

# Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

# Nameless but not hopeless

**Australian-based artist and rap star Nameless\* used to be purposeless before he met Someone who was sinless.**

Growing up in government housing in Brisbane, Nameless was no stranger to destructive lifestyles. He was surrounded by arms dealers, drug addicts and many who were back and forth on 'holiday' courtesy of Her Majesty (in prison).

With the guidance he received from his parents, he was able to develop his natural physical ability to make his way into every rugby league/union representative side that he tried out for. Aspiring to be in peak physical condition also led to several state titles in jujitsu and training for cage fights while competing in the boxing ring.

But mentored by neighbourhood criminals and the '90s amphetamine epidemic, meant that Nameless did his first break-in when he was 10. He remembers rollerblading around with a screwdriver and pockets swollen with change.

For Nameless, a massive gateway to evil had been opened. Breaking into cars at 10 led to stealing them at 13. Marijuana at 11 led to shooting up speed at 13. Addiction led to many stores, homes and businesses

being broken into or robbed. Love became hate and everything that was wrong became right.

Nameless had a short break from this scene when an accident resulted in a serious injury. While swimming with his girlfriend (now his wife), he broke his neck and spent six months holed up in hospital. A life-threatening injury like this should have made Nameless rethink his life and make dramatic changes.

But for him this meant switching his criminal activities into a smarter hustle and with an even worse drug habit.

As he could no longer pursue a career in the fighting or sporting arenas, Nameless diversified into other fields of passion – aerosol art and rap. With a basic recording set-up he was able to learn and grow in writing, production and audio engineering.

**A massive gateway to evil had been opened**



During the turbulent years that followed, his girlfriend since 13 stuck with him and he became a father at 17. This should have been a wake-up call to cause change, but he couldn't dig himself out of the ditch, and constantly returned to the grip of

intravenous ice use and the accompanying lifestyle.

With drugs being more pure yet cheaper than ever, a now 22-year-old Nameless lived in a housing estate with two young children. Life was exciting as he had just com-

pleted a 14-track album under his original performing name of Golden Fleece. It already had a buzz and the project was ready for release to the public.

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## THE MOST SCARY POWER IN THE WORLD

I RECENTLY watched a series on Netflix (Marvel Comic's *Jessica Jones*) where the villain had the most terrifying superpower I could imagine: to be able to mind-control people and make them do anything he tells them to.

For instance he could tell them to hurt, torture or kill themselves or others (throw that cup of hot coffee in your face; bang your head through that post), give him anything that he wanted or act against every natural instinct (put your screaming child down on the pavement and drive me around like a chauffeur).

I tried to imagine if I had such a power how long it would take me to abuse it, even if my intentions started out to be only to use it for good. Less than a day definitely; maybe even less than an hour before it became a tool to fulfil my selfish desires.

Not cruelly at first, but my family would soon become my slaves (pick up that mess, make me tea, vacuum the house etc.). The minor irritations I politely



put up with from others would be stopped (kill your barking dog, throw your stereo through the window). Rules wouldn't apply (get back in your car, Officer, and forget this ever happened), and I'm pretty sure the momentary desire for revenge when someone offends me would be acted on disproportionately (rude driver got your car into a ditch, pushy shopper scratch off your tattoos with your fingernails).

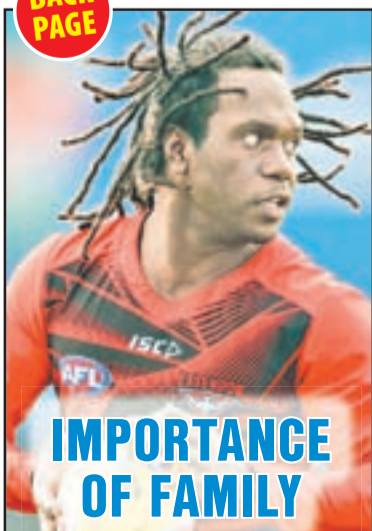
It would progress from there I imagine.

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, and what more absolute power than to control others without consequences?

If such a superpower did exist you would want to know the person wielding it was 100% good and incorruptible. Yet do you know that even God, who is indeed 100% holy and unselfish doesn't use His power to control us against our free will? Why?

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BACK PAGE



IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY



## Nameless but not hopeless

● From page 1

But God had totally different plans in store for the young father.

An associate gave Nameless a CD that was a raw account of a rap artist's lifestyle, his struggles, and the temptations of the world surrounding him.

"There was a clear difference in the way he spoke about these things compared to every other lyric, story or rapper I had ever heard before," says Nameless. "It spoke of a hope and a real way out."

This message answered the who, what, when, where and why that Nameless was searching for. It was a raw, real, and honest account of life influenced by the Gospel of Jesus



Christ. Through this music he heard who Jesus was, is and what He has done.

"It was as if my heart was taken from my chest and shown to me," he says.

Years of pride, crude behaviour, crime and drug addiction fell off his life instantly at the moment he submitted his life to Jesus. It was obvious to everyone around him that something massive had happened. Nothing was the same. Nothing would ever be the same again.

● \*Nameless is the creative persona of Aaron Ainsworth. His new project "Letter to the Gutter" is available for free at [www.namelesscreations.bandcamp.com](http://www.namelesscreations.bandcamp.com)



Cover art from Nameless' two latest albums: Letter to the Gutter and Life after Death.

# Tale of an unhappy crow

BY ALAN BAILEY

**PERHAPS** crows always look unhappy. They not only have a dark expression, they have a dark sound, too. I can remember times when I have finished a job outside, feeling pleased with it, when AA...RK comes through the air as if mocking my work.

Lately, we have had a local crow caught up in a craze he can't seem to escape. Each morning he does the rounds of our vehicles, visiting the rearview mirrors to angrily peck at the crow that simultaneously pecks back at him. He then goes over the road to repeat the performance with other parked cars that also have pesky crows in their mirrors. Even his raucous calls of disapproval don't seem to bother the reflection. It is always there.

### WHAT DO WE LEARN?

Thinking about it, I felt there were a few things this unhappy crow's behaviour could teach us.

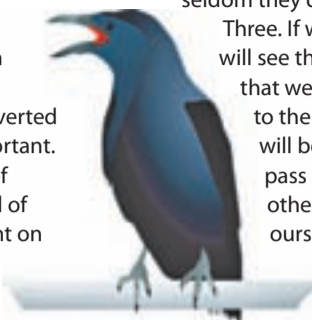
One. It's so easy to be caught up with something which at the time seems important to us but is in fact a passing shadow. Our attention can be diverted from what is really important. In fact, it can be a way of life, taking us to the end of our days. Our life is spent on trivialities and yet we are not right with God! We never thought about making peace with Him.

Two. The way we see ourselves affects so much our attitudes and behaviours. Our reflection doesn't please us. We are not blessed with good looks and we feel that others are unimpressed with us. So we spend a lot of time trying to measure up. It would be better for us to think a lot less about it and get on with positive life-building activities. It has been said, "We would worry less about what

others think of us if we knew how seldom they do."

Three. If we look outwardly, we will see that there is a great deal that we can do to contribute to the needs of others. We will be happier people if we pass on some happiness to others, rather than confining ourselves to a world of privacy. Loving and giving beats self-pleasing as a lifestyle. How obvious it is that there are so many, many people who are in much greater need than we are.

A crow will only be as wise as nature will allow. But we have a high calling as creatures made in the image of God. We can become acquainted with Him. Jesus said: I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me. The door is open. Forgiveness and eternal life are free.



# Stemming the modern tide

BY RICK LEWERS

**WHAT** people might not expect these days is non-Christian commentators lamenting what has been lost when Christianity is on the decline.

Paul Kelly, in the *Weekend Australian* July 8-9, 2017, writes: "Christianity has fallen from 88 per cent of the population in 1966 to 52 percent today, and seems sure to slide soon below the 50 percent threshold. It would be absurd to pretend this epic change does not have profound consequences for society since it constitutes the eclipse of a particular conception of human nature."

Alongside this decline in Christianity, Kelly speaks of the shattering of trust, a disintegration of community-shared values, and a decline in civic virtue. He suggests the singular most important factor in this change is, "the notion of the individual - the obsession about individual autonomy in every aspect of life, love, work, race, sex, culture and death. Put harshly but not inaccurately, it is narcissism presented as self-realisation and human rights."

"Narcissism" means to have an excessive love of oneself and used to be considered a disorder but may now be a modern growth industry. Should one ever have to deal with a narcissist it quickly becomes obvious that there is no more important person in the world than the narcissist.

I think "narcissism" as a disorder should not be confused with what is simply a rampant individualism where God

is removed and the most important person in the world is "me".



Kelly is right to suggest a loss of a particular view of human nature that reflected a humbler humanity. A humility that sees life lived not for self but for each other in community.

God designed us for such community and selflessness. Our evolution away from God may well see the survival of the fittest but how fit are we when love, peace, kindness, gentleness, self-control and humility become endangered species? Remove

God and will any of us survive?

What Kelly fails to acknowledge is the bias of our human nature and the sinful realities that follow when God is removed. Without God, human nature always puts self at the centre of the universe. Herein lies the problem - God removed and self as the centre.

Kelly closes his reflections: "There was an inevitability about the decline of Christian faith, but there was nothing inevitable about the dismal pretender that presents as its replacement."

I don't see an inevitable decline in Christian faith but the necessity of it if we are to ever escape the modern western cult of "self-worship". Putting God back in the centre introduces us to the person of Jesus Christ and the character of God's grace, mercy, and love expressing itself in kindness and self-control and producing a community where people consider others more important than themselves.

# MOST SCARY POWER IN THE WORLD

● From page 1

An interesting thing happens in the series when the villain, Kilgrave, falls in love with Jessica Jones. He realises that although he can force her to act like she likes him, even make her sleep with him, he can't make her love him - that has to be an act of free will, and so he goes about trying to woo her in his own twisted way.

Submission can be forced but love

has to be earned, and given freely. That is why God, who doesn't just love but IS love, chooses to limit His omnipotence (all-powerfulness) over us. When He made us He didn't want robots, He wanted friends, so He gave us free will. He can't force us to follow Him, He can only woo us.

That is what people mean when they say Christianity is a relationship not a religion. It should fill us with awe - not what God CAN do but what He chooses NOT to do.

And it means we as humans have a truly terrifying power.

The power to say no to the God of the universe who made all things and without whose permission we couldn't take the next breath.

The power to refuse the love of a being from Whom every good thing

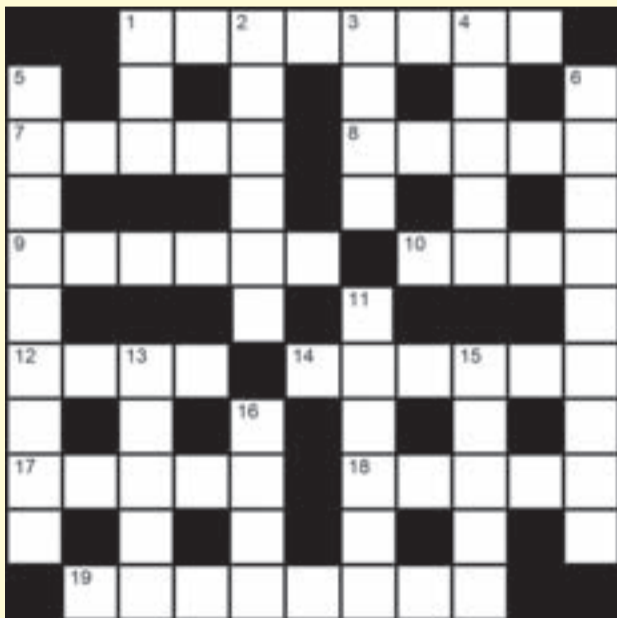


originates and without Whom we can do nothing. How can we dare!

● Please note: some scenes in Jessica Jones may be offensive to viewers and Challenge is using it as a reference, not endorsing the programme.

## Crossword

- |                                  |                    |                      |                        |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                    | 8 Tropical fruit   | 14 Longship sailor   | <b>DOWN</b>            |
| 1 Gun with a steep angle of fire | 9 Protein in wheat | 17 Spacious          | 1 Affectionate embrace |
| 7 Rage                           | 10 Eye affliction  | 18 Bank of snow      | 2 Rabbit home          |
|                                  | 12 Warty hopper    | 19 Ship deck opening | 3 Robe for Caesar      |



**SOLUTION PAGE 11**

## Sudoku

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

Puzzle Level: Medium

6 3 8  
4 2 9  
7 5 1

**SOLUTION PAGE 11**

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

### 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@challenge.org](mailto:jodyb@challenge.org)

# Finding treasure in a tip

When Emily Rampellini's parents divorced, her life went into a dangerous downward spiral that brought her to the point of self-harming and having suicidal thoughts until a chance encounter in a slum gave her new hope.

"I was heading into a downward spiral that I couldn't get out of," Emily tells of her Year 11 year, "I started hiding things from my parents, lying to my friends and ditching them for new friends that weren't right for me, dating the wrong people and doing everything that I shouldn't be doing.

"That year was the worst year of my life. I fell behind in everything: my friends, my schoolwork, my faith were shot.

"I thought that God would never forgive me for the things I'd done, let alone accept me in spite of them."

Although Emily came from a family of many and mixed faiths, she had come to believe in the existence of a Creator God when her school teacher explained the complexity and function of the human eye, and Emily realised it could not have come about by chance.

At the instigation of her mum, Emily later got baptised [immersed in water as an outward sign of her inward conversion to Christianity]. But she admits she was in "no

way ready to be baptised" and after the event "avoided church like the plague", although she might have found some much-needed stability there in the wake of her parent's divorce.

A year after her life spun out of control so badly, Emily looked around and found that she was alone. "My friends didn't want to speak to me. My parents lost trust in me. I started to doubt myself as a person and was at the point where I started to have suicidal thoughts.

"I honestly thought that no one cared if I lived or died. My boyfriend, at the time, was not a nice person to me at all. He would mentally tear me down and agree with the names I called myself in my mind, as well as trying to make me do things that I wasn't ready for."

She decided to take action. "Like a snake bite I sucked the poison out of my life and looked to rebuild.

"I started to rebuild friendships I had lost. I improved in school and was top of my class again. I wasn't better but I was okay. All was good, except for my faith ... but you never know what God has in store for you."

Emily got an opportunity to go to the Philippines on a mission trip instead of going on school leavers at the end of Year 12.

"I was so excited to make a difference but little did I know that it wasn't what I would do for those



Emily Rampellini on a mission trip in Africa earlier this year.

people but what those people and God would do for me," she recalls.

In the first week of the program, she was put in a group that visited a slum area.

"At one point I wandered away from my group and stumbled upon

a Christian but the other people in the area didn't like her faith and had torn up her Bible. Still, she prayed day and night and read the ripped up pages.

"She shared with me a verse: 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain' (Philippians 1:21-22) and I asked her if she thought she was good enough for heaven and how she could live this way.

"She asked me if I knew what Jesus had done for me. It was in that moment that I broke down. I cried my eyes out, I confessed my sins to her and to God. There in a rubbish tip in Bacolod, Philippines, I gave my life to Jesus.

"I sat on the tip and prayed for ages," Emily recalls.

Then she got up and bought the woman a new Bible.

Emily had realised neither she nor the old woman had to be "good enough" for heaven, because nobody could be, except Jesus. He alone was sinless and made a way for all those who believe in Him to be in relationship with God.

"She didn't want to accept the Bible but I knew it was I who owed her, for she had given me the greatest gift of all time. The gift of Jesus," Emily ends joyfully.

Since then Emily has been on another mission trip – to South Africa – sharing with others the treasure of forgiveness she found in a rubbish tip. •

## Swim ends sinking feeling

A random swim in the dark turned into a genuine God encounter for Rod Martin.

I grew up in Sydney. I didn't feel like I fitted in with my family so, by age 13, I was living by myself at the horse racing stables where I found work. That is where my use of alcohol began. I got into nightclubs and started using marijuana at 16, and was also stealing alcohol from my parents' cellar when I visited. I went to jail for two months when I was 18, for drug trafficking.

Soon afterwards, I met a girl who became my first wife. She smoked pot and dabbled in other drugs as well. I started taking speed and was drinking at least six schooners of beer per day. I split up with my wife after 18 months because of my alcohol abuse and aggression. I ended up depressed and moved to the Gold Coast. I was smoking pot and drinking spirits every day, and got into stealing and lots of fights. I was in and out of work.

I was with another girl for seven years, but we split up, again because of drugs and alcohol. I was sad most of the time. I just didn't realise what I was doing to my life. My next relationship lasted six years, but my drinking and drugs continued.

Sophie was the next girl and after two-and-a-half years together we had a son, Lockie. I was still drinking heavily and pushing my feelings down, trying to escape reality. I tried to settle down, but was always drunk and losing jobs. Sophie left when

Lockie was seven months old.

I tried to commit suicide, but they revived me and put me in the psych ward. I tried to kill myself a few more times after that. Lockie was just over a year old when I did detox at a Salvation Army Recovery Services Centre on the Gold Coast in 2004. I gave up everything for four months but then met a girl and got back on the drink. The relationship broke up and my drinking got worse.

One day Lockie saw me drunk and it broke his heart. He told his mum that I was going to die. I knew that I had to do something.

A few days later, God came into my life. I was swimming in the dark, but then a light came on and I heard God's voice. I knew God was around, and that nobody could hurt me. I could only hurt myself. I went to see someone for help. They pointed me to a program called the Turning Point for detox. I then did the full program at the centre and dealt with a lot of feelings and personal issues. The staff were supportive and inspiring.

There were times when I wanted to leave, but the Lord wasn't letting me go. The day I went into detox, I picked up the Bible and didn't stop reading it for eight weeks. I just wanted to know more about this Higher Power I knew



Rod eventually realised he needed help, both spiritually and practically to kick his alcohol habit.

I needed in my life.

I have a huge relationship with God. I wake up thinking about God and He is showing me stuff every day. I still get counselling from AA and NA meetings, go to Turning Point for the aftercare programme, and church every week. Lockie came to my graduation from the Recovery Services Centre. He is proud of me and we have a strong relationship. I am a member at the centre now and their church is very supportive.

God is leading me into the church to help other people - addicts and seniors. This is where God wants me and I now live a life of peace and grace which I have never had before. I always worried about money but I don't now. I am rich - I have Jesus. •

Article used with kind permission from the Salvation Army's *Warcry* magazine

## Are we in a state of confusion?

BY RICK LEWERS

"WHERE are we now in the west? As our liberalism loses touch with its Christian roots it is becoming even more confused, intolerant, and incapable of delivering a good political culture."

This is a quote from Greg Sheridan, the foreign editor for the *Weekend Australian*. He recited the words of George Orwell: "One cannot have any worthwhile picture of the future unless one realises how much we have lost by the decay of Christianity."

Historically, Christianity in the West offered clarity not confusion while discouraging intolerance by open debate, freedom of speech and an awareness of the dignity of the individual given by God who made us in His image.

Male and female He made us in His image, equal in worth but not the same - complementary. Physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually complementary.

Sexual? Yes! But never so reductionist as to define a person only in terms of their sexuality. Defined by relationship? Yes! But the order of relationship is God first and then our neighbour.

The beauty of putting God first is that a loving, perfect, moral authority speaks into every other relationship we have, governing how we live toward each other, and guiding us in matters such as family and human sexuality.

But here-in lies the problem. In the world of iPads, iPods, iMacs, a rebellion in the "iSelf" world exists in us from birth.

The spread of such rebellion varies from the hypocrite in church to the hypocrite who refuses to go to church, through to the anarchist. The anarchist being a person who rebels against any authority. That is what makes an anarchist so dangerous. They will submit to nothing and no one, including God.

I have often heard the statement, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian". That in itself indicates how little a person knows about the teaching of Jesus Christ and the value of Christian living. The statement does not reveal the heart of a Christian but the heart of the "iSelf" anarchist.

With distance comes ignorance ... and with ignorance you don't believe nothing ... you begin to believe anything. Worse still, "iSelf" fashions shape your thinking and responses rather than understanding the mind of God on the issue. The hope, as always, is repentance. Surrendering the anarchic "iSelf" to God may be difficult and require significant courage and humility but He promises forgiveness and life changing assistance.

Lack of surrender by Australians will not of course change God but it will for eternity ruin relationship with God, while corrupting the present with confusion and selfishness. •

# A walk in the woods



**Kelvin Starr hated the church for the abuse it covered up and repeated against him but eventually it was where he found healing too.**

For everyone there is a time in their life where they grow up and become adults, usually around the time they lose their childlike innocence.

For Kelvin Starr that innocence was ripped away from him in 1964 when he was sexually abused by an

older boy in the woods during his summer holidays.

"I staggered home bleeding and in pain ... with tears streaming from my eyes," he recalls in a booklet he wrote called "Life to Last". "It would be over 50 years before I was able to enter those woods again."

The woods had previously been a place of adventure for Kelvin where he would climb trees with his friends, play in the river and catch fish. Now he was too scared to enter them again.

When Kelvin told his parents how he had been raped and beaten, he

got no hugs or compassion but was blamed for not running away and for "letting" it happen, although the boy was 10 years older than him and much stronger.

Kelvin then turned to the local priest for understanding, believing that priests were supposed to be gentle and kind like Jesus.

But his relief at being heard quickly turned to horror when he found out that the priest already knew what the head choir boy had done, and in turn sexually abused Kelvin himself.

"This time I didn't tell anyone, I didn't want the belt again, I became moody, quiet and withdrawn," Kelvin shares. "I hated them both."

Kelvin buried his pain and shame deep in his subconscious but the ordeal made him feel he was to blame for everything that went wrong in his life and that he was dirty and damaged.

At 15 he left school and started work, and at 21 married his wife, with whom he later had two children.

When his son was eight years old and part of the local boy's brigade,

Kelvin was invited to attend a parade at the church.

All his feelings of betrayal and pain surfaced again.

"I didn't want [my son] to have anything to do with church," Kelvin confesses. "To me church was an abomination."

Nevertheless he eventually agreed to attend and later also went to a special service, where the preacher shared a gentle message on forgiveness and how people who had been abused could hold hatred in their hearts.

"The preacher asked those who were struggling with the past to come forward and talk to someone about it. I however couldn't move," Kelvin remembers. "I felt such a heavy weight on me. Feelings of guilt and shame bombarded my mind. How could I forgive those men? Hatred burned

at my insides!

"Over the next few weeks I became a very unlikeable person. Moody, argumentative, depressed. I wanted revenge on my abusers," he admits.

Other things were also going on in Kelvin's life: he suffered a debilitating back injury at 30, was cheated in a business venture, got into heavy debt and, as a result, became addicted to pain killers and whisky.

It was another invite to church that led to the answers that Kelvin so desperately needed. The preacher explained that Jesus acts like a bridge between us and God.

"He said that all of our problems could be handed over to God through this Jesus and this Jesus wanted a friendship with me. Me! All I had to do was tell Jesus that I was sorry for all the wrong things I had done."

Kelvin felt he could do that but then the preacher said he also had to forgive those who had wronged him.

"What? Wait a minute! Doesn't this Jesus know how those two men hurt me? Doesn't this Jesus know how I've been cheated? Doesn't this Jesus know how much pain I'm in?" Kelvin raged.

Then he realised that of course Jesus did know, He had also had His innocence betrayed and endured terrible pain on the cross.

"Jesus doesn't wave a magic wand to make all of our problems disappear. He does however help us to have the courage and strength to deal with them," Kelvin explains. Through counselling, he was able to deal with the past and forgive his abusers.

"The freedom that brought me was incredible. All of the shame, the guilt, the hurt, and the humiliation dissolved almost overnight.

"I became a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. I accepted the fact that Jesus had given His life for mine. The biggest life changing event ever to hit a man!" Kelvin shares joyfully.

Kelvin went on to train as a Pastor and now uses his past experiences to help others who have gone through similar crippling abuse.

Years later, with his friend Nige Burr at his side, Kelvin was able to re-enter the woods of his childhood and find healing.

"God's Holy Spirit was my comfort. The power of the cross put to rest the trauma I had carried. The devil's work was finally destroyed."

## Masterchef and other life changing decisions

Six years after winning Masterchef 2011, kitchen whiz, mum and committed Christian Kate Bracks was recently in Perth, speaking about her TV appearances and other choices where she got a lot more than she bargained for.

Kate describes her Masterchef experience and the flurry of activity afterwards as "an alternate universe" and "a few years of crazy" before she returned to the primary school teaching she had trained for. She now teaches food technology and religious education in Orange, NSW, while continuing to raise her three children, aged 14, 12 and 10, with husband Luke.

She remembers her decision to enter the Masterchef competition as one with long-lasting consequences, many of which were unforeseen.

"Each of us have those decisions, sometimes really well thought out, sometimes made in a split second," she shares, "where we can look back and see that they changed the rest of the course of our life."

Sometimes those decisions also cost us what we could not have anticipated. In Kate's Masterchef experience that was eight very difficult months away from her family that she didn't count on and wouldn't have signed up for had she realised beforehand.

But she had not expected to make the first 50, or then to make it more than a few weeks on the show. She certainly never anticipated winning the event, and all the public speaking and other opportunities that would open up for her since.

Another decision the result of which Kate could not have anticipated, was one to go on a mission trip to Thailand while at university. On the trip to help at underprivileged schools, which Kate was initially reluctant to sign up for, she met future husband Luke.

However, the decision that preceded both those life-changing events and had the most profound impact on Kate's future, was her decision to hand

the reins of her life over to Jesus when she was 21, and commit to living for Him.

Although Kate grew up in a Christian family, attending church regularly, this was not an automatic decision for her.

"Growing up I thought God was a party pooper and that if I took Him seriously I would have to give up all the things I enjoyed and keep a whole long list of rules," she remembers wryly, "I just wanted to party and have a good time and I thought God would take away my fun."

Then one night Kate was going out the door when she caught a glimpse of her reflection in the mirror and thought: "Who are you? Why are you here?" And so began a journey of exploration to find the answers to the big questions of life.

"I asked old people (since I thought they would be the ones to know), read books and watched videos," she recalls. "I read about all religions, New Age ideas and people's own philosophies. And I also went back to church."

Over the course of a year Kate came to realise that the God of the Bible was a God who acts for us on our behalf in order to make possible a relationship with Him.

"I realised that Christianity is not about me and what I've done or what I'm doing, but about Jesus and what He has already done for me," Kate reveals.

God sent Jesus into the world to die on the cross so that He could take our separation from God on our behalf. All we have to do is believe that Jesus paid the price for our wrongdoing (sin) in full.



Former Masterchef Kate Bracks remembers deciding to enter the competition as one of three major decisions that have shaped her life and destiny.

Kate explains sin is like a cold.

"The runny nose and the sneezing are the symptoms of the underlying virus, in the same way that the bad things we do are the symptoms of the infection of sin in our lives. Sin is more than the wrong things we do or the right things we don't do, it is our rejection of God as the rightful boss of our lives," she clarifies.

She shares how reading the Bible story of Jesus making wine at the wedding in Cana revealed to her that God is not a party pooper but that in that story He kept the party going, anticipating the greatest party of history when He celebrates His marriage to His Bride, the church.

"My response to a God who would die for me, is to live His way. I read the Bible and try to find out what God wants me to do in my life, I go to church to encourage others and to be encouraged, but that is not what makes me a Christian," Kate explains. "It is not what I do that makes me right with God."

"Sometimes being a Christian makes life easier and sometimes being a Christian makes life harder, but there is no religion or philosophy that offers the answers to the big questions of life, and a true sense of peace, like the God of the Bible - because there is no other God like Him."

# Nowhere to look but up

Several years ago Wayne Hicks decided to kill himself. He sat alone in his home with a bottle of whiskey and a 9mm handgun determined to put an end to his pain.

Life no longer felt worth living; his wife had taken his daughter and left him because of his alcohol and anger issues, the bank had repossessed his vehicles and home, his business was bankrupt and he had been blacklisted.

"I put the gun against my head many times," he recalls, "Every time I put my finger on the trigger, a loud voice in my right ear would say 'Kill yourself, there is no way out of this life. Do it, do it now.' Then I would hear a soft voice in my left ear saying 'Wait until tomorrow morning.'"

This went on until the bottle was empty and Wayne had passed out on the floor. The next morning a Christian friend he didn't know very well came to take him to church.

Wayne had been to church before. As a child he was forced to go even though his parents never attended.

His father was a violent alcoholic and his mother suffered from depression and anxiety.

"I became depressed at a young age," Wayne admits. "I feared my father and as I grew older my fear turned to anger and hatred towards him."

In Year 3 Wayne heard the story of Jesus from a teacher and made a commitment to follow Christ but stopped reading the Bible and praying soon afterwards.

At 15 Wayne's anger and hurt led him to find solace in parties, clubbing, brawling, alcohol, and drugs.

"My anger grew daily. I never feared anyone. Fighting became a way of life for me. I struggled with everything, life was a huge burden. I used my anger to cope – it was all I had to hold onto," Wayne confesses.

In his mid-twenties, knowing his life was a disaster, Wayne prayed asking God to bless him with someone who would love him and promising to quit drugs if He did.

"I heard God say 'You stop taking drugs and I'll bless you with someone who will love you'. The first night I went out sober I met Janean, a beautiful girl from a broken home," Wayne remembers. "She came to live with my family when her mother disowned her. Shortly after this she fell pregnant with our daughter Savannah."

They married but finding love did not solve all Wayne's problems.

"Life got worse as time went on. I worked full time during the day and ran a mobile disco at night. We struggled financially. Anger and depression were still part of my life. I never knew how to show Janean that I loved her and I struggled with the after effects of drugs for three years," Wayne shares.

"One night I got home from work and my wife asked me for a divorce. I refused and threatened her life. Two days later I arrived home and found the house empty. I was so devastated I collapsed on the floor and cried for a week."

That was the tipping point that caused Wayne to abandon all hope.

But the next morning, sitting in the back corner of the church with his friend he heard the minister say "I'm here to tell you that your life will never be right if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ". Wayne got up, walked to front of the church and dropped to his knees.

"I asked Jesus to forgive me and to help me. That day I gave Jesus Christ my life. It felt like a tap opened in my head and water ran through my entire body cleansing me. I heard an inner voice say 'Get up and live your life.' I got up and was completely healed. I felt no anger, rage, depression, hatred,



Wayne Hicks and his wife Janean have been married twice - to each other!

pain, or desire to drink or do drugs."

Wayne felt God promise to rebuild his life. At this stage, he and his wife had been divorced for two years, but shortly after his surrender to Jesus, Janean came back to him, committed her life to Jesus and the couple were remarried after receiving Biblical counselling.

God also told Wayne to reconcile

with his father, which he says was "a special time of healing".

Wayne acknowledges: "I am not alive today because of my own doing. I owe all that I am to Jesus who shed His blood for my sin on the cross at Calvary, who rose from the dead on the third day and who is seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. He picked me up out of the devil's clutches and gave me a new life." •

## Secular psychologist: atheism has a problem

BY AKOS BALOGH

**MODERN** Atheism has a problem. At least according to a Professor of Psychology at Toronto University, named Jordan Peterson.

It has got to do with the popular view among Atheists (especially among the New Atheists) about the God-like power of human reason.

Let me explain.

**Many Atheists believe that doing evil is irrational. And doing good is rational.**

So human reason alone can

show us morality: no God required.

According to many Atheists, anyone thinking rationally will know what good is, and do it. Doing evil, on the other hand – such as being selfish, and cheating on others – is irrational – in which case we don't need religion of any kind to tell us what right and wrong is – it's just self-evident.

But there's a problem with this logic.

As Professor Peterson says: "What is irrational about me getting exactly what I want from

every one of you whenever I want it at every possible second? ... There's nothing irrational about it. It's pure naked self-interest.

"Why not every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost? It's a perfectly coherent philosophy, and it's actually one that you can institute in the world with a fair bit of material success if you want to do it."

It is an interesting point. And it's relatively easy to find real life cases of this principle.

For example, is cheating on an exam the wrong thing to do? I know both Christians and Atheists would say 'yes'.

But: is it rational or irrational to cheat on a test?

The answer is not so obvious. After all, if you can cheat on a test, and get away with it, and it means the difference between getting that great job, or that mark needed

to gain entry to that prestigious university, cheating on a test may well be 'reasonable'.

The same could be said for that lucrative business deal: why not bend the rules, if it means you end up with thousands more in your pocket? If you are in an unhappy marriage, why not indulge in that marital affair, if you're sure you can get away with it? In sum, if the benefits of doing something illegal/immoral outweigh the risks of being caught, why not

do it? It's a rational calculation.

But, there's more.

Not only can selfishness – and other forms of evil – be rational; there are many possible situations where doing good can be considered irrational.

Jewish social commentator Dennis Prager gives the following historical example that makes the point:

"Was it rational or irrational for a non-Jew in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II to risk his or her life to hide a Jew? We all know that this was moral greatness of the highest order. But was it rational? Not really. You can't get much more rational than self-preservation."

And so here, in a nutshell, is the problem for Atheism: If doing evil can be rational, and doing good can be irrational, then human reason alone can't tell us right from wrong.

Reason leads to good only when you want it to. Just as it leads to bad when you want it to.

This is because Reason is just a tool. It is no more intrinsically moral than a knife. A knife can be used to murder or to torture people. But in the hands of a surgeon, it can be used to save lives.

So if it wasn't reason alone that gave us the western view of human rights, human equality, and human dignity, then where did such a view of humanity come from?

Peterson makes the same case: "[T]he proposition that underlies western culture, is



Dr Jordan Peterson. Photo: Adam Jacobs

that there's a transcendent morality... the ethic that drives our culture is predicated on the idea of God."

It is the idea that we are made in the image of God, with inherent worth, dignity, and equality.

In the words of Atheist philosopher Luc Ferry: "Christianity was to introduce the notion that humanity was fundamentally identical, that men were equal in dignity – an unprecedented idea at the time, and one to which our world owes its entire democratic inheritance."

Now, I'm not saying all Atheists are egotistical and self-seeking – many Atheists are noble, virtuous people (and many Christians do awful things!). I'm merely saying that Atheists are misguided in believing that

reason alone is a reliable guide to morality.

It is good that a secular psychologist like Peterson understands the problem with human reason. And from the Bible's perspective, although human beings, in general, have some sense of morality (due to our being made in God's image), our moral compass is far from perfect, and easily warped by our sinful desires, our culture, and other influences (e.g. Romans 1:18-32).

Hence, we need a word from outside ourselves to show us what is right and wrong. But more than that: we need Someone to rescue us from ourselves, renew our hearts, and give us a new moral compass – one that actually functions (albeit not without effort). Thanks be to God, for Jesus Christ. •



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# Dead certainty

BY DANIELLE JONES

**RECENTLY** in my home country there has been a surge of sudden, unexpected deaths. Autopsies revealed undiagnosed or untreated non-communicable diseases (NCDs). However, it seems like sudden death is common worldwide; perhaps not because of NCDs but through shootings, terrorist attacks, wars, natural disasters and hunger.

None of those people saw Mr. Death coming with his army, his sickle or his wrestling clothes, like Troy did in August Wilson's *Fences*. They were simply here one day and gone the next.

Recently, I studied the story of King Belshazzar in Daniel chapter 5. He was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, the conceited king who God cut down to size by making him live like an animal until he acknowledged that God was the Most High.

However, like his father, Belshazzar thought that he was the greatest and seemed to have learnt nothing from his father's punishment. So in this chapter he had a party and used the sacred goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, to drink wine while praising pagan gods.

So God sent him a message which appeared on his wall, and when the prophet Daniel interpreted it, it was a warning of his days coming to an end and his kingdom being divided because of his disobedience.

The chapter goes on to say that God had Belshazzar killed that very night.

My first reaction to this was "Woah, that's cruel." However, as I thought about the two major warnings he had received - his father's testimony and the writing on the wall - I wondered why he had not simply asked God to forgive his sins.

Perhaps Belshazzar was too busy. But what could be more important than heeding a life or death warning from the God of the universe?

Many of us are more similar to Belshazzar than we may think. Perhaps none of us have ever received writings in an ancient language by a ghostly hand on our dining room wall; but, we have all seen the news and heard the testimonies of others.

Thus, wouldn't it be accurate to say that we are being warned every day?

The fact is we could be killed because of the colour of our skin, our wealth or lack thereof, the uniform we wear, or from a stroke or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Therefore, how do we not see that tomorrow may be too late?

Today is the right time to pray for our souls, to forgive, to pray for our friends, family and enemies, to make an effort to spend time talking to God and reading his Word (the Bible), and to savour every moment that we have been given.

This reality has made me a lot more conscious and intentional about the way that I love people. More importantly, it has made me more intentional about the priority that I give to God in my everyday life.

As the Bible says: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16).

The Bible also says: "For, all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Peter 1:24)

It is a fact, 100% of us will die. Have you prepared for eternity? •

# Out of the darkness

**Sword-wielding drug dealer Tony Gielty - one of Scotland's most violent prisoners - finds peace after being shown simple kindness**

BY ALISON HULL (GOOD NEWS)

**F**ew people were living in as much darkness as Tony Gielty.

At just 17, Tony was sentenced to ten years in prison after he attempted to murder a man with a samurai sword. This was just the latest in a series of violent episodes, and once in prison, it continued. In fact it got worse. Nobody was safe from him - not his fellow prisoners, nor the staff around him. He was thrown out of the most violent prison in Scotland, and spent months in solitary confinement.

## REPUTATION

"Violence," he says now, "had become a massive part of my identity and my reputation, which in turn led to benefits - protection and criminal status."

Tony had not always been a violent person. A deep depression settled on him when he was still quite young, and the only antidote he found was the adrenaline that coursed through his system when he ran from the police, sold drugs or launched an attack on someone.

In prison, when alone, the memories of what he had done tortured him. But he found himself incapable of breaking the pattern of hitting out. And, as an ex-boxing champion, he was powerful. Recklessness made him even harder to control.

At the end of their resources, after Tony had been in prison for a few years, the Scottish Prison Service was about to reach for its last weapon - to put him on the Ghost Train. This is a policy of putting difficult to control prisoners into solitary confinement permanently - moving them around from prison to prison, a few months here, and a few months there, leaving them disorientated and unable to cause trouble. Its effect was, he says, "to destroy a prisoner psychologically."

And at this point, another prisoner told him bluntly - "You need to see a priest."

## LOVE

Tony knew about priests - he had been brought up in the Catholic Church, and had even gone through a period of loving Jesus and wanting to be a saint as a child. All that was way behind him now, but he made the request. And when

he met Father John, he met something new, something he had not encountered in prison, up to that point. He met the love of God.

Tony says: "The chaplain's genuine love really stood out in a dark environment." In the book he has written about his experiences, *Out of the Darkness*, he uses a quote from Simone Weil: "One of the rarest and purest form of generosity is to pay attention." Tony explains "It was the simple forms of kindness that most touched my heart."

And slowly he began to change. After meeting the chaplain, he began reading the Bible and attending the chapel.



Tony and Anna Gielty on their wedding day.

Although his drug-dealing continued, the violence stopped. Those around him, including the prison staff, could see the difference.

But a plan to bring a violent man (one of Tony's friends) in from another prison, in the belief that Tony would be a good influence on him, backfired. Soon they were both in solitary confinement.

And then God really got to work on Tony, who was finally able to see himself from God's point of view.

Through reading the book of Amos in the Bible, Tony saw just how sinful he was and that he would be judged for his sins by a righteous God.

"I had stood in the highest court of my country, in front of the highest representatives of my nation's law but that was child's play in comparison to the thought of the



Tony and his son, Louis.

judgement of God," he writes.

Tony made the decision to follow Jesus but wanted to know for sure that God was real. When he asked God to show him a dove and was answered in the most unlikely way, Tony was stunned that God would answer the prayer of a sinner.

"As I was thanking God and weeping, I was filled with a supernatural peace. I could feel the love of God as it poured into my heart. I had peace, an unshakeable peace, and a peace like I had never known. I was in a maximum security prison, inside a solitary cell, and I was freer than I had ever been in my life!"

The man who had left solitary confinement a little while later looked different on the outside, and was very different on the inside. The drug-dealing which, even in prison, made Tony a rich man and brought him privileges, trendy clothing and other perks, was over.

## CHANGED

He threw out of his cell all the things his trading had brought him. He started calling himself Anthony instead of Tony, signifying that he was a new person. And he wanted - and wants - more than anything is to let the others know the Jesus who has completely changed his life.

"Right from the start," he says, "I was desperate to present the mercy of Jesus Christ, so that others trapped in hate may find a way out, and those facing hopeless situations may be encouraged to seek God. Too many of my friends have been killed, imprisoned or remain trapped in drug abuse, written off by themselves and others. But God didn't write me off, even when I was in a padded solitary, silent cell, facing years in prison."

Tony once felt like there was an unmovable mountain between him and God but now says,

"Those dark doubts could no longer touch me. I was free. I thought I was cursed and cut off from God, but where I deserved death, He had given me life, and where there is life there is hope."

## COMMITTED

On his release, Anthony went on to study, marry, start a family and work both in prisons and with people who have life-controlling problems. In all cases, he is committed to showing others, especially prisoners that what happened to him can happen to them.

When he sums up why he wrote the book, Anthony simply says: "To see people come to know Jesus. For them to know that God is real, that He cares. To give people hope, that no matter how dark your life might be, Jesus is able to overcome it." •

nudge WITH KARL FAASE

## Never get comfortable with unbelief

**WHEN** you consider the shifts in thinking, education and pressures in modern western democracies, it is almost surprising the number of people who follow Christian belief.

Yet in all western countries faith and belief are still a significant part of the community. This cannot be explained just through history and families. Thousands of people continue to choose to follow Jesus every day across wealthy western nations.

Canadian writer and philosopher Charles Taylor writes:

"The individual pursuit of happiness as defined by consumer culture still absorbs much of our time ... All this is true and yet the sense that something more presses in. ... Our age is very far from settling into comfortable unbelief."

In the face of opposition, Christian belief continues to grow. The key reason for that is, as Taylor suggests, we cannot get comfortable with unbelief. •

# Building Better Marriages

## THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE

BY ROB FURLONG

**REMEMBER** the story of the Tortoise and the Hare? Aesop's fable concerns a tortoise who was fed up with being ridiculed for his slowness by a hare and challenged him to a race!

Convinced he would win easily, the hare took time out for a nap halfway through but awoke with a start to discover the tortoise had both passed him and crossed the finish line first.

At first glance, before the race is run, it is obvious that the hare has a distinct advantage over the tortoise - it would be a brave person to bet *against* the hare!

As the hare's coach what advice would you give him pre-race?

"It's in the bag!" or "Win, but don't overdo it. Save your energy for the

bigger race."

Perhaps you might be more circumspect and advise him, "Don't underestimate this guy, this a *long* race!"

What advice would you give the tortoise?

"I admire your courage, but you have way too much baggage holding you down, hindering you from winning this race."

But who *really* had the most baggage?

The hare!

He was lazy and arrogant. He had poor follow through and lacked stickability.

The tortoise's baggage was obvious but it also brought out his best. It produced endurance, tenacity, perseverance and courage.

And I don't think losing would have bothered him. His goal was to finish the race!

The tortoise recognized and dealt with his baggage and he kept moving forward.

The same principle operates in marriage as a couple grows in their oneness.

If a couple are to grow closer over the years then it means that they both will have developed ways of identifying their personal baggage *and dealing with it.*

Every one of us comes to marriage with "baggage", but so many are unaware of it.

And we quickly discover that living under the same roof with another person creates all sorts of issues and conflicts!

However, rather than deal with our baggage we often retreat into blaming the other person and demanding that they "sort themselves out!"

Of course, there is truth to that. We all carry personal baggage and need to work it through in order to become whole people.

But unawareness of or refusal to acknowledge our own baggage, makes us extremely unsafe and heading for personal and relational disaster.

I can remember when recognizing and dealing with some of my own baggage became deeply personal for me.

I had a bad habit of reading too much into comments made by others to me, perceiving them as personal criticisms of me or my performance.

This was particularly pronounced in my relationship with Karen. She might make an observation about something I had done or said and if



it did not agree completely with how I saw it then I would take it personally and feel quite wounded.

But when I began to recognize and *own* my behavior, I also began to identify the *faulty thinking process* that was at the root of it all.

I would hear the comment, interpret it incorrectly (instead of clarifying what was said), which then led to a whole range of negative thoughts and responses.

Things began to change when I deliberately grabbed the negative thought early in this negative cycle and replaced it with positive and truthful statements.

As I went through this process of dealing with some of my baggage, we grew closer as a couple; we grew in our oneness.

I wish I could say that I have perfected this but I can't. But I can say that my marriage is richer because I am married to a woman who is committed to journeying with me because she knows that I want to be a better man.

And I am just as committed to her as she deals with her own baggage.

So what are you? A tortoise or hare? ●

## Lessons from a sausage dog (Part 9)

BY JODY BENNETT

**MY** youngest daughter likes to tell me about how many dogs and other pets she is going to have one day - a sausage dog, a pug, a couple of Corgis (like the Queen has), a greyhound and a Labrador!



"Don't you realise how expensive that will be?" I asked her. "Buying the dogs is hugely expensive and then you have ongoing costs - vet bills, food, toys, equipment, grooming, kennelling when you go away; not to mention the time needed to care for and exercise all those dogs!"

I guess having dogs is a little like having children - if we really sat down and worked out how much they would cost us personally and financially - not to mention emotionally - then we wouldn't have them at all!

But almost everyone who has dogs or children will tell you that the benefits vastly outweigh the costs; and they would definitely recommend owning pets or having kids.

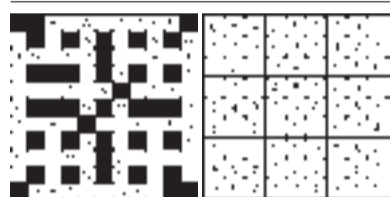
In the same way, becoming a Christian can be extremely costly, to the extent that often outsiders cannot understand why anyone would want to make the commitment.

Jesus warned his disciples in Luke 14 of that cost, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ... In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

For some converts, Christianity means they have to abandon some relationships, some habits, some cherished notions. For other people it costs them even more directly when their family rejects them, they are chased out of their homes, lose their jobs, are thrown in prison or have to forfeit their very lives.

Yet I have only ever heard of Christians agreeing with the Apostle Paul when he says in Romans chapter 8 verse 18: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Like having pets or kids, Christianity may seem to be a ridiculous investment of time, money and effort for no dollar and cents return, but those who have done it know that what they gained in joy, love, forgiveness, hope and eternal life, is immeasurably more than they have lost. ●



## How can I become a Christian?

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

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

<b>OUR PROBLEM:</b>	<b>Separation from God</b> "Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God's standards are perfect" (Romans 3:23)	<b>ADMIT</b>
<b>GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION:</b>	<b>Jesus died on the cross</b> "God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)	<b>BELIEVE</b>
<b>OUR RESPONSE:</b>	<b>Trust Jesus by receiving Him</b> "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)	<b>COMMIT</b>

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 :**

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

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

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

I would like to think about this.

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

*\* Please tick and write clearly \**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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### WISH SHOPPING APP

**CHRISTMAS** will be upon us very shortly, so how about an app that makes it possible to do all your gift shopping without leaving the comfort of your armchair?

Wish shopping app allows you to choose any of thousands of gifts, most heavily discounted, and have them delivered to your door.

You can get everything from clothes and shoes, jewellery and art items, to homewares, nifty gadgets, bags and wallets, and make up.

They also have lots of baby products and toys, and there are many items for crafters, gardeners and hairdressers.

Conveniently, you can shop at any time, so you can use your commute or your hours of insomnia to productively get through your Christmas list. (Be warned however



there is a great danger of finding more items for yourself than for anybody else!)

Many of the products are things you won't see in the shops. There are also branded items from retailers like Fitbit, Redken and Sony.

Each day there is also the opportunity to "Spin and Win" and get an extra discount off items or save with flash deals. Some products are even free and all you have to pay is postage.

The app, which has more than 150 million users, notes your preferences and over time will show you more of the things you are interested in.

Products on the site are very well described and usually feature several photographs. Many items give you a choice of colour and/or size. There is also an easy return policy.

The products this writer has ordered have all arrived safely and mostly ahead of the estimated delivery time. They have been exactly as described and she has yet to be disappointed.

In fact, why wait until Christmas, get presents all year round with Wish! ●

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# Player finds two new families



**Australian rules footballer Anthony William Watson McDonald-Tipungwuti had his life transformed by two unexpected encounters that gave him opportunities, hope and a bright future he could not before have envisaged.**

**MELBOURNE, SEPTEMBER 1, 2017:** Anthony McDonald-Tipungwuti of the Bombers runs with the ball during an Essendon Bombers AFL training session at Essendon Football Club. (Photo Scott Barbour/Getty Images)

**T**he 24-year-old, 1.71-metre player, recognised by his famous dreadlocks and notable for his explosive pace, excellent ball use and emphatic tackles, had his first unexpected meeting when he crossed paths with Jane McDonald on the Tiwi Islands at the age of 16.

Anthony was born and raised on the islands, off the coast of Darwin, in an Indigenous Australian family. His father died when he was a baby and, while his mother is still alive, he was raised by his beloved grandmother until she died when he was 10.

He then lived with his aunt until meeting Jane, who came to the islands with her daughter, Nikki, to work at a local school.

At the time, Anthony spoke barely any English.

A pair of socks was the catalyst for his first bonding experience with Jane.

"There was one training session where I forgot my socks and I said to Mum, 'Do you have any spare socks?'"

"She said to my sister (Nikki), 'Go on, take off your socks and give them to Anthony'. From then on, we had a connection," Anthony remembers.

The following year, 2009, Anthony was adopted by Jane in Gippsland,

and in 2010 he came to study at Chairo Christian College near Pakenham, where Jane worked, with his main goal being education.

Football was an added bonus, and he started playing with TAC Cup outfit Gippsland Power — where he featured in two grand final teams — and the school eventually gave him one afternoon off a week to work with his coaches.

Later Jane "took off her mum hat" and turned coach too.

"She was pretty hard — that's what mums are for," he said.

"But I look at it as a real positive. She has made me become a good footballer rather than taking all the easy roads. She gave me that hard feedback to improve on, giving me advice and pushing me to become a better player."

Anthony had been working in Essendon Football Club's community department and had spent three years on the Bombers' VFL list, before he worked up the courage, with encouragement from Jane, to ask coach John Worsfold to give him a chance to train for the 2015 draft.

He has played with Essendon in

the AFL, ever since.

"I'm really lucky and grateful that they gave me the opportunity. I haven't looked back since," grins Anthony.

Jane still works at the college in Gippsland and is there for him as he continues to adjust. "She's helped me with life and footy," he said. "She's teaching me a few things around the house and how to look after it." She is also in charge of his strict training diet.

Another thing Jane has helped Anthony with, is his faith, and in 2015 he had a spiritual encounter that caused him to fully embrace Christianity.

"In the year before I got drafted, I made that decision to give my life to God," he said. "I made the decision where I needed a change in my life. God's been good. He gave me a good opportunity and from the start and to the end. He is there to look up to and encourage me to work through life."

Anthony and Jane pray together before he goes into the rooms before every game, and he joins the club chaplain again before the match to communicate with God.

**"I made that decision to give my life to God"**

"It's one of the things that just reminds me that God is there to guide me through the tough times on the field and off the field," he said.

"It's building in me, Christianity. It is pretty hard in an AFL environment, but I really enjoy the challenge. It's a good challenge — you've got to be truthful in your faith and accept people for who they are."

The Bible says becoming a Christian is being adopted into God's family and taking on a new identity — just like the way Anthony took the McDonald family name in 2014 to reflect his new identity as part of her family.

Anthony says he fitted right in

with his four siblings from the minute he arrived.

"We had all bonded straight away. So we made it official. I said, 'I'm part of the family', but the one thing I needed was the name."

"I explained the reason (to family on the Tiwi Islands) and said, 'Jane is my mum and they're my family now and I'm lucky to have them in my life'."

Jane has said she's lucky that she found Anthony but they are both fortunate to have found each other and even more blessed to have found the love, purpose and security that comes from being "found" by Jesus. •

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