

Fatherhood fixed felon's fears

One of Cameron Casteel's earliest memories is of his father beating up his mother. He recalls his father being handcuffed and taken away. Cameron experienced abandonment, imprisonment, abuse, and homelessness before he had even finished high school. Then, when his girlfriend became pregnant, Cameron saw only one solution. How could he be a father when he'd never had one himself?

Sharing his story on his YouTube channel, Cameron says he didn't know how to process the emotions that came with his traumatic childhood experiences and began to rebel against his mother and the law.

"At a very young age I'd already broken into several schools, I'd been in tons of fights, I had stolen from several stores, and I'd stolen from people," Cameron admits. "People would always say, 'Oh you're just like your dad.' That kind of made me proud a little bit, I hate to say, because my dad was my hero."

Then a close family friend took his own life. Cameron was confused and hurt. "I realized that there was an escape from the pain that I was enduring," Cameron says.

At 13 years old, Cameron decided to kill himself. One day he was on his way home to take an overdose of pills and a neighbor saw him and asked him what he was doing.

"I don't know why I told her the truth, but I did." The neighbor was a Christian and prayed for him and told him about Jesus. Cameron

decided not to kill himself at that time but the thoughts did not go away. Then his father was released from prison. He got married and had a child – Cameron's half-sister.

"He would tell me all the time, 'If you don't help me sell these drugs then your sister is going to go without diapers and food.'"

So at 14 years old, Cameron helped his father sell drugs and it wasn't long before he ended up in a juvenile detention center.

Cameron found a Bible in the prison library and read that Jesus loved him and wanted to be his Father. But he resented the words he read.

"I didn't want a dad. I didn't want someone to love me, because all I knew at this point was that it brought pain."

After Cameron's release from the juvenile correction center, he lived with his aunt and uncle while he was on probation. But when that ended, he moved back in with his dad, who was unable to look after him and eventually kicked him out.

Feeling as though he had burned his bridges with other family members, Cameron found himself homeless and begging at stores for food that was going to be thrown away.

Then Cameron met a girl at school, Presleigh, and it was love at first sight. By the end of the year, Presleigh was pregnant.



Cameron Casteel with his wife Presleigh (above) and his daughter Isabel (left).

"I wasn't ready to be a dad," Cameron admits. "I'd never had a dad and so I told her, 'Let's have an abortion.'" Presleigh didn't want an abortion and the pair fought about it for days. Eventually she booked an abortion in a different state.

Curious to know about the abortion process, Cameron looked at some videos online. He came across a song called *Give me a Voice* by Dillon Chase. The first line of the song: 'I thought this was a womb not a tomb,' brought tears to Cameron's eyes. He felt as if his unborn daughter was speaking those words to him. He called Presleigh and begged her not to go through with the abortion. To his relief, she told him she had already decided not to.

When Cameron's daughter was born he remembers holding her in his arms and looking into her eyes for the first time.

eron, you can be the child you never were. I am the Father that you never had. I never left you. I have never forsaken you. And Cameron, when it came down to it, I did die for you."

"I lifted my hands in that moment and I surrendered everything I had to King Jesus. I couldn't run anymore. Everything that I had experienced in my life trying to fill this eternal gap I tried to fill it with temporary things and it just never seemed to work. God revealed to me His love – the love of the Father – through me becoming a father."

As Cameron looks back at his story he now sees that Jesus was there all along.

"He was always in my corner and He was always saying, 'Come here, I love you. I'm the Dad you need.'"

Not long after this, Presleigh also gave her life to Jesus and the couple married. Cameron now goes around

"I said, 'You'll be the child that I never was and I'll be the father that I never had. I'll never let you go and if it comes down to it, I'm gonna die for you.' And it was in that same moment that I felt God talk to me and say, 'Cam-

sharing the good news of Jesus in prisons with Dillon Chase.

"I encourage you today to follow Jesus," Cameron tells others. "I don't know your situation. I don't know what you're going through but I do know that you're in such great dire need that Jesus abandoned the throne of heaven to come down and die in your place. And to me that's a God worth living for."

Fun for Kids
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Youth Truth
Page 8 and 9



Dillon Chase, whose song changed Cameron's views on his unborn child.

BACK PAGE

YEAR OF BIG CHANGE
SYDNEY MCLAUGHLIN

Katie's incredible kindness



Benji and Katie Majors with their adopted girls.

BY ALLIE SCRIBNER

Katie Davis was a Tennessee high school homecoming queen and class president headed to nursing school, but instead she became a mom to 13 needy girls in Africa.

Katie adopted them after being confronted with their dire circumstances and poverty, during a short-term mission trip to an orphanage in Uganda.

Katie had been raised in a Christian home and had learned about Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross from an early age, which inspired her own love for the vulnerable.

"Around the age of 12 or 13, I began to delve into the truths of Scripture," she writes in her first book, *Kisses from Katie* (2011). "As I read and learned more and more of what Jesus said, I liked the lifestyle I saw around me less and less. I began to realize that God wanted more from me, and I wanted more of Him. He began to grow in me a desire to live intentionally, and different from anyone I had ever known."

On a mission trip after finishing school in 2008, she was moved to

compassion by the conditions she observed first-hand in Uganda. Believing she could make a difference, she decided to put off college for one year and stay to teach kindergarten in the Christian-run orphanage.

During her time there, a terrible rainstorm caused a mud house to collapse, burying several children. Leaders scurried to rescue the kids buried under the remains of the earthen house. Fortunately, none were seriously hurt and all recovered in a local hospital.

After being rescued, Agnas, 9, whose parents both died of AIDS, sadly asked if she could live with Katie forever.

Looking into the pleading brown eyes, Katie could not say no.

That was the beginning. Katie didn't immediately embrace her destiny. To please her parents, she returned to the United States to get her nursing degree but soon dropped out as she found herself longing for the people of Uganda.

She returned to Africa as a full-time missionary. As she worked with the children, she felt a bond growing in her heart. Under Ugandan law,

she had to be 25 to adopt, but she could initially be granted custodial care.

"My first instinct [was] not, 'Oh, a baby—let me adopt it!' Because I think, best-case scenario, they're raised in Uganda by Ugandans ... But knowing there [was] nowhere else for them to go, I [didn't] find myself capable of sending them away," Katie explains.

When she was old enough, Katie began adopting orphans — 13 of them! All the girls had either lost parents to AIDS or were abused or

abandoned.

"I feel like she's really my mother because she shows me love," says Prissy, one of the girls. "I feel like, yes, this is my mom."

Katie married fellow Tennessean missionary, Benji Majors, in 2015 and they now have two biological sons.

She has set up Amazina (Truth) Ministries International to underwrite two schools and a medical and vocational outreach, as well as scholarships that help hundreds of children attend school. It also runs

the Masese Feeding Program serving over 1200 meals each week day.

Katie believes her choices are the result of divine providence: "God just designed me this way because He already knew that this is what the plan was for my life, even though I didn't know."

She has written a second book about her life *Daring to Hope: Finding God's Goodness in the Broken and Beautiful* (2017), and is currently working on a third. Read more at katiemajors.blog.

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Jewish man freed from grip of drugs, depression

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Ira Forkish spent half his life "strangled by the demons of loneliness and anger, peppered with resentment and fear, all fuelled by the daily use of alcohol and drugs."

As he surveyed a "lifetime of darkness" one day, Ira, then 32, ruled out religion.

"My main teacher in Hebrew School was a bully and me, not being a traditional learner, could not grasp God's language," he told God Reports. "I searched for God in places like hallucinogens for years and even dabbled in researching dark arts, (and there was) nothing. So God was out."

Drugs were his touchstone and he imbibed as many as he could, experimenting with different mixtures in the hope he could escape the clutches of depression.

"Sometime during this period of desperation, some of my partying buddies found Jesus and so they invited me to a Bible study," he remembers. "Why not? I told myself. In one of these studies Jesus appeared to me in a very real manifestation. Finally (there was) hope."

The vast expanse of empty meaning was suddenly filled with a real God. There was hope outside of drugs.

But just because he had surrendered his life to Jesus doesn't mean Ira immediately found a way out of drugs. He was not completely free yet, and the parties turned darker.

"Every time I used drugs, the depression got worse, like having a one-ton grain of sand piled one by one on my heart and mind," he remembers. "Desperation, desperation, desperation — with no road out."

He wondered where Jesus was. Had the Son of God abandoned him?

"My life had crashed into a point where all its pieces resembled a jigsaw puzzle dumped onto a table and no matter how I looked at it there were no visible moves," he recalls.

Of course, God had not abandoned him. He showed up in the form of a buddy, who had enrolled in a treatment program for drugs and alcohol. That buddy called and

asked how Ira was doing.

"I guess it was apparent that for me things were 180 degrees from smooth because his reason for calling was to tell me that they were bringing the program to LA," Ira says.

Within two months, he promised the program would be in Los Angeles and Ira would have hope.

That friend called frequently. "Did you stay sober since we last spoke?" he would ask.

"No," Ira responded candidly.

Decades before Ira was born, Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, got sober through the Christian "Oxford Group." The two keys were his relationship with God and the

work helping other alcoholics who needed "to put the plug in the jug."

Ira's friend was enrolled in a spinoff rehabilitation group called Palmer Drug Abuse Program, and when it opened in Los Angeles, "it brought me not only a way to live drug-free but most importantly how I could live in a lifestyle that required rigorous honesty and relationships with God and others."

Desperate to be free from the strangling grip of addiction, Ira attended meetings every day. Sometimes more than once a day.

There were people who "would go to party after party and leave a wake of passed-out bodies behind them, criminals, drug dealers, robbers with or without guns and so many more," Ira recounts. "But here they were honest about their transgressions and willing to go to those harmed and do their best to make good."

Love permeated the meetings. The people were being restored and rediscovering their love for life.

Today, at 73 years old, Ira is celebrating 41 years of sobriety. He is in the reinsurance industry. His wife of 30 years has stood by his side through lost babies, bankruptcy and children with disabilities.

"God is my counsellor and protector," Ira says.

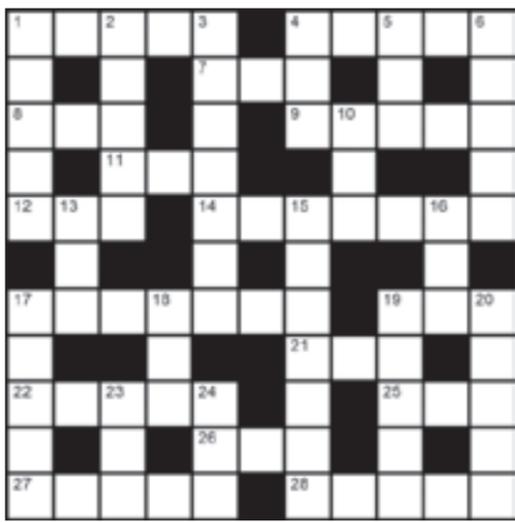
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Coffee Break

CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Nail's cousin!
- 4 ___ and puffs
- 7 Christ the Redeemer site
- 8 Be achy and weak
- 9 Perpendicular, vertical
- 11 Australian bird
- 12 Get it wrong
- 14 Sea in Israel
- 17 Thick pureed drink
- 19 Long ___ (in the past)
- 21 Cereal grain
- 22 Tower of London birds
- 25 A month (abb)
- 26 A lyric poem
- 27 French painter
- 28 Ancient souvenir



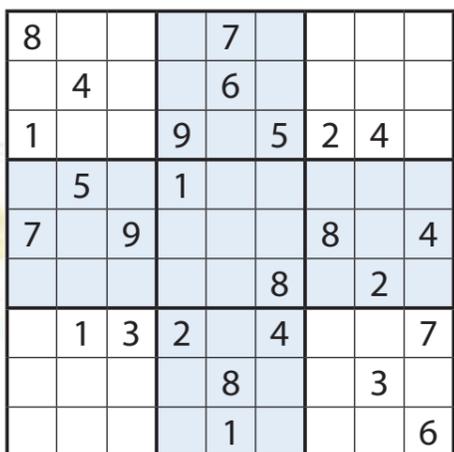
DOWN

- 1 Plant support
- 2 King or queen
- 3 Metal beaten into shape
- 4 A jump on one foot
- 5 Winter bug
- 6 Curved cavalry weapon
- 10 Floral necklace
- 13 Canyon feature
- 15 Short stop in a journey
- 16 Bird-to-be
- 17 Play guitar strings
- 18 Metal in rocks
- 19 Coral-ring island
- 20 Eye-linked
- 23 Delivery vehicle
- 24 Ropy sounding negative!

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



"They squared the wagons. Are they allowed to do that?"



I blamed myself for my dad's drug death



Adelle Howells

When Adelle Howells was 12 years old, she realized her family was different to other families. Her parents were drug addicts, she had spent time in foster care and she already had a criminal record. As time went on, Adelle became a drug user herself. One night tragedy struck her home and she carried guilt with her for nine years until she found forgiveness and a love she'd never experienced before.

In an interview on the Kirkholt Community Church YouTube channel, Adelle shares that one day, when she was 11, she had left her house in order to escape the constant violence in her home. She ran into a boy from her class and they got into a disagreement and ended up fighting.

"I got arrested and charged with aggravated bodily harm," she admits. "I was only 11 years old and already had got myself a criminal record."

Then when she was in high school, she recalls a time she was called out of class by a teacher to speak to someone from social services.

The woman told Adelle that her mother was going to flee her violent relationship and she could choose to stay at her school and go into care or leave with her mom.

"There was no way I was gonna go into care again. I'd been there before and I didn't like it. So I chose to go with my mom and we moved into a hostel."

There was another reason Adelle wanted to move away with her mom. She was being sexually abused by someone close to her.

"I didn't think anyone would believe me so I just blocked it out... It makes you feel dirty. It makes you feel like you're not worthy."

After they moved into the hostel, Adelle started taking drugs and sleeping around. "I lost all respect for my body," she shares. "I didn't think that there was anything worth saving because it had already been taken."

At the age of 14, Adelle found out she was pregnant. Her home life was very difficult as her mom was taking drugs and they didn't get along. So after her baby was born Adelle left home and stayed on a friend's couch. At 16 she got the keys to a flat of her own and the next year she met a boy and he moved in.

"I thought that we could have a little family together," she recalls. "Things were alright in the beginning but then he started to get control and I couldn't go anywhere without telling him where I was going. He started to get violent and I real-

ized then that I was now following in my mom's footsteps."

Adelle found herself back at the same hostel she'd stayed in with her mom when she was escaping a violent relationship.

"I didn't want to bring my son up in that environment and I didn't want to follow in [my mother's] footsteps," she says, so she managed to get her own place again and her dad even started coming around. It had been nine years since she had seen him.

"I used to think he was coming to spend time with me but he wasn't - whenever he was there my mom was there and they'd disappear off upstairs to take drugs together. They were taking heroin together. One night when my dad came to stay with me and my mom wasn't there he asked me to go and score him some drugs."

At the time Adelle was taking amphetamines. She hadn't slept for two nights so had planned to just go to bed but her dad kept asking her to go. Eventually she gave in and got the drugs for her dad. But after he took them, he started to get a headache. Adelle gave him some painkillers and left him to get some sleep.

"I went to bed and I got up the next morning with my four-year-old son and I walked into the living room where my dad was sleeping and I found my dad dead."

Adelle's father had died from a brain haemorrhage caused by the drugs he took that night. "I blamed myself - if I'd just kept saying no and just gone to bed, my dad would still be here and I wouldn't be living with this guilt."

The guilt continued to follow Adelle for nine years. Then she found out about a conference for people affected by drug addiction called Fixed, which was to be held at a church. Initially apprehensive, she was surprised by the welcoming atmosphere of the modern church. As she listened to the speakers, Adelle felt it was as if God was speaking directly to her.

At the end of the day, the final speaker took to the stage.

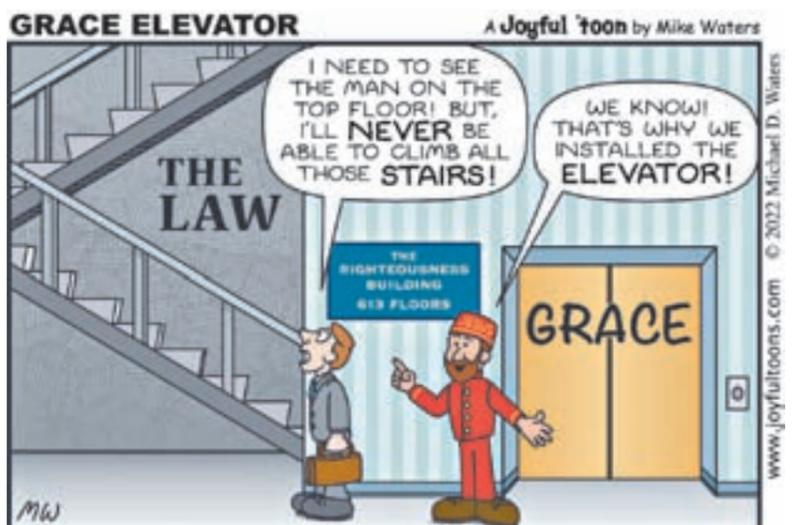
"He spoke about Jesus and how he died on the cross for all our faults, flaws and failures and that no matter what we've done we could be forgiven," Adelle shares in the documentary *Adelle: A Redemption*.

Adelle went to the front of the church and received prayer. That was the day she decided to receive Jesus' forgiveness and follow Him.

"It was just an amazing feeling and I knew that I'd been forgiven. I knew that I was accepted by Jesus. I knew that my life was about to change."

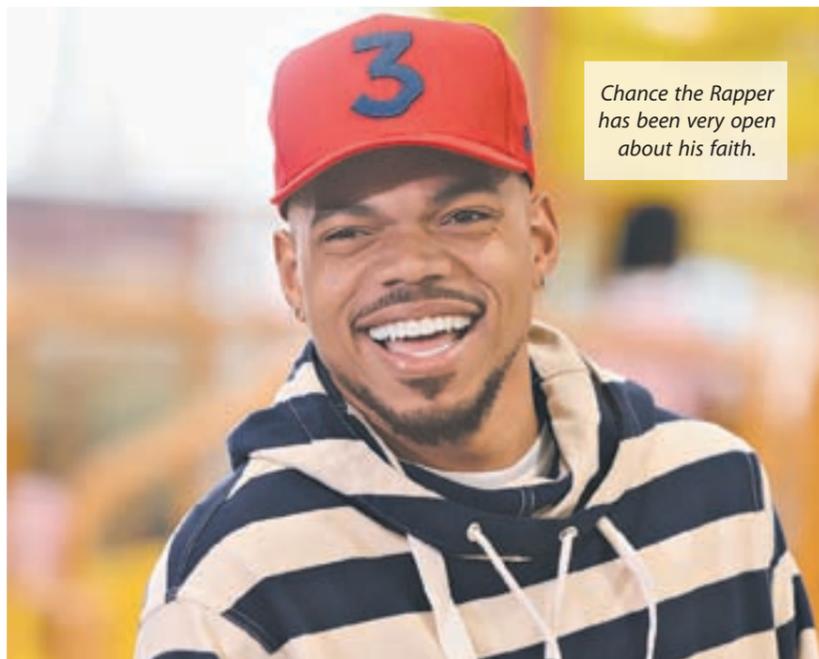
Adelle began attending church and later worked with the trust that organized the Fixed conference and spoke in schools, prisons and churches about how God had transformed her life.

I KNEW THAT I WAS ACCEPTED BY JESUS.



For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. - john 1:17 niv

Chance encounter



Chance the Rapper has been very open about his faith.

Looking at the online bios of Chance the Rapper, who has a history of drug use, swearing and sexual immorality, one may not immediately realize that he is a Christian. And yet, like his mentor Kanye West, the evidence attests that he has come out of a profoundly self-focussed past to find the forgiveness and new life offered in relationship with Jesus Christ.

His own Instagram posts state the case eloquently: "*The wages of sin are death*. That's heavy knowledge right there! All of us are born into sin, BUT the son of God lived a completely sinless life, won the victory over Satan in the garden, and STILL experienced death on the cross. All for us. Tmw I celebrate His victory over death" He tweeted on the 11th of April this year, the day before Easter Sunday.

He has also posted a quote from Psalm 51 in the Bible that reads: "*Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.*"

And that is exactly what God does when we turn to Him, apologizing for all the ways we have disobeyed and rebelled against Him and asking Him to help us start afresh.

This big moment came for Chance (real name Chancellor Bennett) as it does for many people, in a moment of crisis. Often at these times we realise just how frail and helpless we are in the face of the big issues like disaster, disease or death.

The successful rapper, singer, songwriter, activist and actor was raised as a Christian by his grandmother but later walked away from his faith. He turned back to God when his daughter Kensli was born with an atrial flutter (abnormal heart rhythm). Speaking about the situation, he said "[I just] pray a whole lot, you know, and need a lot of angels ... And...you know, God blessed everything, it worked out well."

Following the situation, Chance wrote on Twitter on January 31, 2016, "Today's the last day of my old life, last day smoking cigs. Headed to church for help. All things are possible through Christ who strengthens me."

Since then, Chance has reconciled with and got married to his daughter's mother, Kirsten Corley, from whom he was estranged, and they have had a second little girl, Marli.

He has also cleaned up his life, been very open about his faith publicly and, inspired by musicians like Kirk Franklin and Kanye West, has produced many gospel driven songs.

Chance's music has been described as uplifting, generally containing jazz-inspired melodies and gospel influences. His lyrics usually have references to Chris-

tian theology, his struggles with his faith and his upbringing. Chance also incorporates choirs into his music to attempt to maximize the gospel undertones.

The multi-award winning rapper shared details about his faith on "The Ellen Show" last year after DeGeneres pointed out that Chance has given millions of dollars to charity and asked, "Why is it important for you to give back?"

The 27-year-old entertainer, who is worth an estimated \$33 million said: "So, my understanding of a lot of stuff is based on Jesus. Jesus teaches us to ... care for your neighbor, care for people who aren't necessarily your blood but still a part of your body, because we're all humans."

He also credited his parents with instilling in him the value of caring for and giving to those in need. His parents have both been actively involved in Illinois politics and social justice issues.

"So I guess it's a mixture of my parents and Jesus," he said.

The year before the celebrity announced he was taking a brief sabbatical to spend time studying the Bible.

"[Christians] all quote Scripture and tell each other what God likes and doesn't like, but how much time do we spend as followers of Jesus to really just read and KNOW His Word?" he said at the time. "I'm definitely guilty of not devoting time to it. So I'm off to read and learn, because the next generation of Bennett is here."

Good for him, for wanting to get to grips with what Christianity really teaches before passing it on to his children!

People have also been curious about the number three Chance wears on his hat. "I've rationalized it to myself that it stands for the third mixtape (Coloring Book, which earned three Grammy awards), the Holy Trinity, and the three-pronged family of myself, my girls, and my wife," Chance said in an interview.

In an Instagram post in March as US quarantine began, Chance encouraged his followers: Matthew 5:14-16 says let that light shine so they may know the Father.

I encourage everyone out there today! Be who He made you to be!! A servant, a neighbor, a light, a smile, a helping hand, a worshipper, A WITNESS!! For He is God and God alone!! He is nigh HALLELUJAH [praise the Lord].

"People often talk about an epidemic of suicide, but the real epidemic is the increasing rejection of a robust belief in an afterlife. That's what is miring more and more people in hopelessness." - Clay Jones

Ex Playboy bunny on finding 4-ever love

BY MARK ELLIS

Dropping out after her first year of college, Robyn Dykstra interviewed with the “Bunny Mother” at the Playboy Club in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and soon found herself donning a skimpy outfit with rabbit ears and bunny tail, serving drinks to ogling men.

“I was among many drop-dead gorgeous women,” she told God Reports. “Playboy makes you think you are no more irreplaceable than a golf cart. There were 100 women behind me who would step into my stilettos if I got fired or broke the rules.”

Despite Playboy’s uninhibited image, the rules outlined in the *Bunny Handbook* Robyn received in the late 70s were strict, including:

Bunnies were not allowed to date customers or be alone with men without permission.

Bunnies could not have tattoos; wear eyeglasses, shoes lower than 3 inches or jewellery of any kind except for Playboy cufflinks; and had to strictly watch their weight.

Bunnies had to wear false eyelashes and vivid, bright lipstick and could not eat, drink, smoke, or sit down in front of customers.

For her adherence to Playboy’s highly-crafted fantasy look, she was well-paid. “I made more money than my mom and dad combined,” she says. “People would give you \$50 bills for looking pretty and smiling.

It was hard work; I was a glorified cocktail waitress.”

Robyn grew up in a single parent home with a liberal minded mother.

“I had been sexually active for years. I believed my body was mine to do with as I pleased. I believed there was such a thing as safe sex, and that if I was responsible, my choice to have sex wouldn’t hurt me or anyone else.”

She also used sex to manipulate men. “Men were so ridiculously willing to say or do anything to see a naked woman,” she recounts.

Robyn had a distorted view of Christians, based on what she had seen in the media. “I was pretty sure they weren’t allowed to have any fun. They couldn’t go to movies or out dancing,” she thought.

Before she dropped out of college, Robyn met a Christian man named Jay who “wasn’t at all what I expected Christians to be like – all pious and stodgy,” she notes.

When she learned he was a virgin, she devised a plan to seduce him. He firmly but gently rebuffed her advances, and the two drifted apart, but remained friends.

Instead, Robyn married an ex-con she met at the Club. After he lost his temper and hit her one day, she filed for divorce and went back to school to become a

teacher.

Her previous friendship with Jay blossomed into romance. Both their mothers were against the two marrying. “My mom didn’t want me to marry a religious fanatic,” she recounts. “Helen (Jay’s mom) didn’t want her son to marry a Jezebel,

a heathen girl who had no idea how to love him like he deserved.”

Shortly before their wedding, they attended a church service together.

At the end of the message, the pastor said, “God has sent His Spirit to save you because He loves you so much! All of us on this earth are

sinners. The wages of sin is death, and that means we’re all bound for eternal damnation unless we confess our sins to God and turn away from them.

“God the Father sent his Son, Jesus, to pay for all your sins. Jesus died in your place and then He rose from the dead after three days in the grave to prove He had conquered death. Jesus is the



Robyn Dykstra with her fourth husband Dave and her sons from her first marriage.

only way to God in heaven. Tonight, it is my prayer that anyone who has not already done so receive Jesus as their personal Savior.”

The pastor invited people to pray the sinner’s prayer. “Whatever ‘saved’ meant, I knew I needed it, so I silently repeated the prayer after the pastor,” Robyn recalls.

“Dear Jesus, I admit I am a sinner. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I am asking you to forgive me. I open the door of my life and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for giving me eternal life. Amen.”

When she told Jay, “he was so happy he spun doughnuts in the parking lot like a redneck who has been sampling his own moonshine,” Robyn wrote in her book *The Widow Wore Pink*.

Their marriage lasted 14 years, but

ended tragically with Jay’s untimely death at age 39, leaving behind two children, ages seven and four. Robyn’s third husband, Craig, died unexpectedly at age 41, only a few short years into their marriage.

In Robyn’s book, *The Widow Wore Pink*, she offers hope and encouragement to those who face unexpected tragedy and loss. “I felt the presence of God during that season,” she says.

“Sometimes people betray us, you face sickness, disaster, and you wonder if He is still on the throne. It is never too late for a fresh start with Jesus. He is trustworthy.

“Though the earth may shake, still the Lord is faithful.”

Robyn Dykstra is in full time ministry with her fourth husband, Dave, who she calls “Mr. 4-ever.” They have been married 20 years and teach the Bible at women’s events.

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE FOR A FRESH START WITH JESUS



The truth is in the numbers

BY JANICE TEO

Brad Platell lived life by the numbers. He only believed what he could prove. The certainty of mathematics brought him peace and comfort.

“Mathematics is pure science,” says the Perth dentist. “You can’t argue against it. One plus one will always equal two. It’s not up for debate.”

In Brad’s structured world, there was no place for anything he couldn’t prove. And that first and foremost, meant there was no place for God.

The 65-year-old had been brought up in a Christian home, but hated going to church.

“Church to me was a huge inconvenience,” he tells Challenge News.

“It took up my Sunday mornings when I could have been playing. I liked The Beatles and rock ‘n roll - in church we had an old lady playing hymns on a pipe organ. Hymns that we actually sang in ye olde English!

“Plus I had to put shoes on - in the 1960s boys didn’t wear shoes, not even at primary school.”

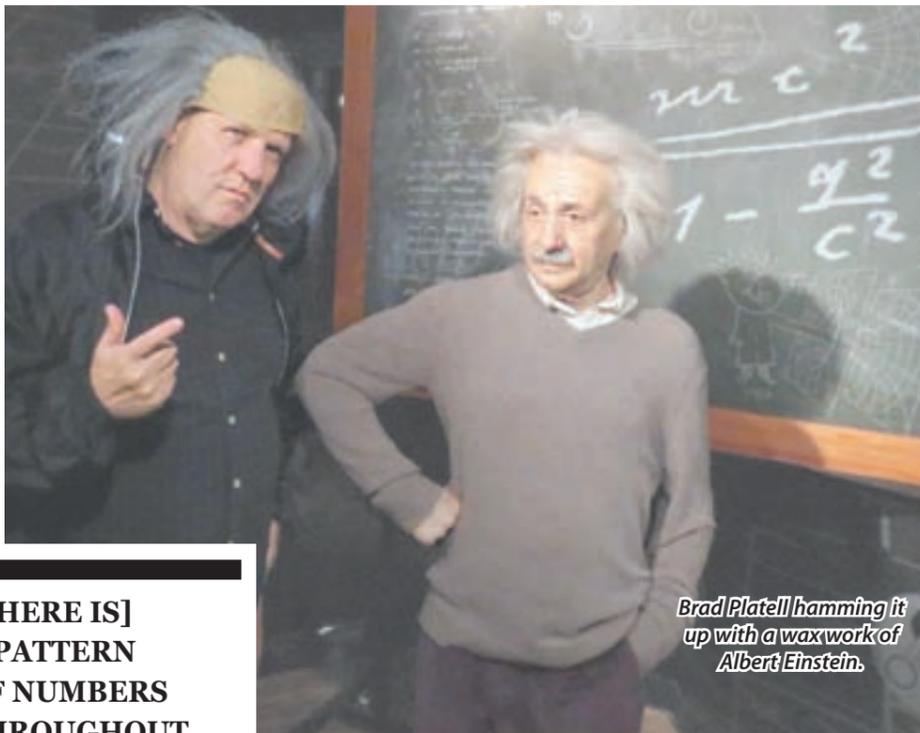
The hours spent at church were to Brad a black hole of boredom. “All the adults seemed stuffy and religious. I was sure if they smiled their faces would crack. They had no fun or joy in them.

“Why on earth would I want to be like them?”

He was equally scathing about the Bible, which he declared was written by a “bunch of fuddy-duddies; religious fanatics who wanted to control people. It had some nice stories, some horrible stories and even miraculous stories.

“But where was the proof this was true? It seemed to have as much proof as the existence of Father Christmas.”

When it was time for him to be confirmed [a ceremony in the Anglican church to mark adult



[THERE IS] A PATTERN OF NUMBERS THROUGHOUT THE ... BIBLE THAT CANNOT BE ... COINCIDENCE



membership], Brad refused. He says he cannot remember any member of his family going to church after that.

One day, he was filling out an information form and found the last question intriguing. It asked “What are your future ambitions and goals?”

Cheekily Brad wrote: “To find out if there is life after death before I die!”

“I guess that gave God permission to work on me,” he grins.

Two weeks later, he was having a meal with a Christian couple who, like everyone else, were unable to convince him of the Bible’s authenticity. But they knew someone who could – the

Brad Platell hamming it up with a waxwork of Albert Einstein.

long dead mathematician Ivan Panin.

“They shared a photocopy of Panin’s work with me,” Brad says. “For some strange reason they had kept this piece of paper for years although neither of them understood it.”

Ivan Panin was a mathematician in the late 1800s who achieved fame by discovering numerical patterns in the Greek and Hebrew text of the Bible. His studies led him to declare that the Bible could not have been written by a man.

“Ivan Panin found a pattern of numbers throughout the whole Bible that cannot be explained away as pure coincidence,” says Brad. “It would take a supercomputer to do this number pattern whilst still maintaining language meaning and grammar.

“And they definitely didn’t have supercom-

puters when the Old Testament or New Testament were written.

“The chances of these number patterns appearing were impossibly small. And they kept on appearing, again and again and again.

“I saw the signature of a Supreme Being all over the pages of the Bible – and it was the God of Abraham, it was Jesus. Once I realized this, I was converted within minutes. I honestly feel the Holy Spirit led me to Christ there and then – it was 12.01am!

“Immediately I felt different. I felt ‘clean’...I don’t know how else to describe it.”

Brad’s epiphany occurred 33 years ago, when he was 32, and says it changed him from the inside out.

“I realized I wasn’t the center of the universe,” he grins. “I started to perceive other people as more valuable, and I became softer on the inside. Things that I used to think were socially acceptable, like having a laugh at someone else’s expense, I now questioned.”

To those who like ‘the old Brad’ find it difficult to accept the Bible as fact, Brad has this advice: “The greatest hindrance to knowing the truth is to assume you already know it. Keep an open mind.

“Remember there is a difference between facts, evidence and interpretation.

The Theory of Evolution and Creation use the same facts. The interpretation of the facts is what is different. They see the evidence in a different light. Both theories use dinosaur bones in their argument. It’s the same bones, just a different interpretation of the bones.

“Just because most people believe something to be true doesn’t make it true.”

He says the most incredible thing about God is that “the King of Kings knows me and loves me. He has gone to incredible lengths to restore me back to Him.

“Do I have my ups and downs with God? Of course I do! But He is always there, watching over me, waiting for me. I know I can always count on Him.”

Youth Truth

I finally came home

Michelle Reynoso was at a three-day electronic music festival, surrounded by bright lights, people dancing, loud music and drugs. She looked around at everything that was supposed to be bringing her joy but she only felt darkness.

Then two simple words popped into her head, as they had done regularly since she was a child: "Come home".

Sharing in a YouTube video on her channel, Michelle says that when she was young she didn't know who she was and tried to fit in with everyone around her.

She started hanging out in the wrong crowd, drinking and experimenting with drugs and lying to her family. Michelle remembers feeling overwhelmed and like there was a void within her that she couldn't identify.

"When I was partying, drinking, smoking, and hanging out with certain people I thought that's who I was, but in reality I was just conforming to the people around me because I wanted to escape that feeling of loneliness. I felt like I finally found a place where I belong," Michelle remembers.

She also remembers something deep inside her telling her that what she was doing wasn't right and asking her, "Is this the life you want to settle for?"

"As I was getting these thoughts and these convictions, I chose to ignore them because I was just running away from dealing with what I had going on inside," she says.

She also felt pressure to measure up and look and act a certain way so people liked her.

"I just constantly battled with not feeling liked enough," she admits.

"I remember being at parties and I felt so out of place and even though I had friends and a boyfriend and I had all these things I still could not shake, this feeling of loneliness or this hole that I had deep inside of me."

Although Michelle didn't grow up attending church regularly, her family had occasionally visited different kinds of churches.

Whenever they visited a Christian church, Michelle remembered feeling a peaceful presence that brought tears to her eyes.

She thought one day she would like to follow God and be devoted to Him.

As a teenager, there had been



Michelle Reynoso

times she had cried out to God in her room and asked for forgiveness for the way she had been living but she would quickly fall back into temptation.

But those two words 'come home' kept popping into her head.

"I knew it was God and I chose to just keep ignoring him because I just thought to myself, 'No God, I'm not ready... I want to do things my way, I want to have fun' and then I would go to that party or go to that rave or try this drug or drink this or have sex."

But something was different at this festival when she was 19.

Michelle said all the experiences she had tried didn't satisfy her and had actually left her feeling emptier than before.

"I was really just hungry and thirsty for something more," she says.

"I was just done with feeling empty, with feeling lonely despite having all the things that I thought were going to fill me up. I was done. I finally cried out to God and was like, 'God it's time now. I'm ready to go all in. I'm never looking back,' and then God came into my life and He showed me a better way. He kept whispering, He never gave up on me."

Michelle visited a church with her sister and a friend.

"I heard God say, 'Welcome home,' and He welcomed me with open arms. He didn't hold my past against me, instead He wrapped me in love, compassion and mercy. I still look back at all those times when I said no to Him and [I'm amazed] He didn't give up on me and He still pursued me and He still wanted me... I felt like I finally found what filled my soul. I finally felt true, perfect love," she shares.

"The one thing I am sure of in this life, the one thing that I can stake my life on, is that the only answer is Jesus.

"There is no relationship that can top His love.

There are no earthly treasures, fame or fortune that can ever outweigh His love. Go to God and He'll do the rest... God will change your heart and He will clean out your heart and you will see that God is patient to help you deal with your struggles and whatever you may be facing." •

RAPPER FACES A FORK IN THE ROAD

As a teenager, British rapper, author and broadcaster Guvna B was the kid on the fringe of his group of friends. The kid who thought he was a gangster but was really too scared to participate in anything.

In a Premier On Demand YouTube video, Guvna, whose real name is Isaac Borquaye, said he grew up in a council housing estate in London and fell into the wrong crowd as a teenager.

"I was always really cheeky, but never really naughty," Guvna recalls. "I'd get in loads of trouble at school, just for silly stuff like getting into silly flights or calling people names... I used to hang around with some quite naughty people, and they would always do naughty stuff, but I'd be too scared to do it. And then after it was done, I'd be like, 'Did you see me? I was there!'"

Guvna's parents had emigrated from Ghana before he was born. His family didn't have much money and his mother worked two jobs.

"She'd come home and look after us and cook for us and then go out again to work and I just saw how much of a struggle it was for her," he says.

In an interview with HTB Church, he says, "I guess as a first generation Brit there was a lot of pressure on me to not waste the effort my parents had put in to getting us here and bringing us up."

The family had attended church since before Guvna was born but as a teenager he had to be dragged there and didn't really understand Christianity.

His youth leader at church caught wind of Guvna's behaviour and told him he had to choose between the gangster life or Christianity. He warned him of the dangers of life in a gang.

"Those things were happening to some of the people that I knew on the estate, so I knew that if I carried on I could potentially get into that kind of trouble," he says.

Then his youth leader told him about the alternative of a life serving Jesus.

"He told me about the true meaning of Christianity and what Jesus did for me," Guvna recalls.

It was that conversation that led Guvna to becoming a Christian.

About a month after Guvna became a Christian he saw the power of prayer in action.

He said he and a group of friends were playing football at school in the rain.

"Out of nowhere, a massive lightning bolt struck the middle of the playground and every single one of us fell to the floor," Guvna recounts. "So I was in a daze for about 15 or 20 seconds. I kind of staggered to my feet and saw another friend over



Guvna B collects his award for Best Gospel Act during the 2010 Mobo Awards, at the Echo Arena, Monarchs Quay, Albert Dock, Liverpool. (Photo by Yui Mok/PA Images via Getty Images) NSET: Guvna B with his wife in London, England in 2013. (Photo by Ben A. Pruchnie/Getty Images)



the other side of the playground get to his feet. In the distance I saw a good friend of mine, Izzy, lying face down in the middle of the playground."

He and his friends ran to Izzy's side and saw there were holes throughout his school uniform and Izzy himself was pitch black.

"That's when we realized he had been struck by lightning," he explains. "It hit his body, and then hit the ground."

Their teacher tried to resuscitate Izzy without success, so they called an ambulance.

Guvna watched on in horror as the paramedics pumped Izzy's chest with a defibrillator in the playground.

"They couldn't get him breathing either so he had to go to hospital and be put on a life support machine, because he couldn't breathe himself," he recalls.

Guvna prayed to God to heal his friend.

"My friends were obviously struggling with it as well because it was just like a big shock," Guvna remembers. "So I think my faith actually helped them at that stage because no one really had a lot of faith, back then. So I'd pray with them. Eventually he came back to life and started breathing again. It was a proper miracle. The doctors couldn't explain it, his family couldn't explain it, but it happened."

Guvna says there had been other situations throughout his life that didn't always have a happy ending.

"But I just know that having faith is like a light at the end of the tunnel for me and it makes me a stronger

person," Guvna attests.

He relied on that strength in 2017, when his father passed away suddenly. "He had cancer, but he didn't know that he had it," Guvna said in an interview with HTB Church. "And so when he started to show severe symptoms he went into hospital and four days later, he was gone... It really knocked us and hit us heavily, and it just spiraled me into this painful grief, and painful self-exploration."

That grief also dug up memories from the past of when I had lost friends to youth violence, and I had not really dealt with those emotions properly. It also subconsciously prepared me for the two friends that I'd go on to lose shortly after."

Guvna says growing up on the council estate, there wasn't much time for emotion and he had learnt to deal with the unpredictability of life in a toxic way.

His song *Cast my Cares* was borne out of this grief.

"That song was just me crying out for help and saying, 'God I don't really understand what's going on and I just need your help. I need to cast my cares on you.'"

Guvna has released 10 albums and written two books, *Unpopular Culture* and *Unspoken: Toxic Masculinity and How I Faced the Man Within the Man*.

Guvna, now 32, lives in London with his wife and their son. •

"There is no sin too great for God's grace. There is no habit too big for his healing. There is no label too strong for his love."

- Craig Groeschel



Youth Truth

Weird dreams changed my life

A series of dreams led Roxanne Morgan to move across the world and ultimately change the trajectory of her life forever.

Roxanne grew up in England and says she was a 'wild child' during her teenage years.

"I was just in the wrong crowd," she admits in a video she shared on her YouTube channel. "I was doing drugs and partying all the time and getting into fights."

One night while she was sleeping, she felt like someone came to her in a dream and told her to move to America.

Roxanne moved to Los Angeles, where she attended acting school. Her teachers were encouraging and told her she could make it in the acting world.

"But I made bad choices for myself," Roxanne says. "Instead of going on auditions, instead of focusing on perfecting my craft, I ended up partying and getting back into drugs."

When she finished acting school, Roxanne went back to England, where she fell into a deep depression.

When her family decided to go to America on holiday, Roxanne jumped at the chance to return but decided on this occasion to make the move permanent. She met Jesse, who would later become her husband, and they started living together in a hotel on Hollywood Boulevard.

"There was a Bible next to the bed and he started reading it to me at night," Roxanne remembers.

She said as Jesse was reading the Bible, something inside her began to shift.

"I went to bed one night and I had another dream that I was supposed to get baptised," Roxanne says.

"I didn't know what being baptised meant so I ran off to this little church in Beverly Hills. I went in and walked up to the preacher and I said, 'I don't know why I'm asking you this but I feel like I'm supposed to get baptised.'"

After attending a few services at the church, the preacher baptised Roxanne [immersed her in water as a symbol of death of her old life].

"I came out of the water and I felt nothing," she recalls. "I continued to go to church but I wasn't changed in any way."

A few days later Roxanne met a girl in her gym who showed Roxanne a video that she said changed her life forever. The video was a YouTube clip called Paul Washer's Shocking Youth Message, where she heard the Gospel that Jesus died for her sins, for the first time.

"I was so taken aback by the things that this guy was saying," she says.

"He was telling me that I was a sinner and that I'd been sinning



Roxanne Morgan

before God all my life. All of these things that I'd done and all my sins started coming to my mind."

Roxanne says it was like her eyes opened and life made sense to her.

"I understood what life was about," she recalls. "(God) was watching me, He was with me, He loved me, and He wanted to forgive me for all of these things."

That night Roxanne had a surreal experience.

"I laid in my bed and it felt like God ripped the roof off of our tiny little apartment and this love started falling from heaven," she remembers.

"This love began to fall into my soul and into my heart and I heard this voice saying to me, 'I love you, I have always loved you - you are my daughter and I am your Father.'"

The next morning she told her future husband, "Something happened to me, I'm not the same, I am completely

different."

She says it felt like she had been born again and washed clean.

Roxanne went to church with the friend who showed her the video.

"I just knew in my heart that Jesus was Lord, that the Bible is true, that Jesus died for my sins, that He loved me and had been pursuing me my whole life and that God loves me so much," she says.

"He loves us so much that He sent His own Son to die in the place of my sins and die in the place of your sins so that you wouldn't have to suffer the punishment for your own sins."

Roxanne encourages people to seek God by reading the Bible and praying.

"(God) has seen you through your pain, through your struggles. He's seen you through the drugs. He's seen you through the depression and the anxiety and all of the things that you are going through, and He says, 'Come to me all of you who are weary and heavy laden and then I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'"

Roxanne is now married to Jesse and they have three children. •

I found a way out of the haze of drugs

At 19 years old, Jordan Orick was in rehab for the third time. His drug of choice was more - more weed, more meth, more cocaine, more pills, more alcohol. But it was never enough, until he found the more his heart needed, and he never used drugs again. Jordan shared his story in a video on his YouTube channel.

He said he was only eight years old when he first used drugs and alcohol. He described using drugs for the first time as feeling instant gratification.

"I think I was instantly an addict."

When he was 16 Jordan was caught with drugs at his high school. The police arrested him and he was taken to juvenile detention that day. Not long after, he went to rehab for the first time and while he was there, he decided he would try to change.

"After I completed the program and left rehab, I actually did stay clean and sober for eight months," he recalls. "I was very determined to stay sober and not use anything. Of course I made no changes to my life in any other way whatsoever."

Jordan had the same friends and was in the same environments as he was before he went to rehab. But he convinced himself he could stay sober anyway. It wasn't long before he succumbed to temptation and started using again. Initially, it felt incredible.

"Once I had to have drugs and alcohol every day just to function and to get out of bed and go about my daily life, that's when it stopped being fun," he admits. "I got to where I couldn't get high enough anymore. Nothing could really numb the emptiness on the inside of me."

At 18 years old, Jordan started shooting up drugs. He said he felt depressed, tormented, confused, empty and dead on the inside.

"I just had no answers for life," he says. "Drugs had always been my only answer." One day Jordan had been partying and drinking all day with friends but hadn't shot up drugs all day.

"The withdrawals were starting to hit me and close in on me and I was essentially having to deal with a moment of sobriety," he remembers. "I was face to face with just how terrible my life was and just how deep the emptiness on the inside of me was."

It was about 2am and he walked outside his house. Jordan had always had an awareness of God, and he decided to pray.

"I said, 'Lord, I want to stop putting needles in my arm, but I can't. But if You will help me, I will.' About two weeks later, that prayer was answered."

He was partying with friends when police arrived and broke up the party. Jordan found himself in rehab for the third time. One night he was laying on his bed, suffering from drug withdrawals.

"As I'm laying there, the Lord just starts dealing with my heart," Jordan explains. "And normally I could hide from Him or kind of push Him to the backburner of my mind by getting high, but I couldn't run and hide and get high anymore."

Jordan reflected on his life and realized if he continued the way he was going, he was headed towards his death. "Somehow in that moment of clarity, I called on the Lord," Jordan recalls. "I said, 'Jesus, if you will for-

Jordan Orick was headed towards an early death but a moment of clarity caused him to change direction.



give me of all the dirt that I've done, I will accept you as my Savior.' And as soon as I said those words, to my absolute and utter surprise His tangible presence swept into the room... The Bible talks about the peace of God that passes understanding - it was the peace of God that filled that room." Jordan said Jesus then healed him of his withdrawal symptoms.

"I felt the presence of the Lord start at the bottom my feet, my legs and come all the way up through my body," he attests. "That healing presence went all the way through my body and I was completely and instantly healed of every single one of the withdrawal symptoms... I started thinking, this is it - the thing that I thought I found years and years ago in drugs. The thing that I thought would fulfil and satisfy and bring contentment and life and wholeness on the inside of me."

After his conversion experience, Jordan said he had to learn how to think differently.

He still had the desire to get high and he didn't want to feel that way anymore. He spoke to his dad about it, who told him, "Jordan, you are completely free from addiction, you just don't know it". Jordan set about renewing his mind, as it says in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

"I would say, 'Jesus, You said that who You set free is

free indeed. Lord, You set me free. I know I met You and You set me free from addiction,'" Jordan remembers. "I just took God at His Word. And I would just walk the floor and pray, declare and confess God's Word [quote the Bible] as living truth."

One night, Jordan was praying and worshipping the Lord and he felt God's presence fill the room. He felt God speak to his heart, "The second you were saved, sin became dead to you." From that moment Jordan no longer struggled with addiction.

"I am absolutely free," he declares. "And it's not because I'm special. It's because Jesus is special... It's not that I was deserving, it's not that I was worthy, it's not that I was good. I was the total opposite of anything that was good, but it's all because of how good He is, how worthy He is, how able He is."

Jordan is now a husband and father and a pastor of a church. •



Jordan with his wife Kara.

nudge

WITH KARL FAASE

Bullies come in all shapes and sizes

LIKE many people, I can remember being bullied in high school. I was a skinny kid who was often the target of those who wanted to throw their weight around. Bullying continues in our schools and community today but it is radically changing.

In surveys held, 42% of kids say that they have been bullied, not in the playground but rather through online means. This harassment now occurs via social media, SMS, email and more.

The intriguing part of the new cyber-bullying is that it is no longer "big boof-head boys" but rather it is often those smaller in stature than their victims. As a newspaper article says, "The thug waiting behind the bike shed has been replaced by the anonymous bully who can reach his or her victim 24 hours a day from just about any location."

The mode may change, but the attitude is just the same. Bullying online or by physical threat is another example of our brokenness and need for the love and grace of God. •

Contact Challenge!

Do you have a story to tell, a tricky question to ask or want to let us know how Challenge has impacted you? Email harriet@challengenews.org

EVOLUTION FAILS BEFORE SELECTION CAN EVEN START

Natural selection is fine, but the theory of evolution collapses long before natural selection can even get started, says biochemist Sy Garte, PhD, on Capturing Christianity. It collapses at the molecular level.

Simply put, there's no scientific basis for how complex, sophisticated molecules – called polymers – could have spontaneously generated to provide even the most primitive cells the building blocks necessary to start the evolutionary process.

The field of study searching for an explanation of how these molecules first developed is called abiogenesis, and its failure to account for “chemical evolution” is something of a secret in science.



“People who say that we're almost there are just wrong,” Sy says on a YouTube video.

“People who are not working in the field, many of them, will say, ‘Oh, yeah, we're getting there. We've made a lot of progress.’ But the people who are actually the leaders in the field and know the details say... not a lot of progress has been made – in fact very little progress. And the number of problems just keep expanding.”

“The general scientific idea is that life began through what's called ‘chemical evolution’ and chemical evolution is very different from biological evolution because there's no natural selection and there's no replication or there's no mutations,” Sy explains. “Chemical evolution is when you take chemicals, you put them together and they either react or they somehow are able to do things only on the basis of chemistry, without any mutation, without any replication, and without any natural selection — and that's pretty hard to do.”

“Nothing in the universe self-replicates accurately other than living cells,” Sy explains. “No chemical self-replicates, no machine self-replicates, crystals don't self-replicate, even DNA doesn't self-replicate.”

Indeed, chemicals do not produce offspring!

“But a living cell can make copies of itself that are 99.9999% accurate,” he adds. “That's astonishing. How does that happen? It involves a tremendous number of really complex things, including the genetic code, including ribosomes, and DNA replication, and protein synthesis – things that are just too complicated to describe without slides or without a semester of biology or chemistry or whatever.”

Evolution is also a poor explainer of what makes humans different than animals.

“There are other parts of biology that are incredibly suggestive of something way beyond anything we can understand, including consciousness, human behaviour,” Sy says. “The idea that Darwinian evolution by natural selection explains why we have morality or why we're creative or why we love music, that's just nonsense.”

“That's not even scientific. What makes us human? What does it mean to be in the image of God? Human beings are not just animals who are smart.”

Sy's father was a chemist, and both his parents were communists and militant atheists. However, Sy's biological studies eventually led him to Christian faith.

“Science and Christian faith are absolutely NOT in conflict,” he says. “I understand that people growing up in faith occasionally will lose it for various reasons. But one of those reasons should never be science, because science is not anti-Christian. Science is not atheistic. Christianity was instrumental in the foundation of science.”

“In the beginning of science all the original scientists were Christians. There are still many, many scientists who are Christians, despite the current atmosphere which is somewhat hostile to Christianity.”

Journey to the age of the Earth



Danny Faulkner has a B.S. (Math), M.S. (Physics), M.A. & Ph.D. (Astronomy, Indiana University) and has been an Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina–Lancaster for 26 years, where he teaches physics and astronomy.



Danny Faulkner can't remember a time when he wasn't interested in astronomy and recalls being captivated by the night sky as a three or four-year-old. When he was about nine he went through a “dinosaur phase” – as many boys do. He read every book he could find on dinosaurs and where they came from. He recalls discussing with other neighborhood children about how dinosaurs began in the sea and eventually changed over millions of years into the giant creatures they saw in their books.

As Danny's schooling progressed, he learned there was a name for this process – evolution. And when he was about 11 it struck him that evolution was not in line with the Bible's account of ancient cosmology.

Danny was the son of his town's church pastor and had accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior when he was about six at a Vacation Bible School.

“However, I managed to drift away from the faith for much of the next nine years,” he says in his biography on the Answers in Genesis website.

“When I began my second year of high school, I met some other students who were living a much more vibrant Christian life in the public school. That hurt, because some of them had been Christians for only a short while. As a result, I rededicated my life to Christ.”

Danny's fascination for astronomy had never left him and it was around this time that he realized that, not only did he want to make a living as an astronomer, but that he also felt that it was something God was calling him to.

He read many books about astronomy, science and the Bible – many of which taught day-age and theistic evolution.

In a presentation at the 2017 Is Genesis History conference, Danny said the writers of these books explained that the Earth wasn't just thousands of years old, but actually millions or billions of years old, and the days of creation were actually long periods of time.

“I realized pretty quickly that what they're telling me here isn't exactly what I understood the Genesis account meant and what my family understood and certainly what my church understood. I also realized that these men were Christian men that were devout and they had studied a lot. They'd studied scripture a lot more than I had, and studied science. And so if that's what they were saying, it probably was correct.”

But then he read *The Bible and Modern Science* by Henry M. Morris, who believed God created the earth in six literal days.

“What he was saying was very different from these other two men. So they both can't be right

[but] what he was saying made a lot more sense scripturally to me... That took me back on the right path pretty quickly... If you take the Word of God seriously and you believe it's authoritative – and I think that's a non-negotiable for us – then it certainly tells us about the way to salvation and about the Lord Jesus Christ but it also tells us a lot of other things and if you can't trust it on the history of the world, can you trust it on the future of the world? And I think

the simple answer is no, you can't. So it's a seamless whole – it stands together.”

Danny agrees that the Hebrew word for “days” (Yom) can also be translated as a long period of time, but people need to look at the meaning of the word in the context in which it is found.

“The first time the word ‘day’ is found in the day one account,” Danny explains. “It says, ‘God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.”

And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.”

He explains that it is clear this is referring to a literal day and to then go on to use the same word to describe millions of years is very poor writing style!

“Once you believe that the world was made in six days, then suddenly, creation is pretty easy once you get past that sticking point. So I think it comes down to an authority question: Can we trust the Bible with all matters, not just salvation and spiritual matters, but all matters of life, and the world around us?”

Danny says that while most astronomers and geologists believe the universe is 20 billion years old and the Earth is 4.5 billion years old, the evidence for this could easily be interpreted in other ways.

“There are some other astronomical suggestions that the solar system and the earth and the rest of the universe are not really that

old at all,” he says in an interview with Creation Ministries International.

“Comets disintegrate too rapidly to have been in their present orbits for all those billions of years. So evolutionists theorise about a shell of comets, an ‘Oort cloud’ too far out to see, to act as a way to ‘restock’ the inner solar system with comets every so often. However, there's no scientific reason to believe that there really is an Oort cloud. The so-called Kuiper belt, closer in, has been put forward as a theoretical source of shorter period comets. However, even if there are comets in this region, it doesn't solve the problem for the evolutionists, because the Oort cloud would still be needed to resupply the Kuiper belt after a while. Then there is the moon – due to tidal friction, this is slowly spiralling away from the earth, which is slowing down its rotation. If you calculate back a billion and a half years ago, the moon would have been in direct contact with the earth. So that is a very strong indicator that the moon can't be even a third as old as the claimed 4.5 billion years, and it is probably vastly less than that. Also, theory suggests we should find plenty of, say, million-year-old supernova remnants, but we don't find any – though there are many that are thousands of years old. And that is a very startling result if you really believe in a universe that's millions of years old.”

Danny says he is thankful for his college days at Bob Jones University, where the science faculty was committed to biblical creation. He went on to do graduate work at Clemson and Indiana University.

While completing his PhD, Danny started teaching astronomy and physics at the University of South Carolina–Lancaster.

“Though not all my fellow faculty members or staff agreed with me on creation, they respected me for the job that I did in the classroom and in service to the university and community,” Danny shares.

Danny taught at USCL for over 26 years. He has published over 100 papers in various journals.

He is a researcher, author, and speaker for Answers in Genesis and hosts Ark Encounter trips and Stargazer's Nights. He also hosts Astronomy Live programs and *The Skies Proclaim His Handiwork* workshops at the Creation Museum.

Danny and Lynette have been married since 1976. Lynette also serves as a volunteer for Answers in Genesis at the Creation Museum

IF YOU CAN'T TRUST [THE BIBLE] ON THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, CAN YOU TRUST IT ON THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD?



There is faith that God spoke and everything came into being as a result. There is also a faith that a big bang happened, and billions of years later, there are millions of different plants, animals and people. It takes faith to believe either of these scenarios. – Jeff Rhoades

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

WHEN OUR FEAR TURNS TO ANGER

BY ROB FURLONG

“Be angry, yet do not sin...” So wrote Paul the Apostle as he gave great practical advice on living out our relationships with one another.

Many years ago, a friend read this out to a group of us while also making an honest admission that he found this piece of advice “incredibly difficult to live out!” He was simply echoing what we all felt – it’s so easy to quote this statement, but extremely hard to follow!

Difficult or not, we all know from our own personal experience that anger can lead us to do and say things which are harmful and destructive.

What is it then that drives our anger, causing us to lash out at others?

Psychologists and counselors will tell you it’s fear.

One author describes the relationship between fear and anger in this way:

“Fear of the unknown is akin to the

fear of loss. When we don’t understand something, we fear that it will in some way rob us of things we hold important. For example, suppose that a strange man calls up wanting to talk to your wife and he refuses to explain why or identify himself. This unknown typically generates fear in your mind. You’ll think of the worst possible scenario that is based on the possible loss of your wife or her affections to a strange man.

This will lead to anger.

The reaction of this husband’s anger is based on his fear of loss. Because he fears the loss of his wife in some capacity – physically, emotionally, or even that of not being good enough for her – he will react in anger.”

The same author goes on to say:

“Few people know how to deal with fear. Our internal defenses are not well equipped to deal with fear. It can paralyze you. It can rob you of the ability to think. It can create fear upon fear. For most people, the only effective means of combating fear is with anger.

Anger provides us with a weapon to use against the source of our fears. We hope to destroy, in some way, the basis of our fears and therefore be freed from our fears. In effect, we combat a strong, negative emotion with another strong and often negative emotion – anger. This is a very

dangerous combination.

I’ve learned that angry people have many fears. They feel, in some way, vulnerable to others. Their defense is to lash out in anger. This does succeed in keeping people at arm’s length, true, but it destroys nearly every meaningful relationship as well.”

Reflecting on the above, I think of Darth Vader!

As young Anakin Skywalker, he is presented to the wise old Jedi, Yoda, who detects “much fear” simmering away in the young man’s heart and he warns him against this. But it goes unheeded; Anakin succumbs to his fear, venting it through his anger, and the monstrous Darth Vader is born, leaving behind him a wake of pain, hurt, cruelty and the murder of innocents.

As Yoda says, “Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”

Although fictional, it is a powerful illustration of how fear fuels anger, which then leads to destructive behaviour – sin.

Are you caught in a cycle of anger that expresses itself in such things as hurtful comments, unforgiveness and revenge?

Then it is time for you to confront



ANGER LEADS TO HATE. HATE LEADS TO SUFFERING.

— YODA



your fears.

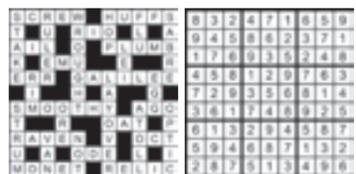
Ask yourself, “What am I afraid of?”

Is it losing your spouse, being overlooked for a promotion, being rejected by others, having your carefully hidden flaws exposed or having your point of view challenged?

All of these, and countless others, have the capacity to lead us into angry, sinful, behaviour.

Take the time now, to think about your fears, and where required, seek out a good counselor who can help you process them.

“Be angry, yet do not sin...” •



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 usaoffice@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:

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

- Bible
- Some ‘starting off’ literature
- Information on a helpful church

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Age, occupation (it helps) _____

Send to: **Challenge Literature Fellowship, 2634 Drake Road, Lebanon Ohio, 45036**
usaoffice@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Satan hates you

BY JODY BENNETT

IN a world where almost every week I think things are getting more and more bizarre, The Satanic Temple of Idaho has posted on Facebook at the end of a longer message “Just know that Satan loves you for you!”

This strikes me as an utterly mind-blowing statement. I understand that many people in the world don’t believe in God, and even some of those that do, don’t believe in the antithesis of God – the devil. But I would have thought that surely those of us who believed in Satan were at least all agreed as to his character! And I would have assumed that people turned to Satanism out of a desire for power, certainly not out of a desire for love and acceptance.

If someone was out looking for a god to love them, why on earth would they choose Satan?! Where do they get their information about Satan from? The Christian Bible is the only source I know.

On the one hand you have Jesus, who demonstrated His love by walking among us, healing and doing kind deeds, and then dying on the cross to pay our sin-debt to God; on the other you have Satan who ... what? Brought all the trouble into the world by tempting Eve and causing The Fall. What loving act of Satan do Satanists use to prove his great love for humanity?

The truth is Satan absolutely hates us. He is the enemy of God the Father and all He stands for, Satan CAN’T love because God IS love. The Bible calls him the old serpent and the father of lies. Satan is bent on humanity’s destruction. He is trying to deceive as many people as possible to spend eternity in damnation with him in the place that God created specifically to punish him and his evil angels. He hates that God loves us and offers us forgiveness for our sin. He hates playing second fiddle to God and wants to be worshipped as god.

That statement on the post might have had a slightly different meaning in its context, which was as part of a post about a gay pride march. Maybe it was meant to mean that Satan loves what you are doing and never expects you to change your sexual behaviour or sinful inclinations. However, that is a lie too. Satan loves sin because it destroys us. He encourages people to sin and to get deeper and deeper into sin until they are enslaved and destroyed by their sin. Whatever your sexual appetites are, he will warp and change and pervert them, to become more animal lust and less emotional fulfilment. If Satan approves of some behaviour, you can know it is because it leads to death.

Don’t believe the lie that Satan will leave you as you are. God will accept you as you are and then raise you up to be holy and pure and clean, as He is. Satan will accept you as you are and then drag you down into the depths of depravity with him. Sin will always take you further and cost you more than you imagined. God’s path will make you the best human being and ‘a little lower than the angels’; Satan’s will make you little better than a beast.

Don’t be fooled, Satan does not love you, he hates your guts. He is the enemy of God and all His good creation – which includes you. •

When people encounter the true God, they experience a selfquake. That’s one way you can tell if you’ve met Israel’s God or simply a figment of your imagination. A made-up God will leave your world undisturbed, conveniently aligning with your priorities without displacing anything, because ultimately you are more glorious than it is. The real God, however, will land in the middle of your life like an elephant crashing through the ceiling, displacing your sin, changing all your priorities, and forcing you to reorient yourself around the weight of glory.

– Andrew Wilson, from *The God of All Things*

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.	
For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app	
Comic book Bible online- goodandevilbook.com	
More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online	



Inset: Sydney McLaughlin of the United States smiles with the gold medal after the Women's 400m Hurdles Final at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in Japan, on August 4, 2021. (Photo by Li Yibo/Xinhua via Getty Images)

Sydney McLaughlin of the United States in action in the Women's 400m Hurdles Semi Final two during the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympic Games on August 2nd, 2021 in Tokyo, Japan. (Photo by Tim Clayton/Corbis via Getty Images)

SEASON OF SUCCESS

US track star Sydney McLaughlin (now 22) is an American hurdler and sprinter who won gold in the 400-meter hurdles and in the 4x400-meter relay at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games (held in 2021).

She also holds the current world record, (which she shaved a further .8 seconds off at the recent World Athletics Championships) and Olympic records for the 400-meter hurdles.

Although Sydney tries to limit her social media use because she finds it a distraction, in August 2021, she wrote a lengthy Instagram post glorifying God.

“Let me start off by saying, what an honor it is to be able to represent not only my country, but also the kingdom of God,” she wrote. “What I have in Christ is far greater than what I have or don’t have in life. I pray my journey may be a clear depiction of submission and obedience to God. Even when it doesn’t make sense, even when it doesn’t seem possible. He will make a way out of no way. Not for my own gratification, but for His glory.

“I have never seen God fail in my life. In anyone’s life for that matter. Just because I may not win every race, or receive every one of my heart’s desires, does not mean God had failed. His will is PERFECT. And He has prepared me for a moment such as this. That I may use the gifts He has given me to point all the attention back to Him.

“2x Olympian, Olympic Champion, World Record Holder
“Thank. You. God.”

2020-21 was a very big year for the athlete, along with her medals, she won herself a diamond ring too, when she got engaged to NFL player Andre Levrone Jr. , and – even more important and life-changing

than those events – Sydney also got baptised (immersed in water) as a declaration of her decision to commit her life to following Jesus Christ.

In November 2020, she posted a video of her getting baptised in the ocean at a beach in LA, and said, “For twenty-one years I was running from the greatest gift I could ever receive. And by His grace, I have been saved. I no longer live, but Christ in me. My past has been made clean because of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Sydney explained to Movieguide what brought her to this decision: “I grew up in a Christian household. I went to church every Sunday. My parents raised us on biblical principles, and for a long time, I always knew that God existed and I knew that He definitely played a big role in my life, but there was no relationship.

“Honestly, I didn’t even understand the importance or the purpose of Jesus and how all that played out. So it was a lot more of religious right and wrong, [rather than] true relationship and connection and intimacy,” she explained.

“But I didn’t think there was any freedom in [surrendering to Jesus]. And I was afraid that in doing that I would be handing over my individuality and my identity. So I kind of put that off and just walked in the world and lived a very secular life and it never fulfilled me. It never sustained me and I could vividly hear God in a couple of instances ask, ‘Are you done? Are you ready to give your life over to me? Are you ready to let me have control?’ And I would literally tell Him ‘no.’”

She continued: “God can’t force

you to love Him. So I kept walking that road. I got to a point where I was just very depressed and desperately searching for some sort of purpose because a lot of it was wrapped up in track. A lot of it was wrapped up in relationships, and none of those things ever worked out or sustained me.”

However, once COVID hit, Sydney was forced to spend more time by herself and she started to listen to sermons and read her Bible “... things I didn’t normally do on a daily basis,” she admitted.

“I had people from my church ... do Bible studies with me and even Andre inviting me to the NFL Bible study, and I got into community with people who I truly saw living in that freedom and

in that joy that Jesus brings. Over time, I was able to build my own relationship with Jesus.

“Andre is like one of the best things that ever happened to me,” she said. “Beyond being such an amazing friend, he’s such a great man of God. He’s helped me in my walk and has always constantly encouraged me in that. And it’s been such an amazing thing just to have him as an example of what it means to live a life like Jesus. And truly, that’s what attracts me to him the most.”

Sydney said that Colossians chapter 3 in the Bible stood out to her and opened her eyes to how to live for God. The chapter begins: *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your*

life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

“Being able to live a life that’s led by God, and understanding His love for me that sustains me more than anything secular in this world, has given me a new perspective on everything. And I know that it’s a constant journey, but definitely one of the best decisions I’ve ever made in my life,” Sydney affirms.

“God’s love for you will never change regardless of how you perform or don’t perform,” she added. “At the end of the day, as long as I’m giving 100% of what I have to Him, the rest doesn’t matter. I thought I was a track athlete. I thought I was a social media influencer ... but now I’ve understood that first and foremost, I’m a child of God. Track is not who I am, it’s just what I do. It’s the opportunity He’s given me to bring all of the glory back to Him.

“Christ has cleansed me and washed me and made me

clean. There’s just so much beauty in that and the grace, the immeasurable amount of grace that He showed me that I do not deserve.

“It’s just been amazing to just sit in the simplicity of God’s love. It’s been very enjoyable just to feel that and then, as an overflow of the love that I’ve received, be able to share that with others around me.” ●



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