

FREED FROM GROG

Stephen Morrison was overjoyed. The 16-year-old teenager from Kununurra, a town in the far north of Western Australia had won a prestigious basketball scholarship. Not only was the scholarship a confirmation of his talent and potential, it also meant a good future doing something he loved.

He had a celebratory drink. Yes he was only 16 and underaged but he'd been drinking since he was 14. Alcohol was as common in the young Aboriginal's house as plain water.

"I grew up with alcohol," Steve, 39, tells Challenge. "I can't remember a time when there wasn't alcohol in the house. My mum didn't drink but my dad did. I was always around alcohol and alcohol was always around me."

He moved to Perth and began his scholarship at Willetton Senior High School.

"It was the first time I lived on my own and had all this freedom," he says. "No adults, no parents. I had a little hair on my lip and I thought I was all grown up."

"That's when I started drinking hard. I lost all interest in sports. Soon all I could think of was where I could get my next drink."

"I drank at every opportunity and I drank to excess. Naturally I progressed to drugs. Then came the stealing, the breaking and entering, the selling to feed my habit."

He says it didn't take long before he became addicted. "I got into fights and into trouble with the law," he



Stephen Morrison points at his name on the plaque that commemorates his time with Teen Challenge. **BELOW:** Stephen with his wife and children.

remembers. "I knew I was on the brink of being arrested and getting thrown into prison."

Things reached a head one evening after a particularly bad bender. Driving home he suddenly stopped his car and put his head on the steering wheel.

His shoulders heaving, he did something he hadn't done since he was a child

- he prayed. "Lord help me, Lord help me, Lord help me," he sobbed.

"That night it hit me how bad my life had become," he says. "Four years before that I had everything to live for. I had a scholarship and a bright future. But I had lost it all. Lost my friends and members of my family who didn't want to be around me anymore. I used to have a good reputation but I lost that and instead I was looking at jail."

Why did he pray? Ironically, Steve was surrounded by prayer as much as he was by alcohol. His mother, a Christian, was the family's spiritual rock and had brought her children up to believe in and have reverence for God.

"I'd always known about Jesus Christ," Steve acknowledges. "I can't think of a time when I didn't know about Him. I didn't know much about Him, but I would look at creation and I just knew there was something out there, someone spiritual and bigger than me."

"My mum would pray and there was always reverence in the house.

If we had problems, Mum would say 'let's pray'."

The next few months after his epiphany at the steering wheel "were a blur" Steve chuckles. But suddenly things started happening.

His mother worked at the Department of Justice and one day she saw a flyer for Teen Challenge on the floor. Teen Challenge is a Christian organisation, with a worldwide network of offices which run programs to help teenagers, adults, and families with substance abuse or self-destructive behaviour.

She gave Steve the pamphlet. By the end of the month, he had enrolled in WA's Teen Challenge.

He landed at the program's facility in Esperance on a Wednesday. That Sunday he attended its church service and by noon that day he had become a Christian. "I don't really remember much about the sermon but something made me go up and pray for the Lord to change my life," Steve says. His journey back to wholeness had begun.

He completed the two-year program and spent another year there as a mentor. This opened the door to what he is doing today.

Steve is a drug and alcohol counsellor with Hope Community Services in the mining town of Kalgoorlie - he is in fact the branch's first Aboriginal counsellor.

"I believe I have much to offer because of my own past," he says compassionately. "I was saved from that mindset and hopelessness."

He says he sees how God worked in his life. "There is no way I would be where I am today without God. God put me here for a purpose. I really do feel like I was lost but Jesus found me."

Steve is so good at his job he was recently awarded the prestigious encouragement award at the National Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs Conference in Adelaide. "I feel sad when I talk to my clients and help them peel back layer after layer of grief and hurt," Steve says. "It can be very heartbreaking but at the same time I'm glad I can help."

Hope is not a Christian organisation but Steve directs his clients to his church, Mungagadugu Church, if they are interested in finding out more about the Gospel (the good news of Jesus Christ dying for our sins).

"My clients could easily be me," he says. "I used to be like that but thanks to Jesus I'm saved from that life. My purpose now is to rebuild others' lives."

BACK PAGE

ACCIDENTAL FAITH
IONA ROSSELY

Finding True North for life's journey

BY MARK CALLAGHAN

AH, the wonders of the modern GPS, giving guidance by that still, small, electronically generated voice - hassle free navigation to any part of the globe ... unless of course, you have been directed to a road with a bridge washed away, or yet to be built ... as happened to a friend in Illinois, America.

The Global Positioning System makes use of the geographical lines of latitude and longitude to provide co-ordinates for location and destination. These lines have been accurately plotted for about 350 years, and enabled the era of world exploration, circumnavigation and colonisation.



For latitudes, we have two fixed points - the North and South poles. However, confusion arises because the compass points to Magnetic North in the Arctic Sea, when the Geographic or Geodetic North is some 500 kilometres away in Canada.

Longitudes, the East-West coordinates, are complicated by Earth's rotation, and the lack of a natural starting point. An arbitrary spot, the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, UK, was chosen as Longitude zero degrees, the Prime Meridian. Everywhere else is measured from that Greenwich line of longitude.

And so we have a way to fix our coordinates, and plot a course with confidence.

● Turn to page 2

Finding True North for life's journey

● From page 1

Today I hear the commonly used term "Moral Compass", a euphemism for 'conscience'. A compass is only useful if it can detect and give an accurate reading of "True North". Any strong magnet placed close to a compass will cause the needle to point to the magnet – North no longer exerts sufficient pull on the needle. The compass may well point, but its usefulness is lost if it cannot indicate a fixed point from which to plot the journeys of life.

Many today have been influenced by cultural magnets placed close to their compass – True North is skewed. With the multitude of spiritual and cultural magnets vying for North ... it is often a case of not being able to see the wood for the trees. The compass needle can spin wildly.

In multi-cultural Australia we still retain the right to choose our spiritual journey and the road upon which to travel, a freedom worth fighting for. Lewis Carroll wrote, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there".



Since 1611, the printed Bible has become the most widely read book in the West. It has provided "True North" for generations who have chosen it, and a fixed point to guide our nation-makers.

As Bible literacy becomes less common, the 'Moral Compass' becomes less reliable, if for no other reason than that it is highly individualistic. There are no absolutes, no givens, and no Polar stars by which to fix our course. Life is multiple choice.

The Apostle James describes God the Father as one "who does not change like shifting shadows". My own journey of faith began when I entrusted my destiny to Jesus Christ, described in the letter to Hebrew Christians as "the same yesterday, today and forever".

There is security in getting to know the unchangeable God. We have our ups and downs but God remains faithful, even when we are not, because it is His nature. It is comforting to know God can be trusted. ●

TRANSFORMED THROUGH FIRE

David Snyder, who serves as Executive Director of Sustainable Medical Missions (www.sustainablemed.org), lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. This is his story:

Human beings do whatever we can to avoid pain and discomfort. We distract ourselves with media, attempt to soothe our souls by filling our bellies, or drown our sorrows with drugs or medications. Many are familiar with this path and the empty promises of these methods.

However, it is the pain and trials that so often transform us from who we are to who we are meant to be... who I am meant to be.

My story begins with a narrative that few have and many would envy. My parents were both present and loving. We were not overly rich, but we had more than enough.

But the truth is that we are all born with a brokenness inside of us, and God loved me too much to leave me the way I was. Some changes occurred from successes and positive experiences. Yet, as much as I desired to avoid pain and trails, these are the moments that helped shaped me to be the person I am today.

One of the most painful experiences physically and emotionally was my five-year battle with a chronic and supposedly incurable disease caused ulcerative colitis. This disorder which causes lesions or tears in your digestive system also has the bonus of regular diarrhea, bloody stool, and intense cramps.

What was even more traumatizing was the fact that this occurred from ages 16-21, which are challenging years even in the best



David Snyder

of circumstances. There were many embarrassing situations with friends and while on dates, and I remember praying to God for five years for this to be taken from me.

My parents were both followers of Jesus, and their loving attitude towards me and consistent sharing of the Good News about Christ had led me to accept Him as my Lord and Saviour at the age of eight.

This was the most important decision of my life, and I was and continue to be transformed by this choice.

Fortunately, regarding my ulcerative colitis, God's answer was "no" to my plea for it to be removed or more accurately, "not yet". While I was concerned about my physical healing, God wanted my heart to be transformed. I was following God, but I did not fully

trust God and would often strive to either control things or gain glory for myself through high performance.

I would even neglect my physical health and relationship with others in this pursuit. But, over the years, God revealed this truth to me, and it was not until I began to make changes in my life, demonstrated my trust in God, that I began to be released from this disease. It is supposed to be incurable, but I have remained symptom free for the past 20 years.

One would think that a profound miraculous healing like this would be sufficient for my heart to change. The truth is that there have been many areas of my life and character that needed work.

My identity in my work was broken through the traumatic loss of my job and the many months of unemployment that followed.

My pride in my athletic abilities has been torn down many times through injuries to my back and knee. Most recently, my reliance upon the support and guidance of my father has been challenged through his ALS diagnosis, which is a disease that disrupts the interactions between the nerves and muscles that most often leads to increased disability and death.

Each of these moments (and the ones that will come in the future) are often overwhelming and filled with sadness or grief. Yet, the story of my growth spiritually and in my relationship with Jesus is one that is often formed in the fires of despair, as my heart is reoriented towards God's plans, as well as my trust in His character and provision to carry me through difficult times. ●

Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 It's chemical symbol is Zn
 - 4 Eminent person
 - 7 Unhappy place for golfers
 - 8 Brief, bright star
 - 9 Hinder; obstruct
 - 10 YouTube interrupters
 - 11 Fantastic, exceptional
 - 13 Finished edge of street
 - 15 Remove some paint
 - 17 To cause to remember
 - 18 To regard with respect
 - 20 Song performer
 - 23 To be in debt
 - 24 Packed down, as dirt
 - 25 Wild unwanted plant
 - 26 Escape or avoid
 - 27 N.E. English city
 - 28 Grain used in sushi

DOWN

- 1 Areas or regions
- 2 Heavy weight lifter
- 3 Tough, resilient
- 4 Wire kitchen utensil
- 5 Shaking with fear
- 6 Allowed another car to go
- 12 One working reduced hours (4-5)
- 14 Lamb mother
- 15 Treated metals
- 16 Oven-baked dessert
- 17 Citizen Kane's sled
- 19 Broadband device
- 21 Fresher or more recent
- 22 Line of rooftop

SOLUTION PAGE 11

We all put on masks

BY RICK LEWERS

I DON'T understand why people would have a problem being asked to wear a mask. It might not be popular to say it out loud but we all put on masks. So what's the problem? Long before Covid came along we were masked and long after it disappears we will continue to be masked. So what's the problem?

We mask our looks with cosmetics, our smell with perfumes, and our bodies with fashion. We mask our true intentions with pleasantries. We mask our real desires with protests. We mask our insecurities with bravado or spin and so much more.

We even mask our sinfulness with deception. That's an interesting mask! Using the sin of deceit to mask the sin of other things. It's an interesting mask but not an unusual one. You'll find everyone owns this mask and sadly wears it far too comfortably.

We mask our loneliness by playing the actor or jester in the courts of people's approval. We mask our lovelessness in self-gratifying sexual encounters. We mask our shame with blame. We mask our smallness by boasts of greatness. We mask our despair with drugged or drunken delight. We mask our darker side by concealment. We mask our faults by claiming we are better than others. We mask our discomfort with materialism. We mask being lost by appearance of being busy and in control.

Such masks are responsible for the untimely deaths of some and ultimately the deaths of us all.

When we mask the truth about our future with God by an unintellectual dismissiveness, death is no surprise. The mask of godlessness is the mask of futility. Take off that mask and you will live, keep the mask on and you will die. Take off that mask and there is atonement and



resurrection. Keep the mask of unbelief on and there is...only death.

My prayer is: that all masked individuals would prefer to be unmasked and forgiven, than hiding and ashamed, preferring the hope of life offered than to feel like the living dead.

Interestingly, it was Jesus Christ who first protested the masks we wear. In fact His de-masking of people certainly contributed to His death. No one likes to be exposed to the truth about themselves even if it is God doing the de-masking.

I was recently sent a photo of a mask that was diamond encrusted. The marketers of an image took no time in offering, our Covid-infected world, a mask that would be a fashion statement. A mask manufactured to make the wearer look good and feel safe from sickness while not exposing the fact that its wearer is sicker than perhaps they understand. Masks can do that...hide the true face of the person behind the mask. Of course this diamond encrusted mask was costly. Like the masks that cover up who we really are, it was a mask you can't really afford to wear.

Makes you realise why Jesus Christ protested the mask. Makes you realise that Jesus Christ is better for you than your masked attempts at life without Him.

It defies logic that people would have a problem being asked to wear a mask for the wellbeing of everyone. It certainly defies logic to mask the truth about how sick we are without God and to ignore the healing He can offer.

As we put on the medical mask let me encourage you to take off every other mask and come to the God from Whom nothing is hidden and from Whom nothing can be covered up. Take off the mask behind which you hide and let God give you a better look at yourself, and a fresh start with yourself and with Him. ●

Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

6 3 8
4 2 9
7 5 1

SOLUTION PAGE 11

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

Called out from the shadows

BY JANICE TEO

As far as stepmothers go, Lily Cordeiro drew the short straw. A very short straw. Lily's parents divorced when she was two and her stepmother subjected the young girl, already traumatised by her mother's departure, to almost daily beatings, teasing and merciless taunting.

Often she would promise her stepdaughter an outing only to leave her behind and take her own daughter instead. Lily cried herself to sleep almost every night and wet the bed until she was seven.

She carried the trauma into her adult life. Timid and compliant, she was an easy target for the office manager, who was a bully and would ridicule her in front of other staff by making her do the most menial of tasks even though she was the head of her department.

Conditioned never to fight back, she internalised the abuse so much she would shiver and cry every time the manager approached her. Her situation soon became known and the company sent her to see a psychiatrist every morning before work. Blinding headaches, the result of stress and fear, were constant companions.

"My stepmother was so cruel to me," said Lily, who turns 88 this year. "I think that's why I never learned how to love properly. I thought maybe that was how to bring up chil-

dren so I didn't love my own son the way I should have. I said cruel things to him also."

The memories suddenly came flooding back. A pause. A tremble in the lower lip. Eyes suddenly tearful.

Thankfully, life as an adult had its fair share of good times. Lily loved dancing and pictures of her at parties show a happy young woman.

But the confidence and polish were

just for show. Inside, she struggled with poor self-esteem and avoided being the centre of attention at all costs. She often said she felt she was somehow misshapen.

In 1986, she moved to Perth, Western Australia and was glad for the fresh start. But still, something was missing.

Lily attended a Christian school in Singapore and remembers one of

her teachers as being a very God-fearing woman.

"I didn't really understand much but growing up in a Christian school I was always aware of God. I remember one night when I was so fearful of my step-

GOD MADE EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL WITH ME



mother, I think I had a vision or a dream of God standing over my bed and watching over me."

Friends and relatives in Perth would invite her to church services but she always refused saying "if God is everywhere I don't need to go to church. Besides so many Christians

are hypocrites." One day she was invited to a church lunch. With many Singaporeans and Malaysians in its congregation, the menu promised dishes Lily hadn't eaten for years. She agreed to go even if it meant having to sit through the service first.

"I went to the service and at the end the pastor asked people to raise their hands if they wanted to become Christians," she remembered. "I was horrified. I thought he was so rude! I couldn't think of anything worse than walking to the front of the church with everyone staring at me!"

That afternoon she told the friends who brought her she would never set foot in church again. Then the following Friday they got an unexpected call from her. "I told them I don't know why but I wanted to go back," Lily said.

"Till today if you ask me why I changed my mind I don't know. I only know something inside told me I had to go back."

Dreading the pastor's invitation to come to the front to pray and ask Jesus into her life, Lily sat in the back row so she could make a quick getaway.

She never made it out the door. When the invitation came, something made her get up and walk to the front. "I don't know what happened," she says, laughing. "I only knew I had to walk down and pray for God to come into my life. Usually I am so shy of anyone looking at me but this time I didn't feel shy at all!"

Lily says her life has changed dramatically since the day she made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

"God has made everything beautiful with me," she says. "Now I have peace and joy. No more fear. I am still quite timid but I don't have that same kind of shaking or terror of people."

She said her most significant breakthrough came during a church camp. The speaker prayed over her and she was overcome by the power of God. She said she definitely felt God's presence during that time and she knew she had been healed.

"My life is so good now," she says. "God has made my life perfect. I have never been so happy as I have since becoming a Christian. Now my life has meaning and purpose. God has given me my life back. My son and I have reconciled. I will always praise God for what He has done in my life."

Where she once avoided gatherings, she now shows up faithfully for prayer meetings and Bible studies. Lily has not lost her reluctance to be in the limelight but shine she has - many testify to her faithfulness, her humility, her kindness and generosity.

Lily says: "The most important thing is this: Give God your life. He will make everything beautiful and you will have so much peace and love. He is wonderful. He is beautiful. Nothing can compare."



Lily with her grandchildren Erin and Ryan.



Lily Cordeiro as a young woman

BLOWN AWAY BY GOD - LITERALLY

Autism, dyslexia, a lazy eye, no end of learning difficulties. Not surprisingly, school was a struggle from the get-go for Shaun Benstead, who battled depression on top of everything else.

Yet he persevered with schoolwork and succeeded in getting a good Honours degree in Biochemistry and a Masters Degree in Neurochemistry from the University of London.

He had battled numerous misdiagnoses during childhood and was thus never able to get the proper treatment or medication. It wasn't until he was 40 that a specialist was finally able to pin down his condition to Asperger's Syndrome, a kind of autism.

Shaun's laudable achievements masked a deep resentment towards God, who he blamed for his mountainous struggles.

"I rejected the idea of God and the Bible because I could not understand why He would let me suffer so much," Shaun, now 57, confessed.

Describing himself as a "militant agnostic" (someone who does not know whether there is a God), his objections ran the gamut of unbelief.

He believed there was no God, life on earth came out of nothing, Jesus Christ was a myth and the Bible could not possibly be accurate and really, why should the Christian religion be the right one? In fact, Shaun first heard about God in kindergarten but even then decided the priest had to be talking rubbish.

Then in February 1987, Shaun began to have difficulties breathing. Doctors could find nothing wrong with him, leaving him feeling anxious.

"On the last Friday evening of April that year, I met with three Christian friends to pray," he said. He was astonished when a young woman in the group said things about him which only he knew.

"I concluded there and then that there was a



Shaun Benstead - former agnostic and now convinced believer.

God and He knows absolutely everything about each of us."

As they were praying Shaun said he had an experience of Biblical proportions. "There was a violent rushing wind from above!" he said.

"It filled the entire room, penetrated my ears and filled my entire body but there was no wind outside and besides, the doors and windows were closed.

"Suddenly I could breathe properly again. It was like a scene out of Pentecost!" Pentecost is the Biblical account of the day the Holy Spirit (the unseen presence of God) fell upon believers, filling them with power and enabling them to speak in different languages. Read about it in Acts chapter 2 verse 2.

All of Shaun's clever objections crumbled like dust. "My experience proved to me that the whole Bible is true and that the Good News of Jesus

Christ (the Gospel) is to be embraced and obeyed," he said.

"This convinced me that everything Jesus said and did was true. I committed my life to Him and Him alone shortly afterwards."

Shaun now sees a deeper meaning to his struggles and believes God was trying to make him aware he had a problem that needed to be addressed.

"God has helped me to deal with this by encouraging me to read and study the Bible, attend a Bible-believing church and have lots of social interactions," he explains.

"I have learned a lot from the Bible. I really believe that it is God speaking to us in a way that we can understand. The social interactions with a wide range of people have helped me relate to them and hence cope with the world around me. Both of these things have helped me communicate the Gospel to those who have not yet met Jesus."

His favourite verse - "except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3) very accurately sums up how accepting Jesus into his life has opened Shaun's eyes to a whole new reality.

More than that, Shaun's personality has also undergone a dramatic change. "I've become more generous and caring, less arrogant and selfish," he says. "However, I find it hard to turn the other cheek," he says ruefully. "I'm a fighter."

His academic achievements blinded him for many years to the truth of the Bible and creation.

"But today in spite of what academic institutions teach, I realise now that we cannot possibly have evolved. Which came first: the chicken or the egg? How did the human eye and brain evolve? Certainly not from chemicals in the sea!

"The whole of nature with its diversity and intricate levels of control shouts Special Creation, loud and clear!"

Phone call thwarts woman's suicide

Padina was ready to kill herself and take her seriously ill mother with her.

The Iranian woman was struggling with severe depression, the pain and shame of a failed marriage to a bigamist and caring for her mother, who was deathly ill with multiple sclerosis. Desperate for the peace and joy that eluded her in life, Padina hoped she would find them in death.

Padina grew up in Iran and was a devout Muslim. "I thought if I could do all the things Allah demanded he would answer my prayers, give me peace, and someday allow me to enter his paradise," she says.

"I hated Christians and was very happy when I found out they were being persecuted. We were always told if we killed a Christian we had a one-way ticket to heaven."

When she was 18, Padina married Navid, setting the stage for a long and rocky relationship with a man who spent more of his time overseas with his other wife than with Padina.

Padina was shattered when she discovered Navid was married to someone else and turned to her faith hoping to find comfort. "At the end of my day, I would do my prayer beads,

say my five prayers and fall into bed, only to do it all over again the next day but my depression worsened," she says.

It was around this time she became friends with a Christian nurse she worked with. Padina noticed this girl seemed different and asked her about her religion.

The girl told her about her faith in Jesus Christ and Padina's interest was piqued. She began watching televised church services and read a Bible she kept hidden. She even prayed to Jesus occasionally and received answers to her prayers, but stayed loyal to Allah.

It was not until Navid asked her for a divorce that she hit rock bottom. "When he said he didn't want me anymore, I couldn't speak," Padina says. "I'd invested 10 years of my life



STOCK PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

in him. That's the night I decided to end it all."

Padina's attempt to end her life was stopped by her mother. "You can make me stop this time but I'll try again," she told her mother.

Padina was so bent on suicide she stopped watching the Christian pro-

grams, praying and reading her Bible. She convinced herself Jesus had done nothing for her and she would serve Allah this one last time by taking her own life.

This time, her mother did not try to stop her. This time, she asked Padina to kill her as well.

As Padina got the pills out, her mother tuned into an illegal Christian broadcast. A pastor was speaking about Jesus: He said: "If you're planning to kill yourself, the Lord says, 'Stop.' He has a hope and a future for you. Stop and call me right now."

Padina's mother rang the pastor and within half an hour had committed her life to Jesus Christ. She tried to give the phone to Padina who took it reluctantly, and

when she spoke to the pastor it was only to say: "I'm going to kill myself and your Jesus cannot do anything for me."

"Give Jesus just one chance," the pastor pleaded. "You can always kill yourself next week."

Padina agreed, but resolved to

just go through the motions. "I will pretend to invite Jesus for one week into my life," she thought. "I can embarrass Jesus and Christianity for the false religion it is. In one week, I will call this television program and kill myself live on the program. That will disgrace the God of the infidels."

However, the next morning, Padina was astonished to see her mother walking. She took her to the hospital and was told by a doctor that a miracle had occurred. "There is nothing wrong with her," the doctor said. "She has been cured. Which imam (Muslim leader) did you pray to?"

"It wasn't an imam," Padina replied. "It was Jesus Christ."

The next time Padina called the pastor, it was not to kill herself but to commit her life to Jesus. "I cried and prayed and turned away from my sins," she says. "I had a faith in Christ that could not be moved. I finally knew Jesus Christ had saved me. I could risk being happy."

Padina is now a leader in Iran's underground church. She has a zeal to tell others about Jesus. "I could sit right there and show them that I have what they want. I know the scriptures of the Koran. I've done all the things they do. I've prayed all the prayers they pray. I did it all, but found no peace from Allah or from Islam.

"I would tell them to test Jesus, to see what He will do in their lives. I would love to tell all the people of Iran about the beautiful Jesus I have seen.

"I want to give my whole life to Christ. I want to surrender everything to Him. I no longer worry about who will do what to me. God has replaced my nightmares with a vision for myself and for other people." •

Padina's story is told in the Voice of the Martyr's book, "IRAN: Desperate for God," available at www.VOMBooks.com.

'Worst' Aussie gangster changed

Between the 1960s and the 1990s Stan 'the Man' Smith was one of the most feared villains in Australia, and the gunman behind some of the era's worst gangland murders.

Stan reportedly acted as the enforcer and contract killer for key crime figures like Lenny McPherson and George Freeman, and he played a major role in the marijuana trade; then in the last years of his life he underwent an unlikely transformation.

Jack the Insider aka Peter Hoysted shared Stan's story with the ABC's Richard Fidler.

As Jack tells it, in the 1960s when Lenny McPherson rose to prominence in the Sydney underworld, Stan Smith was his muscle – younger (by 16 years), fitter and with a great propensity for violence. Jack attributes at least 25 shooting incidents and 14 murders to Stan. Most of these were contract killings.

Stanley John Smith was born in depression-era Balmain in 1937, when this inner west suburb of Sydney, near the docks, was a really rough area.

Like many of the crime figures of the era, Stan was nabbed for a couple of minor thefts as a child and, after a few run-ins with the police, sent to a boys' home. Stan was 14 at the time. These reform schools seemed to specialise in churning out brutalized human beings, by using the borstal system of having the older boys meet out the discipline to the younger ones. This often involved sexual and physical abuse – which was the case for both Stan and Lenny McPherson before him.

On Stan's release at age 17 he was a violent and angry man. He started working stand-over rackets for the prostitution rings in the 1950s, making sure the girls turned over enough trade. Stan is reported to have been excessively violent, even for the extortion industry, and would often just 'lash out' and savagely beat the women.

Ironically, one bright spot in Stan's life was his



Stan Smith (right) and his wife Marilyn Smith, with fellow mobster Graham Henry.

almost textbook romance with Marilyn Moss, who became his wife when he was 18, and remained married to him until his death 54 years later.

Due to police corruption, Stan, Lenny and George Freeman, known as 'the Team' of crime bosses, could act almost with impunity. This was before narcotics, and their main rackets were pimping, bookmaking, 'sly grogging' (illegal alcohol), night clubs, casinos and dodgy construction.

One of the most prominent criminals Stan allegedly killed is Stewart John Regan, known as 'the magician' for the way he made people disappear. Stan shot the psychopath, murderer and suspected child killer, four times in cold blood.

In the late 60s, early 70s, Stan got involved in the fledgling narcotics business, but only marijuana. He was involved in local plantations and importing weed from overseas by boat out of season. He got involved with various bohemians and musicians to distribute his product, and in this way got into band and tour management.

Ironically, Stan had a deep hatred for heroin, because his son, Stan Jr, became addicted and died in 1979 of an overdose. Stan ruthlessly killed the drug dealer involved by beating him severely and then running him down in his car and leaving

him for dead.

Although he was a well-known criminal character, Stan was an expert at blending into the background and covering his tracks. He was only ever imprisoned once, for three months, after being arrested at a Melbourne airport with a very small amount of amphetamines and an ounce of hashish.

However, the notorious criminal met his match towards the end of his life, on November 6, 2003, in a bowling club in Putney when he 'found God' as Jack puts it.

Evidence that Stan indeed acknowledged Jesus as his Lord, is that he reportedly began going to church and reading his Bible, got baptised [immersed in water as a sign of dying to his old life] and became involved in volunteer work, the church choir and distributing religious tracts.

Private investigator and friend Rex Beaver confirmed that Stan then started running legitimate businesses. Jack believes this was indeed a sincere conversion, as Stan gained nothing material from it. But, on the other hand, he notes wryly that Stan's new-found faith didn't apparently compel him to hand himself into the local police station and confess to all his crimes.

"If Stan knew you in the past several years, he would pray for you that you would come to know Jesus Christ," Rex said at Stan's funeral service. "He said, 'God has forgiven me and I have forgiven anyone and everyone of anything and everything. Someone may have something against me but I would hope that I would not have any argument with any man.'"

Stan Smith, whom Jack calls the worst contract killer Australia has ever seen, died in 2010, aged 73, worth \$25 million, which he left largely to his church. He was survived by Marilyn and their two remaining sons, Hayden and Peter.

His story illustrates that no one is too evil or too old to find the forgiveness and mercy of God. •

GOD HAS FORGIVEN ME



nudge WITH KARL FAASE

COVID causes spike in prayer

RESEARCHERS have found that the crisis and uncertainty around the global COVID-19 pandemic is causing a growth in religious interest.

Jeanet Bentzen from the University of Copenhagen has been researching global religious interest via the growth in Google searches for 'prayer' for many years. Bentzen has found that in times of crisis there is greater interest in prayer and there is a growth in the Google searches for prayer. She states "...prayer intensity has sky-rocketed in the month of March 2020."

Some may suggest this is just superstition, people looking for religion in uncertain times.

Another way of looking at this phenomenon is that when life is easy we don't think about deeper issues. When life is tough we are forced to ask: what matters?, why am I here?, who can help? At those times, looking for God becomes a very significant option.

Don't miss this period of time as an opportunity to build your personal faith in Jesus Christ. •

TEENTALK

Little Miss 'Perfect'

Chéri-Lynn Steyn



If there was one place in the world Chéri-Lynn Steyn loved to be, it was basking in the glow of her own limelight. Arrogant and full of pride, smart and accomplished, she believed she was better than others.

Her achievements, both academic and sporting, became her idols and she worshipped them.

"I was an academic achiever from the day I walked into primary school," she says in a friend's blog *In Pursuit of the Beloved*.

On the rare occasion she scored less than 100% in any test, she says the shortfall only inspired her to work harder.

Sport followed very much the same trajectory. Although she never reached the heights of international fame, Chéri-Lynn, who grew up in sports mad South Africa, did well enough at provincial and national levels.

"Losing was never an option," she says, revealing again the rigid plumb line she held herself to. "Extreme measures were taken to minimise the risk of losing. I was very hard on myself. Inadequacy was not tolerated in my world. My biggest fear was mediocrity."

Another area Chéri-Lynn enjoyed being queen of all she surveyed was religion. Raised in a Christian home with good values, she was careful to observe all the requirements of the faith. She went to church regularly, prayed and studied the Bible.

She prayed and even saw people she prayed for get miraculously healed. She was thoroughly impressed with herself.

It never occurred to Chéri-Lynn that her success had more to do with God's help than her own cleverness. At the time she may even have felt God had a lot to be grateful to her for.

Then came a family vacation at a resort named Klein Kariba. By this time, Chéri-Lynn's older brother had become a Christian. Chéri-Lynn hated the holidays when her older brother was present because she knew he would challenge her about her pride and self-righteousness.

"He confronted me about parts of the Bible I had never read, or thought were not applicable to me," she writes in the blog. "For a very long time I convinced myself I was going to heaven because how could God send ME to hell?"

During that holiday in Klein Kariba, as she and her brother inevitably clashed, he asked her the question that changed everything. "If Jesus is your Saviour, from what did He save you? Did He save you

from sin? Who are you when no one else is around, when it's only you and God?"

Chéri-Lynn said she had no answers for her brother.

"That night was the worst of my life," she says. "I could not sleep, try as I may. Every time I closed my eyes I had sexual fantasies as I did every night...I realised then that if

I would die on my way home from the resort I would certainly be sent straight to damnation.

"How could I be so arrogant, such a big sinner and claim to be a Christian preaching to people?"

Chéri-Lynn finally admitted she was lost and a sinner. She realised her achievements would not matter on the day she stood before God for judgement. "Yet without them I felt like nothing. Humiliated, I admitted I had lost at life."

Realising her own good works could not save her, she said that the following morning she pleaded for forgiveness and asked God to save her. "Not because of who I am or what I have done but because of the cross and the blood Jesus shed at Calvary."

She stood up that morning from the bed in her grandparents' caravan a "new being".

She realises now her

achievements had made her haughty. "I believed I was better than other people; in my own eyes I was perfect - or close enough," she admits. "I would see people receive healing after I prayed for them, but in my heart it was always because I prayed for them."

"I am convinced to this day the Lord blessed so many people through my life for the sake of His name. I misused God. In reality I blasphemed His name. While I preached the loudest, I was the most hypocritical. I used the cross as an excuse to sin in certain areas because, I thought, I was doing all of the other things right."

Chéri-Lynn is a vastly different person today. Now she acknowledges God in everything she does, saying "everything I achieve today is simply a praise offering to Him."

"My life is not my own but lies safely in the hands of my mighty heavenly Father. I am forever grateful that He

called me by my name and never stopped calling until I answered."

She says the hardest part of being a Christian is knowing many people have yet to ask Jesus Christ to become their personal Saviour.

"But the best part about being a Christian is when someone you have prayed for multiple times finally tells you they have received Jesus into their lives. That is truly a good

feeling."

She says the five years since becoming a Christian have meant more to her than the 18 she lived before she submitted to God.

One of her favourite verses is Isaiah 1:18 - "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

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FROM HEROIN TO HEROINE

Maxine was trapped in heroin and cocaine addiction for 29 years that began after a trampoline accident in her teens. As her life spiralled out of control she lost any sense of identity and suffered from years of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression and PTSD.

She lost everything including her kids, her home and her relationship with her mum and family. When her father passed away she was unable to attend the funeral. She tried detox rehabs and was admitted on occasions to hospital and mental health institutes but nothing could fill the void she felt and she very quickly lapsed back into addiction.

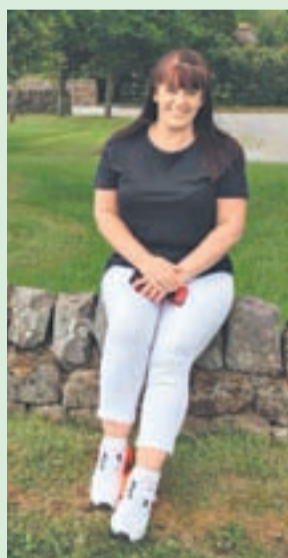
At one stage she was so ill with septicaemia and pneumonia that she was given six months to live. She was in a state of total despair and hopelessness. In the chaos she cried out to God.

When the Teen Challenge City Outreach met Maxine, she was living in a homeless hostel in an area of Liverpool notorious for drugs, gang violence and prostitution.

She was visiting her community pastor and had found a pebble in the church grounds with HOPE inscribed on it. That



Maxine before (left) and after her time at Teen Challenge.



same day hope was offered to Maxine! People had been praying for her and God had heard them.

Two years later Maxine has completed the Teen Challenge HOPE House residential programme, has achieved several certificates and courses. She is also finishing a refresher course in English and Maths and has applied for her Driving License!

She has full restoration with her mum, communication has opened with her two older children and the door has opened with her extended family - unheard off in the last seven years! An opportunity has arisen to work in a sensory room for adults and children with

learning disabilities and challenges.

Maxine has gone from having no identity to an identity as a beloved child of God after receiving Jesus as her own personal Saviour. She gives Him all the glory, praise and thanks for all He has done in loving her and accepting her, lifting her out of the pit of sin and despair.

She is serving in her local church, reaching out to girls in a red light area in Leeds and travels back to Liverpool to tell others how Jesus can rescue them from the addictions they have got trapped in.

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

Be creative

A GROUP of college classmates have created a phone case that they say will help to fight Covid-19.

The phone cases are coated in copper alloy and are antimicrobial, so how do they slow the spread of the new coronavirus?

"We use a copper-alloy composite that starts killing germs on contact," Nick O'Brien, a senior at Vanderbilt University and one of the co-founders of company Aeris explained. "The way it works is there are millions of copper ions. They all have this loose electron that zaps germs, whether bacteria or viruses on contact, neutralizing the outer membrane of the germ."



The two-part case is thin and lightweight, so it functions just like normal. A plastic inner liner helps separate the copper from the phone so it does not create interference.

Once the cases launch, Aeris said that for every case sold, they will donate one to frontline health care workers.

Be kind

Performance "Whoever left is someone's love" with red balloons by artists in honour of the victims of COVID-19 in Brazil at Esplanada dos Ministérios on June 01, 2020 in Brasilia, Brazil. (Photo Andressa Anholete/Getty Images)



BELOW: Kenyans walk past a mural about Covid-19 along Haile Selassie Avenue in Nairobi. Kenyans have used creative ways to spread informative health messages about Covid in murals, skits, face masks, songs and more. (Photo Boniface Muthoni/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)



LEFT: In the United Kingdom, a skeleton wearing a surgical face mask lies across the windscreen of a van in Herne Hill, on 30th June 2020, in London, England. (Photo Richard Baker / In Pictures via Getty Images)

Laugh

Desperate doctor prays for dying pastor

In March, Queens New York Pastor Benjamin Thomas developed a fever that refused to go away.

"I took Tylenol, Motrin, the temperature was not going down," recalled the preacher, who is in his 50s. He said he has been preaching for more than 30 years and had never been out sick from his job until then.

On March 23, he went to a health care facility. "They checked for COVID-19. I was positive."

He was then taken to Plainview Hospital where he was given antibiotics but they could not admit him because "there was no room".

After taking the antibiotics and staying home, his fever didn't go away. He also started experiencing shortness of breath. Four days later, on March 27, his frantic wife dialed 911. He was rushed to a medical centre alone. His wife could not accompany him due to COVID-19 restrictions.

What happened over the next several weeks, the pastor said, he only recalls from other people's memories.

"I walked into the ambulance. That's all I remember," he said.

Benjamin said he was placed on a ventilator. He was there for almost



Dr. Robin Varghese (L), heart surgeon at The Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City who runs the cardiac surgery ICU, is seen here with Pastor Benjamin Thomas (R), who recovered from COVID-19 after a 100-day fight.

two weeks before being transferred at the end of April to the intensive care unit at Mount Sinai Hospital under heart surgeon Dr. Robin Varghese.

Earlier, his church had started a chain prayer for him that went global.

"During the first couple of weeks of April we were not making much headway and there was one point in particular which was the night of April 19th when I got desperate," says Robin.

He explained that he and his team

had done everything they could to save Benjamin's life but nothing would work.

"At that point, I went into his room late at night and I was on call and I just told God there is nothing else I can offer him. He's got to take over. We've given him everything that modern medicine can throw at him," the heart surgeon said.

After crying out to God, Robin said he decided to study the case some more and got some fresh ideas, which

he and his team implemented to treat the Queens preacher. And Thomas began to improve.

"Since that night he started to make slow, very slow but steady progress. His lungs were just ravaged by the COVID-19 virus and he had been in an induced coma for over six weeks. By the middle of May we started to see hope that he was going to make it and we're very happy that he continued to progress and he started to wake up," Robin said.

"We're thankful for all the people who were continuing to pray for him because we know that that was a very important part of his recovery along with the care by our intensive care team."

Benjamin cried when he heard about the 54 days he missed while he was in a coma.

"It just goes to show the power of God. We can't understand or explain what happened to the others but we do know what happened here. And we're so thankful," hospital chaplain Rocky Walker said.

The time was hard not just for Benjamin but for his wife, and their daughter. His wife was unable to visit him and no one could visit her

because of the lockdown. She became panicked and depressed, and had to be hospitalized for 17 days.

"She went through a very tough time but my 17-year-old daughter, God gave her the strength. She did not give up," Benjamin said.

"By the grace of God, I overcame COVID-19. I came home on July 2nd. I'm recovering," he said.

The pastor said he is grateful to have had a doctor like Robin who knows how to pray.

"Dr. Varghese is a great man of God," he said, who wasn't afraid to "lift the name of Jesus" in his time of need.

The Queens pastor, who will have to be assisted with oxygen for a while, said he hopes to get back to his congregation eventually. He currently connects with them through Zoom and other online platforms.

He urged the church to keep praying because "it works."

"Never give up. Prayer works. No matter what. We see miracles ... I'm a living miracle. The prayer of the church works," he said. "I was dead a couple of times at least in the last four months and God kept me. God brought me back."

Biochemistry and beginnings

ORIGINAL STORY BY
DR. TAS WALKER OF CREATION
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

PETER Borger has been interested in science ever since he can remember. Encouraged by his father, who was a biology teacher, Peter excelled in biology, paleontology, and cosmology.

He was often out and about in nature, collecting fossils and stones. He read science magazines and was fascinated by questions about human and animal origins.

Peter says he doesn't remember

his family ever attending church, but that his father would tell the family Bible stories. "Bible stories were part of my early childhood," he recalls. Through his teenage years he lived a very secular lifestyle.

Peter's interest in origins led him to major in molecular genetics and biochemistry in his master's degree. "In my mind, these concerned the very foundation of life," he says. What Peter discovered amazed him.

"The complexity of the chemistry of life is immense; nothing is left to chance," he marvels. "I saw interconnected biochemical systems closely working together to maintain the cell, without which life would be impossible. They were cooperating systems.

"That convinced me that evolution, as taught at the academy and popularised by materialistic philosophers such as Richard Dawkins could not be right. I realised that life cannot be explained by naturalistic means, and so must be the work of an intelligent creator."

Peter started his Ph.D. studies in 1993, when little was known about gene expression in humans. Peter said, "Nobody knew in detail how and when genes were switched on and off."

One of the genes he studied was the IL4 gene, which specifies how to build the protein known as interleukin-4. Understanding how this gene produces interleukin-4 is important as too much of this protein can cause allergies, asthma, and dermatitis.

The more he discovered about the body's systems, the more Peter was convinced of the evidence for intelligent design.

In July 2001, Peter began a post-

doctorate in Sydney, Australia and says it was there he realised there was no such thing as an evolution theory.

When Peter studied population genetics, it was presented as scientific evidence for Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection. He says he found to the contrary that there was no support for the belief



Dr. Peter Borger is an expert on the molecular biology of signal transduction and gene expression. Since October 2019, Peter works for Wort und Wissen, a German creation science association.

that apelike creatures somehow evolved into humans because for that theory to hold true, brand new DNA sequences would need to be produced. "I realised that population genetics provides no support for the claimed ape-to-man evolution because it has no mechanism to generate new genetic information," he posits.

Peter explained some surprising findings from studies of mitochondrial DNA

(mtDNA) in women.

Studies show there is very little variability in the mtDNA among women, which indicates that all women alive today must have come from a very small human population not that long ago. The same characteristic is found in the human Y (or male) chromosome.

This is entirely consistent with the biblical account that all people are

descended from one founding couple – Adam and Eve.

"But the timing of this founding couple was problematic," Peter says. "Reports claim they lived 100,000 years ago or more, which is much older than the Bible indicates for Adam and Eve. But when I checked, I realised that the calculated date assumed the long ages.

"It is assumed that apes and people evolved from a common ancestor five million years ago. If we discard this Darwinian assumption and use experimentally measured mutation rates, the origin of mankind, is reduced to 6,000 years. This is fully in accordance with the biblical timeframe.

"These findings support Genesis, not Darwin. Of course, there are always questions that need to be addressed, such as when a report appears that seems to fit the Darwinian paradigm and contradict the biblical one. That is the nature of science. Such anomalies simply call for more research, which will reveal an answer in the creation paradigm."

Peter's book, *Darwin Revisited*, scientifically refutes the Darwinian paradigm and presents a novel theory to explain rapid speciation. It was the only book critical of evolution published in the Netherlands in 2009, the Year of Darwin. Since then he has been regularly invited to present his

ideas in the Netherlands, the USA, and Germany.

So why is all this significant? Peter explains: "The issue of evolution and Genesis creation is hugely important for our understanding of who we are, why we are here, and why things are the way they are.

"Evolution has suffering and death in the world for millions of years. However, Genesis clearly teaches that God created this world "very good", so there was no suffering, disease, or death. These entered because Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator.

"1 Corinthians 15:21–22 says: *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*" In other words, the good news of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ comes out of the bad news that bodily death came through sin, as explained in Genesis.

"My experience with science, molecular genetics, and biochemistry has confirmed the truth of the events in Genesis and given me a wonderful confidence in the good news presented in the New Testament. When I examined the Bible and compared it with my scientific studies, I found the answers to my long-held quest to understand origins in our wonderful and enigmatic world."

Believe It or Not

1st colour 3D x-ray of the human body

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

AN amazing new medical imaging scanner, using technology developed at the Large-Hadron Collider at CERN, is able to produce 3D x-rays in colour. The scanner is able to identify both density and atomic variation, producing the brightness and colours in the image respectively. This means that the 3D image can display organs, bones, fat, muscle, etc., in the body and can even identify disease markers.



X-ray of a human heel.

The technology shows great potential in enabling better diagnoses without invasive surgery. It is a wonderful example of real ('operational') science that can be used by doctors to help patients.

Studying the images, it would be hard to come to any conclusion other than that the human body is an incredible feat of engineering, exquisitely put together. We are not just evolved bags of chemicals that have come together by selection of random accidents; as this new scanner showcases, we truly are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-16).

Papadopoulos, L., World's first 3D X-rays of human body produced using CERN technology, interestingengineering.com, 13 July 2018.

DR. Peter Borger has an M.Sc. in biology with honours (biochemistry and molecular genetics), and a Ph.D. in medical sciences. He has worked at several outstanding science institutes at the University of Groningen, Netherlands; the University of Sydney, Australia, and the University of Basel, Switzerland. He is currently researching the non-protein coding part of the genome and how it is involved in generating variation and speciation.

COUNTERING 'CONTRADICTIONS'

HAVE you ever heard the claim that the Bible can't be trusted because it is full of contradictions? Or perhaps you, personally, have had questions about verses that appeared to be inconsistent with certain other verses?

Bible sceptics have made very long lists of alleged Bible contradictions. Uncontested these lists can keep non-believers from considering the Bible's claims and intimidate (or even shake the faith of) believers.

But the doubts simply don't stand up to scrutiny, as Dr Jason Lisle clearly shows in this helpful book. In it, he has compiled a list of 420 alleged Bible contradictions. Every single one crumbles under examination. In most cases, it is clear that critics simply haven't read the text carefully (or in context). In other cases, poor logic is used. And in still other cases, critics have merely cited compatible differences.

The book also includes a helpful Scripture index, so that when you are faced with a sceptical objection to a verse (or if you think you are seeing a Bible contradiction), you can just look the verse up in the index, then turn straight to the relevant 'contradiction' and answer. Very handy!

Available from austore.creation.com in soft cover for \$18.



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Experiencing the perfect father

BY ROB FURLONG

Bilquis Sheikh was born into a wealthy Pakistani family and although a Muslim, for the first forty-six years of her life, she neither embraced nor rejected her religious heritage.

This all changed when her marriage to a senior Pakistani Government minister collapsed. The divorce by her husband ignited a longing within her for spiritual truth and she quite naturally began with her Muslim faith.

Reading through the Koran she discovered it mentioned the prophet Jesus several times which led to her reading the New Testament to learn more about Him.

As she read both these books side by side, she noticed that she experi-

enced a great sense of peace whenever she read the New Testament.

One day she confided with a Christian doctor about her search for God who suggested she speak to God as if she were talking to her father.

This was a revolutionary thought for her because in her reading of the Koran she had never found God portrayed in this way. However, Bilquis' memories of her father were of a loving man who always had time for her, so to speak to God as if He were her father was not difficult.

But what she discovered astounded her!

Kneeling alone in prayer, she held out before her both the Koran and the Bible and very sincerely prayed, "Which book Father? Which book should I believe?"

Almost immediately she heard God speak the following words clearly and directly to her heart:

"In which book do you find me as Father?"

The discovery of God as a loving, personal Father radically changed her life and led her to put her trust in Christ as Lord and Saviour.

That God loves us as a Father is a deeply intimate and profound truth which cuts right into the core of our being and tells us that we are loved and treasured for who we are.

For some of us, the idea of calling God "Father" brings up some very negative connotations because our experience of our earthly fathers has been so poor and in some cases, devastatingly so.

"God is my Father? Well, if He is anything like my father was, then I don't want to have anything to do with Him!"

It's an understandable response but I want to encourage you very sincerely as you read this – *please don't judge your Heavenly Father solely by your earthly father.*

A year ago I read some really helpful advice about this and it has the potential to be quite life changing. The author said:

"The thought that our Maker can also be our perfect parent is a thought that can have meaning for everybody, whether we come to it by saying, 'I had a wonderful father, and I see God is like that' or by saying, 'My father disappointed me here, and here, and here, but God, praise His name, will



be very different, or even by saying, 'I have never known what it is to have a father on earth, but thank God I now have one in heaven.'"

Without in any way minimizing the negative experiences some of us have had with our earthly fathers, the author's point remains true – God is the Perfect Father and we rob ourselves of much joy if we judge Him by those experiences.

Jesus once told the story of a son who took his father's inheritance and frittered it away recklessly before hitting rock bottom.

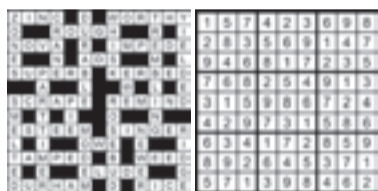
When he finally came to his senses, *he returned home to his father.*

He went back, asking to be treated as a hired servant but what he received was completely unexpected.

He found a father who was *waiting* for him, who forgave him and poured out his love on him.

The father in the story represents God and He is *waiting for you.*

Why not head home to Him today? ●



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:

<p>If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box</p> <p>I have prayed this prayer. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some 'starting off' literature</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information on a helpful church</p>	<p>If you have NOT prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box</p> <p>I would like to think about this. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have a problem (see attached letter)</p>
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Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 5)

BY JODY BENNETT

DURING the school holidays my teenagers are usually at home with our little sausage dog while I go to work. They tell me that Carrie hardly moves from her spot at the lounge room window all day while I am out, waiting for me. She doesn't come to play with the children or sit with them watching TV and, according to the kids, hardly eats or drinks either.



But as soon as she sees my car pull into the driveway, Carrie goes crazy – rushing around, jumping at the window, barking like mad and trying to force open the front door to get to me. (The children only let her out when I've parked, so I don't run her over!)

Then she delightedly rushes up to me, before I have even fully gotten out of the car, rolls over, weeing with joy as soon as I pat her, and spreading the mess everywhere with her manic wagging!

My, that is a restorative for any bad day!

I am good to my dog in my own limited way, and love her company, but in an infinitely greater way, God showers us with good things and deeply desires our fellowship.

Should our longing for Him and delight in His presence not be akin to that of my little dog?

Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind (Luke 10:27). In church, Christians sing songs of worship and love to God and sometimes even dance, clap and wave their arms enthusiastically because God is so wonderful and so praiseworthy it is difficult to express adequately our gratitude and love for Him.

We can sometimes almost tangibly feel His presence with us now but also wait eagerly to see Jesus "for real" because He has promised to one day come and take His followers to be with Him.

May I learn from my little Carrie to be undistracted and patient, with my nose, as it were, pressed up against the pane, anticipating the first glimpse of my wonderful Master and delirious with joy in His presence.

The best 4-letter words

BY JOHN HUTCHINSON

THERE are two four letter words which mean a lot to me - words which help me stare down failure and give the winning edge.

The two empowering words are – 'Next Time.'

Many a great achiever and many a great discoverer only succeeded because of next time. When things go wrong you must think – "Next Time!" Next time may be your chance to turn things around and do better.

A wind farm proposal was rejected time and time again. But, the plans were resubmitted until wind turbines started generating pollutant-free electricity.

'Next time,' needs to be uncoupled from 'last time.' Last time can sour us with disappointments and failure. 'Next time' can urge us on with fresh vigour and determination.

But, 'last time' can also make us over confident. It's all too easy to say, 'I can do this again.' For what happened last time may be different next time. Next time, however, is rarely the same.

Never the same

I used to take teams of young people to distant sheep stations and help them develop their shearing skills. Often, when dealing with behavioural issues, we'd say, 'Next time we'll be ready for this.'

But, let me tell you, next time was never the same. Tactics that work today may be ineffective tomorrow. That is why we ever invent new

weapons. Who'd go to war with muzzle load guns today – or bows and arrows? Enemies quickly learn!

The strongest fellow who ever lived painfully learned the lesson. His super human strength was dependent on a vow never to have his hair cut. But, his girlfriend found out his secret. When in deep slumber, she skilfully cut away his hair with razor sharp scissors. When his enemies entered, the shorn man said: 'I'll go out as I've done before...'

His brutal humiliation solemnly warns us against presumption. Nothing is the same!

Last time

Next time, however, is full of uncertainties, possibilities and probabilities – particularly in such a changing world. And, whilst we learn a lot from last time, we never know it all.

But, be aware of this: there will be a 'last time.' We'll run out of days and our opportunities will go.

God, however, promises new beginnings to those who trust Him. There's an exciting 'next time' for those who've done awful things – a next time for murderers and thieves - a next time even for terrorists. It's for all those who repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. Jesus said, 'I came that they might have life, and have it in all its fullness.'

Jesus proved there would be a next time when He rose from the dead. His resurrection authenticated all He said and did. It proved that He truly died for our sins. It tells us that next time with Him never ends. It's forever. ●

AIN'T NOTHING GONNA KEEP HER DOWN

**Challenge
SPORT**

A new book *Racing on Empty* hit the shelves a few months ago. It's the autobiography of skier Iona Rossely - who should not have been alive to write it.

Iona, an Irishwoman who lives and works in New South Wales, was a competitive speed skier. The sport involves hurtling in a straight line downhill as fast as humanly possible. Speed skiers regularly reach speeds of up to 200kmh. That kind of speed is not called breakneck for nothing.

Iona was competing in the World Cup in France in 1987 when an accident happened. Flying down the slope at 160kmh, her right ski came off. She flew off the top of a gully like a human slingshot in a move that she describes in her book as "like jumping out of a block of flats".

She churned through the air like a rag doll in a spindryer for 1.5km before landing with all the force of a sledgehammer on a block of granite. Sitting up, she saw fragments of bone protruding from her right leg.

"I just thought 'that's it, I'm dead'," she wrote in her book. Then she blacked out.

Iona did not die, though her doctor said she should have. But it took an eight-hour operation and 28 metal screws to put her shattered leg back together again.

Told the accident was the end of her sporting career, she again defied the odds and represented Ireland in the World Championships of Endurance Racing, and the

World Equestrian Games, adding the title of top Irish rider at the World Equestrian Games to her international skiing accolades.

She had success, fame and money thanks to lucrative endorsements and advertising contracts. Yet there was an emptiness in her soul.

Iona was born into a fairly strict Catholic family and the rituals and traditions led her to believe God was impersonal and distant, so she walked away from Christianity. Instead she turned to Buddhism, tarot cards and crystals. But nothing filled the void.

Then, while recuperating in Cyprus she met a Christ follower.

"My physiotherapist was a Christian and she invited me to a Bible group," Iona said. "I was very reluctant but I went with her and I was overwhelmed by the love that I was shown. Unfortunately, I still had this obsession with my identity - which was all wrapped up in sport."

She moved to France in the early 2000s and met a Christian couple who became close friends. They were "so compassionate, so loving", she said. "They lived and breathed Jesus. We did the Alpha Course (an introduction to the Christian faith) together."

She said at that stage she considered herself a Christian but struggled to hear from God.

It wasn't until the World Equestrian Games in 2009 that her faith was sealed. It began when her horse had an epileptic fit the day before their race.

"I was really quite distraught because I couldn't understand why God would allow that to happen when it was important to me," she said.

Shortly afterwards, she walked into her kitchen and saw her open Bible on the table. "It was like Jesus walked into the kitchen," she recalled. "I just had this overwhelming sense of love. In that moment I realised that I didn't want to carry on running my own life, I needed to let go of my obsession with my identity and my sport."



Iona Rossely in her skiing days in the 80s and later (below) on the Irish Equestrian team.



"I had this overwhelming sense of peace and an overwhelming sense of freedom that I'd never really felt before. It was just amazing."

Today Iona is a lay minister for the Anglican Parish of Murwillumbah in New South Wales. She is an artist, speaker and avid animal lover and her passion is sharing her testimony on how God gave her a new life.

"I'm loving Australia. It's the right place," she said.

In the closing pages of her book she writes: "I had worked hard over the years to tame horses, dogs and cats, most of which were broken and rejected. In a way, God had been doing the same with me. I was broken and am still partially broken. But every day another piece of me gets put back into its rightful place."

In an interview with UK Christian website Eden, Iona said she wrote the book "for all those who feel broken and lost and have nowhere to turn, for those who have everything but don't understand why life seems shallow and meaningless and for the rich and the poor who seek the truth; it's for those who have everything and those who have nothing."

Her favourite Bible verses are 2 Corinthians 3:17 - "Now the Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." And Matthew 6:33 - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all things will be added to you."

She said God has shown her that we are all in a race, "but if we keep our eyes focused just on Him then yes,

we will win. I am still very competitive, but now I'm competitive for God.

"What was hindering my relationship with Jesus was my stuff and my possessions, my horses, my winning, my obsession with competing. But as soon as you drop your idols, then God can actually really get into your life." •

*The royalties from *Racing on Empty* will all go to the Sozo Foundation, a charity based in Cape Town, South Africa.



Iona Rossely

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