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IN THE JAWS OF DEATH

BY HARRIET COOMBE

Tiffany Johnson was snorkeling in the Bahamas when she thought she bumped into something. When she turned to see what it was, she was horrified to find she was face-to-face with a shark and her arm was in its jaws. But Tiffany drew on her faith and was able to experience strength and peace in the midst of the most terrifying ordeal.

"There was no alarm," she remembers. "There was no fear. I turned to my right and I was face-to-face with a shark. He had my arm pinned. His beady eyes were darting everywhere and then staring."

Tiffany remembers having an eerie feeling. It was like time had stopped.

"I started having visions of my kids," she recalls. "I remember feeling almost like my body was releasing, like giving up. But then the strength of the Lord came out from inside me and it gave me the strength to fight."

Tiffany was raised in a Christian home and had made a commitment to Jesus as a child. After a relationship breakup in college Tiffany said she "spiralled" and lost sight of that commitment for a while.

"Pretty soon I didn't even recognise who I was anymore," she admits. "I didn't like that. That was the wake-up call that I needed."

Tiffany rededicated her life to God and never looked back.

Now, as she stared into the shark's eyes, she drew on the strength of her faith.

"I remember thinking, 'No, you will not take my life. I'm not going to



Tiffany Johnson and JJ with their children (l to r), Luke, Natalie and Kylee.

die here.' I yanked my arm and that's when all the fury started."

When Tiffany yanked her arm, she managed to get some of it out of the shark's mouth before he clamped down on it again. She screamed but her snorkel muffled the sounds.

"I was fighting for my life and nobody knew," she shares. "I was yanking and at one point when I yanked my arm and his jaws opened, my arm flew out and it was gone. My arm was severed completely. It was just a mangled stump."

Throughout the attack Tiffany was able to keep breathing through her snorkel as the shark miraculously didn't drag her below the surface of

the ocean.

"When he let go of me I threw off my snorkel mask and I screamed out, 'Help, help me, Jesus!' I began to make my way back to the boat with my non-dominant hand, the one I had left. I was taking a few strokes, but I remember feeling like I needed to get my stump out of the water. As soon as I pulled it up out of the water, it was spraying blood."

Tiffany will never forget the horrified look on her husband's face when he finally heard her cries. JJ jumped into the water and he helped her into the boat.

"I hit the boat and the peace of the Lord Jesus was like a cloud," she attests. "I knew He was there. I could feel Him. I could feel His peace surrounding me. I wasn't panicked but I knew what needed to be done. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, 'God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind'. I felt like I was living that verse."

With no medical kit or tourniquet on the boat, Tiffany asked her husband to tie their beach towel as tight as he could to try and stop the

NO, YOU WILL NOT TAKE MY LIFE. I'M NOT GOING TO DIE HERE.



bleeding. When they reached the shoreline they were instructed to go back to the main port – another 20-minute boat ride. Tiffany's heart sank.

"I prayed, 'Lord, I need You right now.' I started praying for specific things: I prayed for my husband to be able to manage it all and I prayed for my kids, that somehow they could work through this, and I prayed for the doctors. I even prayed, 'God use this in some way, don't let it be in vain.'"

When she finally reached the hospital, Tiffany underwent a five-hour surgery. She and her family returned to America within two days for further treatment and after two days in hospital in the US, Tiffany was discharged.

● Turn to page 2

Daughter's addiction pushed me to change

BY NAOMI REED, ETERNITY NEWS

KAZ'S STORY: "I came to faith in Jesus halfway through my daughter's drug addiction, five years ago. It was such a hard time. We lost my mum, my aunty and my daughter's best friend, all in the space of three months. It was too much for my daughter. She became addicted to ice ... and during her addiction I took care of her son.

"It was really hard. My husband and I were suddenly looking after a three-year-old boy, as well as managing my retail shop in town. And because of my business, I didn't want other people knowing about my daughter's drug addiction. I felt the stigma of it and I didn't want to tell anyone. Eventually, I was in such a mess, that I went to the doctor and I told him what was going on.

"He gave me a piece of paper with a lady's name on it. She was a mental health clinician and she counselled me for three days. The most helpful thing was learning that we can't control what others say, think and do. It's not our responsibility. We are not in control of our loved one's addiction.

"But halfway through that year, I also started going to church.

"I think I was searching for some sort of calm through my massive storm. My parents had been Christians and invited me to church but I always said no. I used to say that it's not my thing. But when I started looking after my grandson, I started going to his [Christian] school assemblies. I really liked the songs the children sang. They were pretty hip for Christian music. I'd go home and find them on the internet and I'd put them on the playlist on my phone. I even changed my radio to Vision Christian Media.

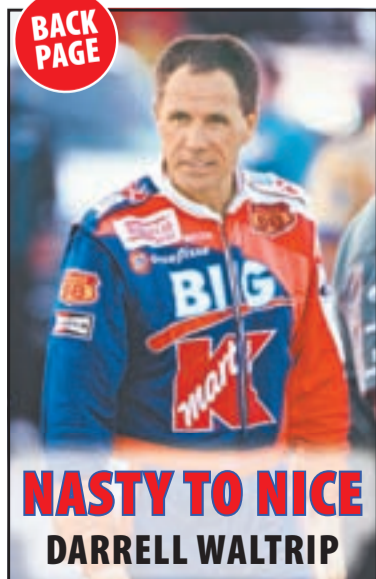
● Turn to page 4

Fun for Kids

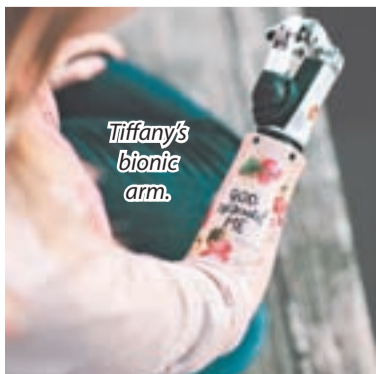
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NASTY TO NICE
DARRELL WALTRIP



Tiffany's bionic arm.

Lost wallet changes life

BY ROXY PHOTENHAUER

Will Wang is lucky to be alive. Because of China's one-child-per-family law, Will should have been aborted. China allowed families to have more than one child only if they paid a huge sum of money to the government.

His parents weighed their decision carefully. It was a lot of money, but they made the sacrifice.

Originally, Will pursued math but in his senior year of high school he grew fonder of English. Being from Shanghai, the metropolitan coastal city, he had the chance to meet and talk to expats. One was Nick, an American with whom he could practice English and enjoy friendship. Nick was a Christian and this intrigued Will.

"I used to be a pretty bad man on the streets," Nick told him. "It is God of the Bible who has transformed me into what I am today."

China teaches atheism. Believing in God gives people something other than the government to hope in, and a communist, totalitarian government cannot allow any competition.

So Will didn't, couldn't believe easily in God. "To me reading the Bible was like fairytales and it wasn't anything real," Will says.

Will applied and was accepted into college in Detroit Michigan. A Chinese church took him in; he loved the people, but when it came to the Bible studies he practically dozed off. Having made a Christian friend



Will Wang telling his story on YouTube

on campus, Will started to believe in God — a little bit.

But what pushed him over the line was placing his wallet — with \$900 in cash and credit cards on top of his trunk at the gas station and forgetting it after he filled up, driving away.

"I was really, really, very upset," he remembers. "I was blaming God. Why would You make me lose my wallet today? That's a lot of money."

He did his best to not be gloomy.

The next day, someone came to the dorm looking for him, but he was out and so he was informed of the visit. Will waited the following day for him. He was a black man. (Most Chinese feel some amount of bias towards black people, Will says.) However, he overcame his own biases instantly when the guy gave him his wallet.

"I started hugging him," Will remembers.

After Will thanked him profusely, the man turned to walk away. But he couldn't resist asking a question.

"You know sir, um, I'm just curious," he said. "Why would you return my wallet back to me with the money in it? Most people wouldn't return it."

"I'm a Christian," the man replied. "God wants us to love each other as brothers and sisters. I hope what I have done to you today, you will do to others one day."

The power of the man's example of living out his faith with integrity caused Will's faith to become complete. The wallet was the tipping point. After virtually a lifetime of God calling him out of Buddhism, he knew it was time to surrender completely to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

God imparted His spirit and Will was born again. "It was a divine set up," he says.

"It immediately changed my heart at the moment," he says. "I felt so touched, and at that moment I instantly believed in God."

Will no longer dozed during church services. He got baptized and felt a peace and comfort. He started leading a Bible study.

"I could have never imagined in China 10 years ago, I would be who I am today," Will says. "God has completely changed me into what he wants me to be."

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

Thanks for Challenge!

For the first time ever, in 2021, Challenge printed a Portuguese language military edition. It will be distributed to military personnel in Portugal, throughout African Lusophone [Portuguese speaking] countries and in Brazil.



This is from the head of the Portuguese Military Christian Fellowship: *IT'S with great joy and thanks to God and all that cooperate in this great project to make this edition [the Portuguese military edition] to be distributed to all Lusophone countries.*

The next step will be the delivery process, which needs some more financial support ...

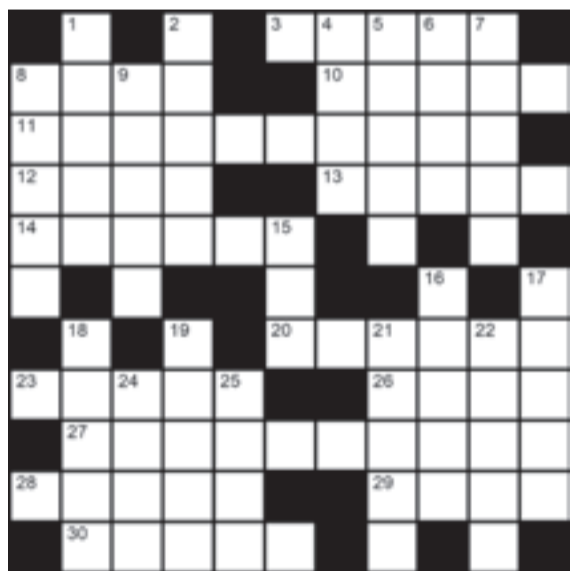
Above all we thanks very much for all the contributions and prayers! God be praised.

— Greetings and Blessings,
Samuel Cóias
MMI-Lusophone Africa

Has Challenge impacted your life? Please tell us how at jodyb@challengegenews.org

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- ACROSS**
 3 Double babies
 8 Retail business
 10 Standard
 11 Far-flung
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 20 Utensil
 23 ... Barrier Reef
 26 Covering
 27 Approval
 28 Burnt log remains
 29 Fruit
 30 Sends via snail mail
- DOWN**
 1 Garment
 2 Go on a buying spree
 4 Metal strand
 5 Brainstorms
 6 Close
 7 Sorrowfully
 8 Federer's nationality



- 9 Smell
 15 Furniture wood
 16 Rock
 17 Direct for information
 18 Grip or understand
 19 Dashes or sprints
 21 Snares
 22 Nearby
 24 Repeating sound in a canyon
 25 Trial; examination

IN THE JAWS OF DEATH

• **From page 1** "Every amputee that I talked to that's gone through trauma of some sort are in hospital for a minimum of weeks," she relates. "Usually it's months. I had a clean bill of health, other than healing. I didn't fight infection. I actually never required a blood transfusion because they said I didn't lose enough blood. I shouldn't even be alive, let alone not require a blood transfusion!"

"Every medical person I talked to is just blown away when I share what happened. They say, 'You don't make sense medically — you are a miracle.' I think about all the stories and miracles from the Bible — we still serve a miracle-working God. He's still doing those crazy things and I'm one of those testimonies."

Tiffany and JJ live in North Carolina with their children Kylee, Luke and Natalie. They have launched Be an Overcomer Ministries and speak at churches, conferences and workshops.

Tiffany remembers the first time she spoke in a church and 20 or 30 people chose to give their lives to Christ after hearing her story.

"I thought, 'This makes it worth it.'"
 She realised her prayer on the boat for God to use her experience was being answered.

Tiffany wants to help change people's perspectives on tragedy.

"The one thing you have control over is your response," she says. "You may not have control over the situation but you can control your response. I am blown away at the amount of joy God has given, not just me but my family, in the midst of it. Not even on the other side but through the process. Your circumstance doesn't determine your peace. Your circumstance doesn't determine your joy, God does. And when you can grab a hold of that truth, it changes everything." •



Tiffany leaving hospital.

Under His wings

THE Bible says in Psalm 91:4 "He [God] will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge."

An article in *National Geographic* several years ago illustrated this beautifully.

After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree.

Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he gently struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings.

The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise.

She could have flown to safety but refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had scorched her small body, the mother had remained steadfast.

Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live.

Jesus once lamented over Jerusalem: "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37)

Are you willing to come under Jesus' protection? •

[SOLUTIONS PAGE 11](#)



"We are communicating better, but we are still not out of the woods."

STORIES OF THE BRAVE AND BOLD

DENY JESUS OR DIE

A Nigerian kidnapped by Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram was told to renounce Christ or be killed. She refused – but lived to tell the tale.

It wasn't the first time Amina (not her real name) had countered the extremists. The Christian Institute reports that her family was first attacked by Boko Haram in 2012, when 20 militants broke into her home and tried to make her husband and children deny their Christian faith. When they refused, they were attacked, one after another.

"My husband died immediately," says Amina, "but two of my children were later rushed to hospital and their lives were saved by God's grace, after surgery."

Five years later, the terrorists came again. This time, Amina was hit three times when they shot at the bus she was on.

"They killed all the men immediately and then took the women to a forest where we were kept for eight months. All of us suffered from trauma, fear and anxiety." The women were all told to become Muslims, but they refused and continued secretly praying and worshipping God, even when threatened with execution.

Amina says: "By the special grace of God, we all stood in faith. For us, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The women would rather be killed than turn from Jesus.

Amina was eventually released, and was helped to recover by a trauma healing program run by Christian charity Open Doors.

She says: "After the program, I got peace for my family and myself. I thank God for that encouragement that they gave to me at that time."

Nigeria is one of the worst countries in the world for persecution of Christians, so bad that some have called it genocide. •



Hate replaced by overwhelming love

Growing up amid political turmoil, Abdel-Nour witnessed violence and humiliation from the Arab rulers of Algeria against the Amazigh tribes (of which he is a part).

"I was a racist," he told SAT-7. "I disliked Arabs; I detested and hated them." He fought against the Arabic language forced upon him. "At school, my grades were not good in Arabic because I hated it, so I dropped out of school. At home, when I saw my sisters watching films in Arabic, I turned off the TV," he recounts.

Things began to change when Abdel-Nour met some people from a local church.

"They did not stop talking about Jesus Christ. I was a curious person, so I went with them to the church. I felt joy flooding my heart, but I did not realise who Jesus was. Later, over time, I believed in Him," he shares.

Abdel-Nour surrendered his life to Jesus and was born again. He found God's love, which had been missing in his life.

"Verses such as 'Love your enemies' (Matthew 5:44) had a big impact on me. I loved and meditated on the Word of God, and this strengthened my faith, so I accepted Christ as the Saviour and Lord of my life," he says. Abdel-Nour was baptised, and over time, God the Holy Spirit worked in his life to bring change into his life.

Remarkably, his hatred was replaced by love. "Christ has radically changed my life. God loves us as we are, regardless of our nationality and language.

"I began to love hymns in Arabic...God urged me to love what I used to hate," he shares. His family noticed the change in him and showed interest, too. His father believed in Christ when he read the Bible Abdel-Nour brought home from church.

"Today I say that we are all brothers," he declares.

"When you believe in the God of love, He will fill you with His love and bless you." •



Abdel-Nour

Heroin addict found path to victory

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

As a part of the traveling Romani Gypsies in Scotland, David Buckland grew up in a trailer without heat or running water. His father was a farm worker and they connected the TV to the car battery when they wanted to watch something.

The Scottish kids called him a pikey, a slang term for the minority European group.

"We had to learn to defend ourselves and the only way I knew to do that was by fighting. I had a younger brother to defend as well," David told God Reports.

David's dad was given to blows.

"My father was a violent man and we were all terrified of him," David says. "He beat up everybody, me, my brother, the neighbours."

His mother abused alcohol and prescription drugs.

To cope with the brokenness of his home, David got into boxing.

"When I was eight, I got obsessed by boxing and put my all into becoming a Sugar Ray or Ali," he says. "I loved boxing. That was my claim to escape."

But at 17, his claim to escape turned into running with a youth gang. He drank and started smoking weed, along with hallucinogenic drugs.

"I dabbled in the occult not knowing what I was opening doors to," he says. "I ended up becoming a heroin addict for 25 years."

Today, at 49, David is a Christian. "I was a king of sin, but Jesus is the King of Salvation," the Victory Outreach volunteer says.

Once while serving a jail sentence, he read *Blood in Blood Out*, the story of Art Blajos, who trained for the Mexican Mafia in San Quentin and became a big-time drug dealer and abuser before coming to Christ and dedicating his life to serve in Victory Outreach in England.

It was the beginning of God working in David's life.

When he finished his sentence, David straightened up. He got a good job working on oil rigs off Aberdeen, got a house, drove a BMW, married and fathered two kids.

He was reformed but not transformed, still resistant to God.

Without a genuine relationship with the Lord, David eventually fell back into drinking and abusing.

"I went off the rails again," he says. "I lost everything. I went back to square one."

But family members started to become Christians. His violent father accepted Jesus and became gentle.

Then his brother had a pointed conversation with him. "Do you believe there is a heaven and hell?" his brother asked.

David Buckland today, clean and free.



David's fiancée.

David prayed the sinner's prayer [a prayer expressing repentance and belief in God] without fully understanding the meaning, but God enabled his heart to believe and be born again.

Within days, he found himself in a drug rehab home operated by Victory Outreach.

Founded in Los Angeles by Sonny Arguisoni in 1967 to reach people enslaved to substance abuse, it runs half a dozen homes in England.

David got his life back. "God has done amazing things," he says. He even got to meet Art Blajos, the protagonist of the book he read, at a conference in Los Angeles.

Today, David still lives at the Victory Outreach home and works helping recovered addicts get jobs. Most have no paperwork, have never paid taxes or had a bank account, so even if they're honest and hardworking, the companies can't employ them because of a lack of paperwork.

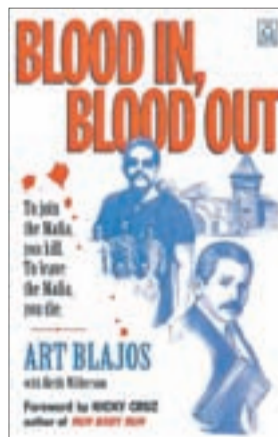
David helps them set up their accounts and learn to pay their bills, he says. He's developed a significant network of contacts to help guys find direction, purpose and responsibility.

At the time of writing, David was engaged to be married. He found a Christian girl from Zimbabwe via the internet. She works in the Victory

Outreach ministry in Johannesburg, South Africa.

"I look back and think how can I deny God?" he declares. •

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



UPTICK IN BIBLE READING



RECENTLY, the YouVersion Bible app team celebrated a remarkable milestone: more than 500 million people have downloaded the app, an accomplishment creator Bobby Gruenewald said is "humbling." Far from the claim that Biblical faith is dying, his team is seeing radical growth and interest in the Scriptures. Bible reading is up 21% in 2021 compared to 2020, and up 56% when compared to 2019. It's a trend that shows no signs of slowing.

"The Bible's alive. We see people turning to God's Word in huge numbers," he said, specifically noting the increase YouVersion has seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. "People were turning to the Bible during this time of uncertainty."

The popular Bible app doesn't only provide Scripture; users are also able to dive into Bible reading plans, connect with friends and loved ones using YouVersion and engage in other meaningful ways. Why not give it a try today? •

From 'old junk' to precious gem

Linda Hills says her father used to keep old broken stuff that she and her siblings called the 'junk line'.

"All that broken stuff reminded me of me," the 47-year-old tells *Challenge News*. "I needed fixing too."

She says she has seen more of the curly side of life more than she would have liked to. Admitting she grew up a rebel in New Zealand, she often deliberately disobeyed her God-fearing parents who raised their six children with the Bible and regular church attendance.

"When I was 16, I wanted my own way," Linda, who has six children of her own, confesses. "No one, NO ONE, was gonna be the boss of me. My rebellious heart put myself on the throne."

Yet for all her bravado, Linda was lost and torn in her quiet moments. "I don't remember listening too well to what mum and dad read from the Bible but I knew in my heart it was the absolute truth," she says.

And so she struggled between the devil and the deep blue sea. She wanted to live life on her own terms but worried she would go to hell when she died.

She wanted nothing to do with rules but found the thought of having to answer to God for her actions and decisions too frightening to contemplate.

"During my quiet moments I'd

think 'what if Jesus comes and I get left behind?'

"Satan doesn't want us to have these quiet, still moments when we think about important stuff. He wants us to think we are 'all right' the way we are, but God wants us to be 'all righteous' (1 Peter 1:1) through His Son's finished work, and I knew I wasn't that.

"I knew I had gone astray and that there was more to life than what I was living. At times I thought I would go to heaven and other times I panicked that I wouldn't. When I got the chicken wishbone I would actually wish that I could really be saved. But wishing doesn't get you saved.

"I knew I had to fix my broken relationship with God."

Enter Peter Brandon, a visiting preacher from the UK, who in 1989 held meetings in Toowoomba, a three-hour drive away from Linda's home.

Linda and her family drove all the way to Toowoomba and attended the services. Sunday, April 23, was the final service. The preacher told the congregation how he only discovered true joy when he decided to let go of his fears and trust God.

"At last it clicked and the lights came on," Linda said. "I came just as I was, guilty, no good. I took my feet off the bottom and by faith trusted God's Word and started to swim in the ocean of His love. I received the free gift He offered.



"That night, I found peace with God. At last I knew for certain my soul was right for eternity."

However, it didn't take long for the same doubts to come knocking at her door, and soon Linda felt the familiar tightening in her throat as panic started building up in her.

The following week she attended another Christian meeting. "Would you believe it, I heard the same kind of illustration again!" she exclaims. "That message was just for me and it broke the fear.

"Since then I've rested in what Christ has done for me. Having assurance of salvation is so important. [If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour.] Don't give that bad thought, doubt or worry more than a second in your mind; just

get rid of it."

Linda has faced her fair share of trials. A miscarriage in her fifth pregnancy left her distraught. After a week of sobbing she found the strength to tell God she trusted Him. "He's the one in the driver's seat, not me," she said. "This is something I've needed to remember every day of my life.

"I'm still learning to let go, to change the things I can and leave the things I can't in God's hands. But at least today I can tick the 'I'm saved' box. By His grace (undeserved kindness of God) my sins are no longer mine to pay for."

She urges readers: "He can do the same for you. Nothing in your life is more important than your eternal destiny."

Daughter's addiction pushed me to change

• From page 1

"So then I decided to go to the church on the school grounds. The first time I went, I met a gentleman who had known my mum and dad. He knew all about their faith journey and he shared it with me. It was fantastic! It made me feel so much closer to my parents. But that first year, everywhere I went, the same verse would pop up. It was John 3:16. *'For 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.'*

"That verse was everywhere ... and I'd never heard it before. I'd never read the Bible before ... but it was telling me something. I saw it on the back of the church newsletter, then up on the screen after the sermon, then on a billboard near our local restaurant, then in a book for parents of addicts.



"Every time I saw it, I cried. God was telling me that it was okay and that He loved me, and that He had given up His son Jesus for me.

"I believed it. I'm so thankful to God. He has been with me all the time, I just didn't know Him. I've also come to realise that God uses us to help others. My journey through my daughter's addiction has let me connect with so many parents to help them through their child's addiction. I have a red couch at the back of my shop and people always come and sit to share their journeys, and with God's grace I am able to help them.

"My family has also been restored. My daughter is now three years clean. And it was because of my journey that I was able to help her to get the help she needed. How amazing is it to have my God in my life!"

Kaz's story is part of Eternity's Faith Stories series, compiled by Naomi Reed. It is used with kind permission.

LIVING IN FEAR AND TRUSTING IN LIES

Cambodian Channa Touch was finishing secondary school and preparing to be a Buddhist monk. His mother had resisted all her sister's invitations to go to church but one day, she sent Channa instead.

"Everything about church was weird and unacceptable," he remembers. "After the service,

there was a meal. I was given rice, tracts and a Gideon's New Testament.

"I ate the rice and threw away the tracts but I kept the New Testament. This book was my passport to a weekly meal. After three months I started to read it. I noticed that the New Testament constantly refers to older stories. I

wanted the whole Bible."

The church pastor told him the Old Testament was not for beginners and Channa must read the New Testament first.

"So I stole a Bible from the church," he admits shamefacedly. "By reading the whole Bible I was confident that I would expose faults and prove that this foreign religion was a fraud.

"However, while reading Romans the Holy Spirit lovingly taught me that I was sinful and unable to save myself from my rebellious spirit. I knelt down and asked Jesus to forgive me. I fell in love with God's Word. By day I devoured the Bible. By night I slunk outside and preached to the trees.

"No one wants to become a stranger to their own family and be mocked and rejected. But I now knew that I had been released from a trap. I had been living in fear and trusting in lies. 'Perform this ritual and you will be protected.' 'Make this offering and you will prosper.' 'After enough reincarnations you will become perfect.' I saw that all this achieved nothing. Jesus gives us freedom from fear and a full and

meaningful life. Even if they killed me, no one could take this away from me. I couldn't get away from this truth," Channa declares.

He now boldly proclaims Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life as the pastor of a village church, together with his wife, Simy Srean.



Channa Touch and his wife Simy Srean.

EXTREME HEART MAKEOVER A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

— REVELATION 3:20 NIV

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www.joyfultoons.com

YOUTH TRUTH

Lying for people's attention

As a teenager Melissa Dougherty hid a secret addiction that many teenagers also struggle with.

She was addicted to attention and often lied to get the validation she craved. But when she got caught out in a big lie, her world began to crumble.

Melissa shared her story in a YouTube video and explained that she had always tried to do the right thing and had a "loud moral compass" but at the same time, felt depressed and lost, with no aim in life.

"I loved it when people worried about me, I loved it when people thought about me," Melissa says.

"I would make grandiose claims about things that would happen in my life to get that attention, that's how I fed it. It turned me into a really big liar."

Melissa said she tried to be what everybody else wanted her to be so she could fit in and feel good about herself.

"Anything that gave me value in life was from some sort of external source – a boyfriend, a friend, my group of friends – whatever the case may be, I had to have that attention to feel good about myself. I had to have something or somebody giving me what I needed to feel valued. From

the age of around 13-16 I just fed that attention-seeking with lying."

Those years of lying caught up with Melissa when she told someone she was dating a big lie, and was found out.

"As a result of course they broke up with me and it catapulted me into a really deep depression," she explains. "I became suicidal. I didn't want to live – every day was absolute torture."

Melissa actively started planning her suicide and stopped eating.

One weekend Melissa and her friends were invited to a party of a mutual friend.

"At the time I said no – all I wanted to do was go home and go to bed because that seemed to be the only relief

I had ... while I was sleeping it just felt like the pain wasn't as intense," she remembers.

Melissa dropped off her friend and started driving home but she had a change of heart. She turned around and went back to the party. At the party she discovered a friend of hers had just become a Christian.

"He had just found Jesus and he was at this party telling everybody about Jesus," she recalls.

Melissa sat and listened to her friend and something he said shocked her.

EVERY DAY WAS ABSOLUTE TORTURE



Melissa Dougherty's life changed after a conversation with a friend at a party. Photo: melissadougherty.co

"I remember him pointing at me and he said, 'There's nothing that you've done that God cannot forgive – He loves you'... it's so simple but that hit me hard," she recalls.

Melissa had been raised in a home with some Christian beliefs that were also heavily influenced by New Age and New Thought (using the power of thought to control physical and mental events) teachings.

Although at that point she didn't know there were names for these teachings, she held a lot of attachment to New Thought ideas of manifesting reality, visualisation and inner divinity.

Although she had some understanding about God, Melissa said she had never heard about God's forgiveness in the way her friend had put it.

"What my friend was telling me was that I could have forgiveness through Jesus," she says.

"He's the One that I have been looking for. He's the One that fills my heart. He's the One and He alone is the only thing that can give me the love and the forgiveness that I need.

"That's basically what I heard that night and I

believed it and it changed my life."

The next morning when Melissa woke up she felt complete peace and like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders.

She said she felt like she had a new identity and had an insatiable hunger to know more about what her friend had talked about.

But she also had a lot of questions about the Bible and there were things she didn't understand. She started attending a church but when she asked questions she was met with opposition.

"I started visiting other churches that I liked but I still didn't have somebody that was patient enough to sit down with me and discuss these things with me," she explains.

She said nowadays the answers to her questions are readily available on the internet, but at this time, that wasn't an option.

She said she needed more evidence. When her difficult questions weren't answered, Melissa embraced some of the ideas she had grown up with. She began to search for her 'inner divinity' and become as spiritual as she could.

But her questions about God and the Bible never fully went away and, after giving birth to her first child, she

"I remember thinking at the time, how could they say anything wrong about these people – they're loving and caring and all they talk about is love, all they talk about is acceptance?"

Then she saw something that stopped her in her tracks. An article criticised a well-known spiritual teacher's idea of being god-like. She said she felt like the blood rushed out of her head.

"That's what I believed – I believed that we were all god-like," Melissa admits.

"I believed that we all could be like God, that we are in essence little gods.

"I never connected that being associated with deception... but that literally is the oldest lie in the book – quite literally – that you can be like God."

Melissa kept researching and discovered that there was a name for the ideas she believed and it was called New Age and New Thought.

"I thought it was just a higher spiritual realm so to have this label on it actually kind of helped me, because then all of a sudden I could categorise what my beliefs were and how it was distinct from what the Bible taught."

After recognising and turning away from these false beliefs, Melissa got involved in counter-cult ministry and helped people involved in the New Age to find Jesus.

She now runs a YouTube channel under her name, Melissa Dougherty, which focuses on apologetics (defending Christianity against objections).

THERE'S NOTHING THAT YOU'VE DONE THAT GOD CANNOT FORGIVE



By Cedric Hohnstadt



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YOUTH TRUTH

Popular YouTuber calms his anger

When Jacob Coyne was a teenager he was so filled with rage that he was nicknamed 'Rhino Rampage Jacob'. He spent his time smoking, drinking and partying but instead of calming him down, those habits only fuelled his anger. That was until he found a permanent solution and the anger within him vanished.

Jacob now has a popular TikTok account as well as thousands of subscribers on YouTube. He shared his story recently, revealing that as a teenager he was in a "mess of problems".

"I was angry all the time," he admits. "People used to make fun of me because of how angry I would get at people."

One night he was playing computer games late at night when his dad returned home from a church Bible study.

"There was this glow on his face," Jacob remembers. "He looked different. There was love in his eyes, and when he got closer to me I actually was startled."

He felt afraid and actually asked his father not to come any closer.

"The closer he got, the more I felt like I needed to confess all my sins to my dad," he says. "So I told him all the things that I'd been doing – how I'd been partying and drinking and smoking and getting into all sorts of trouble."

Then he saw something in his dad's eyes that he hadn't seen before.

"I saw Jesus in his eyes," he shares. "My dad told me that he was a new man and I believed that – I saw it on his face."

Jacob wanted what his dad had. He asked him to take him to the Bible study as soon as possible. The next week Jacob went to the Bible study with his dad.

"When we got there the same thing happened – I saw Jesus in all of these people's eyes. I had never seen anything like it before. All of them had so much love in their eyes and I knew that God was real."

Jacob was raised in a Christian home but until this point, he assumed Christianity was like other religions.

"[I thought] it was just a good moral thing that people do," he explains. "I didn't know that you can actually experience God. I had many doubts in my own heart that God was even real. But when I saw this in everyone's face, I saw this love, I knew that God must be real. And also I was just convicted of all of the sin that I had been committing. I knew that I had to live a new life."

Jacob's heart pounded as the Bible



Jacob Coyne was nicknamed 'Rhino Rampage Jacob' due to his anger issues. Photo: Youtube/JacobCoyne

study went on and he waited until the end and he asked for prayer to receive Jesus.

"At the end of the Bible study message, I raised my hand and I said, 'Guys, please help me like you helped my dad, I need Jesus to save me.' This old man came over to me and he put his hand on my shoulder and he prayed for me. And at that moment I felt all the rage, all the sin, all of the darkness inside of me, be driven out."

As the darkness left him, he finally felt free. The leader of the Bible study then prayed for Jacob to be filled with the Holy Spirit. "So he put his hand on me again and prayed, he said, 'Father God in the name of Jesus Christ, please fill Jacob with the Holy Spirit.' And that's exactly what happened.

"My heart got so warm, it felt like it was on fire and I felt like this, tingling feeling all over my body, and I felt it all over my face, all over my head from the inside out, and I just began to cry. It was tears of joy."

"Then I began to praise Jesus. I'd never praised Jesus before but His praise was on my lips. I began to just say out loud I love you Jesus. I love you Jesus, I will follow You, Jesus."

That night Jacob also had a vision that he was preaching the Gospel [good news about Jesus] to millions of people.

"Ten years later, that's what I'm doing," Jacob attests. "I get to share

the Gospel to millions of people every single day. I have a million followers on TikTok with Christian content, and I am sharing Jesus' message every single day."

Jacob's life changed forever from that night.

"I used to be addicted to the party scene, popularity, material things and lust, but then I was addicted to the Bible. I couldn't get the Bible out of my hands. I couldn't stop praying. I couldn't stop praising God. Something supernatural happened to me."

"Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and I met Jesus Christ personally that night and I've met him many times since then. You see I don't follow Jesus because it's just another religion, I follow Jesus because He is real. God is real and there is only one God and I've met that God."

Jacob now invites others to make the same decision he did.

"There's nothing more special about me than there is about you," he explains. "God loves all of us. He wants to save and change and transform all of us so that we can change this world. I've been following Jesus now for 10 years, and it's the best decision that I've ever made in my life."

"I am free. I've been set free from so much of the bondage and the chains that I was in by Satan. I'm free from all those sins, Jesus has forgiven me, and I'm a new person now. You can have that too. The Bible says in Romans 10:13 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"



Angela found fulfillment and acceptance. Credit: YouTube/Angela Wang

Desperate for love

When she was in college, Angela Wang fell in love for the first time. Her boyfriend and their relationship meant everything to her – to the point where she found her identity and worth in what her boyfriend thought of her. So when the relationship broke down, Angela was devastated. She didn't know who she was anymore but she knew that she felt desperate to feel loved. Thankfully, it was then that she discovered unconditional love.

Angela shared her story in a video on her YouTube channel, revealing that as a teenager, her priorities were popularity, parties and boys.

"That also continued on into college as well," she says. "I wanted to party and I wanted to be around people that partied."

But the parties weren't fulfilling her. "There was always this void in my heart that wasn't fully satisfied, no matter how much I partied, no matter how much validation I got from guys," she shares. She met some friends who were involved in the college's Christian ministry, Cru. Angela had grown up in a Christian home and found faith in Jesus as a child. As she grew older she continued to believe in God but didn't have a relationship with Him. She just called on Him when she needed something.

Angela started attending church with the girls she had met through Cru.

"I would come out of church and I would come out of those Cru meetings feeling so fulfilled," she remembers. It was from there that Angela's understanding about God grew. Despite this, she continued partying on the weekend. "I believed in God, I loved God and I loved the feeling God gave me of being so loved, but I wasn't walking with Him," she admits. "I wasn't obedient and I thought I could still live in my own ways."

Angela also started dating a boy and fell in love for the first time. "It wasn't a healthy relationship," she explains. "I started getting my identity from him and I would seek validation from him and not God." They dated on and off for three years. When the relationship ended, Angela was devastated.

"I was so lost, I didn't know who I was anymore," she says. "I didn't know what to do with my time. And that's when I actually started reading the Bible for the first time because I was desperate for someone to tell me that they loved me, and it ended up being God. God saved me in that season where I was just so sad."

Angela read the story of Jesus in the book of John in the Bible. "I was so touched from the bottom of my heart that someone would love me that much, to die on the cross for me and take my place because I'm imperfect, I have sinned and I do not deserve to have a relationship with such a perfect God. But Jesus was the payment for my sins."

After college Angela's ex-boyfriend asked her if she wanted to get back together. "I was still new to trusting God, so I just went purely on my emotions and said yes," she says. But the relationship was again short-lived.

She looks back at their final breakup and remembers the pain she felt but also the important lessons she learnt. "It taught me how to trust God and it taught me how to never get my value, worth and identity from someone else who is not God," she says. "God was there for me when no one else was. He was there when I broke down the middle of the night crying over this boy. He picked up all my pieces and put my heart back together again."

Angela recognises the transformation that has taken place in her life.

"I used to party and try to find fulfillment in that. And you might get some temporary satisfaction but after the party's over, you're going to have that same empty feeling that is just continuously eating at you that never gets fulfilled. It's a God-sized void that only God can fill... trusting Him, believing in Him and living your life for Him will be the best decision that you ever make."

I WAS DESPERATE FOR SOMEONE TO TELL ME THAT THEY LOVED ME

PEOPLE USED TO MAKE FUN OF HOW ANGRY I WOULD GET



Dinosaurs in Eden?

In 1992, Steve Müller's life was transformed by what he initially considered a "random series of events" that put a Bible in his hands, followed by an "intellectual exercise" in reading it. Up to that point, Steve's life had been directionless.

"My life was broken and empty and devoid of any real meaning or purpose. I was enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree at James Cook University in Townsville, North Queensland, and during that time was making some very bad decisions that had a negative impact upon my life. Living on campus, away from home and parental supervision, provided many opportunities for binge drinking and other irresponsible behaviour, particularly in the area of relationships," Steve admits.

"As a non-believer, the decisions I had made were motivated by a desire to please myself, but they left me in a state of despair, confusion, and depression," he told *Challenge News*.

One day a friend gave Steve a cassette tape with Christian-themed music, and he found the poetry of the lyrics intriguing. At the same time, other friends were warning him to stay away from Christians. As a result, Steve became even more curious about the Bible.

"The negative experiences I had been through at university also left me searching for answers," he remembers. "Overall, I believe God was using all of these experiences to expose my sin. He was drawing me to Himself."

Then came the series of "random" events that Steve can now see were very much orchestrated from on high.

"I had been in Townsville during my third year of university (1990) and was returning home to Cairns by bus late at night for holidays. On previous occasions I was always dropped off at our street, but this time the bus driver said we had to go all the way to the transit centre in town. I had no phone to call my parents, and the first two phone booths I tried were out of order, so I decided to look for a taxi.

"As I wandered into town I met a street evangelist/pastor who invited me to his church, and a couple of weeks later I ended up going along



Steve Müller and his dinosaur art and (above right) manning his church's market stall.

just once out of curiosity. I was not really interested in joining, however I did ask the pastor for a Bible so I could check it out for myself, and he gave me an NIV New Testament.

"I examined my New Testament thoroughly for the next year and a half, and eventually became convinced that the Bible in its entirety must be the Word of God. I knew

I was a sinner before a holy God, and one night, around the middle of 1992, after reading 1 Corinthians 15, I trusted in Jesus for my salvation and committed my life to Him.

"What began as an intellectual exercise — 'examining' the Bible to consider whether it might

be true — resulted in God humbling me as I submitted my mind to the Word of God."

At first, Steve had felt that accepting the Bible as truth would be intellectually "risky". But when he finally took the plunge he found that it set him free.

"I was drawn to the clarity of the absolute truths of Scripture, which stood in stark contrast to the relativistic confusion of man-made ideas and philosophies I was learning about at university. These competing philosophies offered no clear answers

to the big questions of life — *Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?*

"When I became a Christian, the 'big picture' frame of a Biblical worldview provided answers to those big questions of life, and I saw where I belonged in that picture. I discovered that the truth set me free (John 8:32).

"I had finally found healing, fulfillment, meaning, purpose... and peace with God," Steve states.

Receiving Christ prompted Steve to purchase a complete Bible and start from the beginning. He was immediately impacted by Genesis 1:31. It was clear to him that God is good and that His creation was originally "very good".

"I understood that God's perfect creation had been plunged into sin and death as a result of the rebellion of the first people, Adam and Eve. We are all born into this world as descendants of Adam, with a sinful nature, separated from God. Therefore, we need to be saved and reconciled to God by trusting in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross: *'...He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'* (Isaiah 53:5–6 NIV)."

Like most others, Steve had been educated on evolutionary principles, and hence he pondered the idea of man only appearing after billions of years of history. He found Scripture taught otherwise: People were there "from the beginning of creation" (Mark 10:6, 13:19). Prophets have been killed "from the foundation of the world" (Luke 11:50). Man has been accountable "since the creation of the world" (Romans 1:20).

Such passages, along with the genealogical records of Genesis 5 and Luke 3, convinced Steve of the truth of young earth creation.

Creation is thus foundational to his evangelistic activity in Gladstone, where he lives. For example, his church sets up a stall at the local markets selling his dinosaur sketches, as well as featuring images of dinosaur soft tissue finds and ancient depic-

tions of dinosaur-like creatures. The stall attracts considerable attention from the public.

Steve draws dinosaurs in situations with people, mammals, and modern birds, because, in the Bible's timeline, dinosaurs would have been contemporary with all the rest of creation.

Steve and the team use these illustrations to challenge evolutionary assumptions and lay a foundation for sharing that:

"It was the sin of the first man, Adam, that resulted in death and suffering and the broken world we live in today, and our only hope is in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45). He not only died for our sins on the cross but also conquered death through His physical resurrection, and one day He will return to bring in a New Heaven and a New Earth restored to Edenic perfection."

To promote broader discussion Steve has also created a Facebook page called Dinosaurs of Eden. There he posts his dinosaur drawings with brief explanations and links to related articles on creation.com.

When asked what he would say to any Christians who don't accept six-day creation or the truth of Genesis,

he replied:

"I would ask them whether they have considered the implications for:

1. The moral character of God. Is creation over millions of years of death and suffering consistent with a God who is good?

2. The authority of Scripture. If Moses (John 5:46-47) and Jesus (Matthew 19:3-6) were mistaken about creation, how can anything else in God's Word be trusted?

3. The Gospel. The physical death and resurrection of Jesus is tied to the historicity of sin and death entering the world through the first man, Adam (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 45-49). If death and suffering were normal for 'millions of years' before man, the very foundation of the Gospel would be undermined.

"We need to begin with the Bible and build all of our thinking on Scripture," Steve advises, "rather than beginning with the ideas of men and imposing those ideas on the Bible." •

For more information, and more of Steve's dinosaur drawings, visit homechurchgladstone.com

This article is based on a Creation Magazine article by Dr Ron Neller, and information Steve Müller provided directly to *Challenge News*.



Why are dragon legends found in cultures all over the world? Could it be that people coexisted with dinosaurs in the past?

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

It's time to grow up emotionally

BY ROB FURLONG

“Many people may be, chronologically, 45 years old but remain an emotional infant, child or adolescent.” What a perceptive observation the author of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Peter Scazzero, makes here! He was commenting on how many people grow up physically but never grow up emotionally.

To illustrate his point, he describes the various stages of emotional development that we need to pass through as being: that of the infant (totally focussed on having our needs met by others), the child (where our happiness or otherwise essentially depends on whether we get our own way or not), the adolescent (where we are concerned only with ourselves and don't express much empathy for others), through to the final stage of becoming an emotional adult.

As mentioned, Scazzero reminds us that many people get “stuck” in one of those first three stages.

However he also describes the positives of being an emotionally healthy adult, which I have paraphrased:

- They can express their needs and wants with clarity and honesty.
- They exercise mature control over their thoughts and feelings.
- In times of stress, they remain true to their values and beliefs without belligerence.
- They respect the right of others to think differently to them.
- They allow others to make

mistakes.

- They love people for who they are.
- They know their own limits and are not afraid to be open about them.
- They have empathy for others.
- They can resolve conflict in a way that also respects the opinions of others.

I must confess that when I read a list like this, I feel a stab of guilt in my heart because I recognise that for far too long in my adult life I lived like an emotional adolescent – but by God's grace and a commitment to the difficult task of life change, I have steadily experienced the freedom of growing up into an emotionally healthy adult.

(Admittedly there are still times when I cry like a baby but that is usually reserved for important things like when the Aussies lose a Test match!)

Growing up emotionally has the power to transform our relationships, especially with those who are closest to us.

When a husband grows up emotionally, he becomes more considerate of his wife, seeking to fulfil her needs before his own; a wife becomes more concerned about building her husband up instead of tearing him down with her criticism; and friends learn to listen, value and respect each other for the different perspectives that each one brings to the relationship.

A new year is a gift that presents each of us with the opportunity of fresh possibilities and the chance to make some changes in our lives, beginning with ourselves and then see-

ing the benefits of those changes spill over into our relationships.

Of course, I do not think for one minute that by simply turning the page on the calendar to 2022 that our lives will be miraculously transformed.

Change – particularly personal change – requires more than just a desire for it.

Personal change involves a commitment to seeking wise advice and then putting it into practice, over the long haul.

Real change takes time.

But a new year does provide us with a starting point that can become the catalyst for significant change in our lives.

So, embrace the opportunity that 2022 represents for you – get your hands on a good book that will encourage you to grow personally, (I recommend Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*), seek out the advice of someone who can support and encourage you in the process of change and don't forget to draw strength from God!

And you had better get a move on – by the time you read this, 2022 will already be a month old!



Want to explore more?

Here are some free, helpful, Christian online resources:

Online Bible - Olive Tree app (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - Bible.is app , or Youversion Bible app	
Christian radio station - CBN radio app (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app	
Christian movies - New Faith Network app (7-day free trial)	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - the Bible Project on YouTube .	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity.	
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More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online	

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

What? Salvation is an eternal relationship with God – now on Earth and, after we die, in Heaven.

The Lord Jesus says: “I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in Me has eternal life.” John 6:47

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Who? Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

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

Why? Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

How? The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:8b-10

Ready to change your life forever? Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude – which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,
I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.
Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn't, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank You that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You – I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Saviour and my Master. Amen.

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a Christian that you know or email us at info@challengenews.org
2. Use the resources in the green box on this page to find a Bible to read and more information regarding Christianity.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

AS A NEXT STEP: Please send me: Bible Some 'starting off' literature Information on a helpful church

I have prayed this prayer.

* Please tick and write clearly *

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Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 20)

BY JODY BENNETT

AFTER all these sausage dog stories, I think I may have got the analogy wrong. That my relationship with my little dog is not in fact a very good picture of God's relationship to me, after all.

You see, the other day I was eating something and Carrie was begging for a piece of it. I said “no” and one of my girls said, “Mum, she knows you don't really mean it.” Sure enough, I eventually gave the dog some.

I indulge my little dog; she is not very obedient and quite overweight because I'm not very good at tough love. When my husband says “no” to her she gives up begging immediately, but with me she knows “no” means “you probably will get something, if you continue to insist”!

I laugh when she's naughty and excuse it away, and she won't come the first time I call (although she responds promptly to my husband).

We may be tempted to think that God looks at us that way – that He is our indulgent grandad in the sky who only tuts at our naughtiness and gives in to our every desire.

That is a message some people teach – that God is never cross with you, never punishes you, never wants bad things to happen to you and will give you everything you ask for “in faith”. That, because He understands what motivates your sin, He isn't really angry about it.

That isn't, however, the message of the Bible.



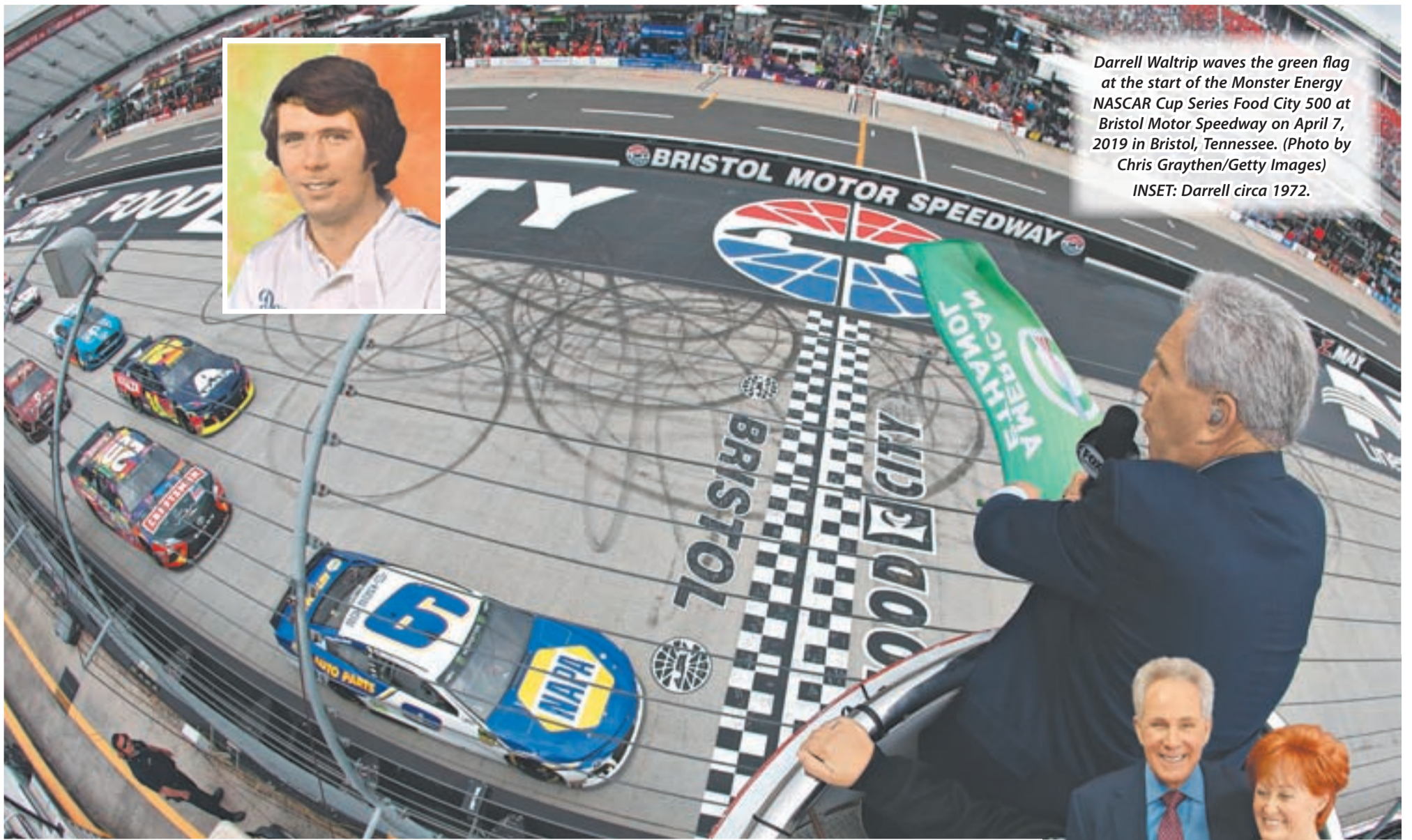
The Bible says God doesn't only become our Father when we choose to follow Him, but our Master. We become His servants – in fact in the original language, we become His slaves (Hebrew: *ebed*)! We are commanded to lay down our lives, to pick up our cross, deny ourselves and obey His commands.

Jesus didn't encourage His disciples to expect rewards, comfort or earthly happiness from following Him, but warned them of trouble, distress and tribulation. (John 16:33)

In a not-often quoted parable in Luke 17 Jesus gives an example of a servant (read slave) who after all the work of the day has to serve his master's food before he eats himself. “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, [you] should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” (v. 10)

Perhaps a police or military dog is a better analogy then, for my relationship with God. It does exactly what it is told, it is eager and fit to do its master's will, it is not indulged and petted, although it is well-treated and loved. It is bred for conflict, not comfort. It doesn't live to do its own thing but to fulfil a greater and very important purpose. It sticks close to its handler and goes where he or she goes and does what it's told, not even shrinking from danger or death in that obedience.

That is not such a cosy view of Christianity is it? However, it is Christianity as the Bible portrays it. So it is important people clearly understand that God insists on being your Lord, not just your Saviour, so they think twice before “asking Him into their hearts” and then bringing disrepute to the name of Christ by refusing to obey His commandments.



Darrell Waltrip waves the green flag at the start of the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Food City 500 at Bristol Motor Speedway on April 7, 2019 in Bristol, Tennessee. (Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images)
 INSET: Darrell circa 1972.

From hated to humble

Three-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Darrell Waltrip was known for his arrogant, brash personality as much as his success behind the wheel. But when he survived a wreck at the 1983 Daytona 500, he described it as a wake-up call that knocked him conscious.

Darrell shared his story when he was the keynote speaker at the USA 2015 National Prayer Breakfast.

He said racing was his passion but he had gone about it in all the wrong ways in the early years.

"I was just as aggressive off the racetrack as I was on," he says. "I didn't have a lot of friends - I didn't think I needed friends. I looked over in the car and I was the only one in there so I didn't need any friends to be with me."



Darrell Waltrip in 1999. (Photo by Sporting News via Getty Images)

He said people described him as, "brash, ruthless, pushy, cocky, conceited, aloof, boastful, arrogant and just downright annoying".

"Those were people that liked me, so you can imagine what people that didn't like me had to say about me!" he jokes.

NASCAR fans booed him when he was introduced at races and wore 'Anybody but Waltrip' t-shirts to the track.

He said NASCAR Hall of Famer Richard Petty told him, "I don't know how you keep a sponsor, you're so unpopular with the fans."

It wasn't just the fans. Darrell said he was always arguing with NASCAR.

"I didn't like the rules, mainly because they never worked in my favor, so I was always trying to change the rules," he recalls.

Darrell admits that his personal life wasn't much better.

"I was so arrogant," he says. "My personal life was a mess. I drank too much, I liked to go to the bars and hang out with the boys... I did everything to satisfy me. Whatever felt good to me, I did it. I didn't give it a second thought."

Darrell said his wife Stevie was a Christian and she would always pray for him to get involved in a Bible study or a church.

Darrell said to her, "Look Honey, I race on Sundays. I don't have time to go to church. I'm busy all through the week getting ready for the next race - I just don't have time for this church stuff."

"Well I'll just keep on praying," she replied.

Then Darrell got a chance to

drive for his childhood hero, Junior Johnson.

"I thought maybe someday I'd get to meet him, I never thought that someday I'd get to drive for him," he says. "It was the best years of my career."

He said in the first two years they won 24 races, 18 pole positions and two championships. But then he got involved in a horrible wreck at the 1983 Daytona 500 when his car spun at nearly 200mph (320km/h) as he tried to avoid hitting a car in front of him.

Darrell's brakes locked and the car slid and hit an embankment so hard that it was thrown back onto the track in front of the other cars. It then hit a retaining wall, where he was again pushed onto the track. Darrell was badly concussed and hospitalised.

He said he didn't even remember attending races during the few weeks following the crash.

"When I finally came to or woke up I realised that the wreck had knocked me conscious," Darrell says. "It scared the hell out of me and I mean that literally. I realised I could have been killed that day. What if I'd have lost my life right there that day at Daytona? Would I have gone to heaven or would I have gone to hell?"

After that he started going to church with his wife.

"I got down off my high horse, I got down on my knees and (the pastor) and Stevie and I prayed that the Lord would come into my life and forgive me of my sins and be my Lord and Savior," Darrell remembers. "That was the greatest day of

my life. That changed everything. I'll never forget going home that night and I told Stevie, 'I feel like the weight of the world's been lifted off my shoulders. I feel like I've been born again, I feel like a new man.'

"When the Lord comes into your life you're going to be different," he explains. "He changed me and it was for the better."

Fellow drivers and fans noticed the change. NASCAR fans even voted him 'Most Popular Driver' two years in a row in 1989 and 1990.

Darrell said he still had problems and still got into wrecks but now he wasn't facing them alone.

"You don't have to walk alone," he says. "You don't have to carry all those burdens like it's you against the world. You have to do like I did, you've got to get off your high horse

Darrell Waltrip poses with his wife Stevie during the NASCAR Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in North Carolina in 2019. (Photo by Brian Lawdermilk/Getty Images)

and get on your knees and ask for forgiveness. He's waiting for you."

Over his career, Darrell won 84 NASCAR cup races. He and Bobby Allison are tied for fourth place in NASCAR history.

Darrell was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of America in 2003 and the NASCAR Hall of Fame Class of 2012.

He retired from NASCAR in 2000 and worked as a race commentator from then until 2019.

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