

## SEEING THE LIGHT AMID SUFFERING

Losing a child rocks your world, your marriage and your belief in God to its core, as well-known Christian singer songwriter Steven Curtis Chapman can testify, but he determined it would only make him stronger.

Steven says that as a child he “grew up in a relatively happy home”, although his parents fought often and his father “carried a heavy load of shame and anger” that he sometimes took out on Steven and his older brother Herbie.

The atmosphere at home changed profoundly, however, when Steven was seven years old and his parents and brother committed their lives to Christ during a gospel revival at their church.

Steven, himself, didn’t respond at the time but later that year, seeing the change in his parents, he was challenged by the Scripture where Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will open the door, I will come in.”

“I don’t remember anything else the pastor said,” Steven shares, “but *this* was very clear to me. I could sense Jesus knocking at the door of my heart. I had seen a change happen in my family so when I heard this. It was what God used to ask, ‘Will you invite me in?’

Steven recalls the day in his autobiographical book *Between Heaven and the Real World: My Story*: “I knelt down and prayed while the congregation continued singing... I was happy just to know I was on my way to heaven. I didn’t have a lot of deep, dark sins to confess, so my conversion experience wasn’t as dramatic as some. ‘Am I supposed to cry?’ I wondered aloud. ‘I don’t feel like crying. I feel like smiling!’

“It wasn’t fear of hell or even a strong desire to go to heaven that motivated me to respond. It

was the reality of having a relationship with Jesus that meant the most to me. ‘This is a good day,’ I thought.

“What God did in my heart that day in a small Kentucky church when I was just an eight year old little boy was eternally significant in my life.”

### SUCCESSFUL CAREER

The other defining influence in Steven’s life was music. Steven’s dad ran a music store and taught the guitar, so even before he was eight, Steven was reading music and song writing.

He and Herbie would perform together as the Chapman Brothers – he on guitar and Herbie singing.

“I have been fascinated with the whole idea of song writing for as long as I can remember,” he recalls with a smile. “It was how I found my voice.”

Steven’s first album, *First Hand*, was released in 1987, topping at number 2 on the Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) chart.

He maintained consistent success over the next 30 years, winning five Grammy awards and 58 Dove Awards in various categories (more than any other artist to date) with 19 more albums, 10 of which went gold or platinum.

### THE ACCIDENT

In October, 1984, Steven married Mary Beth and together they had three children, Emily, Caleb, and Will. They later felt called by God to adopt two little girls from China, whom they named Shaohannah Hope and Stevey Joy.



ABOVE: Musician Steven Curtis Chapman. INSET: The extended Chapman family in a photo from Facebook.



● Turn to page 2

### Fun for Kids

Pages 5,6,7



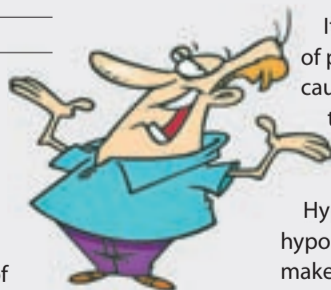
## THERE IS HOPE FOR HYPOCRITES

BY CHRIS BRENNAN

**HYPOCRISY** just makes us mad doesn’t it? Politicians speaking of tightened belts, while endorsing payments for themselves.

There is the hypocrisy of some media figures speaking of truth and objectivity, while at the same time advancing a personal or political agenda with inaccurate or selective reporting.

There is the hypocrisy of some doctors supposedly committed to the Hippocratic Oath, while at the same time advocating killing.



It makes us mad when we see examples of police who are supposed to be guardians, caught in corruption or carelessness, and then there are examples of hypocritical clergy, preaching and standing for morality while living out the worst kinds of immorality.

Hypocrisy rightly makes us angry. We hate hypocrites. Hypocrisy makes us cynical. Hypocrisy makes us distrustful.

I hate the hypocrisy that I see in those around me, and the damage that it does... but there is a kind that I hate even more. I hate the hypocrisy that I see in myself.

I hate it but sadly, I’ll hypocritically point out the failures in others much more quickly than I’ll confront it in myself. I hate hypocrisy, but I find

myself looking for the short cuts when it is the long road that needs to be walked.

But here is the good news for a hypocrite like me. Jesus said: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

No hypocrite Himself, Jesus lived a life consistent with His beliefs, and no mere talker, He gave His life so that hypocrites and sinners might be saved.

Jesus said of Himself: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Is that a get out of jail free card for hypocrites? By no means, rather it is the certainty of our judgment, while at the same time an offer of mercy for those who would recognise their guilt and turn away from their hypocritical, self-justifying ways. ●

# Jesus in jeans: a 21<sup>st</sup>C parable



IF Jesus had chosen to come to earth in modern times, some of His parables may have been a bit different. He used stories and pictures that the people could readily identify with from what they saw around them.

For instance, maybe John 15:1-8, instead of being about vinedressing, would have sounded something like this:

"I am the true power source, and my Father is the IT manager. He disconnects every device plugged into me that malfunctions, while every device that does run, He updates so that it can function even more optimally. You are already virus free because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain connected to me, as I also remain attached to you. No device can run without charge; it must be connected to the power. Neither can you process data unless you remain in me.

"I am the power source, you are the devices. If you remain plugged into me, you will process much data; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a device that is at 0% battery and useless; such devices are thrown away and recycled. If you remain plugged into me and my updates remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you run many apps, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

We know that no matter how

fancy our phone or tablet, unless it is charged, it is useless. That is how much we need Jesus. He doesn't just enhance our lives like a pretty cover or phone jewel. Without Him we really can do NOTHING. It all starts with plugging into Him. Without the power of God flowing through our lives, all the potential and talent within us lies dormant. The Bible says we are "dead in our sins".

However, filled with the "power" of God, the darkness in people's lives is replaced by light and they have purpose and understand why they were created. They are useful in society and to God's Kingdom.

The more we use our devices, the more they need charging. Many people say they are too busy to spend time praying, reading their Bible and being quiet before God, but the truth is busyness is not a virtue and often we just need to sit still, spending time with God, being recharged.

Reading the Bible to learn God's perspective on our self and our world is like getting regular software updates. The Bible also provides us with anti-virus software so that we can guard against attacks that corrupt our data and prevent us from running optimally.

Come on fellow devices, let's "switch on", "power up" and get with God's "program" in our lives!

# Seeing the light amid suffering



● From page 1

In 2004, Steven flew back to China with strict orders from his wife: "Don't even look at any orphan babies."

But within seven months, another little girl was added to the family, Maria Sue. "This little one just grabbed my heart," Steven explains. His heart would break just a few years later over that little girl when on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008, she was killed in a tragic accident.

Maria and two of her sisters were playing in the backyard when older brother Will pulled his SUV slowly into the driveway. Maria took off running towards the car, eager to greet her brother, ignoring the warning screams from her sisters. Suddenly Will made a turn in her direction. He never even saw his sister.

"I was on the phone to my manager, when suddenly I heard screams from out back," Steven writes. "These screams sounded different than any I'd ever heard before ... I quickly headed to the garage and as I rounded the corner, the sight that met my eyes staggered me.

"I got down on the ground and starting doing CPR on our daughter," Steven remembers. "I applied compressions, praying loudly in between, 'Breathe! Breathe!'"

Maria, critically injured, was taken by helicopter to hospital where she was pronounced dead.

"We didn't know how we were going to take the next breath," Steven recalls sadly. "I would go to where nobody

could hear me and scream until my voice was almost gone. "It sure didn't and doesn't make sense. But I never felt like God abandoned us."

### THE AFTERMATH

In all the grief and trauma that followed, Steven and his family refused to blame God for the tragic loss of Maria. Steven says that at the time, his prayers were simple and desperate. "God, I'm going to trust You. I have nothing else."

Steven turned back to music to help him channel his pain. He wrote numerous songs about his little daughter and released an album in November, 2009, called, 'Beauty will Rise,' in memory of her. But, as the title attests, it's more than a collection of grief and sadness. It is a declaration of faith in God's redemptive hand and belief in the promise of Heaven.

That same year, the Chapmans finished work on Maria's Big house of Hope, a medical care centre in China that provides holistic care to orphans with special needs.

Steven's autobiography is available on Amazon. His wife, Mary Beth, has also written a book about coping with loss, called 'Choosing to SEE: A Journey of Struggle and Hope.'

"God has not forgotten us, Maria is safely in His care, and life – although different – will go on," Steven concludes. "I can only see a part of the picture He is painting. I don't have a clue. But I know God does."

# Resurrection promise

The final part in a short series that explores the ultimate end of us all.

BY RICK LEWERS

**THERE** is a story of a little blind boy who, while flying his kite, was asked, "You can't see the kite so how do you know it is there?" The blind boy responded, "Because I can feel the tug of the string on my finger." And so it is in the heart of people when it comes to life beyond the grave. People may not know what is out there but they can feel the tug in their souls.

Following the resurrection of Jesus Christ that tug on the soul had people asking, "How are the dead raised up and with what body will they come?" That's a great question which bleeds others like, "Will I be recognisable as me? Will there be reunion with loved ones beyond the grave?" and many more. These are answered by two illustrations given in the Bible.

The first is the illustration of a seed. We know that when we dig a hole, put the seed in it and cover it over with dirt new life begins. What you plant is not what will be, but rather, out of the ground will spring new life consistent with the seed sown but magnificently transformed. From a rose seed buried you don't get tomatoes you get roses

and the transformation is beautiful. In other words there is a continuity with what is sown but a difference in terms of transformation.

The Bible makes clear that this is what resurrection is like for the Christian. The body is buried, covered over, and new life springs forth from the grave. There is continuity as out of the ground will come you - not me or someone else. But there will be a difference in that you will be magnificently transformed.

The second illustration is fish having bodies suitable for water and birds, for the air. Each uniquely designed for their environment. The point is that in the resurrection you will have a body suitable to your new place of existence. In other words you will be clothed with a body suitable for heaven and eternity – one that suffers no illness, no breakdowns, no injury and no death.

This is what the Bible says, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is

perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

In the face of death the Christian is offered the most extraordinary gift: a new life recognisable with the old, a better life beautifully transformed, and an eternal life with a body to suit.

The implications are magnificent. "Recognisable" rings with the possibility of reunion with our loved ones. "Transformation" will mean perfection's blessings. And "suitability" means the end of grief and an unending friendship with God and each other.

For the Christian, one minute after you die, life just gets better. I say for the Christian because all this depends upon the merciful reconciliation Jesus Christ offers us in His death on the cross made certain through His resurrection from the dead.

To those who are not Christian, I say Jesus Christ would welcome you into all this, if only you welcomed Him into your life.



## Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 French President 2018
  - 4 Very small
  - 7 Calendar span
  - 8 Partner of void
  - 10 Close by
  - 11 VIP car
  - 12 Long book, movie
  - 13 Wide-eyed, enthralled
  - 15 Winter downhill activity
  - 16 Pressure meas.
  - 17 They hold plants
  - 19 Urban haze
  - 20 Consider / judge
  - 21 Burrow
  - 24 Stadium section
  - 25 Dog command
  - 26 Outbuilding
  - 27 Lower the lights

1		2		3		4	5		6
				7					
8			9			10			
		11							
12						13	14		
		15			16				
17				18		19			
				20					
21	22	23				24			
		25							
26						27			

**DOWN**

- 1 City in Minnesota
- 2 Musician, cello
- 3 Stocking fibre
- 4 Summer shade
- 5 Resentment
- 6 First human in outer space (4,7)
- 9 Pooch affection
- 13 Holdings, article of value
- 14 Attention-grabbing ploy
- 18 Summed together
- 22 Swelling reducer
- 23 Reel's partner

SOLUTION PAGE 11

## Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

6 3 8  
4 2 9  
7 5 1

SOLUTION PAGE 11

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

# Truckie's long haul to healing

Truck driver Anthony Bootes has had harrowing experiences with suicide, rape, loss and rejection in his life, yet he found healing and wholeness through a series of events that began as he was embarking on a murder-suicide plan to end his pain.

Anthony grew up in Townsville, Queensland, attending various schools, moving around a lot and constantly getting into trouble. In November 1987, when Anthony was 13, his father, who suffered from Parkinson's disease, committed suicide by shooting himself at 5am one morning.

Anthony was the one who found the body. His life was turned upside down but he wasn't offered any counselling to work it through.

His loss and trauma were then exacerbated when his martial arts instructor started sexually abusing him, until Anthony's mum sent him away to boarding school.

Anthony ran away from there and was kicked out of his next school for calling in a hoax bomb threat, which is how he ended up in a horse riding school for troubled teens.

"The horse riding school taught me a lot about horses, and also taught me life skills and how to behave around other people. It was the best 13 weeks of my life," Anthony remembers.

From there he began working as a jackaroo, then studied at agricultural college. When Anthony was offered a job driving a water truck, he moved to Charters Towers just before his 18th birthday.

On his birthday, Anthony's boss got him drunk, and raped him.

"I didn't tell anyone about what had happened to me. I moved away and went from state to state working on cattle stations. I was just surviving the best way I could. I turned to alcohol and ended up an alcoholic at the age of 23," he recounts. When he was hospitalised with alcohol poisoning, and told that if he kept drinking he would die, Anthony quit.

Following a failed marriage, and several jobs and moves, Anthony met an 18-year-old from Wagga Wagga, who travelled around with him

for a while in his truck. When he tried to end the relationship, she revealed she was pregnant.

"I didn't even know how to look after myself, let alone a child, but it takes two to make a baby so I packed up and moved to Wagga as well," he continues. The couple lost a second child at just six weeks old and then had a third little girl.

The pressure on Anthony to drive longer hours in order to earn more, caused him to start using the drug speed to stay awake.

At that time, after more moves, Anthony bought a house, hoping to give his family some stability.

"I thought this would make me happy but the bills and debt, which I hadn't taken into account, put more pressure on me to drive even more to make more money to support the home budget and my drug habit," he explains.

Eventually, his wife gave him an ultimatum – 'us or speed' – but when Anthony tried to cold turkey off the drugs without any help it ended in them separating.

His wife took up with another man and Anthony was only allowed to see his daughters for two hours at a time, on supervised visits.

That was when he hit rock bottom.

"My depression and stress levels were so high I couldn't see any more hope in this life, so I was going to end it by driving the truck through the house that we bought and kill my wife, her boyfriend and myself," he admits.

While Anthony was writing a suicide note, his phone rang and it was a Christian man, Graham Hood, who knew Anthony's sister and who ran a programme called Recovery Road. He and Anthony chatted for about two hours and Graham promised, "I'll ring you every day until you get out of the darkness back into the light".

Through an amazing "coincidence", Anthony's boss called the same day to say they had got a new trucking contract to Brisbane, where Graham was, and Anthony was able to go to meet his rescuer in person. The men spoke for hours, they watched the Christian movie *Courageous*, about fatherhood, together, and Anthony was invited to stay for dinner.

"I asked if I could have a shower before dinner," Anthony recounts, "and Graham said to me, 'Ask God into your life while you are in there'. So [in the shower] I said, 'Righto, God if you want me to believe in You then You better send Your only Son Jesus to me because I have got nothing else to give in this life of mine.' Well, I came out of the shower feeling peace - no more anger or hurt, and this pain I had had in my right arm that went from my ribs to my fingertips was gone."

Just as the shower washed his body, that prayer washed Anthony's soul clean of his past, his pain and his sins. "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

He says, "That night I lay on the bed with my arms outstretched like a cross



Anthony's truck declares 'Forgiveness matters' and is a testimony to his freedom from bitterness over his past.

rebuking Satan and his demons out of my life in the name of Jesus. All these black shadows left the room and I fell asleep and woke up to a whole new different life."

The following weekend Anthony went to church with a cousin, whom he found out had been earnestly praying for him. There a woman he didn't know gave him a Bible. He then joined a Bible study group.

In 2013 Anthony had the opportunity to share his story over the radio and was overwhelmed by the response from people saying how much it had helped them to forgive others in their lives.

The following year he married for the third

time, to Sarah. Anthony stopped driving long-haul trucks last year after being involved in a fatal crash (that wasn't his fault) but previous to that he had a big sign on his truck declaring "Forgiveness Matters".

Indeed it does. As the Bible says in Mark 11:25-26 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

And Anthony's life is proof that no matter how you have been sinned against, forgiveness is possible by the grace of God.

## King Manny and the art of finishing strong

**DO YOU FEEL GUILTY?** Have you done a lot of stuff you're not proud of? Hurt a lot of people? Broke a lot of laws? Do you think you have done too many bad things for God to forgive you or make your life right?

Let me tell you the story of Manny.

Manny had a privileged upbringing. His dad was a very rich big shot, the boss of a clan with lots of clout. His dad was also a good guy who was religious and well liked. Manny, not so much.

Manny became clan boss when he was just 12 years old and right from the start he worked as hard as he could to undo all the good his dad had done. He destroyed everything his dad had treasured and wasted his wealth. He was mean and cruel as a leader and went in for voodoo and the dark arts in a big way. They say he murdered so many innocent people that the whole city ran red with blood. He even killed his own kids - deliberately!

You would think this guy was totally unredeemable. Sounds like a Pol Pot or Stalin. But his story wasn't over yet.

Manny's enemies attacked his clan, destroyed his 'hood, took all his gold and money, killed his mates and dragged him off as a prisoner. And while Manny was being held captive he had a lot of time to think about the havoc he had wreaked and the mess his life was in. He remembered his dad and how different the outcomes were for him because he was a religious man who did the things the priests told him God approved of.

Manny cried out to the God of his father, admitted what a mess he had made of things,

and asked God to help him fix it.

In the course of time Manny's enemies let him go and he returned to his clan and started doing things right. He got rid of all his occult paraphernalia, rebuilt his neighborhood and started treating people fairly and doing what the priests told him. He became a totally different person and a deeply religious man.

He died with dignity, was buried with honors and is now in heaven with the God who forgave him.

Manny's story is in the Bible (2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33). He was King Manasseh, and although he is mostly remembered as one of the most wicked kings of Judah, God doesn't remember his sins any more because Manasseh humbled himself and repented (asked for forgiveness and turned away from his sins).

You see it is not about all the awful, stupid things you have done in your past, or the mess your life is currently in; it is about what you do from here on in and how you finish the race. It is never too late to make a fresh start. You may not be able to make everything right or fix all your poor choices, but God is able to redeem what is left and to bring beauty out of ashes.

If God can turn Manny's life around, I know He can make something of yours.



Anthony and Sarah Bootes look happily towards the future together.

# True change is possible

Although Hannes Grové grew up with a minister as a father, knew a lot about God and had even prayed tearfully to God in his late teens to save him, he now knows that it was not until he truly surrendered his desires and will to Jesus in 2015 that he became a Christian.

"I was on my way to hell and I did not know it, because I thought I was saved," he explains. "I had allegedly been led to Christ 10 years ago and told to immediately 'go and tell people what God has done for you'. I did not want to but they made me 'testify' and, at some stage, I began to believe the lie. I thought if I said it enough it must be true.

"I was bound in my sin. I confessed some of it but I never stopped sinning. My life did not change. I was a slave to sin and my sin became worse," he confesses.

In his 20s, he says he "began doing awful things". He smoked and drank a lot and was sexually immoral. He manipulated people, hated Christians and all they stood for and had a very bad temper that expressed itself in beating up people.

"My anger was always out of control. Christian friends pointed this out to me. However, the more I confessed my wrongdoing, the more I sinned, and the more I felt I was losing touch with God. I became desperate. I started sincerely to seek God. I was scared, alone, and empty," Hannes admits.

Then in January 2015, Hannes read a sermon by Jonathan Edwards,

and felt a powerful presence surround him.

"I felt God say to me, 'You poor, distressed sinner, unworthy and fearful, come to me and Jesus Christ will accept you and protect you.' I felt tears run down my face as I prayed, 'God, save my soul.' God confirmed to me that I was now truly saved."

Hannes had a vision of a man on a dark mountain calling out 'Follow Me'.

"Although I could not see His face, I knew that it was Jesus. While climbing the mountain, He showed me parcels, letters, and items—each one had a label written on it. I saw myself picking these up. On top of the mountain, we came to a cliff. Jesus looked at me and told

me to throw each item away. The moment that I threw these over the edge, I knew these represented my sins. Now I knew that God had saved me and that my name was written in what the Bible calls the Book of Life," shares Hannes.

"God met with me and He saved me. Jesus did what I could not do - paid the price for my sins on the cross at Calvary and saved me from hell and the power of sin in my life.

"After that everything changed. Suddenly I loved Christians for the first time. Everything is now about the Glory of God, where before it was all about me. My temper is gone. I do not beat up people anymore. I quit my job and became a pastor - the one thing I never wanted to be."

A few months later Hannes' father died.

"I wish my father could see me

now, serving the Lord as a minister," Hannes says sadly. "I wish my dad could be here now that I can make him proud. I didn't do that while he was alive but I will see him in heaven one day and because of his example I now stand firm on the Bible and preach God's words.

"I intend to follow Christ and Christ alone," he declares. "My prayer is that God will be glorified [made famous], not me. My life belongs to Christ and not myself. My Lord walks with me and He leads me on. I cannot do anything without Christ and I want people to know that King Jesus is alive and when He saves you, everyone will know that something is different." •



Hannes Grové now understands that being a Christian isn't about trying harder but it is about being radically changed from the inside out by the power of God inside you.

**"I WAS SCARED, ALONE AND EMPTY"**



## From Boyzone to God's own

Kicked out of school at 14, Shane Lynch was a real problem child. But he proved his critics wrong by rising to fame in 1992 with boy band *Boyzone*.

With his moody, dark looks and multiple tattoos, Shane didn't quite fit the band's clean cut image. Indeed, it seemed that throughout his years with them the former mechanic was intent on rebelling against conformity. Infamously, he embarked on a drunk, expletive-filled rant at the 1999 MTV European Music Awards.

"Every time I spoke I had no respect for myself or anyone else," he confesses. "I was a very angry individual and I was lost in the world."

At the height of its fame, when *Boyzone* was enjoying a string of number one singles, albums and sell-out tours, Shane should have been one of the happiest men alive. However, he found himself in a "dark place and lost".

"I had everything in terms of materialistic things — a £1m house, a Mercedes, a Porsche. I had everything money could buy, but I wasn't happy," he admits. "I was quite lonely and I was searching for something else. It's true what they say, money can't buy you happiness."

"For a while I tried to fill the void in my life with all the kind of sex-drugs-and-rock-'n-roll things which are supposed to be cool," he recalls.

"I dabbled in the occult and was dancing with the devil, and doing all sorts of negative things looking for escape from myself. I'd lost respect for myself."

When *Boyzone* took a break in 2000, after seven years of non-stop touring, he found himself with too much time on his hands to dwell on things. His marriage to Esther Bennett, the lead singer in now-defunct girl band *Eternal*, crumbled as Shane became withdrawn, moody and in his own words "an extremely angry man". The pair split up in 2002.

"I was very immature and selfish during that time, but I worked my way through that, found my Christian faith and understand the world and myself nowadays," Shane explains.

The change came about when he shared his struggles with a friend and was advised to turn to God. In November 2003, he was baptised [immersed in water] as an outward sign of his new-found Christian faith and now tours the UK telling his story.

"I turned to God and asked for His help and He gave it to me," he says simply.

Recently, Shane shared his story in his autobiography



Shane Lynch then and now.



called *The Chancer*, which he wrote "to encourage others to make the most of the opportunities life presents them with, rather than get hung up on material things".

"I was written off as a child, not for being dyslexic, but as a problem child not getting on in life or with the school system. However, not being able to read or write did not stop me from being successful. I had to take a chance on things and I 'chanced' my way through school by cheating in my exams and using my charm. That's where the title of the book comes from.

"It's plain to see around us that there are so many people searching for comfort and happiness. That's why there are so many turning to drink and drugs," he explains. "But I'm no-one to tell anyone how to live their life. I'm simply telling them about mine."

In August 2007 Shane married his long-term girlfriend Sheena White, a former backing singer for *Westlife*. They met at church and have had two daughters.

"Some people mocked me when I announced that I was a Christian," Shane recalls. "But this is no flash in the pan experience. I am stronger, freer and happier than I have ever been in my life and it gets better and better."

"I owe everything to Christ. I have been freed of everything ... Every day is a brand new adventure. I am a better man for the faith which has been placed in my heart," he declares. •

## ENTERTAINING ANGELS

**WHAT** comes to mind when you think of angels? Fat babies with wings?

Did you know that far from being babies or adults with wings as depicted in so many images – the only time angel wings are mentioned in the Bible is in Isaiah, where the angels have six wings each? "Above [the Lord] were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying." (Isaiah 6:2)



Thanks to Oprah and the New Age movement, belief in angels has almost become a religion of its own. But what does the Bible actually say about angels?

- They are spirits (Hebrews 1:14), yet they always appeared to humans as physical men/males (Gen. 19:1; Luke 24:4), even eating food.
- They number in the hundreds of millions or perhaps more (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11).
- A third of them followed Satan when he rebelled against God, and are now evil. (Revelation 12:4)
- Only three angel names are mentioned in the Bible - Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer (Luke 1:19;

Jude 9; Isaiah 14:12).

- There are various types and categories of angels mentioned, e.g., cherubim (Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 10:1–20), seraphim (Isaiah 6:2, 6) and watchers (Daniel 4:17, KJV). They also appear to differ in rank and dignity, some being described as archangels, princes, or rulers (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 1; Daniel 10:20–21, 12:1; Ephesians 6:12).
- They are/were called holy and elect (Luke 9:26; 1 Timothy 5:21).
- They are more powerful than mankind (2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Peter 2:11).
- They can appear among, and interact with, humans, even killing them on occasion (Genesis 16:9, 19:15; 1 Chronicles 21:15; Psalms 78:49; John 20:12). In Exodus 12:23 God's destroying angel killed all the firstborn in Egypt, and in 2 Kings 19:35, an angel sent by God killed 185,000 soldiers in one evening.
- They can appear physically, and so real to humans that we do not recognize them as angels (Genesis 18:1–16; Hebrews 13:2).
- They are not to be worshiped (Romans 1:25, NKJV; Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10).

Adapted from CMI

nudge

## Balancing work and prayer

BY KARL FAASE

**DIFFERENT** personality types respond to the life of faith and belief with different attitudes. There are those who gravitate towards work and action. For them the prayer and contemplation is pointless introspection and they believe action is needed.

Others are very comfortable with sitting quietly, thinking about the world, they consider what needs changing and believe that as they bring their concerns before



Salvation Army founder William Booth

God He will respond to their prayer.

These two attitudes are often held up as being in conflict.

A great figure and a giant in Church history, William Booth, who started the Salvation Army, sought to hold these two attitudes in tension. These attitudes are to be done in the context of someone who is already a believer in Jesus; a Christian.

He said...

"Work as if everything depended upon your work, and pray as if everything depended upon your prayer."

There is great wisdom in those words.

# Saved from death, brought to life

In 1949, Peter Overliese and his family escaped war-torn Amsterdam and emigrated to Australia for a fresh start.

"As a 12 year old, I was really excited about the great adventure ahead," Peter recalls. "I was keen to taste new things and attend exciting new schools and learn to speak English."

When Peter became an adult, he was determined to seek his fortune overseas in his own style. He travelled extensively and worked and lived in Europe, Africa and Australia.

However, Peter's earlier recollections from his growing-up years were not as pleasant.

He was born in Holland, 1938, one year before the Second World War began.

"My earliest memories and crystal clear experiences are those of a war child of that era, and of those dreadful first years of my life," Peter begins. "I was only seven years old when the Allies liberated Holland."

Peter shares that occupied Amsterdam was "a dreadful place" with no electricity, no gas, no coal for heating, a chronic shortage of food and only a central, coupon, German-controlled food system.

"My family was a 'Christian values' family," Peter shares. "But we never went to church. I grew up without any knowledge of Jesus in my life."

Later the family doctor warned Peter's mother, telling her to take Peter to the "Boeren" – the rural farmers – as he would not survive without better nourishment.

At this point, the family decided to escape Amsterdam and walk north in the country to find food in the rural communities. Being illegal refugees without travel permits, it took them six days and nights to arrive at their planned destination, which was a local



Peter Overliese (centre) and his wife Adele with their children and grandchildren in Perth in 2017.



The church in Vlachtwedde where Peter, his sisters and their parents found Jesus during WWII.

Dutch church in Vlachtwedde Den Harpel.

"They were wonderful people," Peter remembers with a smile. "They found us billets, work for Mum and Dad, and did much more. These loving, caring Christian people saved our lives until the war ended."

In 1945, the war was coming to an end and many miracles were happening. Early one evening, everyone was outside watching the searchlights, fire and bombing sounds coming from the Allies at a great distance.

"Suddenly a blazing British Lancaster bomber came straight for us!" Peter exclaims. "It was at treetop height with four propeller motors screaming and aflame from end to end. I remember the terror of the situation."

It would have crashed into their farm but lifted up and over at the last second.

"We blessed that wonderful pilot in control for missing us that night. Later we learned there was NO pilot or crew aboard ... they all bailed out safely and spent the rest of the war as POWs."

Four years later, they arrived on a WW2 migrant ship in Melbourne, Australia.

However, "it never occurred to our family to give thanks to the Lord," Peter states sadly. "We simply accepted our good fortune as coincidence."

Many years later, after Peter had grown up and finished his travels, he settled in South Africa where he married his wife.

"Over the years, we met many wonderful Christian friends in Africa and were involved with much church activity as a young family," he says. "We have wonderful memories of the era right up to the 80s when we moved back to Australia."

"I would come along to church regularly as a moral support gesture, but was bored by it all," he admits. "I never took part in prayer or accepted the Lord. I honestly believed my success in life was due to my own perceived

cleverness and good fortune. I didn't need God."

In 2000, Peter joined a new church in Perth.

"I remember after a service, I went up to the pastor and asked him how I could make sense out of my life," Peter explains. "It was a life full of good things, good health, financial success, and wanting for nothing."

"I told the pastor, 'I don't understand why I need this 'God-thing' in my life'. He smiled at me and said, 'Let's ask God and say the sinner's prayer.'"

"I immediately balked at this idea, thinking, 'Oh no, not that silly kiddie prayer.'"

"I didn't want to hurt his feelings, though, so we stood aside in church and said the words with feeling, together."

"That was the moment

when all of my doubts and reservations about the existence of God were swept away for good. It was the most wonderful experience of my life!"

Looking back, Peter realises how the hand and protection of the Lord were on him all his life, and how God loved and kept him from harm ever since he was a small child in Holland.

"God has blessed me with a wonderful marriage of almost 49 years now, two fine children and two beautiful grandchildren," Peter says. "I attend a wonderful church filled with loving, devoted Christians and I thank and praise God every day for His love and guidance in my life."

"It is with peace in my heart that I thank Him every day for His Grace [undeserved love] to me, a sinner."

## ARE YOU THERE, GOD?

BY MAX LUCADO

**ONCE** there was a man who dared God to speak.

"Burn the bush like you did for Moses, God and I will follow.  
Collapse the walls like you did for Joshua, God and I will fight.

Still the waves like you did on Galilee, God and I will listen."  
And so the man went and sat by a bush, near a wall close to the sea and waited for God to speak.

And God heard the man, so God answered.  
He sent fire, not for the bush, but for a church.  
He brought down a wall, not of brick, but of sin.  
He stilled a storm, not of the sea, but of a soul.  
And God waited for the man to respond.

And he waited ...  
And waited ...  
And waited ...

But because the man was looking at bushes, not hearts; bricks, not lives; seas and not souls, he decided that God had done nothing.

Finally he looked at God and asked, "Have you lost your power?"

And God looked at him and said, "Have you lost your hearing?"

From *A Gentle Thunder: Hearing God Through the Storm*



**Let PSSM introduce you to God through FREE Bible lessons!**  
pssm.com.au

Complete your details below and PSSM will send you your first lesson or visit our website for online lessons!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: / /  Male  Female

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under 18 years): \_\_\_\_\_

**Delivery Address:**  
PSSM Mailbox Club  
PO Box 357  
Morayfield 4506  
Queensland

**We are looking forward to hearing from you!**  
(07) 5433 1628  
info@pssm.com.au  
pssm.com.au



**Challenge**  
NEWS PAPER

WWW.CHALLENGENEWS.ORG

Testimonies • Children's pages  
Lifestyle articles • Sports

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

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

**PRICING**  
<https://au.challenge.news/pricing/>

Order Challenge from  
Challenge Literature Fellowship  
PO Box 978 Cloverdale WA 6985  
Call 08 9453 3311  
Email: accounts@challenge.news.org

# From sickbed to stardom

Singer-songwriter Lauren Daigle now has the world at her feet, but a few years ago she was ill and housebound.

Talented Lauren Daigle has seemingly come out of nowhere in the last few years to rock the music industry with a new spin on contemporary Christian music.

The beautiful 26 year old has won two Billboard Music awards, an American Music award and five Dove Awards for her powerful vocals and inspiring lyrics, even performing on American Idol.

But just a few months after being nominated for a Grammy Award, Lauren reveals the challenging path that led to her rise to stardom.

"I grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana, emersed in an environment of zydeco, blues, and Cajun music," Lauren says. "As far back as I can remember, I was constantly singing. My brother used to cry to my Mom, 'Please make her stop. I cannot hear Celine Dion anymore!'"

Lauren shares that her parents were very supportive of her gift, being big fans of Christian music. They taught their daughter to seek God in all of her endeavours.

Lauren was convinced that the Lord wanted her to sing, but at only 15 years old, tragedy struck.

"I was diagnosed with a debilitating virus," Lauren explains. "I was placed on homebound rest for two years with an immune deficiency. It's funny how God sets things up, as I was super-busy. I was in high school running all over the place and God stopped me – He stopped me in my tracks."

Those last two years of high school were painfully isolating for the joyful, bubbly, outgoing teenager, forcing her to let go of her dream of getting involved with Christian mission work.

"It was during that season when I truly began to know God and His character," Lauren shares. "He gave me hope the entire time; that I wasn't going through this for any reason. God was setting me up for something and I needed to stay focused."

"So every morning I would get up and read the Bible, doing the same every night before bed," she continues. "The Word was filling me up so much during a time when I was completely alone. God affirmed me and who I was in Him!"

"I was baptized [immersed in water as an outward sign of commitment to Christ] as a little girl, raised in the church, and a part of a Christian family ... but it changed from that to God being MY source, MY Saviour."

Ultimately, the Lord would turn everything around – like only He can do – and use a torturous season for His glory and for Lauren's good.

Lauren found herself turning to worship and began singing at her local church, knowing that one day she would become a singer.

Lauren was convinced by her parents to try out for *American Idol* in 2010, but she was cut before the final 24 contestants. She made it to the Hollywood round in 2012 but was cut in the first Las Vegas round.

The competition's exhausting audition process was the catalyst God used to bring clarity to Lauren's life. Surrounded by people fighting to climb the ladder of success, Lau-

ren found herself at a turning point, where she decided to surrender her dreams to the Lord.

After her *American Idol* stint, Lauren enrolled at Louisiana State University (LSU) to pursue a degree in Child and Family Studies. But her dream of pointing others to hope through music remained on her heart, so she continued to sing throughout college, even leading the student choir.

While still a student at LSU, a local band asked Lauren to sing background vocals on an EP they were recording. When Centricity Music heard the track, they reached out to Lauren, inviting her to an "artist retreat" in Washington as a solo artist. When another band's lead singer was suddenly called away with an emergency, Lauren was asked to fill in his place.

"I had fully entrusted my dreams to the Lord, and now I found myself on centre stage," she says happily. "God took care of the rest."

In 2013, God's plans for Lauren finally came into fruition, and the young singer signed with Centricity Music.

But upon moving to Nashville, her album's project came to a halt when

her beloved grandfather fell terminally ill. Devastated, Lauren immediately went home. Her grandfather passed away five days later.

Lauren explains that her song, *Trust in You* was written during that time of tremendous loss and grief.

"My grandfather was one of the most influential men in my life," Lauren recalls. "He was the first person really close to me that I had lost. [The song] is about trusting that the Lord is going to be there for you."

Lauren eventually returned to Nashville and her career continued to take off. Her full-length album, *How can it Be* was released in April 14, 2015, debuting at number one on the Billboard Christian Albums Chart.

Lauren's life is a beautiful picture of what happens when you entrust your plans to the Lord.

"Proverbs 16:9 says, 'The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.'"

"I'm standing in amazement of God," Lauren concludes. "I have held dearly to this verse ever since I was a little girl. I am so humbled, so honoured, so thankful that He has directed my steps along this journey. He alone has brought me to places I could only dream of." •



Recording artist Lauren Daigle arrives at the 52nd Academy Of Country Music Awards on April 2, 2017 in Las Vegas, Nevada. (Photo Allen Berezovsky/WireImage for Fashion Media )

## Advice from a man without arms

BY DANIEL RITCHIE

"Weirdo." "Gross." "Freak." Those are words I've had spoken to me over the past few years at restaurants. All of them, directed at me, not because I was doing anything offensive, mind you. No, I was being shamed because I was eating. The issue is ... that I don't eat like everyone else. I eat with my feet.

I also drive with my feet and brush my teeth with my feet.

I do everything with my feet because I was born without arms. But, that doesn't limit me. By God's grace, I've been able to live a full life that has included graduating college, marrying my best friend Heather, raising two beautiful kids and serving in the church for over a decade. The way I've lived my life isn't much different than anyone else.

Well, from my perspective, at least.

The issue comes from the fact that the outside world sees me as "different." It is that label that I've worn for 33 years. And it can be a lonely badge to wear, because I don't have a tribe to call my own. I can count on one foot the number of people I've met face to face who were born with both arms. So, that reality made being armless an isolating proposition. I had very, very few people in my life who knew exactly what I was going through.

So, I was different and I knew it. But the problem came when others wanted to let me know. I remember coming home from a trip to the grocery store with my mom at seven years old, in tears because someone had said insulting things to me. There was the time that I had to



Daniel Ritchie affirms: "I am different by God's design."

fend off a rude kid at Disney World – the happiest place on earth. And then there was the time my parents and I were asked to leave a restaurant because I was eating with my feet.

The weight of being different became more than I could bear as I grew into my teenage years. The words of others began to warp my perception of the value of my life. I felt like damaged goods, broken and unlovable. Isolation and darkness were beginning to sweep over me. I started to hate myself and other people.

It was in this time of loneliness and negativity that I came across a Psalm in the Bible that would change my perspective and my life. It was Psalm 139, where King David praises God for forming him while he was still in his mother's womb. In verse 14, he says, "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

I sat in my room and let that verse wash over me. Wonderful are your works God. You have

taken your time to make me just like I am. I am not an accident or a genetic mutation. I am, by all accounts, different by design.

God didn't offer up an "Oops" when He made me. Everything went according to plan and when He formed me, He saw His work as wonderful. And it was in that moment that I began to see it as wonderful, as well. My sense of self-worth, value and identity shifted.

I was no longer who people said I was. I was who God said I was.

It was at this time that something even more amazing happened. I began to see others as wonderful, too. What was true of me, was true of them – regardless of how different they may be.

African-American or Hispanic, liberal or conservative, Christian or not. Arms or armless. Each and every life has God-given value that I must acknowledge. But, it doesn't stop there. I'm commanded to love them.

That change in my perspective, the realization of that truth, has altered the scope of my entire life. And I believe it's only that perspective that can change how we relate to one another in our increasingly hostile and divided culture—a culture where many demand that their differences are celebrated, but are offended by the different ethnicities or political ideologies of others. In that place, we have to see people first as God sees them. We have to approach them in love and with an understanding of their worth, before we can engage them in cultural dialogue.

In this, there can be no compromise.

Different was His design. Not a call to arms. •

Daniel Ritchie is a speaker and writer from Huntersville, North Carolina. He is a husband and father of two. His first book, *My Affliction for His Glory* (Kirkdale Press) released in April. He also writes at [www.danielritchie.org](http://www.danielritchie.org) and tweets at @DanielRitchie.

# Born to communicate

The astonishing rise of a new language in 500 deaf children gives us insights into the gift of language in our first parents.

BY KEVIN MAY

Language—its use is the most important thing that sets humans apart from other mammals. We are able to express all kinds of ideas and feelings besides talking about material objects, and can discuss hypothetical matters as well as realities past, present and future.

People have experimented with certain animals and birds, teaching them to respond to certain words. For example, chimpanzees have been taught to use sign language expressing a limited range of concepts. But no animal has ever displayed language ability coming anywhere close to that of their teachers.<sup>1</sup> We are truly 'wondrously made'.

## LANGUAGE IS PART OF BEING HUMAN

Language is an essential part of human existence. It makes us unique in the animal kingdom. How then did humans acquire language?

Is it a learned ability, made possible by evolutionary development from primitive hoots and grunts, or an innate and essential part of being human? Philosophers and linguists have debated this question for ages, especially since Charles Darwin popularized the theory of evolution.

Many experts, unwilling to contemplate the existence of a creator, have sought to explain the development and use of language by naturalistic means. So they tell us that as man evolved he developed a vocal tract of the right shape to produce various speech sounds, and that as his brain became bigger he developed the ability to control and use his vocal tract for communication. Initially, we are told, he used grunts and hoots to express himself, and over a long period he refined these into what we today call spoken language.

The famous 20th century linguist Noam Chomsky (not a creationist) tried to find an explanation for language. He concluded, taking a stand against many of his contemporaries, that human language ability is innate.<sup>2</sup> Today we have more evidence to back up this claim.<sup>3</sup>

## CHILDREN READILY LEARN LANGUAGE

Watching a young child learning to talk is fascinating. At first a child can't say anything. But after months of hearing his parents and others talking around him and to him, he begins to say words that are intelligible. For a time he will babble,

making sounds without meaning as he explores the possibilities of what he can do. Words begin to come one at a time (typically 'Mum', 'Dad', 'car' etc.), then in basic clauses (like 'want drink'), and then in sentences. No matter how complex is the grammar of the mother tongue, the child learns it and uses it. By about age five he knows all the significant grammatical patterns, even though his vocabulary is quite small. Vocab grows by leaps and bounds after that, so that by the time he is a teenager he is learning new words at a fantastic rate. This ability to pick up language is itself evidence of an innate drive to communicate. But there's more.

When children grow up in an environment of deafness, the inner compulsion to communicate can be seen more clearly, because it can be done even without spoken words. If the child is deaf, and the parents use sign language, the child quickly learns to express himself in sign language too. If the parents are deaf, the child will learn just the same; and if his own hearing is intact, he will also learn to speak fluently and naturally through his contact with other people. In effect he becomes bilingual, because sign language is a true language with recognizable grammatical and syntactic structure, only using hand gestures and facial expressions instead of sounds. So the desire and ability to communicate via language is there, with or without actual speech ability.<sup>5</sup>

## THE DEAF CHILDREN OF NICARAGUA

A particularly striking example of this is to be seen in the experience of some deaf children in Nicaragua, reported by Peter Radetsky.<sup>6</sup> Around 500 such children came together for the first time in schools for the deaf, established in 1980. Until that time they had had no established form of sign language. They had been living in scattered parts of the country, communicating with hearing relatives by gestures. Yet each child's set of gestures had little in common with another's.

But when they came together in the schools, they quickly developed a form of sign language between themselves. At first it was rudimentary, but before long it became a regular language with characteristic rules of grammar and syntax. Judy

Kegl, a behavioural neuroscientist at Rutgers, described it as 'the first documented case of the birth of a language.' She continued, 'Little kids about the age of three or four got exposed to that make-shift pidgin and absorbed it. And then, by virtue of their own language-generation capability, they came out with a full-fledged language.' This sign language had no precedent. In our own culture, sign language has been handed down from one generation to another, but these children had no such background. Their language was entirely of their own making. 'There is nothing that they could have used as a model', says Kegl. 'It's clear evidence of an innate language capacity.'<sup>7</sup>

Adam had language from the very beginning. The first humans, Adam and Eve, had the ability to communicate with each other (and God) from the outset, using language. This includes the mental ability (and desire) to communicate, the physical means to produce speech sounds, the ability to hear them, and the mental ability to process the sounds and connect them with the concepts they represent. Since they had no experience of many of the words that God used, much of their vocabulary may have been pre-programmed, rather than acquired.

When God first created Adam He said several things to him such as, 'You may eat freely the fruit from any tree in the garden, but you shall not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'

Unless Adam had been given some prior understanding of the meaning of the words, and the grammatical patterns in which they were used, God's communication to him would not have worked.

But Adam had not yet seen a creature die, because death only began when Adam sinned (Romans 5:12). What then would he have understood by the word 'die'? We today are all too familiar with the meaning of 'die', because we see death around us frequently. We are so uncomfortable about it that we use other, less stark



expressions for it, like 'pass away', or 'go to heaven'.

The text gives us no hint that Adam did not comprehend it. Even if he did not understand its full significance and horror, he must have known that it was a bad thing. God could have explained it as He talked with Adam in the garden. But we must conclude that he knew the meaning of the word that God used even before he had experienced what it signified.<sup>8</sup>

Language was an important part of the reason why we read in Genesis 2:20 that, before Eve was created, Adam found no partner suitable for himself among all the animals. They couldn't talk to him! Adam needed a partner who could communicate fully with him, as well as being one with whom he could raise a family. So God gave him Eve, and he recognised that she was just right for him (Genesis 2:23). God knew what was best for Adam, and gave it to him freely—just as He does today for all who depend on Him. •

## References and notes

1. For example, recursiveness—concepts within concepts, e.g. 'I told you to read this article'. A child can understand; no chimp ever could, regardless of the sign vocabulary used. A child can also put himself into another's mind. See Cosner, L., *Monkeying around with the origins of language*, August 2006; [www.creation.com/monkeying](http://www.creation.com/monkeying).
2. Chomsky is famous for developing the method of analysis of grammatical patterns known as 'transformational grammar', which was based particularly on the patterns of English. It has not always been fruitful in the field for analyzing other languages. But it seems he got the innateness of language right.
3. See Sarfati, J., *Refuting Evolution* 2, chap. 12, Master Books, Arkansas, USA, 2004.
4. Syntax = the patterns by which words are formed into phrases and sentences in a given language.
5. Sign language in deaf people uses the same areas of the brain as hearing people do for spoken language.
6. Radetsky, P., Silence, signs and wonder, *Discover* magazine, 15(8):60–68, August 1994.
7. Quoted by Radetsky, ref. 6.
8. After all, Adam knew what 'not' meant, although he hadn't experienced a 'not'—cf. Sarfati, J., *Refuting Compromise*, Master Books, Arkansas, USA, p. 223, 2004.

Believe it or not

## Brain size does not determine ability

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

**NOTED** linguist William Foley claims that language developed when brain size in the evolving humans took an upward leap.<sup>1</sup> As brains grew larger, their complexity of neural connections became very much greater and language became possible.

But really it is not brain size that matters, but how that brain is organized.

Brain size in humans ranges widely, typically somewhere between 1040 ml and 1595 ml.<sup>2</sup> Even though brain size tends to correlate with body size, it would be simplistic and false to say that a large person with a 1500 ml brain should be nearly twice as intelligent as a pygmy with a 900 ml brain!

People of all body sizes have potentially the same mental abilities, simply because they are human. It's true that some have a higher IQ than others. That's part of the ordinary variability between individuals. But IQ does not correlate with the physical size of the brain.<sup>3</sup> •

## References

1. Foley, W., *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK, p. 60, 1997.
2. 90% range. Extremes for normal humans approx. 900–2,000 ml. See Lubenow, M., *Bones of Contention*, BakerBooks, Michigan, USA, p. 138, 1992.
3. Eg. Skoyles, J.R. and Sagan, D., *Up from dragons: The evolution of human intelligence*, McGraw-Hill, New York, p. 239, 2002, refers to a woman with a brain size of 760 ml and a normal IQ.



## GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

Young people struggle to find purpose in life, believing that 'science' has made God irrelevant. CREATION MAGAZINE provides answers for your family.

- Affirms the complete reliability of the Bible
- Refutes evolution with real-world evidence
- Helps Christians share and defend their faith

ONLY \$32 A YEAR (4 issues a year)

Subscribe at [CREATION.COM/CMAG](http://CREATION.COM/CMAG)

CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

# Building Better Marriages

## CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?

BY ROB FURLONG

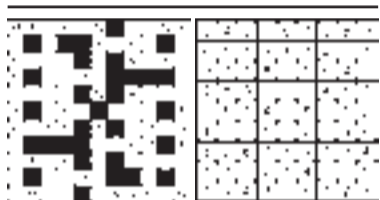
Last month we spoke about becoming better listeners but as I have reflected on that, it has occurred to me that we should also address the other side of the equation: becoming a better communicator!

In fact, being a good communicator is just as important as being a good listener.

To illustrate this, read the sentence below and see what comes to your mind – GODISNOWHERE!

Look closely and you will see that this can be read as either “God is nowhere!” or “God is now here!”

Exactly the same words with two entirely different meanings and the way in which you perceive them is



not purely dependent on your own bias but also on the way in which the author has chosen to communicate the message.

There is nothing more frustrating than trying to be a good listener but having the person you are speaking with being unclear or vague about what they are saying.

Here are some things I have found that help me to communicate more clearly.

### Choose words carefully.

We all know the power that words have and we have all been on the receiving end of cutting statements that were designed to (and succeeded in) hurting us deeply.

However, there are times when we intend to say something but inadvertently caused the listener emotional pain simply because we used the wrong word.

Think of a simple phrase like, “You’re being really stupid!”

Perhaps what the person is doing or saying is foolish, but the mere use of the word “stupid” may also suggest to them that you think they

are worthless, especially if they were raised in a home where they were constantly told they were dumb.

A better way to say it might be to ask, “Do you think that is wise?”

The book of Proverbs constantly encourages us to choose our words carefully: “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances” is good, practical advice on communicating carefully.

### Think carefully before you speak.

This is closely allied with the advice above and it is an encouragement for us to not say simply the first thought or response that comes into our heads.

Proverbs reminds us that, “Reckless words pierce like the sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

When I take the time to stop and think before I speak, I find that I am able to convey my meaning in a way that is both clear and life giving.

**Take time to fill in the gaps.** Sometimes I find myself leaving out important pieces of information

in a conversation, either because I am excited and engaged about the discussion or because I am so familiar with the subject I neglect to “fill in the blanks!”

I have discovered however, that if I do not take the time to fill in these blanks then the listener will do it for me – and not always with a desirable outcome!

Speech with gaps is lazy speech – don’t keep people second guessing you in your communication!

### Tell it straightforwardly.

If you have a concern or a compliment, then be honest and loving in the way you express it.

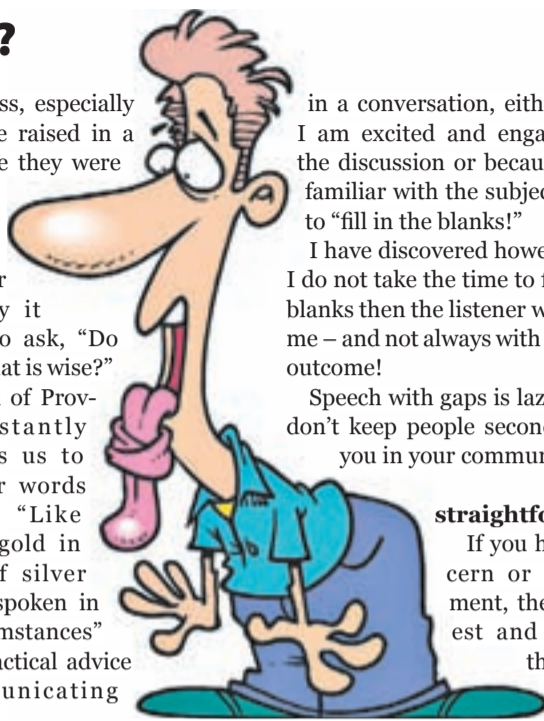
A relative of mine had a habit of saying, “You can go off people you know!” when you did something that displeased them.

The hint conveyed to the perpetrator rarely worked though.

Far better to be honest and straightforward with people when we are sharing our desires, compliments, concerns or joys instead of leaving them with thinking, “I know there was a message in there for me, but I am not quite sure what it was!”

Good listening and clear communication grows as we break out of old habits and develop fresh, positive ones by making a few simple changes.

It seems pretty clear to me!



## FAR BETTER TO BE HONEST ... WITH PEOPLE



## There's an APP for that ...



**WITH THE THREAT** of cyberbullying, sexual grooming, sexting and teen suicide brought almost daily to our attention by the media, concerned parents of tech-savvy kids may feel they need a little help to keep their offspring safe navigating the digital world.

Enter Bark, the app that passes all your kids texts, emails and posts (received and sent) through an algorithm and sends you an alert if it detects inappropriate language, sexual content or even signs of depression and suicidal tendencies. And apparently it is more sophisticated than just looking for key words or phrases, using “advanced machine learning and data science techniques”.

It doesn't give parents the ability to see everything, so your child's privacy remains intact; it just flags concerning content. It also recommends ways of handling the situation when something untoward is detected.

It can monitor text messages, emails and 24 different social media networks. It is also unobtrusive, not interfering with your child's use of their device in any way.

Bark is available on a 7-day free trial and after that costs \$9/month for a family with unlimited devices. There are no lock-in contracts, so you can cancel at any time. It can be used on Chromebooks, which many teens now have for school, as well as all Android, iOS and Amazon mobiles and devices.

The perfect solution for parents and guardians who want to balance their child's growing independence with ongoing vigilance for their safety.



# Ask Y

## Peter Meadows answers your questions about God.

### “If Jesus was so good how come He was executed?”

You are so right. Jesus was ‘good’ – although that has to be the greatest understatement of all time.

So how come He was strung up like a common criminal? The answer – amazing as it must sound – is that this was God's plan from the start.

You see, Jesus did not stumble onto the stage of history. The script had already been written – with Him as the central character.

Jesus was to be the kingpin of God's rescue plan. The One who would deliver us all from the mess we have created.

The Jewish scriptures had been promising such a deliverer for hundreds of years. They made clear statements – prophecies – recorded centuries before Jesus was ever born. This included specific details about the One who would come as the deliverer, such as:

- ◆ He would be born in Bethlehem and of a virgin.
- ◆ He would be betrayed by a friend and sold for 30 pieces of silver.
- ◆ He would be struck and spat on.
- ◆ His hands and His feet would be pierced – and so would His side – but not a single bone would be broken.
- ◆ The soldiers would throw dice for His clothes.
- ◆ He would be buried in a rich man's grave – and then rise from the dead.

Imagine the odds for any one person living a life that matched even a few of these prophecies. Yet Jesus fulfilled them all. Without doubt He was THE one.

God took all that trouble because of what the death of Jesus was designed to accomplish. He was to die as a sacrifice to pay the debt all of us owe to God for failing to live His way.

The Bible says that at midday the sky went black – as black as midnight. Sources outside the Bible confirm this.

Again this had been foretold. Over 800 years earlier, a Jewish prophet, Amos, wrote that God would “make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight”.

The darkness signified what was taking place. Jesus – the innocent one – was being killed by dark forces of evil. He was dying not for His sins, but for ours.

He made our forgiveness possible, so that we can have access to God.

But, of course, that calls for a response from us. Are we willing to admit we need God's forgiveness?

*Peter Meadows is co-author of The Book of Y, the basics for the Y Course that explores life's biggest questions. If you have a question about faith or God, Peter will do his best to answer it. Write to: goodnewseditor@ntlworld.com with ASK Y in the subject line, or to: Good News Editor, PO Box 9831, Nottingham NG2 9JN.*

## How can I become a Christian?

### Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

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

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

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

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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

### AS A NEXT STEP :

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

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

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

I would like to think about this.

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

\* Please tick and write clearly \*

Name

Address

Phone

Age and occupation (it helps)

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

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



# VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

**Phenomenally successful WNBA basketball player Maya Moore, named Sports Illustrated's 2017 Performer of the Year, wants to be remembered for more than just shooting hoops.**

**M**aya, drafted number one by the Minnesota Lynx in the 2011 Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), has continued to excel, both with the Lynx and with overseas teams in Spain and China. *Sports Illustrated* called her the greatest winner in the history of women's basketball, and with two collegiate titles, four WNBA championships, four Most Valuable Player awards, two World Championship gold medals and two Olympic gold medals to her name, among many other awards, it is not hard to see why.

Maya has been praised not only for her playing but for the fire, polish, humility, integrity and friendliness she displays on court.

However, her growing-up years were challenging.

"I grew up in a single-parent home in Jefferson City, Missouri," Maya shares. "To keep me busy while she cooked dinner, my Mom put up a toy basketball hoop in the living room. By the age of eight, I realised I loved basketball more than any other sports and that was the beginning of a nine-year journey of competitive amateur ball."

Maya says that she went to church while growing up, but "I still had my struggles as usual. I knew about God but didn't necessarily know Him intimately. I knew more about what was right and wrong."

Seeking greater job opportunities, Maya's mother moved the family to Atlanta when Maya was 12.

"It was a hard, lonely time," Maya tells Christianity Today, remembering how the middle-school kids mocked her 6-foot height and her size 13 shoes. "It was really tough. My mom and I were on our own together and we had to figure out how to do things on our own."

"We ended up using this time to seek God, find a church and decide that God was important to us. We started to really seek the Lord in a deeper way. When my mom got laid off from the job for which we had moved, she had to work nights for a while, and that produced the perfect storm for us to



Maya Moore (in beige) of the Minnesota Lynx drives to the basket against Essence Carson of the Los Angeles Sparks during Game Five of the WNBA Finals on October 4, 2017 at Williams in Minneapolis, Minnesota. (Photo Hannah Foslien/Getty Images)

have to depend on the guidance and stability that God provided. It was in those years that I started to trust the Lord and experience a relationship with Him as my Heavenly Father."

Her mom's career eventually sent them to North Carolina, then to Georgia. By the eighth grade, Maya had attended four different middle schools. It was a life-altering time in their lives, but for Maya and her mother, the consistency and peace provided by their commitment to Christ helped sustain them through the changes.

"I worked, played and trained every summer and school year and ended up having a very successful high school career. I played my college basketball all the way in Connecticut where the Lord blessed me with some amazing coaches, teammates, friends and mentors through a Christian sports ministry called Athletes in Action," Maya recalls. "Through this support system I developed greatly as a leader, person and disciple of Christ. It has been a challenging, exciting, and prayerful process as I navigate the waters of early adulthood. It's been amazing to see what the Lord has done already, and I know He still has greater things for the future."

"Even though I've got a lot of awards and honours, it is nothing compared to what the Lord has done in my life and what He's done for the world," the 28-year-old declares. "I'm grateful to have the platform of an elite professional basketball player, and I want to do His will with my life."

Maya's mission is to use her fame to help others by advocating for prosecutorial reform in the American justice system and support for the less fortunate through Unicef Kids Power.

"We are to be Christ's hands and feet," she says. "We're called to be loving neighbours. It might not be as popular, but we have to give a voice to the voiceless."

"It's been a great journey living and seeing the Lord's perfect timing unfold, and I'm still growing. In the big picture, God is going to do what He wants to in my life, and He's lined my course and given me so many ridiculous opportunities. Looking back over the last 10 years, we couldn't have timed it better than He did."

A part of Scripture that Maya has incorporated into her life is Colossians 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from

the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

"Because I am a public figure, I depend daily on God to fill me with humility," Maya admits. "I believe the best way I can be a role model is by living an authentic, God-dependent lifestyle. Acknowledging God and His character is a priority and privilege each day He gives me."

"I want to be aware of how I treat others, not thinking too highly of myself. To be a servant in a culture that tries to place me on a throne that only God should sit on."

"Through frequent prayer, diligent Bible study, and regularly engaging with other Christ-followers, my mind and heart remain convinced of His truth in a world that screams otherwise." ●



(L-R) Rich Batista, Maggie Gray, Maya Moore, J.J. Watt and Bunchie Young attend the Sports Illustrated 2017 Sportsperson of the Year Show on December 5, 2017 in New York City. (Photo Slaven Vlasic/Getty Images for Sports Illustrated)

**DISTRIBUTED BY:**