable with our own company, how can we ever possibly be comfortable in the presence of others?

As Turkle observes, *"Afraid of being alone, we struggle to pay attention to ourselves. And what suffers is our ability to pay attention to each other. If we can't find our own center, we lose confidence in what we have to offer others."*

Here are a few practices that I have found helpful to build solitude into my life:

Carve out some alone time for 30 – 60 minutes per day. First thing in the morning is usually the best, before you get into the full swing of the day. I spend my time praying, reading the Bible and talking over with God whatever the concerns are that are currently occupying my mind and heart. This time is invaluable for me because it allows me to get rid of any negative thinking that is weighing me down as well as allowing me to more clearly see the areas I need to grow in as a person.

Keep this time as "device" free as possible. If you use your phone to read, that is fine. But discipline yourself to resist texting, looking at Facebook or checking on emails. Those things have their place – but not here! Work hard to make your time of solitude a distraction free zone!

Plan a half or full day retreat. These usually work best if you have somewhere to go, such as a friend's holiday

home or similar. Take something to read and a journal and pen to jot down any observations that come to you. But keep it simple – you do not want to overload the day!

Solitude, rightly practiced, can become a rich experience that not only deepens our personal lives but also our relationships with others.

Don't be afraid of solitude! •

Even when you are alone, God is there:

WHERE can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

- Psalm 139: 7-12

Ask Y:

Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: If God is so powerful and loving, why doesn't He just stop all the suffering in the world?



IF you see a child with a sharp object you take it away. If a truck is about to mow them down you snatch them to safety. Why doesn't God do the same? And my answer is that He could – but think what would be the outcome.

God could program people never to make mistakes or behave badly. But do you want to live on a whole planet full of android types like "Data" from *Star Trek*? What bliss! What perfection! "I'm sorry sir, I just can't help being good and serving others all the time. It's all I'm programmed to do!"

This powerful God could also remove all evil from the Earth, if that's the way He wanted to play it. But do you fancy living in a place like Seahaven, the TV-location-city featured in the Jim Carrey film *The Truman Show*? This controlled environment was populated by people pushing baby carriages, riding bicycles, and cleaning their spotless houses. And all presided over by the watchful benevolent producer—God.

For everyone in Seahaven, except Truman, this was adequate—because they were actors. But Truman wasn't scripted by the cosmic producer. He was a real, living human with needs and desires and frustrations, which eventually made him yearn to break out of the perfect world.

We can't have it both ways. Either we will be in Seahaven performing to someone else's script, or on a planet where we are allowed the dignity of choice. And once we get to choose, sometimes we will choose harm—to ourselves and to others.

Or God could snuff out anyone who may cause suffering to another. Great idea—and we all have our own list of where He should start. But to eradicate all pain we couldn't stop there. The axe would have to fall on all who had or could—intentionally or accidentally—cause anyone to suffer.

Do you know what that means? We'd all be on the "snuff" list. Not very high up, maybe. But soon God would have to come knocking on your door and mine.

Even so, you may still be saying, "I don't understand why God allows suffering." But what if there is no way we could ever understand. That God wants to provide answers but they are way beyond our ability to understand?

Every normal child reaches the "Why?" stage. And time and again the adult has the answer to hand—but the child's vocabulary, intellect and experience deny it the capacity to understand the answer.

Could that be how it is on some of the issues of suffering? That God would love to let us in on the answers but we don't have the capacity to deal with them? •

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)

** Please tick and write clearly **

Name

Address

Phone

Age and occupation (it helps)

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

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

3 new tips for happiness

nudge

WITH KARL FASE

IN July, researchers from over 60 countries gathered in Melbourne to discuss "positive psychology," AKA: the science of well-being.

Writer and editor Kira Newman of the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley was in attendance, and while there were many different tips for happiness discussed, there were three insights that stood out:

1. Positive solitude
2. Feeling active
3. Future-mindedness.

These points are particularly interesting as they are new, emerging ideas about happiness.

Positive solitude directly opposes our FOMO culture, arguing that time alone spent resting or being creative is healthy!

Feeling active is interesting because— while we all know exercise leads to good physical health— research shows it's just as important to gauge how we feel; are we energized and feeling vital? That could lead to a longer life!

Future-mindedness is a big one. A social psychologist found the happier a person is, the more they look forward to the future. A key to happiness is setting goals now to fulfill later.

From Morning Smile by www.inspiremore.com



Katie Perkins of New Zealand bats during game three of the One Day International Series between Australia and New Zealand at Junction Oval on March 3, 2019 in Melbourne, Australia. (Photo by Scott Barbour/Getty Images)

Photo by Sandeep Shetty-IDI/Getty Images

BIGGER THAN BATTING

Katie Perkins debuted for the New Zealand White Ferns in January 2012, and has appeared in more than 100 international matches since. However the police officer first had to get her priorities right before finding success.

After setting her mind as a youngster to compete for the New Zealand women's national cricket team, Katie found herself lost and far away from that goal in her early 20s. But when she handed the game over to God, her athletic career took a positive turn.

She shares her story:

"To play cricket for New Zealand was the first dream I ever really had. Ever since I was five years old, this dream has given me a drive like nothing else. I had other passions, but cricket trumped them all.

"I grew up going to church, with a strong godly influence in my life because of my family.

"I was a good kid and followed the teachings I learned in Sunday school, but being a good kid and knowing God are two very different things.

"It wasn't until I was 15 years old, after being mentored by a good friend for a number of years, when I started understanding the relational side of God. Then I remember one morning at church, I prayed to God and told Him I wanted to follow Him, to live my life for His glory.

"At that moment, the Holy Spirit [God's invisible presence] filled me and the emotion and adrenaline that surged through my body was something quite indescribable.

"But because I loved the game of cricket so much, my pursuit of

a career in the game soon became my god.

"My self-worth was defined by my success or failure on the cricket field. My mood was determined by how well I played that day.

"After my toughest season in 2010 – 2011, my dream of playing for the White Ferns felt further away than ever before. I needed something to change.

"The offseason that followed turned my whole life around. I went to an 'Ultimate Training Camp' in April 2011, which was centred around [Jesus] Christ. There I met other athletes who had a heart for God, all wanting to understand more about God in their sport environment.

"My eyes were opened to the fact that God didn't care about my results on the field, He cared about how I played the game.

"I learned about playing for God, an audience of One, and about my true worth, which can only be found in God.

"As the winter progressed, my best friend challenged me about where God was in my cricket game. The truth was, He wasn't there at all.

"After a lot of prayer and struggling with the reality I may never be a White Fern, I tried to understand

how to love myself for who I was, instead of what I could achieve.

"By the time the next season came around, I had let go of my lifelong dream and given cricket over to God.

"The freedom and joy I played with that season led to the most successful and consistent summer I'd ever had, and to the phone call that brought me to tears of joy as I found out I would be a White Fern!

"I wish I could say I always play with

this type of joy and freedom but I can't.

"I struggle constantly. As life and cricket got in the way, I let myself become distracted, and let cricket take priority in my life once again.

"At a Twenty20 World Cup semi-final, my love for cricket was non-existent. I was pretty low. I knew it was God that was missing in my life. I felt like my prayers were falling on deaf ears, but in reality, it was me who was choosing to be deaf towards God.

"When I got back to New Zealand, I reached out for help. I connected with chaplains and a mental skills coach.

"I've been more disciplined about going to church and not allowing my sport to get in the way.

I'M A WORK IN PROGRESS, BUT I KNOW I'M MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



"I'm a work in progress, but I know I'm moving in the right direction – closer and closer to God.

"I don't always cope well when I lose. It's an ongoing battle. But I try to remind myself of God's truths: I am adequate, I am perfectly loved.

"Whenever I am lacking confidence in my ability to play, I remind myself of 2 Timothy 1:7, which says, 'For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.'

"A strong visual I have connected with this truth is that of a 100-meter runner standing at the starting block.

"Whatever happens between the gun going off and the end of the race

will have an impact on the immediate future of that runner in this life.

"But God's love and sacrifice for that athlete does not change one bit at the end of the race from when they were waiting at the starting block.

"I now aim to always have my faith play a significant role in my sport and in my life. And I really appreciate when I see it in other players too."

Thirty-year-old Katie is also a full-time police officer in New Zealand, in which she also seeks to put God first.

This story first appeared in the Sport Go Magazine. It is used with kind permission.

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