

ON THE SKINNY ROAD

Australian radio host, singer and media personality Emma Mullings says her life only really began when she processed the pain of losing her mother to cancer decades earlier

Today Emma is living life to the full, gracing our TV screens as the current host of Whats New spots, acting as a radio announcer on Sydney's Hope 103.2FM and recently winning Artist of the Year at the Music OZ awards.

Yet despite her success, grief and anger from the death of her mother when she was little had a huge impact on her life.

Emma was just four when her mum was diagnosed with cancer and died just 12 weeks later.

Her mother Susie Wilson had been a recording artist herself, releasing six albums in the 1970s and early 80s.

It was a shock for the whole church where her parents were pastors.

"I never really understood it," Emma remembers. "It was quite a knock and I didn't process it in a healthy way."

She continued going to church until she was in her early teens and then "went my own way", she admits. "I was a pretty angry kid, with lots of unprocessed grief."

At 20, Emma won a music scholarship and moved to Sydney.

There she tried to quench her emotional pain with "all sorts of



Emma Mullings' hit single *Skinny Roads* has enjoyed plenty of air play around the country

things" and says she had no value for her own life.

"I thought to myself, 'If I take this [pill] and die then maybe I can be with Mum'," she confesses.

At 22, while working for a radio station and getting ready to take a great opportunity overseas, Emma was in the car with a Christian colleague who put a worship album on the car radio.

"I ripped the CD out and told him in colourful language where to put it!" she recalls.

Fortunately, the man was unoffended and made it his mission to get her back into relationship with God. Every Sunday he texted or called inviting her to church. Eventually the prayers of Emma's father were answered and she went.

"I went back a couple of times. One time an ex-mafia boss gave his testimony and that is what I needed to hear, that God could restore anyone. Someone who had made such a mess of their life," she says.

She gave her life fully to God that

night and felt prompted to go study at Bible College to learn more.

"I knew God could restore me and I was so desperate to be healed. He well and truly did it! That was 12 years ago and I have never looked back. I have never been the same. God completely restored my life and it blows me away," she enthuses.

"Jesus is my Creator, my Saviour, my best friend. He is my everything. He understands me when I feel so misunderstood, He sees my heart and He also gently guides and corrects me. I've lived my life with Him and without Him and I NEVER want to do life without Him again."

Now Emma is passionate to help those who are in the same position as she was.

"If anyone had looked at me back then they would have thought 'Oh, my goodness. There is no hope for her.' But I can absolutely say that God can restore anyone and I am a working testimony to that," she declares.

What is love?

BY CAROL ROUND

"WHAT IS LOVE?", according to Google, has been among the top three most-searched phrases for the past four consecutive years. Love, the most profound emotion known to human beings, is most often equated with romantic relationships.

While Valentine's Day has its origins in Christianity, the custom of sending cards, flowers, chocolates and other gifts originated in the United Kingdom in the early 19th century.

According to statistics, more than 150 million Valentine cards are exchanged annually, over \$1 billion dollars' worth of chocolate is purchased in the United States alone and approximately 110 million roses, mostly red, are sold and delivered within the three-day Valentine's Day time period.

The day we celebrate romantic love has become a lucrative holiday for the card companies, chocolatiers and floral shops.

When I googled the phrase, "What is love?" I found articles on the topic ranging from psychology websites to dating sites. Along with a list of YouTube videos, those were the sites that topped the search results.

I wondered what the people who googled this phrase discovered in their search. Did they find the answers they were seeking?

Christian author Phillip Keller once wrote, "Love in a [Biblical] sense is not a soft, sentimental emotion. It is a deliberate act of my will. It means that I am willing to lay down my life, lay myself out and put myself out on behalf of another."

That is exactly what Jesus Christ did for us in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prayed on the night before His crucifixion, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (see Luke 22:39).

When Jesus went to the cross for us, love became an action, not a fleeting emotion.

I have come to realise humans will disappoint us. Because humans seek to love and be loved, we search for meaning and significance in all the wrong places. Only through a personal relationship with our Saviour can we experience authentic love. Through the priceless gift of God's sacrifice, we can finally comprehend the most amazing truth. We were planned before we were ever conceived in our mother's wombs. We were created in His heart. We were wanted. He loved us before He ever set His eyes on us.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (see John 3:16)."

You don't have to google "What is love?" Just read 1 John 4:10: "This is real love – not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."

Article courtesy of ASSIST News Service



YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT!

BY ALAN BAILEY

On an average day, a couple use a staggering 450 litres of water! We take it for granted. It's just there at the turning of a tap. We drink it, we wash our dishes, ourselves and our clothes with it, water our gardens and flush our toilets, not to mention washing the car or filling the pool.



COMMON, YET NOT SO COMMON

Our planet has water in abundance when seen as a whole. The oceans are massive. Seventy percent of the earth's surface. There doesn't appear to be a great deal of it in the rest of the solar system. Two gases, hydrogen and oxygen. Simple chemically, but both common and rare. Plentiful but precious.

Today people buy bottled water to make sure of what they drink. Too many streams and bodies of water are polluted to some degree, some are too high in salinity. In developing countries where there is poverty and over-population, clean water is almost impossible to find. Yet it is essential for life.

Imagine what it must be like to wander in a blazing desert looking for water. If none is found, the body dehydrates, delirium increases and, finally, a shrivelling corpse lies inert in the glaring sun.

A NOTABLE CONVERSATION

A man sat on the side of a well in the hot Middle East. A woman came to draw water in a bucket and carry it away. He asked her for a drink and this began a conversation that has gone down in history. There was an amazing change of direction when he said he had water for her that would quench her thirst forever. His words were, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a well of water welling up to eternal life."

People everywhere are thirsting for a new kind of life – a new quality of life. The woman in the story had tried in many ways to find what her heart craved. Jesus knew that and made the offer of a completely satisfying answer to her need. The offer stands today. Millions have availed themselves of it.

Christ came for the purpose of giving us life. Our existence had been affected by the pollution of sin. Spiritual death held sway. His death and resurrection brought about the availability of life without end. In receiving Christ, we receive life.

"Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

WHOLENESS AT LAST

Drug abuse, depression, attempted suicide – some of the hallmarks of a life that had hit rock bottom. Lauren Mobsby explains how her life completely turned around



Lauren Mobsby says she wouldn't change a thing.

As a child I was sexually abused, and my father was an alcoholic and very violent towards my mother.

One night my mother fled with me and my brother. We moved in with my nan and grandad in South London, where I spent some of my happiest times as a child.

But it wasn't to last. In my early teens, I started drinking and had my first serious relationship. My boyfriend introduced me to the world of drugs.

We would do drugs for days on end in an abandoned flat. But during the three years I was with him, my boyfriend was very violent and would sexually assault me. At times my life was in danger – he came close to killing me.

Thank God, I managed to escape from that relationship, but I'd lost all hope in men. I sank further and further into a world of drugs and escapism.

One day I was introduced to a new drug called ketamine. This was a mind-altering drug that helped me to escape the black abyss that was drowning me.

I suffered depression and anxiety because of my childhood trauma. I would have flashbacks of childhood events that I would try to block out using drugs and alcohol, but I was broken inside.

In my twenties I took an overdose and nearly died.

I can look back now and see how God was watching over me. It's made me realise how God uses hard times and struggles to draw us closer to

Him. I had always believed there was something bigger than us, something that created all this world.

As a child I had always prayed to God. It's only now I realise God has answered all of my prayers, in His own way and timing.

Despite the darkness of the past, the path I have walked has led me to where I am today – and I wouldn't change a thing. The darkness of my life led me to find the light, for which I praise the Lord.

I had prayed all my adult life to be set free from my mental health issues. I suddenly realised I was putting my faith in doctors instead of God.

Though God does use doctors, there are times when we also need to have faith in God's healing power. After prayer and advice from a very wise Christian lady at my church, I asked the church elders to pray for me and anoint me with oil in the way the Bible teaches (in James 5:13-16).

Before that, one of the church elders had told me he'd been given a vision in which God promised I would be set free from the illness. And God kept His promise. He has healed me in a way I never thought possible.

After years of taking anti-depressants, mood stabilisers and anti-psychotic drugs, I no longer need them.

And on Valentine's Day several years ago, I married Michael, and the following June we were both baptised as Christians (to publicly declare our new life in Jesus).

I know now that God has a plan for my life and all I have to do is hold His hand and trust in Him.

"He [God] has healed me in a way I never thought possible"

I pray that my story will give hope to readers who may be going through or have gone through similar experiences, and that the Lord Jesus will bring healing and peace into your life.

GOD HAS HEARD YOUR CRY

BY RICHARD FEENEY

I am here to let you know
That God has heard your cry
Your tears, your pain, your broken heart
Has reached beyond the sky

You may not know but God grieves too
He hears your cry and groans
He sends His word to prophesy
"Revive, revive dry bones!"

The place you're in is not the end
A chapter in a book
In times like these that don't seem fair
Lift up your eyes and look

He's with you in the valley too
You're not alone you know
Keep on walking, don't give up
He will not let you go

You have a future, have a hope
That's better than the "now"
Take hold of Him who rose again
You will get through, somehow.

Crossword

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| ACROSS | 13 Typeface | 23 Metered transport | example |
| 1 Farm animal | 14 Totality | 25 Building of three residences | 31 Health resort |
| 3 Ship's master | 15 Geeky sort | | |
| 7 In past years | 18 Young eagles | 28 Dairy farm sound | |
| 8 World finance agency | 20 Fling | 29 Bruised | |
| 9 Noisy old train | 22 Laotian money | 30 One Direction, for | |

DOWN

| |
|------------------------------|
| 1 Electronic illustrations |
| 2 Breakfast cakes |
| 3 Yellow vegetable |
| 4 Dog or cat |
| 5 Feel sick |
| 6 Word teamed with 'neither' |
| 10 Sporting contender |
| 11 Camping gear |
| 12 Be mistaken |
| 16 Arctic people |
| 17 College certificate |
| 19 Four letters of urgency |
| 21 Lord's Prayer starter |
| 24 Fired |
| 25 Can opener |
| 26 Climbing plant |
| 27 Grassy area |

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

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

SOLUTION PAGE 11

nudge BY KARL FAASE

Alfred Nobel's legacy

RECENTLY I read the story of Alfred Nobel. He was a famous Swedish industrialist, who had made millions from dynamite. One morning, as Nobel read the morning papers, he discovered his obituary. (The editor of the newspaper had mistakenly thought he had died.)

Reading the summary of his life, his demeanour changed from surprise to shock. Despite all of his financial success, the article spoke about him as a rude and unpleasant man. While he was horrified, he also considered the truth of what he was reading. It became the catalyst for him to change his life. As a result he established the Nobel Peace Prize, giving his huge wealth to benefit good causes around the world.

That single decision to instigate the Nobel Peace Prize changed the legacy of Alfred Nobel from rude, wealthy industrialist, to the name most synonymous with humanitarian causes.

What legacy are you leaving? What will people say about your life and how you lived it?

PART-TIME JOURNALIST NEEDED!

Are you an experienced Christian journalist with a heart for sharing the Gospel with people? If so, consider applying to be a part-time journalist at Challenge, part of the team in our Perth office, 2 days a week. For more information about this position please contact our Global Operations Director, John Palandri. Office phone: (08) 9453 3311 Email: john@challengenews.org

share your story

Do you have a story about how you came to know Jesus, that may encourage others? Send your testimony, with a colour photograph, for consideration to jodyb@challengenews.org



Emma with her husband Terrence and children Hosannah and Jeremiah.

On the Skinny Road

• From page 1

Her blog at www.emmamullings.com is focused on helping people to find their purpose and channel their passion into destiny, rather than frustration.

And the title *Skinny Roads*?

Emma says it refers to: "Taking the road less travelled, not the wide, easy road. Being true to the God-call is a skinny road.

"Feel the fear and go for it!" she encourages. "Know that you are following the God-call on your life and listen for His instruction and direction. Sometimes you are walking in the dark and can barely see but you

just have to take the next step. Be true to the vision the Creator has placed in your heart."

Emma's first EP and hit single are available on iTunes, and have enjoyed plenty of airplay around the country.

When asked what she is planning for the new year Emma says it's all systems go.

"The radio show and my beautiful kids keep me very busy. I'm also taking some time off in January to have our third baby!

"Life is very full but it's an adventure and I'm loving the adventure," she concludes.

UK fashion boss praises the Designer

SIMON Ward is retiring as chief operating officer of the British Fashion Council after 30 years in the industry. He's moving on to work for the Diocese of London.

What makes a fashion boss want to work for the Church – an institution that many would consider totally unfashionable?

Simon seems to have no problem marrying fashion and faith. He has been a key player in organising London Fashion Week and the British Fashion Awards, but is passionate about making connections between the creative industries and the world of faith.

Also a worship leader, blogger, author, and former operatic tenor, the head of British fashion writes and sings his own songs, drawing on the Bible for inspiration.

Appropriately, one of his songs finishes with the phrase: "Your truth never goes out of fashion, I can always walk with my head held high" – a verse taken directly from a modern translation of Psalm 119.

Simon was brought up going to church but "escaped the religious stuff" as soon as he could as a teenager and only committed his life to Jesus as a young adult, when his parents persuaded him to return to church and he had a life-changing encounter with God on a youth camp.

The fashion industry has often been criticised as a narcissistic manifestation of our image-obsessed society and associated with child labour, sweat shops, skinny models, sexual exploitation, and vanity. But Simon insists that despite its darker side, fashion is also about the celebration of creativity and talent – God-given gifts.

"I love the links that can be found between God, the Bible, fashion, and culture.

"[Fashion is] such an important thing and a really vibrant industry. Traditionally, the Church has tended to have a negative view of fashion, but I always point to Exodus 28 – the subtitle of which is 'Priestly Garments'. There's a whole chapter dedicated to it," he laughs.

"Lots of imagery in the Bible is about garments and clothing. God is interested in these things – God is a designer, bursting with creativity and constantly making things and innovating very visually and tangibly. It's incredible.

"God is creativity. He created the earth, he created the seasons – he made it so that we need to wear different things at different times of the year.

"Fashion definitely has the ability to enslave, to become



Simon Ward

God is a designer ... He is creativity

a mask and people use it to hide their insecurities, and I think that's really sad," Simon admits. "But we have to explore how fashion can be used exclusively for good.

"For the last few years I and some other Christians in the industry have organised a Day of Prayer during London Fashion Week. It gives me a chance to email everyone in the organisation and let them know it's happening, and ask if there's anything they want prayer for.

"People are always very responsive to that, I've really never experienced any negativity."

Simon believes the high profile of fashion, its importance to such a large number of people, and the size of the industry make it "a huge opportunity for the gospel".

"However, in the aggressively secular environment prevalent in the creative world, making headway will require industry-wide vision, bold action, and a framework of organised prayer and support," he concludes.

With this in mind, his friend Christina Abbott of fashion house Burberry has begun a Facebook page called HTB Fashion Network to encourage prayer and Christian networking among those in the fashion industry.

Read Simon's blog and more information on his website www.simonwardlondon.com

Like the lavender

BY JULIE BELDING

THE beginning of the year, when many of the pressures are off, can be a time to do some soul-searching. In the lazy, warm days of summer it can do us a power of good to take a long walk in the open air and smell the flowers.



The lavender bushes on the cliff top have no detectable aroma, only a purple brilliance that's impossible to miss. I occasionally pluck off a few of the flower heads as I pass, and squeeze them between my fingers. Its then – and only then – that they release their unmistakable scent. Of course the poor flowers are demolished in the process but my hands are left with a pleasant smell as I continue my walk.

The last time I did this I got to thinking: maybe it's not just lavender blooms that release their fragrance when crushed.

There are always people in this world who have it worse than we do. Life deals people some cruel blows. Some are told too early that they have a terminal illness. Some have the responsibility of caring for a disabled child. Some are bereaved of a loved one who was too young to die. But somehow, when they have every reason to feel bitter, many of these people have turned out sweet rather than sour.

Amazingly, some of them have become beautiful, gentle people for whom suffering has been a catalyst for character; people who have received beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning. We all know people like this. But how do we explain them?

In the words of the Austrian American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1926-2004): "These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."

Like clumps of lavender, the spirits of these folk can lift and cheer us. For like the lavender, the crushing they have experienced has served only to release their perfume.

Original article: <http://www.christiantoday.com.au/article/like.the.lavender/20960.htm>

Why does "bad" feel so good?

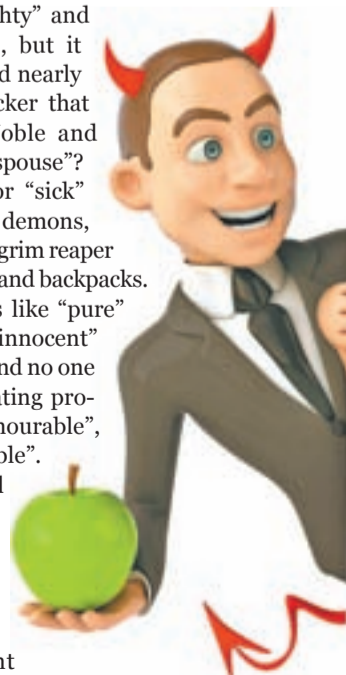
BY JODY BENNETT

ISN'T it strange that we display bumper stickers that say things like "Bad to the Bone", "10% nice, 90% naughty" and have skulls on them, but it wouldn't be considered nearly so cool to have a sticker that said "Good guy", "Noble and honest" or "I love my spouse"?

Good is "wicked" or "sick" and icons of evil, like demons, devils, witches and the grim reaper are put on our T-shirts and backpacks.

We only find words like "pure" on food labels and "innocent" applying to children, and no one would put on their dating profile that they are "honourable", "modest" or "respectable".

There is a natural bent in us all towards rebellion. We can be enthralled by books about serial killers, vampires and zombies. We like violent cartoons and computer games that embrace the occult and are set in mad houses or haunted mansions. We like salacious gossip in our maga-



zines and websites, and even many children's toys look like monsters or "bad guys".

Why do dark themes seem exciting, whereas goodness seems boring and staid?

Even in Biblical times God accused the Israelites of loving evil more than good (Psalms 52:3) and warned of a withdrawal of His blessing (i.e. a curse) on "those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

The Bible says that "No one does good, not a single one. [...] For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3).

But sin is not just something we do, sin is deep inside us. Even the Apostle Paul, who was a close follower of God, said: "I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway ... because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin" (Romans 7:18-19, 24).

Sin is not just the bad things we do or the good we don't do, it is that natural bent in our heart towards all that is dark and wicked; and we are powerless within ourselves to change it.

The Bible says that when we choose to follow Jesus and commit our lives to Him, that old "me" dies and we are given a new life filled with new desires for good things. Our eyes are opened to all the pain and ugliness in the darkness and we have a new attraction for the wholesome goodness that comes from having a right relationship with God, a relationship that sets us free from our natural bent towards sin.

Refined as gold

Two violent robberies and crippling debt plunged Susan into a personal crisis

Goldsmith Susan Howard has fully recovered from the post-traumatic stress disorder she suffered after two armed robberies at the jewellery store where she worked.

Susan witnessed her boss getting shot in the head during one of the robberies and experienced incredible fear that manifested itself in nightmares, anxiety, flashbacks, and depression.

During the same period she discovered her husband was having an affair.

"I blamed myself because I was a mess from the robberies. The heartbreak I felt was just overwhelming. After years of trying to save my marriage, the marriage ended in divorce," Susan shares.

"I was left in a terrible emotional and financial situation. Losing our home to foreclosure, after (my ex) filed for bankruptcy. I didn't know how I could ever repay the debt incurred."

That was when she called a Christian telephone helpline.

"I just couldn't carry my burden any longer. The woman on the phone gave me a few Bible verses to read. One of them was Isaiah chapter 41 verse 7.

"The verse reads: 'The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and the moulder helps at the anvil. "Good," they say. "It's coming along fine." Carefully they join the parts together, then fasten the thing in place so it won't fall over.'

Susan continues: "After reading that verse, I just sobbed. I didn't tell the helpline woman that I was a goldsmith. I felt as if God was speaking directly to me! As if He said, 'Susan I know you, I heard you, and I am with you'."

Following that phone call Susan decided to surrender her life to Jesus Christ, submitting to Him as King of all Creation.

Soon Susan landed a new goldsmith job, and in time was able to pay off her debt.

Shortly after that she met her husband Shawn, and fell in love. They have been married for 10 years, and have three beautiful daughters, Hannah, Rebecca, and Sarah.

"Although my life has ups and downs like everyone else's, through my faith I can overcome all things," Susan declares.

Susan now designs a range of jewellery called Comfort Wear Jewellery that "expresses God's love and grace".

"So if you ask me what God was telling me in the Isaiah 41:7, I will tell you that Jesus the carpenter has been encouraging me the goldsmith ever since the day I gave my life to Him," she smiles. •

See Susan's Jewellery at www.comfortwearjewellery.com

Gamer hits reset button

Overstressed and overworked, Beau Gilmore tried to "hide from the world" through video games but found they always left him empty

As a young boy newly introduced to gaming, Beau quickly became absorbed in first-person shooters.

As an adult juggling two stressful jobs, he played every evening and all weekend.

At the time, Beau recalls, "I loved it. I found it almost addictive". His stress led to smoking, but Beau says he mostly stared at his screen and "forgot I was in the world".

"I was a sixth generation alcoholic, so [gaming] became addictive – basically another numbing effect to drown out life itself."

The worst side effect, Beau says, was the emptiness he felt inside.

"I felt that I couldn't relate to people anymore. It absorbed my mind and cut me off from my family," he shares.

Beau and his family had grown up going to church. While Beau had drifted away from Christianity his sister remained, in his words, a "Bible thumper". One day she asked him, "Why don't you see who God is and see if He can give you a purpose for living?"

"I blew off that question because I had rejected God," Beau says.

"But I couldn't reject her next question: 'What do you think is the purpose of living?'"

"That one hit me deep. I didn't have an answer."

Beau's sister gave him a Christian book to read.

"The book introduced me to a God I never thought existed," he says.

"A God who wanted to have a personal relationship with me (through faith in Jesus), who really wanted to love me, who cared about what I did and what I did to myself.

"I felt this burning desire inside of me that something out there really cared about me."

Reading the Bible every morning for just 10 minutes revealed to Beau how addicted he was to gaming.

"I realised God was trying to get me away from my addictions."

One Christmas

Beau quit smoking. Four months later, he recalls, "I felt God say, 'I want your time and your thoughts. I cannot spend any more time with you

if you're going to spend time training your mind how to kill people in video games'."

At first, Beau was unwilling to give up his only two friends, fellow gamers like him.

A week later he decided, "I either find out who God is and find a purpose, or I stay stuck doing the same thing day in day out."

It was humbling, Beau says, to tell his online friends he was leaving video games for God.

"I spent so much time



FILE PHOTO

blaspheming God in front of them. They were raised in church like I was. They left because they were tired of it like I was."

His friends believed he would return, and yet, he says, "That was the last time my friends ever saw me online".

"I took all of my games and gaming system," he says, "and threw them in the back of my closet."

That decision to seek Jesus, he explains, "was the best decision I ever made".

"I found out so many exciting things about God that I could never find on the TV screen.

"I found out that every moment, every breath I took, was a gift from God. I savoured the small moments. And it added to my life abundantly

every day."

When problems came up Beau realised he did not need to turn back to his past addictions.

"God brought so much joy to my life," he says. "When I had problems I went to the Bible, tried to find peace in it and I was richly rewarded for it.

"It finally seemed like God was giving me purpose. And to me this was the most exciting thing in the world."

Life is a fuller story now, Beau concludes.

"Each day and moment is new, because I have a purpose for living, for fighting through the trials of each day.

"I don't have to drown problems out. I can take it to God and I can have peace and joy with God." •

You're a bit of a fixer upper

BY JANET DENISON

I SPENT THE MORNING filling bags with clothing other people could wear. It felt great to hand bags to Salvos and drive home knowing my closet would be a little easier to navigate in the days ahead.

As the seasons change, there is something fulfilling about bringing some of that change into our surroundings as well. A few years ago we remodelled our master bathroom. I have to admit I got tired of the mess before the job was finished. But every day I walk into my remodelled surroundings and I'm glad we went to the expense and effort of getting it done.

Some changes are easy and quick ways to improve life. Others can be tough and require a little more patience and endurance. Occasionally change is drastic and painful. One thing is certain: change is going to happen for our entire lives.

I'm a big fan of shows like *House Rules*. It amazes me to watch an old, smelly, rundown home become new again. In reality it takes months, but on television it only takes moments.

I think that can parallel our lives; how we view them versus how God views them. We see our lives in seasons, or one room at a time. God can see the entirety of our lives as



the finished product. They might look like a torn up mess to us, but He already sees the full remodel revealed.

I recently found a quote by author C.S. Lewis that painted a picture of change I hope to remember: "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the

house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different

house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself." (*Mere Christianity*).

Each of us is a fixer upper and

He is building a palace

God purchased us anyway. Some lives need more work than others, but all of us need more work than we realized. Our master "remodeler" is the perfect contractor who brings in the right workers at the right time.

We would like for our lives to be a "quick fix" but it will take a lifetime to turn us into the final product God has in mind.

So, the next time change comes our way, let us try to see it from God's point of view. He is building us into a palace for Jesus to live within.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

God was compassionate enough to purchase our lives even though He knew we would take a lot of remodeling. We might be cottages now, but our final blueprint is for that palace!

Look around your life. Do you have internal closets, rooms or even floor plans that need some remodeling? Invite the "Great Contractor" into your life, even if He is carrying a sledgehammer. It will be worth it in the end. •

My sister is happy

On the last day of her life, Sally was celebrating. She had just finished Year 12 and was in the car with her best friend and their boyfriends when the four died in a head-on collision.

Younger sister Betty Sharpe was grief-stricken and, desperate to find out if Sally was happy in the afterlife, she went to a séance, a meeting that claimed to enable communication with the spirits of the dead.* “The answer was spelt out ‘I am happy here’,” Betty says. But where was “here”?

Several months before she died Sally had begun attending a local church and had surrendered her life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Betty recalls Sally waking her up and begging her to go with her to the Sunday service. But Betty just wanted to sleep.

The two girls had been very close, growing up two-and-a-half years apart as the youngest of five. Their parents divorced when Betty was 11.

They had relied heavily on each other as they moved around with their mother after the divorce, boarded with another family for a year, and moved to a large unfamiliar high school.

“I was hurt and angry by all that was happening in my life over which I had no control,” Betty recalls.

“At 14 years old, I felt insecure and anxious. I was not interested in knowing about God. I thought I was an okay person. I had not done anything really bad and I assumed I would go to heaven.

“By this time I depended on Sally a lot. Mum worked shift work but Sally was always there for me and was a wonderful support. She took on a lot of responsibility in Mum’s absence. I loved her dearly,” Betty remembers fondly.

After Sally’s death Betty spiralled into an abyss of sadness, pain, and confusion. The next three years were a mixture of intense grief and anger filled with ‘why’ questions.

“My attitude to life and a future started becoming passive and unmotivated,”



Betty Sharpe, and husband John, share on Youtube about their missionary experiences.



Read more in the Sharpe’s book, available on Amazon.

Betty says.

“I went through the motions of a teenager – school, part time work, friendships, parties etcetera – but my grief was consuming me and I became more and more withdrawn, losing myself in books and TV.”

Her concerned mother encouraged her to attend a local church youth group. Betty went, thinking,

“Well, this is how I can meet some boys!”

But God had other plans.

The first night at this youth group Betty found answers to her questions. Eternal life after death, it turned out, had nothing to do with her being a good person. It was all about her receiving the gift of Heaven Jesus had won for her when he died on the cross to pay the price for all the times she had messed up.

“For the first time I heard answers that made sense to me about the meaning of life, and what happens after death, and how we can be sure of what is truth,” she says.

“There was absolutely nothing I could do to make myself right with God.

“But this incredibly powerful and loving God who accepted me right where I was at, with all my frailties and insecurities, had done everything that needed to be done for me to come into a relationship with Him. His precious Son’s death on the cross secured my position as His daughter for ever and ever,” Betty declares.

“God’s great love and acceptance of me, and all the mess that came with me, drew me irresistibly into the arms of my Heavenly Father.”

The following passage became very special for her: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“The truth of this verse gripped my heart and I went home that night and quietly accepted Christ as my Saviour. I knew without a shadow of a doubt that this truth was the answer to all that I had been searching for through the difficult years,” Betty concludes.

Years later, Betty and her husband John would go as Christian missionaries into the jungles of Indonesia, and today she is still serving Jesus faithfully as a member of an organisation that helps churches in third world countries.

* Séances can cause deep spiritual problems and this newspaper in no way endorses them.

What The Hulk taught me about waking up

BY TIM EVERTON

WE’VE seen a box office landslide of superhero movies recently. These classic stories have it all – and despite the fantasy there is always something in these tales to speak to our reality.

In the movie *The Hulk*, when scientist Bruce Banner gets angry his gamma-ray radiation-infused cells morph him into a temporary green beast of immense strength – he becomes a gross outer exaggeration of his inner rage.

Only two things can calm the Hulk: time and solitude, or his love, Betty Ross.

Betty’s tender gaze, her gentle touch, her softness amidst the rage and carnage is the only thing that can overcome the beast. She looks past the green monster to the man inside.

As the Hulk sees Betty, his inner man wakes up and Bruce Banner eventually overcomes the beast. All that is left is a weakened, broken man amid the rubble.

We can be like the Hulk. We can get caught up in a destructive ‘state’ -rage, denial, self-destructive habits, pride, lust, envy or other sins.

We use these to try to escape pain from wounds lodged deep within our souls.

Pains as varied and different as the sins we use to cover them up. Just like the Hulk we try to avoid our pain or destroy it completely, but our efforts are all pointless and self-defeating.

When we wake up from our ‘Hulk state’ reality hits and we have to pick up the pieces from the bliss of our self-destruction.

When we are unaware we are at our most destructive: this is why God desires that our eyes be opened. The Bible says it is God’s ‘loving kindness’ drawing us to repentance. Repentance; being truly sorry, is waking up from our ‘Hulk state’ to see the hurt and damage we have caused, crying bitter tears of disbelief as to how we could ever cause so much pain to others and to God himself, the greatest lover of our souls and someone who always wants the best for us.

One of the most painful and humbling times in my life was soon after my wife left me. God graciously showed me who I really was deep down underneath all the pain: a lost little boy crying out for his father.

I was Bruce Banner waking up from his Hulk state, and boy did I see the destruction around me: how brash, cold and selfish I was with my wife. It hit me so hard I proceeded to fall headlong into a bottomless pit of despair. ‘How could I have been so uncaring?’ I said over and over.

A friend reassured me that this wasn’t who I was anymore. I knew I hadn’t been a monster, but even little wrongs piled up and hit me like a ton of bricks.

I then realised the extent of my sin against my friends and family, and the hurt and disappointment I had caused them. I had no excuses left: I was completely undone, and completely guilty.

All I could do was to admit my mistakes and beg each person for forgiveness. I would have freely accepted any punishment—it was deserved—but I came to discover how forgiving people are when you are humble and genuinely repentant.

This is how and why God wakes us up: not to punish us, but to show us our true selves. We begin to see we have hurt God most of all. When we truly realise this we are first overcome with dread, we have no excuses and are willing to take the punishment for what we have done.

At this point God says, “I know you’re guilty. I love you so much that I sent my Son into the world to take the punishment for the wrongdoing and destruction you have caused. The punishment for your misdeeds has been taken care of, I have taken the punishment upon myself—such is my love for you”.

Repentance is waking up! Just like Betty Ross frees the Hulk, God frees us from the trap of our pain and sin.

Instead of being forever a monster we are redeemed. We become like the Avengers, able to take what once caused such destruction and use it to set others free. Instead of being used by the enemy of God, God’s love empowers us to overcome the enemy.

“...It was for this very reason that the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the evil one”, says 1 John chapter 3, verse 8.

Original <http://www.christiantoday.com.au/article/what-the-hulk-taught-me-about-repentance/21609.htm>



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Symbol of Love

IF I ASKED what you thought a symbol of love was, what would you say? Most people think of the symbol of a heart. This is a sentimental representation of relational love best left for Valentine’s Day.

True love, deep and significant love, is represented by our wanting to give of ourselves to another person so we enhance their lives. Sometimes that is romantic love, but for many it is the decision to give your life for another person.

Christians believe this is the picture of Jesus’ love for humanity. God’s love for us was demonstrated in that while we were still rejecting God, He sent His Son Jesus to earth so that we could have new life in Him. Here is the best representation of love for all of us. Love is not best demonstrated by the symbol of a heart, but rather the symbol of the cross.

The cross as a symbol gives us a picture of selfless giving, of forgiveness, of a fresh start, and grace in action. What better picture of love could we hold than that?



Nuclear physicist defends personal faith

He is an associate professor of theoretical nuclear physics at South Africa's Stellenbosch University but Dr Brandon van der Ventel is not afraid to refute the myth that science and God cannot coexist

From a young age Brandon was fascinated with science. He loved comic book superheroes who could defeat powerful foes with scientific know-how, and he played at length with gadgets to figure out how they worked.

At university he launched into an in-depth study of how the world works. Today he specialises in relativistic descriptions of nuclear reactions and mathematical modelling of biological systems, computational physics and physics education. He has published 19 papers in scientific journals.

But Brandon says it has been difficult to be a Christian in his line of work.

"The work of creation scientists is ignored and rejected not because it is faulty, but because it rejects the evolutionary (or billions-of-years) paradigm," he told *Creation.com*.

So why continue to believe in the Christian account of Creation?

Brandon explains how his faith actually holds in the face of scientific discoveries.

"The Bible is unique in that it places itself firmly within human history and has withstood the intense scrutiny of generations of scholars – believers and sceptics alike," he says.

"One of the most well-known is that of Sir William Ramsay, who started out as a sceptic and yet, after years of studying archaeology as well as classical history and ancient literature came to the following conclusion: 'You may press the words of [Biblical writer] Luke in a degree beyond any other historian's and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment.'"

Brandon told *Challenge* he grew up in Christian home but made a personal decision to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour during a church meeting at age 12.

"I knew that to be a true Christian meant I had to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation and that apart from Him there is no other way," he shares.

"It also means that we must do as he commands us by loving God and by loving one another. Everyday we must strive to be more like Him."

In 2008, Brandon followed many in academia in believing God must have used evolution when he created the world.

He held to this belief until a church speaker from *Creation Ministries International* challenged the premise of this thinking.

"I was challenged to ask the question: do I place the Bible as the complete authority over everything, including theories in science?" he explains.



Dr Brandon van der Ventel says evolution fails to agree with experimental results.

"Doubting the Bible in Genesis can often lead to a slippery slide to unbelief, where we can end up questioning the inerrancy and infallibility of the entire Bible."

After thinking through the implications of his mixed beliefs Brandon realised that God did not create death in the beginning (as evolution implies), but it was instead a consequence of Adam and Eve's original disobedience toward Him (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45 and Romans 5:12–19).

"If the story of the fall of Man is 'mythology' then there is no need for a plan of salvation," Brandon continues.

"This is ultimately an attack on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeeming work on the cross. This is the fundamental reason why I oppose the theory of evolution."

After this talk, Brandon was motivated to search deeper into

the creation-evolution controversy.

"As I studied the various articles on CMI's website I began to realise that there really is no scientific proof for the theory of evolution. Many other experts in the field of biology, chemistry, physics, geology, medicine and other disciplines have abandoned this false theory."

Today Brandon is confident that science can not only prove the existence of God but that it actually supports this and contradicts the theory of evolution.

"The final judge of any theory (or model) is if it is in accordance with experimental results, and this is precisely where evolution

fails dismally," he concludes. "Thus Christians should not see physical theories such as quantum mechanics and special (or general) relativity as being a threat to the Bible." •

Visit Creation.com for more information on Dr Brandon van der Ventel's research and that of other Creation scientists.

"There is really no scientific proof for evolution"

Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Muddled madness over Mississippian organic molecules

FOSSILIZED SEA LILIES (crinoids) supposedly 'dated' as being 350 million years old have yielded intact species-specific complex organic molecule biomarkers—specifically, aromatic compounds called quinones.

Quinones are known to sometimes function as pigments, and these quinones found in the fossil sea lilies are just the same as those found in sea lilies living today.



A crinoid (sea lily)

Now this ought to be a bombshell to anyone still thinking these fossils could be millions of years old. As the Ohio State University press release said in its introduction, "scientists have long believed that complex organic molecules couldn't survive fossilization"—i.e. that complex organic molecules couldn't survive for millions of years.

However, instead of logically questioning the 350-million-year supposed 'age' of their fossils, the researchers blithely said that their results suggest that "the preservation of diagnostic organic molecules is much more common than previously realised".

What muddled madness. This hand-waving dismissal of what should sensibly have been reason for a major paradigm shift, glibly enabled the researchers to proclaim their finding as "the oldest examples of biomarker molecules extracted directly from fossilized remains."

What a pity they hadn't been content to limit their statements to the observable facts, and leave the history to eyewitness historians. For more see *Gilding the (sea) lily* at www.creation.com.

Isolation and characterization of the earliest taxon-specific organic molecules (Mississippian, Crinoidea), *Geology* 41(3):347–350, 2013.

Ancient fossilized sea creatures yield oldest biomolecules isolated directly from a fossil, Ohio State University, researchnews.osu.edu, 18 February 2013.

Reflections

YOU have searched me, Lord, and You know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You, Lord, know it completely.

You hem me in behind and before, and You lay Your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Psalms 139:1-6

What about radiometric dating?

BY DR BRANDON VAN DER VENDEL

MANY think decay of radioactive materials can prove the earth is billions of years old but this is not the case.

Radiometric dating does not measure the age directly, but rather the ratio of the radioactive (unstable) parent nucleus to the stable daughter nucleus, as well as the present decay rate. However, several assumptions need to be made to proceed with the calculation:

First, one needs to assume that there were no daughter nuclei present at the start; that is, the presence of the daughter nucleus is entirely due to the decay.

Second, there had to be no leakage of either parent or daughter nuclei into or out of the sample. But how can we be sure of any of these assumptions if no-one was present when the rocks were formed or if the change in the elements were not monitored over the entire geological history?

Third, the equation is valid only if the decay rate (λ) is a

constant, and there is much evidence against this.

A radiometric "date" for rock layers near a fossil is accepted only if it fits into the grand evolutionary scheme of things. If this is not the case then either new samples are taken or a different dating method is used. Notice, this is not akin to a system of 'checks-and-balances' but rather a situation where results are 'reinterpreted' in order to obey the evolutionary dogma. Also, radioactive 'dating' methods have also been known to give incorrect ages for samples of known age.

Radiocarbon dating of coal samples and diamonds actually points to a young earth. This is because carbon-14 has a half-life of between 5,000 to 6,000 years. Yet, the RATE (Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth) research group has found coal and fossilized wood containing carbon-14 (yet 'dated' to be millions of years old). Carbon-14 is also present in diamonds, although diamond is the hardest substance on Earth, thus impervious to contamination.

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ANOTHER KIND OF ARAB SPRING

Nejib Boumenjel is from Tunisia, the country that ousted its President in January 2011 and inspired the 'Arab Spring' uprisings across the Middle East. But Nejib has experienced a different kind of revolution

All Nejib understood about other religions was what he had been taught at the local Islamic mosque until he met a group of Welsh Christian missionaries. Their kindness and authenticity greatly surprised him.

"Something I could not explain attracted me to them and made me want to talk to them more," Nejib remembers.

As they drank coffee in his house the next day, Nejib began inquiring about the differences between Islam and Christianity.

"The general assumption people had in my country was that Christians were 'immoral' and had no respect for God – an impression confirmed by the way the European tourists behaved in our country, since it is assumed all European and Western people are Christians.

"The leader of the missionaries told me that the immoral behaviour of the tourists did not reflect the teachings of the Bible."

This answer surprised him, Nejib says. "I used to believe that the Bible had been deliberately changed to justify and encourage those kinds of behaviour.

"They told me, very gently, what



Nejib (left and inset) with a friend: "I realised I was missing divine kindness."

Jesus actually teaches in the Bible.

"I was really taken not just by what they said but the kind way in which they talked to me."

Nejib realised he needed to do further investigation.

"I decided to read the Bible for myself and find out what it really taught. They gave me a Bible in Arabic and we agreed to meet again. I started reading the New Testament, and was deeply touched by the life

and teaching of Jesus in the book of Matthew."

"I strongly felt that God loved me personally"

He met with the group again to discuss any queries that had come up in what he was reading.

"They answered my questions, and told me that they would ask the Lord Jesus to help me understand what it means to be a Christian and to become a follower of Jesus.

"Even though I could not under-

stand much of it, something within me was telling me that the Bible was so special and unique – different from any other book I had ever read.

For 10 months Nejib communicated with the group's leader, sending many questions, and began reading two books.

"*I Dare To Call Him Father* was about a Pakistani lady to whom Jesus revealed himself in a wonderful way," Nejib explains. "It speaks about her spiritual journey to faith in Jesus.

"After reading it, I was overwhelmed by the understanding that

God is truly a God of love and mercy. I could feel that God's love was real and strongly felt that He loved me personally."

"I decided to become a Christian by saying this prayer: 'Lord Jesus, if you are truly the Saviour of the world and really died on the cross for me, and if you are alive and can hear me, please help me to believe it and make it real in my heart. I would like to follow you. Please forgive all my sins and come into my life and change me, and make me part of your kingdom. Would you please accept me?'"

After that prayer, Nejib says, "I felt overwhelmed with a sweet sense of peace in my heart and I knew that something had happened within me."

He then began studying at the same Welsh Bible college on scholarship.

"While I was there the Lord Jesus taught me many things. I was so hungry to know more about God. The

more I read the Bible, the more I loved the Lord.

"Since Jesus came into my heart so many good changes have happened in my life, and God has called me to be a Christian worker and serve him for the rest of my life."

After Bible college, Nejib trained for a year of inner-city mission training called the Urban Challenge Course. He now works for Birmingham City Mission on their team that shares the good news of Jesus.

"I am forever grateful that Jesus has come into my life," Nejib says. •

Chains of addiction broken

Tony Corley was once a slave to alcohol and gambling but now he has been set free

My siblings—two older sisters and an older brother—and I lived in Wandering, east of Perth. When I was eight my father committed suicide, and because my mother found it difficult to cope with all us kids, my brother and I were placed in a Christian Brothers home that took in orphans and children from welfare situations.

In the less than six months I was there I suffered a lot of abuse that would be the cause of many issues as I grew older. I then returned to Mum and her, my brother, and one of my sisters moved to Medina and then to Leederville, both in Perth.

Mum encouraged me to go to Sunday school but, apart from that, religion wasn't a part of my life.

By 10, I was in a lot of strife and welfare classed me an "uncontrollable child". Looking back, I see that I was looking for attention—I just wanted a hug.

I was sent to the Mt Lawley Receiving home and up until 16 I was in and out of institutions. I ended up in Fremantle Jail, as a juvenile, where I was raped, and was in and out of jail till I was 24. Mum died when I was still in jail.

For the next 20 years alcohol, drugs and gambling ruled my life—I used alcohol to numb all the pain I was feeling. I was in an abusive marriage where my wife's son



Tony Corley says no high from drugs was like the joy he found in Jesus.

stabbed me during one argument.

I left my wife and moved to Adelaide to be near my sister, but my family found it hard to trust me because of how alcohol was ruling my life.

I ended up homeless, living in night shelters—sometimes with The Salvation Army—and in my late 40s, I was introduced to the Salvos Bridge Program and it was here that I had my first encounter with God.

Because of stress, I was sent out to a farm for a while. I went to the small on-site church and one Sunday, in the mid-

dle of singing 'The Power of Your Love' I started crying and couldn't stop.

I felt different inside and had a smile on my face from ear to ear. No high that I ever got from drugs was anything like this—I believe it was the Holy Spirit coming into my life.

I discovered that God does not punish. He loves me. I look at Jesus, who didn't have a church like we do but walked around doing good things, and I want to be like that. In Adelaide, I became an adherent [member] of The Salvation Army and when I went back to Perth, I joined Katherine Street Corps [church] and then Balga Salvation Army.

I've learnt that when God gives something, he gives abundantly. I now have my own unit with so much furniture donated to me that I've had to give some of it away.

My heart has been softened; when I went through mediation with the Christian Brothers I was able to forgive them, which they found amazing. I left mediation empowered—I felt God standing on one side holding my hand and on the other was the damaged little Tony.

I have been free of drug, alcohol and gambling for two years. I have my dignity back and the respect of others. I now mentor others, and when I share my story people tell me how it has touched them.

I don't regret my past—it's now my greatest asset, because I have a story of hope for those who have suffered. The journey isn't about me anymore. •

Article courtesy of WarCry magazine

Read the manual!

BY JODY BENNETT

I HAVE recently started a new job (this one!) and two weeks after I started the person I'm replacing left.

Fortunately for me, she left me a giant yellow folder full of all the information I need to do her job – the people to contact, the websites to look at and the writing styles and tips that will be useful.

I couldn't do this job without that file and the training she gave me before she left, and I am grateful for her diligent preparation before her departure.

However, when Caitlin left and I knew I "was it" I felt unprepared and a bit frightened!

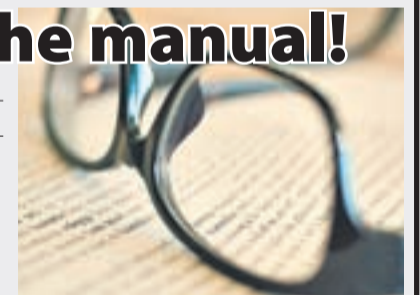
It strikes me that Jesus' disciples must have felt similarly thrown in the deep end and helpless when, after just three years' training, He told them to get on with the job of spreading His message and teaching others to be His followers, and rose up into heaven.

And they didn't have a manual – they had to write it themselves!

However, those disciples had something extra special – the very life, voice and power of Jesus within them through His Spirit – the Holy Spirit. It was like having one of those secret service earpieces with a direct line to Jesus as He was giving them clear instructions on how to live, inspiring them to write what we call the New Testament today and even telling them something about what would happen in the future.

And believers in Jesus today are promised the very same thing – the Holy Spirit living within them and giving them comfort, direction, understanding of the Bible and even insights into the future.

No wonder those first followers of Jesus were transformed from a bunch of frightened fishermen hiding together in Jerusalem into bold preachers of the news that Jesus was alive and offered forgiveness of sins to all who asked! •



Building Better Marriages

ENOUGH FOR ME ... ENOUGH FOR YOU!

BY ROB FURLONG

FOR A FEW YEARS now my wife Karen has selected a word to meditate upon and use as a theme for her life throughout the year to come. It is an enriching experience because it serves to focus her thoughts, prayers and actions at a personal level and in her relationships with others, including me!

As I reflect on my own life over the past twelve months, the word "enough" is a great description of how my life has been.

During this past year, God led me into the wilderness again, and along the way, He turned my thoughts to Psalm 63, written by David when he too, found himself in the wilderness.

David recalls moments when he has seen God's power and glory –



God Himself – in the house of worship (verses 2-5). He writes,

"I have beheld...your power and your glory..."

"What was it he saw?" I wonder. "And when have I seen evidence of God's power and glory in my life?"

More importantly, David saw God in the sanctuary. I take this to mean that God Himself is the One we seek, a greater blessing by far than His acts of power and glory.

So right there in the wilderness, David chooses to praise and rejoice in God. His will be a life of constant praise and of giving glory to God with his words and songs. And the reason for all of this is a quite remarkable statement in verse 3-

"Because your love is better than life..."

To know the love of God in your life, and the peace, comfort and security this brings, is a greater gift than life itself, even in the wilderness. For David, this is enough – "God Himself is enough for me and my soul is satisfied." (v5)

The message for me was straightforward enough: "No matter what I might be facing right now, God is all I need!"

The Christmas/New Year period can be a very lonely one for many

people. They suffer through the break up of a marriage, family or friendship that "came out of left field!"

"I didn't see it coming..." is a sad, but often heard refrain from many broken-hearted souls.

The devastation of losing someone that you had invested yourself in so completely can leave you feeling as if you will never recover or be a whole person again.

If that is you right now, I want you to know that there is real hope. Your circumstances may not change, but I can assure you that God has not forgotten you, He loves you deeply and He can be enough for you.

I am learning, in my times of being in the wilderness, to choose

- To live a life of constant praise to my Father and to thank Him every day.
- To live my life for His glory.
- Above all, to rest in the peace, comfort and security of God's love for me.

In the wilderness, I find I am able to tell God how much I love Him; I can thank Him for every good gift in my life – His love, family, friends, life itself - and for teaching me again about humility and my need to depend utterly on Him.

In this my soul is satisfied – in and with God Himself.

He is enough ... and He can be enough for you!

Movies

CHECK MATE - QUEEN OF KATWE

Chess is not just a game ...



.... At least not for Phiona Mutesi. For her, the game she discovered as a nine-year-old growing up in the Ugandan slums of Kampala is a source of joy; a provider of money and food and, therefore, life; a means by which she rose far above her circumstances; and a metaphor for the story her life tells: "in chess, the small one can become the big one".

Directed by Mira Nair and starring David Ovelowo, Lupita Nvong'o and Madina Nalwanga, Disney's *Queen of Katwe* recounts how Phiona stumbled into a chess class and watched her life take off.

Phiona Mutesi calls Katwe home. Her father passed away when she was three. She dropped out of school when she was six because her mother could no longer afford her school fees. They live on the streets.

For Phiona, this life is her past, present, and future. Selling corn. Eating when she can. She is one of thousands, tens of thousands, scrambling to survive.

Then Phiona and her brother discover a chess club, led by Robert Katende. There, other kids from Katwe find a little diversion from their bleak, day-to-day scrap of existence. Maybe even a little fun.

She was after the free porridge Robert served to bribe the kids into coming, but soon there was no need to bribe Phiona anymore.

"When I first saw chess, I thought, 'What could make all these kids so silent?'" the queen herself remembers. "Then I watched them play the game and get happy and excited, and I wanted a chance to be that happy."

She learned that if a pawn could make it to the end of the board, that piece could be exchanged for another. "In chess, the small one can become the big one," someone explained to her. "That's why I like it."

Phiona was never supposed to accomplish anything.

"The most important thing women do in the slums," she says, "is to produce kids and that's all. That's the most they do."

"Before I had started playing chess, I was just thinking, 'How can I get through this day?' That's the hope I had."

She wanted more. She still does. "My goal in chess is to become a grandmaster," she smiles. "My goal in life is to be a doctor."

In this inspiring film we watch a real-life pawn—a child from one of the dingiest corners of Katwe—use her prodigious chess talents to reach the end of the board.

Queen of Katwe screened in Australian cinemas in December 2016.

How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through 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.

"Lord Jesus, I need You now. Please forgive me for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Saviour and Lord. Thankyou for loving me so much that You died on the cross for me. Take control of my life. Make me the person You created me to be. 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> |
|--|--|

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

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There's an APP for that ...

PLUGGEDIN APP

HAVE YOU EVER been to a movie and had to walk out (or wished you had not brought your kids) because it was much more violent, crass, sexually explicit or full of swearing than you had anticipated? As a parent do you sometimes feel a bit uninformed about the movies your child wants to see with friends? Do you sometimes wish you had saved your money and time by not watching some nonsense?

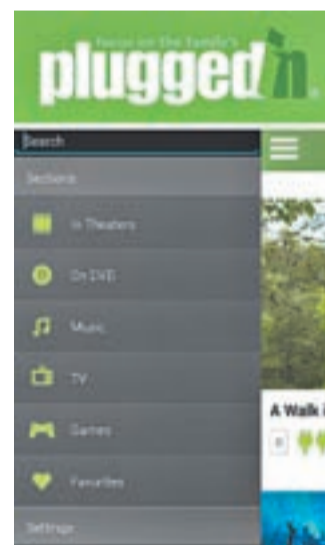
Well, with the free Pluggedin app by Focus on the Family, you can research beforehand whether a movie is the sort of thing you might enjoy, or whether the movie your teen wants to see is suitable.

Pluggedin reviews movies and gives them a rating out of five as to how family-friendly they are. It also gives a detailed description of the plot – warning you if there are spoilers – and a breakdown of the amount of swearing (how much and what words), the drug and alcohol use, the sexual content, spiritual content, violent content and the other negative and positive elements in the plot.

Then you can judge the movie's suitability for your family based on the things you feel are important. You may not agree with the review but at least you will be forewarned. For me I know that less than 2.5 plugs is not a movie I am going to enjoy.

Pluggedin not only reviews movies but also music, television shows and computer games. The website www.pluggin.com also reviews books.

The app means that even standing in line at the cinema you can do a quick check to see if a particular title is likely to be enjoyable. I also like to use it in the video store, or before renting a movie online.



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REBIRTH OF A GOLFING PRO

Golfing icon Bernhard Langer's love of the sport developed from age eight when he worked as a caddy to earn some money.

Born in a little town in Germany about 48 kilometres from Munich to a World War II courier-turned-bricklayer and a housewife with a love of gardening, Bernhard grew up poor and followed in his older brother's footsteps caddying at the local golf course so he could buy the sweets and treats his parents could not afford.

At age 15, Bernhard turned pro and moved to Munich to start his first job as an assistant professional and that year, in 1972, he won his first tournament.

In 1985 he reached the pinnacle of his career: he won seven tournaments on five different continents and was ranked number one in the world.

He won not only the US Masters – the biggest event of his career – but also the Heritage Classic in Hilton Head, the Australian Masters, the Casio World Open in Japan, the Sun City Million Dollar event and two events in Europe.

He had married his wife, Vikki, just the year before.

Yet the feeling Bernhard associates with that time in his life is emptiness.

"I had just won the Masters, I [was] driving to Hilton Head with my beautiful young wife, and I felt empty," he told CNN in 2015. "I [didn't] know why."

In Hilton Head fellow golfer Bobby Clampett invited Bernhard to attend the Wednesday night Tour Bible study group.

Bernhard had tried his whole life to follow the rules. Born in a traditional religious family, he went to church every week of his childhood and kept all the rules and rituals of his church heritage.

That night when the leader of the Tour study group told him

none of those things mattered, and that all he needed to enter the Kingdom of God was to be born-again, Bernhard did not understand.

"It didn't make any sense to me. Surely, at the age of 28, I could not be born again. So at the end of the study, I asked the teacher what he meant by 'reborn'."

The leader opened the Bible and showed Bernhard John Chapter 3 verse 3: "Truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God".

Casting his mind back to the encounter 30 years ago, Bernhard says: "It quickly became clear what was missing in my life. I didn't have a personal relationship with God or Jesus Christ.

"I was amazed to realise that the only way to have eternal life is through Jesus. That He died for our sins, and that it is not through our deeds or good behaviour that we

Above: SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA - NOVEMBER 13, 2016: Bernhard Langer of Germany hits his second shot on the 8th hole during the final round of the PGA TOUR Champions Charles Schwab Cup Championship at Desert Mountain Club (Cochise). (Photo Chris Condon/PGA TOUR)

Below: Langer poses with the Charles Schwab Cup, having won the championship. (Photo Darren Carroll/Getty Images)

receive eternal life because we can never live up to God's standard, we will always fall short.

"After understanding that God loved me so much that He sent His only Son to die for my sins, it felt natural for me to ask the Lord into my life."

After that point Bernhard began to notice changes in his life, his marriage; his outlook and his priorities. He began to put God first, then his family, and then his career – and found that when he did that the feeling of emptiness that had been haunting him went away.

"We're so involved with the here and now we have for 70, 80, or 90 years, when it's all about the eternal

ranks," Bernhard says. "Our life is just a fleeting moment compared to eternity."

He also says his 1993 Masters win, which fell on Easter Sunday, is far more meaningful to him than the '85 victory "because I won as a Christian".

"Easter is what sets Christians apart," he continues. "Jesus was risen and no one else has risen from the dead."

There are times where Bernhard's faith has been tested, notably the missed putt that cost Europe the 1991 Ryder Cup.

But he explains life as a Christian is not always easy, and that in such times you can choose to either blame God or draw closer to him. He chose the latter, and says it is "a decision I have never regretted".



"The emptiness that had been haunting me went away"

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