

# Rocky relationship restored

**Her anger threatened to destroy her marriage.**

Jodie Cooper got to a point after four years of marriage where things were really bad and she couldn't see a way forward.

"I had big anger issues, I would try to manipulate and control my husband with my moods and actions," she admits. "I was easily frustrated with him, never satisfied with what he had done and very quick to criticise and blame him. I also have sensitivity to certain sounds, and this was triggered a lot in our home and it would make me uncontrollably angry. "I also really

wanted to be the boss all the time."

For a long time Jodie was in denial about the situation because she couldn't face how bad things were and felt like there was no way the situation could get better.

"I couldn't see the way out so it was easier not to think about it and get on with my life."

Having grown up in the church, and considering herself 'saved', Jodie eventually sought Christian counselling and asked specific people to pray for her. "Every time I held onto hope that this was going to solve my problems. It never did. All of this mess led me to really question my faith," she shares.

Looking around at her fellow believers, Jodie saw many people struggling with similar character issues, so she concluded that maybe God wasn't able to help her with her anger problems.

However, Jodie had a fundamental misunderstanding of what the gospel – good news of Jesus – meant. She had thought it was a truth you believed that was like ticking a faith box and getting a ticket to heaven. She hadn't realised that Christianity is not believing in Jesus as much as it is submitting to Jesus – all your life, every day, in an ongoing act of dying to self.

"It sounds so silly looking back and I know it is not even close to the teaching of the Bible," she admits, "but I wasn't reading my Bible at the time either. I read devotionals and things but never actually just the Bible. So I started to understand, and research in the Bible, about what the gospel is and the new life that we have because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

"I started to realise that this wasn't just something that I needed to hear once and agree with and that was that, but I needed to use it to renew my mind [change my thinking], daily. And I saw for the first time the weight of my sin, the offence that it was against a Holy God and the incredible price that Jesus had to pay for it for me [by dying on the



An illustration from Jodie Cooper's book *The Greatest Treasure*.



Wilson and Jodie Cooper, who now have a strong and stable marriage, with their children.

cross]. I had never understood this. And seeing it clearly for the first time meant that I could actually face it in my marriage."

Whereas before she had been

proud and unable to acknowledge her faults, now Jodie was able to humble herself before her husband and ask for forgiveness. And she started to take ownership of her own

wrongdoing. "I spent time meditating on what the Bible said about anger and I started to see my anger the way God did.

● Turn to page 2

## ALMOST IS NOT ENOUGH

BY NICO BOUGAS (HELLENIC MINISTRIES)

ON June 17, 1999, Edgbaston, Birmingham witnessed one of the most dramatic finishes in Cricket World Cup history. The South African cricket team almost beat the Australians in the deciding semi-final. But they didn't. Instead the game ended in a tie. A tragic comedy of errors led to a run-out when Lance Kluesner and Alan Donald ended up at the same end of the pitch. They only needed a single, they almost won, but in the end Australia went through to the final and won the World Cup. Almost! Almost! Almost was not enough.

"Almost" is a word that can be used in different ways. It can be used to describe a situation in which we are not ready, or not ready to commit. Maybe you are in a restaurant when the waiter comes to your table and asks if you are ready to order. You reply, "Well, almost."

We also use "almost" when something is "not quite". As in almost full, almost there, almost done. It indicates that something is still lacking.

While we like to use "almost" for a number of situations, there are certain words that don't work with almost, as in "almost pregnant." A woman is either pregnant or she is not. In the same vein, you can't be almost sick, almost happy or almost lost. These things you either are or you aren't. "Almost" is to be not at all.

Another word that doesn't fit with the word almost is "Christian." Either you are a Christian or you are not. You may be well on your way to becoming a Christian. You may be looking into the claims of Christ and

investigating them. But an almost Christian is not one.

When the apostle Paul presented the gospel to Herod Agrippa, Herod said, "You almost persuaded me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Almost. He was close, but not close enough. Apparently Herod Agrippa was moved by Paul's powerful and persuasive presentation of the story of Jesus, but then he turned and walked away from it. He was the almost Christian.

I think there are a lot of people like Herod Agrippa in our world today: people who understand Christianity but haven't committed to it. Church membership rolls are filled with people who think they are Christians because they are church members. They were baptised, confirmed and married in church and might regularly attend services but these things do not make you a Christian. They may give you a relationship to the church, but not a personal relationship with Jesus.

It's not just coming to church that saves us. It's not "turning over a new leaf" that saves us. It's not reading the Bible or memorising Scripture or some "feeling".

Being saved begins with repentance. We must repent of our sins and turn away from them. We need to put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him into our lives to take control.

There are two kinds of people reading this article — "almost Christians" and "altogether Christians." Agrippa was an "almost Christian"—he understood the gospel, heard the truth, but refused to do anything about it. Almost is not enough. For to be almost saved is to be totally lost.

**BACK PAGE**

**DASHING DEFENDER**  
**MIKE FISHER**

**Fun for Kids**  
Pages 5,6,7



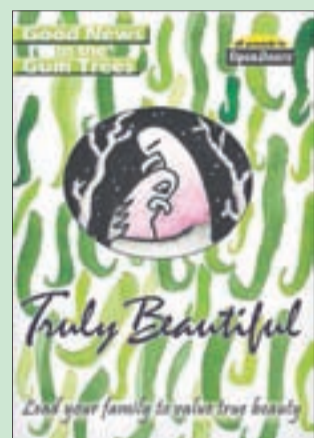
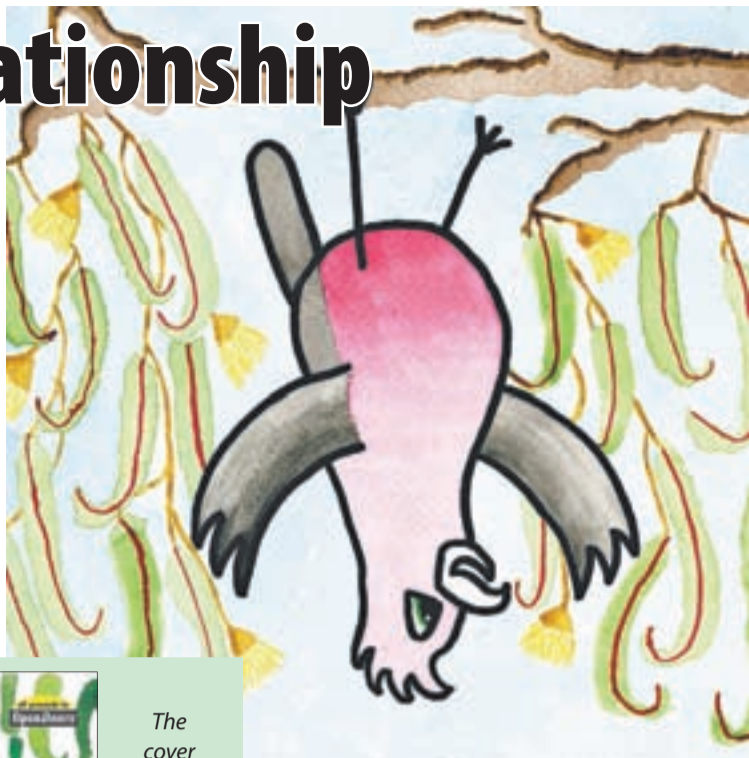
# Rocky relationship restored

From page 1

"Instead of justifying it, I started to hate it and to want to be free from it, not just because it was making my marriage difficult. Even my issue with sounds – God has blessed me with ways to deal with them that are kind to those around me and bring Him glory, which I never could have imagined was possible.

"[Reading the Bible and books about the gospel] gave me the ability to see myself clearly, to understand that the problem really was me and that there was a wonderful solution provided in Jesus. When I could finally face these facts I felt such freedom and hope. I told God the depth of my sins and the way that I hadn't loved Him as I should, and asked Jesus to forgive me and be the Lord of my life."

So although Jodie had grown up going to church all her life, "probably my real conversion was three years ago, when I really understood the gospel".



The cover and a drawing from one of Jodie Cooper's books.

As a result, her marriage has "changed drastically". "I still slip into old habits but I am so much

more ready to face my sin and apologise. But besides that I feel like everything has changed - my purpose in life, my desires, where I get my identity. Life is so much fuller."

The Bible says in John chapter 8 and verse 32; "And you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free" and Jodie has experienced

this first hand. "The truth about God, the truth about me, the truth about the solution to the problems in the world and the truth about the future, opens the door to the most amazing life of freedom and joy that I never knew was possible and it is something that I need to keep being reminded of every day.

"God made humans to love Him most, but we don't, we love all kinds of other junk instead. This is at the heart of all of our rebellion against Him, and it has the most terrible consequences for us. But Jesus fixed this problem for us in the most incredible and unexpected way. He deserves all of our love, and only when we give it to Him will we find what life is really all about."

Jodie is so excited by what she has learnt that she has written a series of children's books called *Good News in the Gum Trees* to help others understand and apply the gospel to their everyday lives. The books include family study guides and action projects to get the whole family involved. Find Jodie's books at [good-news-in-the-gum-trees-1.jimdosite.com](http://good-news-in-the-gum-trees-1.jimdosite.com).

# NO LONGER AFRAID OF DYING

The lack of love and affection José Luis Calderón received as a child left him feeling emotionally abandoned from the time he was seven or eight. This, in turn, led to deep-seated trust issues that made him, in his own words, "cynical, depressed, suicidal and pessimistic".

"My motto was: 'You're already screwed up, now figure out how to survive.'"

Growing up in Pueblo, Mexico, in a nominally Catholic family, José Luis attended church but was never interested in knowing God or following Him.

"For years I was angry with the world. I was so proud – everybody seemed stupid to me. I never trusted anybody enough to be in more than a superficial relationship. Any girl who wanted to get to know the real me, I ran away from."

But what José Luis really was, was scared. "What if I die tomorrow?" was a question that plagued him for weeks. As a Catholic, he was well aware there was a God who would punish him for his sins.

Then in 2005, a missionary invited him to a conference where a guy asked him directly "Why are you afraid?"

"Afraid? I'm not afraid!" he retorted. But he knew it was the truth. He was afraid on the one hand of dying and going to hell, and on the other hand he was afraid to enter into a relationship with God because he enjoyed his lifestyle of sin.

"I liked to see, touch and drink things I shouldn't and I didn't want to stop," the 45-year-old candidly admits. "But I knew a relationship with God would be better."

That firm belief eventually won over José Luis' self-will and he prayed humbly: "Lord, you know I enjoy sin and I don't want to stop. Please do something. Change the way I think and the things I desire. I do not know how



but I know that you are better than all things."

In this José Luis was wiser than many people, who think that they have to clean up their life before they come to God. God knows that we can't do it in our own strength and He is more than willing to help us if we will just express our trust and faith in Him.

We don't have to be 'good enough' to come to Jesus, because what He did on the cross was good enough to cover any sin. As José Luis prayed, God is able to change even how we think and the things we want.

"A few days after exchanging dead religion for a relationship with Jesus, I quit my job and became a full-time sharer of the good news!" says José Luis. "I started reading the Bible and praying and began bit by bit to find that all the things I had enjoyed up until then, looked empty and boring. I now wanted to do meaningful things and meet deeper needs.

"I encourage readers, don't settle for things that end soon. Eternity exists. It's up to you where you will spend it. Prepare yourself!

"Personally, I am not afraid anymore. Eternity for those who know Jesus will be wonderful!"

## Crossword

**ACROSS**

- 1 Web browser entry
- 3 Street entertainers
- 7 What the rings of a tree indicate
- 8 Do wrong
- 9 Newspaper
- 13 US Pacific island
- 14 Litigate against
- 15 Let it stand
- 18 Feelings of allegiance
- 20 Installs carpets
- 22 Expected golf hole score
- 23 Queue
- 25 Dearly loved
- 28 Compete on snow
- 29 Needle hole
- 30 Species of fly
- 31 Little piggy

**DOWN**

- 1 Kitchen tool
- 2 For the most part
- 3 Kind of blocker
- 4 Vessel with periscope
- 5 Blowhard's display
- 6 Quite unhappy
- 10 Friendly
- 11 Famous \_\_\_\_\_ words!
- 12 Frozen water
- 16 Set in type
- 17 House-eating insect
- 19 Norway's capital
- 21 Hatchet
- 24 Concept
- 25 Auction proposal
- 26 Napkin's place
- 27 Compete

**SOLUTION PAGE 9**

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

**SOLUTION PAGE 9**

# You don't have to despair!

BY ALAN BAILEY

Many things we try just don't work out. The diet that promised weight loss. The tablets that were supposed to ease the pain. The scheme that claimed to double your income. The holiday at the beach when it rained the whole time.

Yes, many things simply don't deliver what we had hoped. Some are small matters; some large and important. Think of the words "Peace on earth and goodwill toward mankind." That was said at the birth of Jesus but the peace and the goodwill seem never to arrive. So someone says "We've had 2000 years of Christianity and what has been the use of it. Look at the mess the world is in."

The truth is, we have had 2000 years of the rejection of Christianity by the masses. Just on the basis of standards of justice and fair play, the countries that have been strongly influenced by the Bible's teachings have undoubtedly been the most successful in bringing freedom and light to the people. Those that have had a history of shutting out the Christian message have bred oppression and unhappiness. It is true and demonstrable today. Studies by historians and social scientists have shown that the cornerstones of free and democratic societies can be traced to the Bible's influence.

Furthermore, it is not hard to trace the influence of Christianity on science, health and the legal system. Many of the leaders of the scientific age were (and are) practising Christians (contrary to many ill-informed statements

claiming that it has hindered scientific advancement). Look at the history of hospitals and care of the sick. Around the world, the founding of medical clinics, especially associated with missionary endeavour, has been led by Christians. And the relief organisations! One after the other founded by Christians. Also, the notion of the value of the individual life and its right to justice is a biblical idea.

When a person has heard the Christian Gospel and obeyed it, a new and better life has begun. There are millions of voices that could speak down through the years, testifying of the great transformation brought about through faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour. This paper tells story after story of lives that have been brought out of darkness to light.

Now, it is true that as we look around we see suffering on every hand and experience some of it ourselves. It is tempting for us to ask why God should allow such a state of affairs. The world seems to be going nowhere. It's hard to make much sense of it. That is, until you gain something of the picture the Bible gives of the plan that is being worked out. The current age is no surprise to God. There is a climax to history and it is in the wind. What He intends to bring about will undoubtedly happen.

So, don't despair. Recognise your own need of a Saviour from sin and realise there is only one. He is the one way to God. Though there may be things you can't reconcile, be sure of this one abiding truth: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).



# My life began in a crack house

BY RYAN ZEPEDA

Sana Cotten was only four years old when police raided her home.

"We literally lived in a crack house. My mother was addicted to drugs, and she was in and out of incarceration. There was a lot of people that were around, trying to help her raise me coming up, so I really didn't have much of a relationship with her.

To this day, I still do not even know who my birth father is."

After the police raid, a malnourished and abused Sana, along with her twin, was placed in foster care and eventually adopted by Christians.

"I was taught about God. I was always told that we needed to go to church. I was always told that there was a Higher Power, someone that we were striving to be like. But I never really had a relationship with Christ for myself."

Still, the wounds from her early childhood took a toll as she grew up. At 18, Sana got involved with an older man for affection and got pregnant.

"I was still trying to find out who I was, and I was still trying to find someone that was going to love me. I was trying to heal and trying to find a way to get the love from a man, really, that I was lacking from my birth mother and my birth father."

After two years, the couple separated. At one point Sana got into a fight with her ex and lost control.

"He brought a young woman with him," Sana says. "Although we were not together anymore, something in me just kind of snapped. And I



ABOVE: Sana and her husband and children.

RIGHT: Sana remembers how hard it was growing up.



remember when the altercation was over, I found myself in the bathroom, looking at myself in the mirror, tears running down my face, and I remember thinking, 'There has to be more than this.'

She realized her life was careening out of control.

"Before I went to sleep that night, I literally got down on my knees for the first time in years, and I just cried out to God and I asked God to really show me someone who was going to love me the way I deserved to be loved."

The next day her cousin invited her to church. As she entered, her eyes fixed on one of the greeters.

She felt the strangest sensation in her life as God spoke to her heart.

"God said that's my husband," she whispered to her cousin.

"You are crazy. You're supposed to be here for God, not for a man," her cousin admonished.

"I'm telling you, God said that that is my husband," she responded.

"I knew there was something different about him, something that I had never felt before," Sana remembers. "And so when the service was over, we ended up exchanging numbers."

The man ended up being the minister's son. Following a half-year of dating, they got married.

Sana was happy. But she realized that her relationship with Christ was less than ideal.

"I was starting to kind of play church,"

she says. "I would come to church, I would engage in the praise and worship and I would be a part of all of the women's ministries, and all the different things that they had going

on in the church, but I had no real relationship with Christ."

Then a visiting minister called her out with a prophecy.

"God really wanted to use me, but He did not want to continue using me as a broken woman," she remembers.

"And for the first time I realized that I was a broken woman. That even though I had found that love that I prayed for, and I had found this husband and I was married, it did not heal the things that I had gone through."

Sana at long last surrendered to God, and after a time she saw that her messed-up heart had mended.

"Your healing process is done, but now I need you to be unashamed," God impressed on her heart.

"I realized all those things that

## ALL THOSE YEARS OF CRYING, HAD BROUGHT ME TO THIS POINT

I had gone through, all those years of pain, all those years of crying, had brought me to this point, where God said, 'It's time for you now to serve me wholly.' And it was in that moment I surrendered and established my own relationship with Christ."

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**nudge**  
WITH KARL FAASE

### Stuck in a moment

**MANY** years ago, Bono, of the Irish band U2, wrote the song "Stuck in a Moment" for Michael Hutchence after the news broke of his tragic death at his own hands. Bono's song reminds us all that even in the most difficult circumstances "this time will pass."

There are times for all of us - perhaps even right now - when our difficulties feel permanent. It won't pass. It won't get better. We feel like we are stuck here forever. These feelings lead to desperate thoughts and often more desperate actions.

Sometimes we feel abandoned by God as well. Why would God leave me like this? Why doesn't God respond to my cries for help?

Can I assure you that God hears, God cares and God is there with you. This does not mean that there will be instant change or that everything will be fixed. It does mean that you are not in this alone. God will walk with you and in hindsight, as you look back, you will see God holding you and caring for you throughout the journey.

Don't get stuck in the moment. Turn to God knowing that this time will pass.

# FORGIVING YOURSELF FOR TEEN MISTAKES

It was 1970. Kerry Ellen was only 15 when she found herself alone and terrified in a sparsely furnished, cold room.

She was on a bed in the room. At the foot of the bed was a bin. Kerry looked at the bin. "What is that bin doing there?"

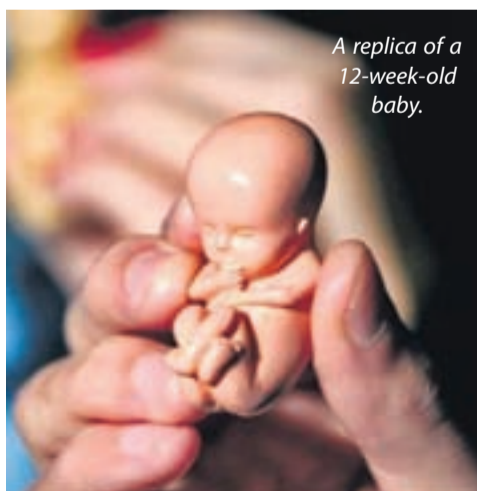
There were people in the room but nobody spoke to her except to tell her to be quiet when she screamed during the procedure. The illegal procedure. The procedure to terminate her pregnancy. She realised what the bin was for.

"I was so naïve," Kerry says today. "I was nearly three months pregnant and so excited and proud of myself when I told my boyfriend I was going to have his baby. I will never forget his words. He said: 'Well you're just going to have to get rid of it aren't you?' His words were a slap in my face.

"A week later he gave me the money to get the job done. If only I had known, I would not have walked through the door to that room in 1970."

Kerry did not tell a soul what had happened and had nightmares for years. She tried hard to bury her feelings, to persuade herself not to feel bad about what she had done, but nothing worked. Guilt and shame wrapped themselves around her like a vice.

"My terminated baby and I were both illegal,



A replica of a 12-week-old baby.

nameless, unregistered and unknown statistics," Kerry says. "When I left, the door slammed shut behind me leaving behind a piece of my heart that was binned alongside my baby. The only thing I was left with were the questions, 'just who am I?' and 'who was my baby?' I bled for days afterwards, but my heart bled for years.

"I had just done what I had been told. A childhood of sexual abuse had taught me to do that, no questions asked."

Kerry was accustomed to abuse. Her mother

was fond of telling her that she and Kerry's father "just couldn't get rid of you though we tried at least half a dozen times".

She is thankful not to have experienced any physical handicap or disability from the repeated attempts to abort her. "I am one of the fortunate survivors," she says. "My heart goes out to those who have to live with disabilities.

"God found me while I was lost. He sees me not from my past but from my future. Under the sunshine of His love, goodness, healing and forgiveness, the impact of my mother's words has melted away.

"God helped me to forgive my parents. The doors of my heart began to unbolt and creak open, one at a time. Forgiving myself took years. I could forgive my boyfriend and the abortion providers. But I felt I didn't deserve to be forgiven.

"People may find it hard to believe, but my parents did love me; it's just that they had their own issues. One of the reasons it took me so long to speak about my experiences was respect for them.

"God sees me because it is His way and timing that is perfect. Psalm 139:14 says, 'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that

full well.' God saved me because I couldn't save myself. He's my hero."

Today Kerry is married. She has three children, two step-children and 10 grandchildren. "They are the most beautiful things I have ever seen," she says. "I look at their faces and I see God's goodness shining through them."

Kerry could so easily have become bitter but has chosen a different path. She sees her life as a gift. "God will always make something beautiful out of something that was once damaged and broken. He does not waste anything in your life. He has helped me to finally forgive myself and move on in the life He has prepared for me.

"My story now helps abortion survivors and participants, and sexual abuse survivors. I now pray Scriptures peacefully outside my local abortion clinic. I will not be silent anymore. I pray for all the damaged and broken mothers and fathers to find peace in Jesus."

One of Kerry's most treasured passages in Scripture is Psalm 139:16 - "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Kerry recommends the website, Live Action, one of the leading pro-life and human rights organisations in the U.S.



**nudge**  
WITH KARL FAASE

## How to find peace in chaos

**WHAT** does the word peace mean to you? For many it's the absence of war or conflict, for others it's the tranquillity of the bush or the ocean or the face of a sleeping baby.

Maybe right now, peace is a world without coronavirus.



The definitions differ, but we would all long for peace.

How do you find peace in a busy and strife-torn world? And what about our own internal difficulties and tensions which rob us of peace?

Jesus promised peace. In John 14:27 He said: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

However, considering all the terror and strife that surrounds us, that promise might seem impossible to achieve for many.

Jesus understood peace in different terms than what we do. In English, peace means the absence of war. For Jesus, peace was considered more from a Hebrew perspective.

In Hebrew, the noun shalom or peace has the more literal meaning of being in a state of wholeness or with no deficiency.

Jesus does not give us lives without tension, but He can give us internal wholeness and peace with God. While it may be difficult to experience external peace, we can know an inner calm built on believing in and living for God. •

# I used intimacy to feel valued



**ABOVE:** Ronald and his wife Fatima, who was formerly a lesbian. **RIGHT:** The book Ronald has written about his journey "Is God Who He Says He Is?"



'I have so much more for you.' "So much more??" What could be better than a life without limits? I had the freedom to love whomever I wanted and however I chose to. A life where I was my own god and lived life according to my own rules. In reality, this life I lived was a big lie. It is a fantasy world for someone who lives as if God

## Ronald McCray lived as a gay-identified man for six years and didn't think he could ever change.

BY RONALD MCCRAY

Like many in the LGBT community, I used to ask myself can God change me? More specifically, I wanted to know if He — God, the Creator of the Universe, possessing all power in heaven and in earth — could take away my attractions for the same sex. I prayed and prayed to that end asking God to remove these seemingly innate desires, but there was no change.

Although I was raised in the church, the reality of my same-sex attraction caused me to question my Christian identity. I questioned whether or not I'd ever experience a change of affections, as if that was the only issue I faced as a sinner in need of redemption from my sin nature. I questioned if I'd ever experience marriage, a family?

All I knew was I had these attractions that I didn't ask for. If God could change a gay-identified person,

I had not seen any examples. That is, until years later, God would shift the very foundations of my life and reveal Himself to me in a way that was undeniable. He told me He'd make me the change I desired to see. I lived my life as a gay-identified man for six years.

Gay marriage wasn't recognized as an institution at that time, but, even if it was, I don't think I could've gone that far. I did, however, want to be loved by a man. And sometimes I thought I had found love. However, for one reason or another, the relationships never lasted very long. Once lust was fulfilled, it was on to the next one. My understanding of love was me giving my body away. The more of myself I gave, the more of myself I lost. I had become addicted to sex.

Sex was the hit I needed to convince myself that I am worth something to someone, even if it was just for a few moments. I held on to the hope that I'd find love that would satisfy the emptiness I was feeling inside. I couldn't deny the void I felt within. But I couldn't explain it.

The clubs, the parties, the men — none of it could fulfill me in the way I longed for. My heart was crying out for something deeper than the shallow experiences of the

### WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN A LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS?



one-night stands, something more consistent than the frequent relationship changes, and something of more value than the desire of being wanted by men I didn't know. One night, my friends and I were in a packed club. The music was blasting, sweaty bodies were touching, and there were beaming lights piercing through the rising steam. I was in my element. While I was out on the dance floor, I heard a voice in my head say to me

doesn't exist, and as if His Word isn't the final authority for all mankind, or worse yet, that He won't return to judge the world in righteousness and according to the deeds done with and in our bodies.

The God who created the heavens and the earth was issuing a divine invitation for me to forsake all I had ever known for a life in covenant with Him, which was far greater than anything I could ever imagine.

He wanted me to understand that I would gain more in Him than anything this world could ever offer me. All I had to do was surrender my life to Him. But to surrender would mean I had to surrender my gay identity. Moreover, I had to turn from everything God calls "sin" to a life He calls "holy". Deep inside, I didn't want to be gay. Yet, I couldn't imagine what life would look like if I gave it up and would forsake everything I knew in exchange for a life I had not known in following Jesus.

I had gained so much in my gay identity. I was loved by many, accepted in a community of people whom I could relate to, and I gained status. However, in all of this, I lost what was most valuable to me — my faith and the reverence I had for God. I lost close connections with family. I lost all attraction for women.

What I had gained by choosing sin over Christ couldn't compare to the immeasurable blessings I'd have by saying 'yes' to Jesus and walking away from this life. And one day, I said 'yes' to Jesus and He changed my life. Jesus transformed my life after being filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost on October 18th, 2009 (Acts 2:38).

In my heart, I knew I was changed. But there were times I questioned my salvation in light of my temptations. I learned that I am not defined by my temptations — I am defined by what God says about me in His word. Now my life has changed in more ways than I could have imagined.

If the church would have told me God was okay with my homosexuality, it would have robbed me of everything God had in store for my life. I have seen the marvellous light of Christ. Why is the light of Christ so marvellous? Because when you've lived in darkness, that's all you know. The splendour of His light and love pierced through the shadows I once lived in and has illuminated a new path for me to walk upon. Had the Church affirmed my homosexual identity and told me God was okay with it, I would have missed everything God had for me. •

This article appeared in the Christian Post.

# What happens when we die, Mum?

Vasily Zhugylov, originally from Kyiv in Ukraine, remembers asking his mother some serious questions when he was about nine. "I really wanted to know about God. There was no one to explain it to me. I asked my mum: 'What happens when we die? Will we just stop being alive? We will never exist again?' She said: 'No, son, never.' I remember crying myself to sleep that night.

"In the Soviet Union times, of course, no one talked about God. Churches were mostly forbidden.

"So I was raised without God and, like most of my friends, I began to drink alcohol and get in trouble. I did my compulsory Soviet military service, and after that worked at a factory. I began stealing stuff, pretty much like everyone else, but my thefts became serious. Eventually, I served my sentence in a maximum-security regime at Cherkassy-62 prison.

"In prison, I met Pastor Anatoly Perepalitsa. He preached the Gospel to us and I repented [turned away from my old life] there.

"I remember my doubt about repenting and becoming a believer. I thought that I could never leave everything behind. That seemed so impossible. How could I give God my life? Instead, I just tried to be a better person. I was constantly thinking, 'How can I become better so I will be good enough to come to God?'

"One day a guest speaker in the prison church said, 'Don't wait, come to God now!' And there and then I turned from my sin. It felt like my entire life I had been a slave of something. That day in the

prison, however, I was set free. I felt like the freest person in the universe! I felt like flying!

"They baptized me in prison in 1994. The Christian group grew so quickly that they needed a bigger meeting room. Our congregation grew to around 150 men. The prison director allowed us to build a House of Prayer on the prison grounds. Pastor Anatoly gave the name 'Freedom' to that church in the prison."

At around the same time, in another town, a 16-year-old girl, Rosa, had also just become a Christian and been immersed in water [baptised] as a symbol of dying to her old life.

Rosa's family also did not practise a faith.

"My father still doesn't," she relates. "My little brother was the first who became a Christian. It happened in 1992 in a Christian children's club in his school.

"My mom, went to the school to check out this club and someone invited her to church. My mom went and she liked it. The next year she asked Jesus to cleanse her of her sins and guide her life. I followed her and eventually, I got saved. I made friends and joined the youth group."

When Vasily was released from prison in 1997, he began to tell everyone he could about Jesus.

"A few years later I worked at a private ice-cream production factory in Kyiv. The owner was not a believer but he liked to hire Christians because they did not steal the ice cream. He always put the Christian workers on the night shift because unbelievers would steal from him at night. The owner totally trusted Christians and this is why Rosa was

also hired. We met working at the ice cream factory and got married!"

The couple now have two children and are child/family coordinators for Mercy Projects in Ukraine, which sponsors needy children and helps transform the lives of those that are vulnerable to exploitation. Alongside his day job doing construction, Vasily also visits hospitals and military bases sharing the love of Jesus.

Pastor Anatoly still preaches in the Freedom church he started in prison many years ago. •

This article is sourced from [mercyprojects.org](http://mercyprojects.org).





# TEENTALK

## Letter to Billie Eilish who says she was once "super religious"

**EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD** American singer/songwriter Billie Eilish has become the youngest person ever to win the four main Grammy categories—Best New Artist, Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Album of the Year—in the same year.

In a new episode of her podcast, *me & dad radio*, she opened up to her father about her past faith and how it has impacted her views of religion today. "I don't know if any of you know—I don't think I've ever talked about it. When I was little, when I was a little kid, I was super religious for no d\*\*\* reason," she said. "My family never was religious. I didn't know anyone that was religious. And for some reason, as a little girl, I just was incredibly religious."

She continued: "And then at one point, I don't know what happened. It just completely went away." Now, she says, "I've

loved the idea of other beliefs. And I think people with closed minds, people like me from a couple years ago—I think that's very pathetic to have a closed mind. It's very lame."

Eilish described her current place: "I don't not believe and I don't do believe. I'm in a very neutral position.

### BILLIE EILISH SPEAKS FOR SO MANY PEOPLE.



I'm open to every belief pretty much." She added that she loves "the idea that there's a God. So why not? How would I know? I'm not going to say I know I don't, nobody knows." Billie Eilish's beliefs are important not just because of her cultural influence but because she speaks for so many people.

Pastor Jim Denison responded to Eilish with the open letter below.

*Billie, I am a Christian minister and writer in Dallas, Texas. I read about your comments on religion in your latest podcast and wanted to thank you for your honesty in saying what so many people think.*

*You said that to be religious is to have a "closed mind" and that we should be "neutral" about belief in God since "nobody knows" whether God is real.*

*Growing up, I felt the same way. My father was very religious when he was a young man, but when he enlisted in the Army during World War II, he experienced such horrible*

*atrocities that he never attended church again. As a result, I grew up, like you, in a home with no religious practices at all.*

*I used to stare at the sky at night, wondering if there is a God "up there". I decided that there's no way really to know, so we should be open to everyone's beliefs and tolerant of all viewpoints.*

*When I was 15 years old, some friends invited me to attend their church. For the first time, I heard the message of Christianity: the God who made us loves us so much that He sent His Son to offer us a personal, life-changing relationship with Himself. If we will ask Jesus to forgive us for our mistakes (which we've all made) and invite Him to be our Lord, He will give us a new life on earth and eternal life in heaven.*

*I asked Jesus for this new life, and He heard my prayer. He*

*changed my life and gave me a hope and peace I have found nowhere else.*

*However, my new faith in Jesus did not answer all my questions. Like you, I wondered how we can "know" if God exists and whether any religion is the right one. I have spent the last four decades seeking answers to those questions. Let me share three discoveries I've made.*

*First, I discovered that there is amazing evidence for the existence of God, the historicity of Jesus, and the truthfulness of the Bible. This evidence does not answer all our questions or remove all our doubts, but it shows us that the Christian faith is reasonable and based on facts.*

*Second, I learned that to be "open to every belief", as you*

*suggested, is hard to do when these beliefs contradict each other.*

*If you believe your father is alive and I believe that he is not, one of us must be wrong. In the same way, if Jews are right in saying that Jesus is not the Messiah, Christians are wrong in saying that He is. If the "five pillars of Islam" are the right path to heaven, all other religions are wrong.*

*... Third, I discovered that Jesus offers us not a religion but a relationship.*

*Religions teach a path to find God through our efforts, while Christianity teaches that God has come to find us. Our hope is not based on what we can do, but on what Jesus has done.*

*However, as with every relationship, this relationship cannot be proven, only experienced. I cannot prove to you that I love my wife or that she loves me. You would have to know us personally to experience what we experience.*

*It is the same with knowing whether God exists or not. The best way to answer the question is to experience Him for yourself. If you will do what I did, asking Jesus to forgive your mistakes (something we all need to do) and to become your Lord, He will give you a life filled with hope, purpose, and joy.*

*It's been said that Christians are beggars helping beggars find bread. I am honoured to share my bread with you.*

The complete version of this story can be found at [www.denisonforum.org](http://www.denisonforum.org).



Billie Eilish poses at the 62nd Annual GRAMMY Awards at Staples Center on January 26, 2020 in Los Angeles, California, with her awards. (Photo Steve Granitz/WireImage)

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## Testing teens can teach a thing or two

BY JODY BENNETT

AS the mother of three teenagers I am learning many lessons about my parenting, and about my faith, through them.

For instance, one of my biggest issues with one of my teens is the lack of common courtesy, including please and thank you.

The lack of those two little words turns our relationship from parent/child to lackey/entitled ingrate. I don't mind vacuuming floors, ironing clothes, making food or picking kids up from school, but a simple 'thank you, Mum' gives me great pleasure and the impetus to keep doing these things day in and day out. It says my child sees me, and acknowledges my small act of service as something I chose to do, not 'had' to do. It affirms my dignity.

I don't need gifts or gushing praise, or even a hug (although they're a rare gift from a teen) but just two or three words said sincerely is enough.



That got me thinking about a spiritual parallel. I believe there is a God and that He is my heavenly Father. Do I thank God enough for all He does for me? Do I treat God as my lackey, expecting Him to provide food, air, peace, answered prayer, health, and so much more, without so much as a 'thank you'?

Am I gratefully aware that EVERY good thing I have comes from Him? Am I grateful for each day, for each breath, for unseen protection? Even the stuff I think I have earned is really because He gave me the ability to think, create and function.

So many people are quick to blame the God they claim not to believe in when things go wrong, but do they offer thanks for everyday mercies and unexpected little miracles?

And do I just expect all the good things to continue? I have sometimes wondered about the point of prayer, since God, by definition as the all-knowing, all-powerful controller of the universe, knows better than we do what we need at any given time. But now I think I realise that He wants us to pray to acknowledge our dependence on Him by saying 'please'.

By humbly asking we are reminding ourselves that it all comes from Him, that the most important things in our lives we can't manufacture or buy, and that every day we desperately need the goodness of God.

And gratitude benefits the giver as much as the receiver, because gratitude fills us with contentment for what we have, banishes our self-pity and helps us to focus on the positive, improving our mental health. It also strengthens our relationships and (take note teens) means that people are more likely to do stuff for us next time!

Those three little words, 'please' and 'thank you' – sometimes I think they could change the world.

**Our greatest need and God's greatest gift are the same thing: forgiveness of sins. And to receive it we have only to ask and pass it on. But to ask for it we must first admit that we need it. Instinctively, we wriggle. - Pete Greig**



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

# Be kind



Six-year-old Paris Williams of Missouri, USA, cares deeply about other people, especially those in need. She inspired her parents to help her bless the homeless with 'Paris Cares Packages' filled with food, water, and other essential items. Each also comes with a cute drawing or sweet note to brighten the recipient's day.

# Laugh

Man, all these doctors, nurses, microbiologists, immunologists, epidemiologists, and other researchers keep saying COVID-19 is dangerous, but all these people who barely passed science in high school keep saying it's not. It's so hard to know who to believe anymore.

I never thought the comment "I wouldn't touch him/her with a 6 foot pole" would become a national policy, but here we are.

Keep in mind, even during a pandemic, no matter how much chocolate you eat, your earrings will still fit.

A mask that keeps people away!



The buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other.

THEY SAID A MASK AND GLOVES WERE ENOUGH TO GO TO THE GROCERY STORE  
THEY LIED, EVERYBODY ELSE HAD CLOTHES ON



Kay Pelican hasn't been able to hug or kiss his wife, Chenella, who is in hospital with Covid-19, in weeks, but that doesn't mean he hasn't found other ways to make her feel loved. So far, he's had more than 12 bouquets delivered to the hospital!



Doris Crippen and Bev Boro reunited.

## Unemployed, depressed by Covid he fled

A young man named Nirmal grew up in a very poor Hindu family. After he finished school, he thought he would be able to find a job.

However, Covid-19 upended his plans and dreams and he was unable to find work. "This caused Nirmal to become depressed and mentally unstable. Even to the point that he left home and was missing for a week. His parents were very worried and could do nothing to try to find their son due to the lockdown," according to a report by Biglife ministry.

The family heard about a Christian woman in their area named Sister Sujata and called her to see if she would pray for their son.

Sujata shared the story of Jesus' life and death with them and they prayed earnestly for Nirmal's safe return.

A week later, God graciously answered their prayers. Nirmal returned home and his mental condition was completely normal.

The God to whom they prayed hears the prayers of Hindus as well as Christians!

In response, Nirmal and his entire family repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

"The Lord has also provided a job for Nirmal," according to Biglife. "He is so thankful to the Lord for his new life and is sharing the news of what God has done for him with others in the village."

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

# Ponder

## Covid brought us together

Doris Crippen, age seventy-three, was recently diagnosed with COVID-19 and became a patient at a rehabilitation centre in Nebraska. Bev Boro, a medication aide, has worked at the facility for more than two decades. Last month, Bev was looking over her patient list when she recognized Doris's name. She was shocked: Doris is her older sister, though the two have not seen each other in more than 50 years.

The two share a father but were born to different mothers. Doris was raised by her mother and stepfather and was 20 years old when she last saw Bev. The women knew each other's names and spent years searching for each other without success. Then the pandemic brought them together.

Despite the suffering Doris has endured, she told a reporter, "I am the happiest person in the world. I cannot believe I finally found my sister."

## HUSBAND OF THE YEAR

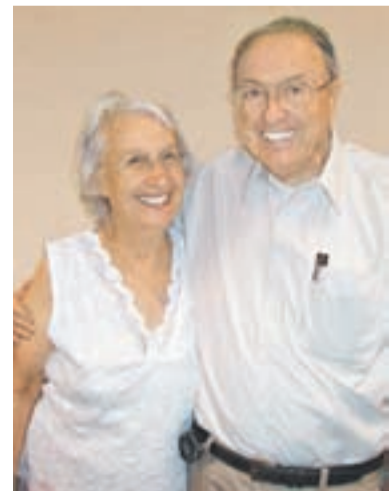
Jack Eccles is a longtime Baptist pastor with two doctoral degrees. Even at the age of ninety-three, he is currently learning German and recently posted a sermon to YouTube.

His wife of seventy years, Gerry, is the mother of their nine children. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2015 and lives in a nursing home in North Carolina. On March 12, when Dr. Eccles arrived as usual to spend much of the day with her, he was turned away because of the coronavirus pandemic.

So he returned the next day with a suitcase of clothes, books, medications, and his computer. The facility had agreed to rent him a single room so he could care for Gerry.

He has been there ever since. Wearing a mask and goggles, he feeds her three times a day, checks to be sure she gets her required forty ounces of liquid a day, and wipes drips so they don't stain her clothes. He positions Gerry's head and neck carefully to be sure she doesn't choke.

Their profile in the *Wall Street Journal* is an inspiring story of love, family, and ministry. In it, Dr. Eccles explains his care for his wife simply: "We're married. I want to be with her. She took care of me for seventy years, and now it's my turn."

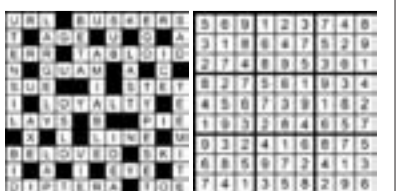


Jack and Gerry Eccles.

# Be creative



London-based artist Viktorija decided to record life in lockdown with a visual diary — on her wall! On March 25, Viktorija began painting her daily experiences on the wall of her apartment. The tiny, detailed drawings capture snapshots of her life from Skyping friends to working from home and trying new recipes. After 113 days, the wall was completely covered. "It will remind me of how important it is to cherish the small but important things in life," said Viktorija. "That life's simple freedoms and pleasures should never be taken for granted."





# THE PROOF IS IN THE PROTEINS

BY JONATHAN SARFATI (ABRIDGED)

Most scientists have been interested in science from a young age, and Dr Brian Thomas is no exception. He first became interested in science when his mother bought National Geographic books about the earth, stars and animals.

“But I didn’t decide to study science formally until my sophomore year at university. I switched from a major in communications to biology when I realized I wanted to look back on having accomplished a hard thing,” the expert in protein design and ancient fossil chemistry explains.

Many of today’s students are surprised to learn that scientists can be Christians, let alone creationists. But Dr Thomas pointed out, “Many of the founders of modern science like Kepler, Newton, Maxwell, Faraday and Pasteur were Biblical creationists.”

In Brian’s case, he was raised in the church, but like way many, he had thought that attending church in itself made one a Christian. However, at age 13:

“I attended a winter weekend retreat in Wisconsin. The Bible teaching made me squirm as I began to realize that I really had no relationship with the Lord. I went forward,



Brian and a Brachiosaurus fossil at the Chicago Field Museum in 2017.

Once I discovered the science that supports Scripture and the perfect interconnectedness of passages from Genesis to Revelation, I got to know a God who wrote words with as much precision as the proteins that He crafted. Promoting this is the goal of the new ICR Discovery Centre in Dallas.”

Evidence from Dr Thomas’ own specialist research areas strongly supports creation on scientific grounds. For example, during his Master’s research, he studied biochemicals, and he explains the exquisite design even at an atomic level:

“My research into the 3D structure of a protein vital to muscle contraction, revealed that almost every amino acid, and thus almost every atom, had to

repented of sins, trusted Christ [for my salvation], and immediately felt the freedom of forgiveness. It was wonderful!

“But after returning home, I faded right back into the world. Eight years later I gave my life to the Lord fully. He made all things new.”

For most scientists who are Christians, there comes a time when they interact with evolution. And for many, evolution is all they have heard, so that’s what they accept by default. Brian was no exception, and he says that because of the ‘fact’ of evolution, he felt “forced to doubt Genesis, which kept me from fully trusting God, the author of the Bible.” Then one of Brian’s friends challenged him to prove evolution. While in that process, he found that evolution was hardly settled science, but had lots of holes.

“I eventually did a 180 degrees.

take its precise position in sequence for the protein to work – and therefore for the muscles in animal bodies to work. I realised that only a super-genius Creator could have crafted precision instruments down to the atom. I also learned that God takes care of our lives in unseen ways and that His humility keeps Him from complaining about not getting His due credit.”

As regarding the deep time necessary (although not sufficient) for evolution, Brian explains:

“Since time tears things down and spreads things out, adding more time just works against the idea that hydrogen became humans. [For instance] collagen should no longer exist in fossil bone, since collagen can’t last for the millions of years attached to fossils. My new techniques revealed tiny collagen remnants in dinosaur fossils. One

way to explain these remnants is to swap fossils’ millions of years for mere thousands. This fits all the science plus the Bible’s timing of the recent Noah’s flood.”

The decay rate of collagen is in line with already published work but Brian did his own research on this too, confirming that collagen could not last for millions of years, unless stored in liquid nitrogen all that time!

“And yet secular fossil experts describe collagen in fossils they place at more than 150 million years old,”

*Brian Thomas received a Master’s in biotechnology in 1999 and a Ph.D in paleobiology in 2019. He worked as a Christian school science teacher until 2008, when he joined the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) as a science writer and speaker. Dr Thomas has written several creationist books and numerous articles. He has been married to Michele since 1995, and they have four daughters and a son.*

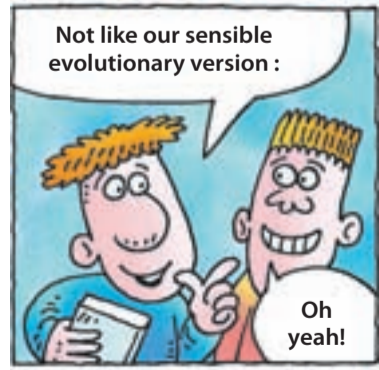
he says. “Collagen in fossil bone is real. I’ve literally seen it in the microscope, and confirmed it with other techniques.”

The presence of collagen in fossils and its too-rapid decay rate exclude millions of years for fossils and thus for the vast rock layers that hold them. And with out millions of years, good-bye large-scale evolution – quite apart from all

the other reasons it can’t work. •

The unabridged article originally appeared in Creation Magazine. It is used with kind permission.

## Dar and Winny Richard Gunther



## Jurassic Park MYTH

In 1993 the movie Jurassic Park was screened. Part of the theme was the idea that an insect sucked blood from a dinosaur about 100 million years ago, then the insect was sealed in some amber (tree gum), then scientists extracted dinosaur DNA from the blood in the insect, and built a bunch of dinosaurs from it. Is this possible? NO.

1. DNA is a very unstable molecule. It would have disintegrated in a very short time, even if it was held inside an insect, and sealed in gum.
2. Even in a laboratory, DNA would last only 10,000 years, under controlled conditions.
3. Science could never reconstruct DNA to make it functional, if it was even slightly damaged.
4. Fresh dinosaur bones, blood, flesh and skin have been found, which proves that they did not die out millions of years ago. If these remains were millions of years old, they would have perished.

Instead of ‘Jurassic Park’ we should be thinking about ‘Noah’s Ark’. The Bible story is the truth, the movie is just an entertaining myth.

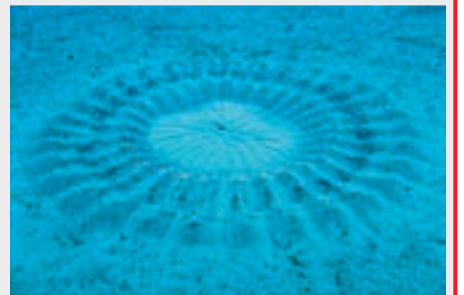
Richard Gunther

## Believe It or Not

CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

### Seabed circle ‘whodunnit?’

BY DAVID CATCHPOOL



IN 1995, divers off the coast of Japan discovered circular structures about two metres (6 ft) in diameter carved in the seafloor sand. Consisting of multiple ridges symmetrically radiating out from a small patterned circle in the centre.

These ‘underwater crop circles’—as some dubbed them—mysteriously came and went, and “appeared to be the work of an underwater artist, carefully working with tools. ... But who or what created them?”

For more than a decade, this ‘Whodunnit?’ remained a mystery. But researchers now know that the creator of these seabed circles is a diminutive pufferfish, just 12 cm (5 inches) long. It takes 7–9 days of laborious construction work for a male pufferfish to build one, apparently with a goal of attracting a mate. If he succeeds, she lays her eggs in the centre circle, where the sand is finest.

It was quite right to see these circles as presenting a ‘Whodunnit?’ question needing to be solved.

These pufferfish constructions have three characteristics never before seen in fish nests shaped in sand: the radially aligned peaks and valleys; the peaks decorated with shell fragments; and the fine sand particles gathered in the central circle.

So these seabed circles with their fine-grained centres are no accident. But if something as relatively ‘simple’ as strategically heaped sand ridges/circles point to their needing a creator, how much more so the staggeringly intricate and complex puffer fish? Able to live, breathe and reproduce, it must itself be the artistry of a creator.

The Bible warns us not to overlook the fact that living things present us with a ‘Whodunnit?’ question (Romans 1:20) — which the Bible also solves for us (e.g. Genesis 1, Revelation 4:11). •

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# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## Some answers to anxiety

BY ROB FURLONG

2020, with its challenges and difficulties, will not be a year we forget in a hurry!

And it's not surprising to hear that anxiety has become a major problem for people, especially in the Western world.

I agree with the statement; I think it is the number one issue people struggle with today.

Over the past fourteen years I have had many conversations with people who struggle with this in some form or another.

A couple of months back I wrote in this column about mental health and its impact on relationships. So for the next two months, I want to focus our attention on anxiety – how we can deal with it personally or help someone we love through it.

But first, a word of caution.

What anxious people do not need is to be simply told “not to worry” or that they “should not be worrying.”

To really help people we have to move beyond spouting clichés like these and encourage them into some

practical steps that will not only grow them but also enable them to experience God's peace which is beyond our human mind's ability to explain or rationalize.

I mention God's peace deliberately because as you read this, whether you are a believer in God or not, I think this is the best place to start!

I am someone who struggles with anxiety so let's call what I share with you here, “Lessons from a chronic worrier!”

Pray: this is where we must begin - I cannot emphasize this enough!

“But I'm not a pray-er!” I hear you say.

Or, “I don't believe in God – why would I bother praying to someone I don't think exists?”

I have said it before and I will say it again – what have you got to lose?

Bring your worry or care to God and be specific about it. You could pray a brief prayer along these lines, “Lord, I'm struggling with \_\_\_\_\_ right now. Please help me and give me your peace.”

Two men by the names of Peter



and Paul instructed people with similar advice centuries ago when they said “bring all your cares, concerns and worries to God.”

The process is remarkably simple and straightforward:

- Take all your worries, stresses, cares and anxieties...
- Tell God about them and give them to Him.
- Do this with thanksgiving...
- And He will give you His peace.

Well known author, Max Lucado has said “it is impossible to pray and worry at the same time.” A helpful application of this which I read recently said that every time you have a worrisome or anxious thought, pray about it. “It

doesn't matter if you have to do it 50 times in one day – it means you have prayed 50 times that day!” I have found this to be encouraging and liberating advice!

Be thankful! Never underestimate the power of cultivating a thankful heart!

One of the greatest contributors to our anxiety is the idea that we do not have enough; that we are missing out in some way by not having the possessions or money we believe will make us happy.

But psychologists will tell you there is a limit to how much happiness money and possessions will provide.

Billionaire J. Paul Getty was once asked by a reporter, “Describe what money can't buy.”

Getty replied, “I don't think it can buy health or a good time. Some of the best times I have ever had didn't cost any money.”

Sadly, many of us still chase the illusion that more possessions means more happiness. However, if you take a closer look at your life you will find much to be thankful for and you will definitely experience less anxiety!

Join me next month as we consider more steps to help us deal with anxiety.

## Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 6)

BY JODY BENNETT

ONE Sunday afternoon my husband, myself, our three children and the dog were all on our queen-size bed and Adrian was rough-housing with the kids and they were all screaming and rolling about fighting and tickling. I was sitting propped up against the headboard and Carrie – the dachshund – became so upset with the noise and mayhem that she crawled behind me between me and the headboard. On one side of me you could just see her tail and on the other her nose.



I think it is very cute she instinctively comes to me for protection. If one of the children is chasing her, or Adrian shouts at her, she runs to stand between my feet, or under my skirt if I am sitting down.

I said to my daughter, “We should be like that with God, always putting Him between us and our problems.”

“Why?” she said. “Shouldn't we be standing on our own two feet? Doesn't God expect us to be able to deal with things?”

And I had to explain to her, no, God expects us to rely upon Him and to involve Him in every aspect of our lives. I pray about things I've lost, parking spaces, little things that are worrying me or that I won't forget things.

That is not to trivialize my relationship with God, but to express my complete dependence upon Him. I know every breath, every heartbeat, every thought is only made possible by Him.

The Bible encourages us to “dwell in the shadow of the Most High [God]” and there “He [God] will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart” (Psalm 91:4).

It also says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

Don't make the mistake of thinking that you or your problems are too insignificant for God to care about. The Bible says that not one sparrow is forgotten by God: “indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7).

## 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) \_\_\_\_\_

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## A case for kindness

BY JIM DENISON (ABRIDGED)

THE more that violence fills the news, the more we need examples to give us hope. That's why Tom Hanks is such an important role model for our culture.

Hanks' movies have grossed nearly \$10 billion worldwide. His portrayal of Fred Rogers in the recent release *A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood* is his 71st film.

But Hanks is known at least as much for who he is in real life as for who he is on the movie screen. His powerful recent interview with the *New York Times* is subtitled: “Hanks is playing Mister Rogers in a new movie and is just as nice as you think he is.”

Here are some examples cited by the *Times* reporter: When Hanks was shooting *Angels & Demons* in Rome, a bride and her father couldn't approach the chapel because of the film crew, so Hanks stopped filming and escorted them to the altar.

He once bought some boxes of Girl Scout cookies, then offered selfies to passers-by as an enticement to buy. He found a student's ID and used his Twitter feed to get it back to her.

**What do college students want most in a mate?**

*Time* magazine reports that researchers asked 2,700 college students to narrow down the characteristics that were most important to them in a lifetime mate, and one emerged from all cultures: kindness.

Kindness works for churches: Congregations in California are responding to the state's housing crisis by sharing their parking lots with people who live in cars, providing mobile showers for the homeless, and exploring ways to

build affordable apartments on their own land. One minister explained: “This is just one part of how we live out our faith.”

YOU CAN HAVE HALF.



Kindness works for managers: according to *Forbes*, science now shows that it's more productive to praise people for their successes than to correct their mistakes.

Kindness even works for popes: Pope Francis hosted 1,500 homeless and needy people for lunch as the Roman Catholic Church marked its World Day of the Poor.

Why is kindness newsworthy? One reason is that it is so rare.

Jesus taught Christians to “love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High” (Luke 6:35). His best friend reinforced His message: “Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

On February 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached from Mark 10:43, where Jesus stated, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant.” Dr. King offered these observations:

“Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve.

“You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.”

See the full article and more of Dr Denison's writing at denisonforum.org





Mike Fisher #12 of the Nashville Predators skates against Samuel Girard #49 of the Colorado Avalanche during the 2018 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Bridgestone Arena on April 20, 2018 in Nashville, Tennessee. (Photo John Russell/NHLI via Getty Images)

# Defender of the faith

Canadian hockey player Mike Fisher's story is for readers who may think that Christians are weak people who come to faith for a "crutch" because they are ill, in trouble or incarcerated. Mike has been a star athlete, is good looking, married to a country music singer, wealthy and grew up in a happy home. He even had a small role in the 2007 *Transformers* movie!

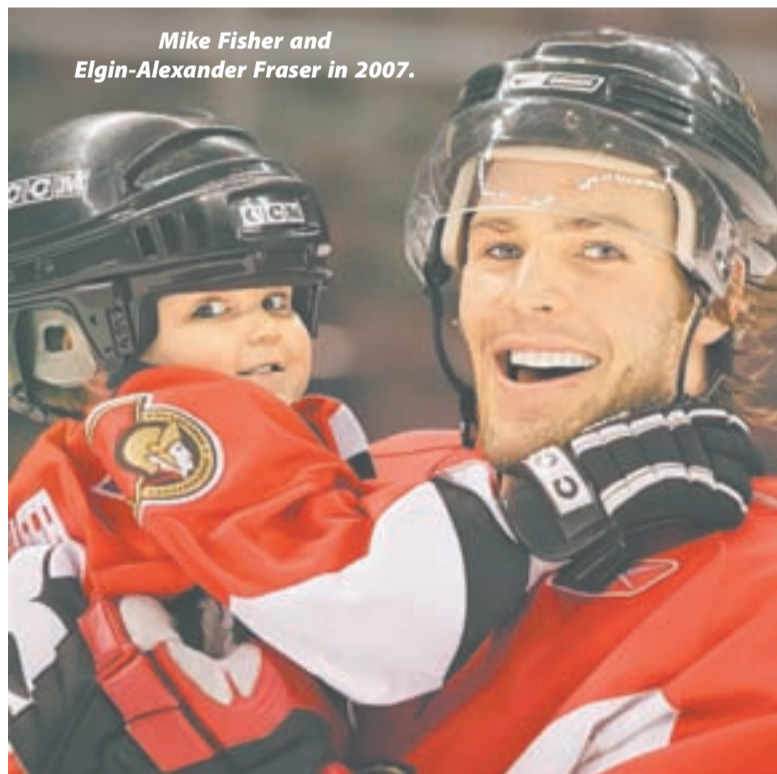
And yet he admits that he still needs God – that without the purpose and love knowing Jesus fills his life with, all the rest is meaningless.

"When I first realised my goal (to play professional ice hockey) at the age of 19, it should have been the happiest time of my life; but I had never felt so empty. I remember going out that night to a bar, getting drunk, making a poor decision and waking up the next morning feeling like the worst piece of [rubbish]," he shares on Youtube.

Mike began playing in the Canadian National Hockey League in 1999 for the Ottawa Senators. Over the next several seasons, he became an integral part of the team, eventually becoming an alternative captain. He played for Team Canada in the 2005 World Championships.

Mike was known for his aggressive play, but also for his speed and skill. He holds Ottawa's unofficial hardest shot record at 105 mph (169 km/h).

In 2011, the centre was traded to the Nashville Predators so that he could be closer to country singer Carrie Underwood, whom he had



Mike Fisher and Elgin-Alexander Fraser in 2007.

married the year before. They now have two sons together.

Mike came to faith as a kid. "I grew up going to church on Sundays. My parents always stressed this as a central part of my life and I grew to understand the importance of having a balance in life and finding a purpose through our Creator. I believe we are all gifted in certain areas and it's our responsibility to use these gifts that God has given us for His glory.

"Playing hockey in the NHL was a dream of mine since I was young, and realizing this dream at the age of 19 was an unbelievable experience

for me. It's hard for me to describe how lucky I felt to play the game I love.

"However, I came to realize that playing in the NHL is only a small part of who I was, and not the part that defined me. Shortly after the night I was drafted and felt so lost, I did a Bible study with my cousin, who I was living with at the time, and read the verse: 'For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?'" (Matthew 16:26).

That verse convicted Mike of the sin and foolishness in his life and he confessed these to God and asked for

help to live right from then on. "God gave me the power to do that and it was awesome.

"As I have grown in my faith, I have come to realize that it is not about religion but relationship. Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is what I believe truly defines a person and how we find eternal significance.

"Everything else fades away and becomes wood, hay and straw. Sometimes it's very humbling to realize that we are here today and gone tomorrow."

Mike's faith has been lived out in how he gives back to the community through hockey camps, charity work and donations.

For instance, in 2007, Mike took three-year-old Elgin-Alexander Fraser, who was dying of cancer, for a twirl on the ice with him in

full ice-hockey kit. This was to fulfil one of the final wishes of the little boy's life, before he succumbed to neuroblastoma – a terminal nerve cancer. Elgin smiled and laughed throughout the experience.

In May 2018, Mike retired from professional ice hockey, although not from his humanitarian work. Besides the small acting roles he has had previously, he has also launched a lifestyle brand called "Catchin' Deers" and spends his time running after his young sons.

Mike has written a book called *Defender of the Faith: The story of a man who never gave up on a dream*, which is available online.

"I find true comfort in God's grace knowing that I fall short in many ways, but He is always there for me through the good times and bad – no matter what," he concludes. •

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