

UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN TRUTH

The word “occult” comes from the Latin word “occultus”, which means “hidden” or “secret” but go to any bookshop or department store and you’ll see occult or New Age products everywhere.

What were once fringe practices like using tarot cards and Ouija boards are now mainstream and even marketed to children. Ever wondered why?

Kate Back’s involvement in the New Age began when she was a teenager and searching for truth, healing and spiritual connection. But she never felt fully at peace and trauma flashbacks continued to haunt her. Then she looked into why the New Age was being pushed so openly and in turn, what was being hidden.

Before her journey into the New Age, Kate grew up in a church-going family. At 15 she started to read the Bible for herself.

“Not long after I started read-

ing it, I was sexually assaulted,” Kate shares. “I thought, ‘How could a God exist or claim to love me if He lets things like this happen?’ So the Bible went back on the shelf.”

It was then that she started experimenting with New Age practices.

One night while playing around with séances, palmistry and channelling, “windows flew open and slammed shut and bedrooms that had no one in them had been turned upside down.” Kate says her life grew darker after this. “I got caught up with drug use and

spent seven years in an abusive relationship.”

She was diagnosed with clinical depression, anxiety disorder, fibromyalgia, insomnia, and chronic back pain and prescribed a cocktail of strong medication.

“I was lost and constantly wondering what the point of life was.”

Desperate to heal her trauma, she read books that taught her to be her own saviour and manifest what she wanted into existence.

She left her abusive relationship and delved deeper into practices like numerology, astrology, yoga, reiki, past life and new moon ceremonies, tarot cards, crystal healing, energy healing, manifestation and witchcraft. Then Kate met her future husband, Aaron. “I finally knew what it felt like to be safe, respected, loved and protected.”

Her chronic pain and insomnia improved and she was able to come off some of her medication. She



Kate Back

believed the manifestation and divination were helping her.

But over time Kate’s anxiety and insomnia worsened.

Flashbacks to the abuse she suffered earlier in her life left her bitter and resentful towards men, including her husband.

When the Covid19 pandemic began, Kate’s fear peaked, leading her to move interstate to Western Australia. One of the first friends she made was a Christian.

“I was drawn to the light she had,” Kate remembers.

One day Kate was looking at a New Age book in a major department store when she suddenly wondered why the occult had become so mainstream. Wondering what agenda could be behind the normalisation of the New Age, Kate asked herself, “What is the opposite of this?” and realised it was Jesus.

“I was constantly wondering what the point of life was.”

“I was constantly wondering what the point of life was.”

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An awe-inspiring view!

A formula for life

BY JOHN HUTCHINSON

THE living of life requires some thought. Our days rush past and they cannot be relived. Many, of course, start from disadvantage. I remember a 14-year-old, just out of a remand centre, who came to work with me. We were cleaning out a sheep dip – not my favourite job.

I was passing up buckets of foul sludge when I heard him mumble, “Do you know what my problem is?” I asked, “What is your problem?” He said, “I’ve got nothing to live for. I’m bored stiff and if there was a tablet which would end my life I’d take it.” That’s not how it should be! There’s so much to live for, even in difficult circumstances.

In a shop once, I noticed the words on a plaque: “Live simply. Laugh often. Love much.” Later I saw something similar: “Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly.” That’s good but we need to think deeper. Let me share a formula which will enrich us with meaning and purpose and help us in our day-to-day experience of living:

Live in awe

Be a ‘wow person.’ Marvel at wonders. Meditate on the spectacular. Think about the phenomenal. It’s like a spiritual inhalant. Be like the poet Roger McKnight who wrote in his poem *Some Chordal Notes*: “In awe of everything, I sing and marvel more.”

Wonders are everywhere and begging for us to be amazed. For me, the precision of a sunrise is breath-taking. Sometimes as daylight appears I say, “23 hours, 56 minutes and four seconds.”

How phenomenal – every 23 hours, 56 minutes and four seconds, this enormous weight of matter spins like a giant top at 160kmph so precisely it’s measured in thousandths of a second! What about its orbit of the sun? In a year Earth travels 940 million km and 365.24 days. What about the air we inhale? It is just the right amount of oxygen and other elements – and with a thin layer of ozone guarding us from harmful rays. What about Earth’s terrain – its mountains and plains, fiords and glaciers, rivers, oceans and lakes? The more we travel the more we have to think we live on Planet Spectacular.

I listen a lot to the birds. I love the notes of the wattle jacks, the soft whistle of the thrush and the laugh of the kookaburra.

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BACK PAGE

A SOLID FOUNDATION
BROCK PURDY

COINCIDENCE? OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Jimmy pushed everything to the limit.

As a young adult Jimmy Bedding filled his life with drugs, parties, girls, and travelling as he chased “the buzz”.

He tried to balance it with his semi-professional soccer career but this was short-lived as he got caught doing drugs and was sacked.

Eventually he decided to join the army as he felt that was what he needed to help straighten him out. He accidentally turned up on the wrong day for his interview to join the army and had to wait another month for the next interview. In that month he got a part-time job as a salesman.

One day during his lunch break, his boss tried to tell him about God but Jimmy told him he didn't want to know about it.

The boss asked Jimmy if he could send him a book and he agreed. The book was *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson. It told the author's story of sharing the good news about Jesus with New York's most violent gangsters.

“At the back of the book there was a name written in ink – it said ‘Danny’,” Jimmy remembers. “This fellow was going to call me about the

book and see what I thought about it.” Although he found the book interesting, Jimmy didn't want to get involved in Christianity.

“When Danny tried to contact me by telephone, I told my mother to block the calls,” he says. “I did not want a religious nut bothering me.”

For three weeks Danny kept calling him but his mum kept putting him off and he eventually stopped calling.

One day, Jimmy went with some friends to a man's house to buy drugs.

“The drug dealer who lived on the top floor was not in,” Jimmy recalls.

“The guy who lived below him answered the door. He turned out to be a Christian and he also tried to tell me about Jesus.

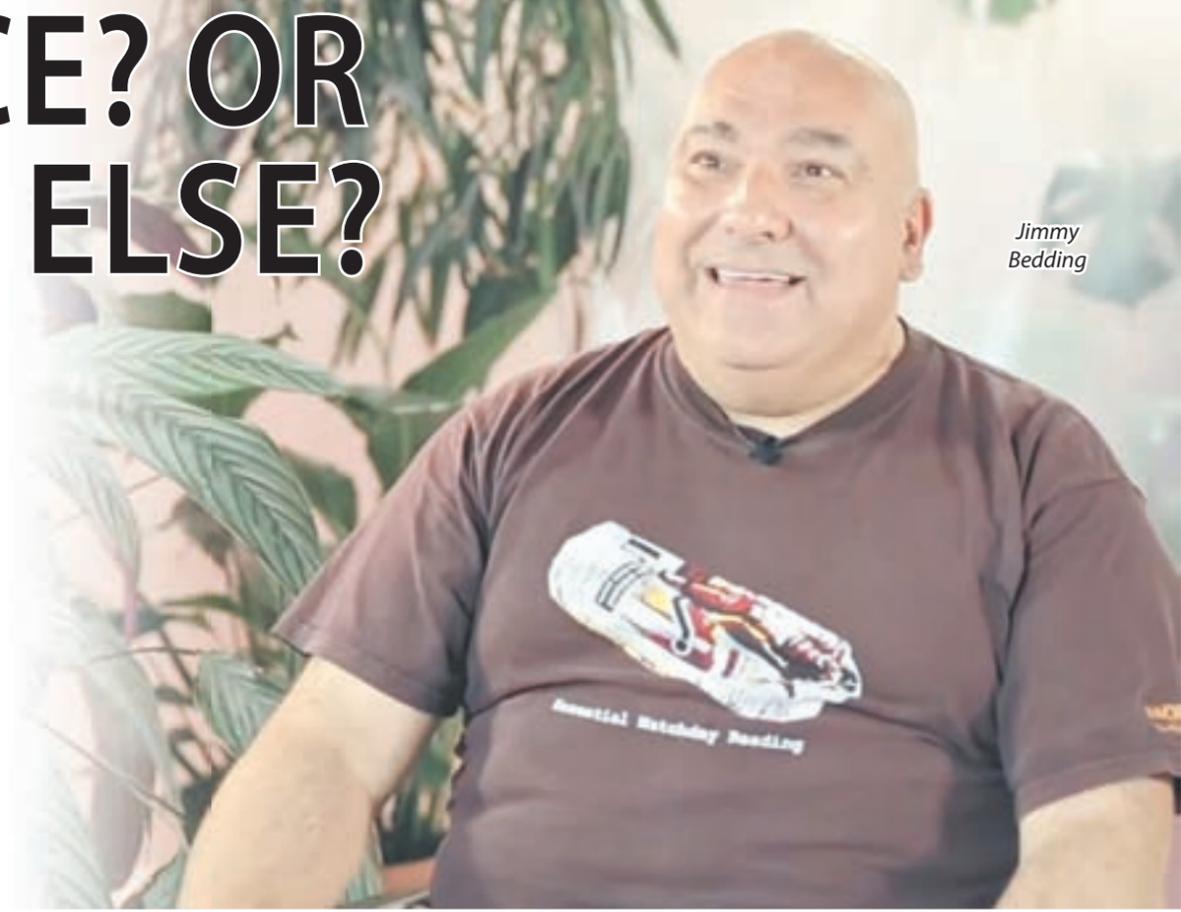
“I thought, ‘Not another one. I've got the book, the phone calls and now I've got this guy at the door.’”

Jimmy left but as he did so he stopped in his tracks and he felt this voice from nowhere say, “Go back to that house.”

“I couldn't make out what was really happening except I knew I had to go back,” Jimmy says. “I went back and said to the Christian at the door, ‘Have we ever met before tonight?’”

Jimmy told the man his name and he said he had been trying to

“You may stumble and fall but He will pick you up.”



Jimmy Bedding

call him for the past three weeks. It was Danny. It couldn't just be a coincidence. Danny told him his story of being an armed robber and God changing him in prison. He encouraged Jimmy to read the Bible.

“I started reading the Bible for the first time and I made a move towards God,” Jimmy explains. “I asked Jesus to reveal Himself to me, and He did in a hotel room in Orlando, Florida whilst I was on holiday there.”

Jimmy opened his Bible to a passage that read, “Seek and you shall

find.” (Matthew 7:7) “I said, ‘Okay, let's put this to the test’, and I said a proper prayer this time, not just a schoolboy prayer but I meant it,” Jimmy says. “I said, ‘If there is a God and your name is Jesus, I'm asking you now to reveal yourself to me’. I really meant it. As soon as I said that He showed up and the glory of God came into my room.”

Jimmy felt something like chains being broken within him for about five minutes and when he opened his eyes, everything looked new and

brighter and he felt like he was on cloud nine. He was now born again.

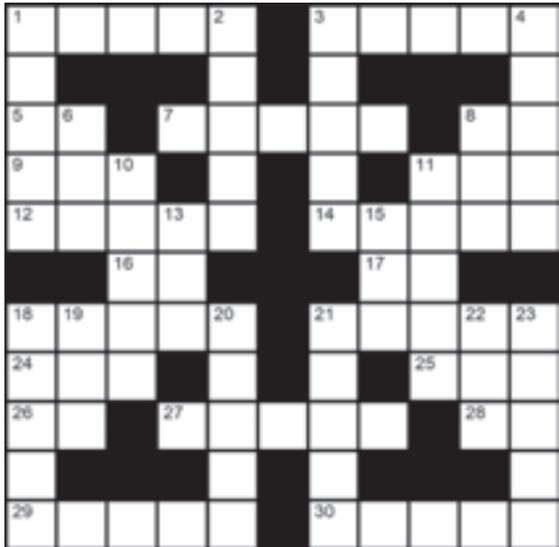
Jimmy has printed leaflets telling his story, which he uses to tell people about Jesus wherever he goes.

“Jesus is the source of life and love,” he says. “You may stumble and fall but He will pick you up and teach you His ways, because He loves you... If you open the door of your heart, you can have an encounter with the living God. He is challenging you to repent, turn back to God and abandon your way for His way.”

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

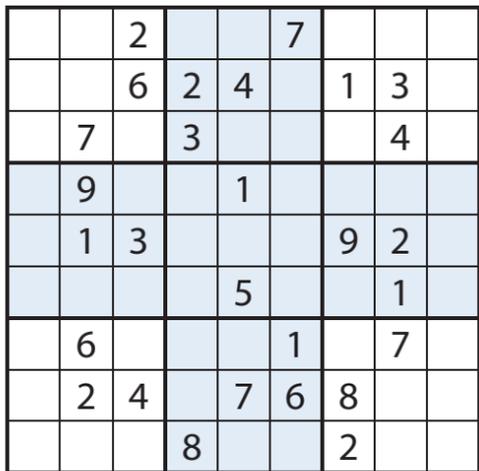
1. Copycat
3. Hang around, basically
5. Passport etc
7. Plain writing
8. Down's opposite
9. Took a load off
11. Aka mad cow disease
12. Fraud, robbery
14. Back tooth
16. __, myself and I
17. Date for she
18. Tricked, fooled
21. Change, as the Constitution
24. Juvenile newt
25. Golfer's goal
26. A refusal
27. Nobleman
28. To ___ or not to be?
29. EU island state
30. Role player



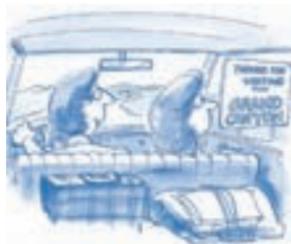
- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 4. Become narrower | 13. Service charge | 20. Serious TV show |
| 6. Zip-a-Dee-Doo-__ | 15. Electrical unit | 21. Oven smell |
| 8. Stars and Stripes land | 18. Jeans material | 22. Apprehend |
| 10. Entice | 19. Weird blip on the radar | 23. Gloomy |
| 11. Censor (out) | | |

DOWN

1. Like tearful eyes
2. Diamond unit
3. State in NE India



SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



“How was your nap?”

Uncovering the hidden truth

● From page 1

“In that very moment, I went looking for Jesus. Well of course He was nowhere to be found in any bookstore, not even a spiritual one. Even the Christian section in the local library was filled with occult books. This concerned me.”

She continued to investigate and discovered prominent New Age author, Doreen Virtue, had become a Christian and was encouraging people to burn her books and cards.

“I owned so many of these, so this shocked me. I soon learnt how evil it was. It didn't take me long before I believed in Satan.

“I learnt that he was the true spirit behind all of the beliefs I had. And he did this all while masquerading as an angel of light.

“I was unknowingly worshipping and supporting a demonic kingdom. I also realised that there couldn't be Satan without God.”

So Kate began to investigate the existence of God. “What I found blew me away because I learnt that there is more evidence proving the Bible to be true than any other historical account in the world and that there were over 500 eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus.”

Kate wondered, “If Jesus isn't the Way, the Truth and the Life [as the Bible says in John 14:6], then why does the world spend so much time keeping people away from Him?”



Ex-New Age author Doreen Virtue at the height of her popularity (left) and now (right) since becoming a Christian.

“I believed in that moment that Jesus was God in the flesh and that He died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected three days later.”

Kate went to church with her friend and received prayer, during which Kate felt a huge sense of release and peace washed over her.

“God has freed me from the bondage of my trauma. He has helped me forgive the people who hurt me and those who didn't protect me, He cleansed me of the shame I've carried for years and has taken away all fear.

“I am no longer lost or confused. I have a peace and calmness in my soul that I have never known before. Even in times of struggle, that peace remains.

“No matter how wretched I was, Jesus paid the price for me.

“He shed his blood on that cross and died for my sins, taking the punishment that I deserve, then he rose from the dead showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us has been satisfied. He has done that for all of us.

“By trusting in Jesus, we will have everlasting life.

“You will find every answer to all your questions in the pages of the Bible.

“If you haven't yet called upon Jesus, or you are relying on light workers, crystals or meditation to heal you, or if you just think you are not worthy, or forgivable, I tell you that there is one name that can save you, and that name is Jesus.”

Letting go of bitter feelings



Doria Chanda

Businesswoman Doria Chanda's parents died when she was 18.

She had relatives but says none were able or willing to look after her and her siblings. And so Doria took on the role of single parent.

"I couldn't forgive them for that," she tells *Challenge News*. "I couldn't forgive them for not wanting to take care of us after my parents died. I struggled with resentment for years." She was also desperately lonely after losing both parents and longed for a special relationship "but I couldn't find any".

Five years after her parents died, when Doria was 23, she attended a church service and there she heard the gospel (the good news that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die for humanity's sins) for what seemed like the first time.

Doria's parents were Christians but they were not regular church-goers so her own background in the faith was patchy at best.

But everything changed at that service. The message that day was based on the Bible passage of Mark 10:46-52, which recounts how Jesus healed the blind beggar named Bartimaeus.

Something in the message touched Doria deeply. "I became convicted that I needed God and I prayed to receive Him into my life."

In the 23 years since that day, Doria has gotten married and now has a fulfilling life. In addition to running a business, she also serves in her church's children's ministry as a teacher.

She is also involved with Child Evangelism Fellowship, a Bible-centered organisation whose purpose is to evangelise children and establish them in local churches. Doria says she has learned to be a more committed Christian and to trust God in all situations.

"For those who like me have a passion to reach children for Christ, I hope they will partner with me and together we can win many souls for the Kingdom of God."

Out of the darkness

Teddy Hung was the biggest drug dealer in Hong Kong but he found Someone more powerful than himself.

Teddy Hung's trade made him very rich and very powerful. It also made him one of the most wanted men in Hong Kong. For Teddy's trade was the triad.

Teddy, who was also known as Hung Hon-ye, was the leader of Hong Kong's notorious 14K gang, the second largest in the world. Teddy's ill-gotten gains came from prostitution, human trafficking, gambling dens and money laundering. Ruthless and untouchable, he went by the nickname 'Black-faced God'.

He joined the gang after dropping out of school at 15. His father gave these uplifting words of advice to his son: "You must not be greedy and fearful of death. Remember to be loyal and not to betray your brothers otherwise I will kill you first."

Teddy had all the trappings of a warlord – four wives and a string of mistresses, bodyguards and luxury cars. As the biggest drug dealer in Hong Kong, he earned millions of dollars every day.

Even jail didn't stop him. When he was sent to prison for 13 years in the 1990s, he renovated his cell and ran his business from behind bars.

However while he was in prison, Teddy was visited by the chaplain who said to him: "You are very successful and famous around the world. But when you die what will you be remembered for?"

"That question made me think," said Teddy. "I realised the more successful I was, the more lives I spoiled, the more guilty I was. I did not help people; I ruined people instead. I was the demon head."

The obvious solution would have been to shut his business down but how could he do that? Teddy wrestled with this dilemma night and day.

Guilt and shame racked him, leading to severe insomnia and depression. In desperation one night, Teddy decided to kill himself.

As he rolled over in his bed, his eyes fell on the Bible his wife had put on his bedside table. She was not a Christian; the Bible was a gift from one of the multitude of pastors who had tried over the years, without any success, to lead Teddy to Jesus Christ.

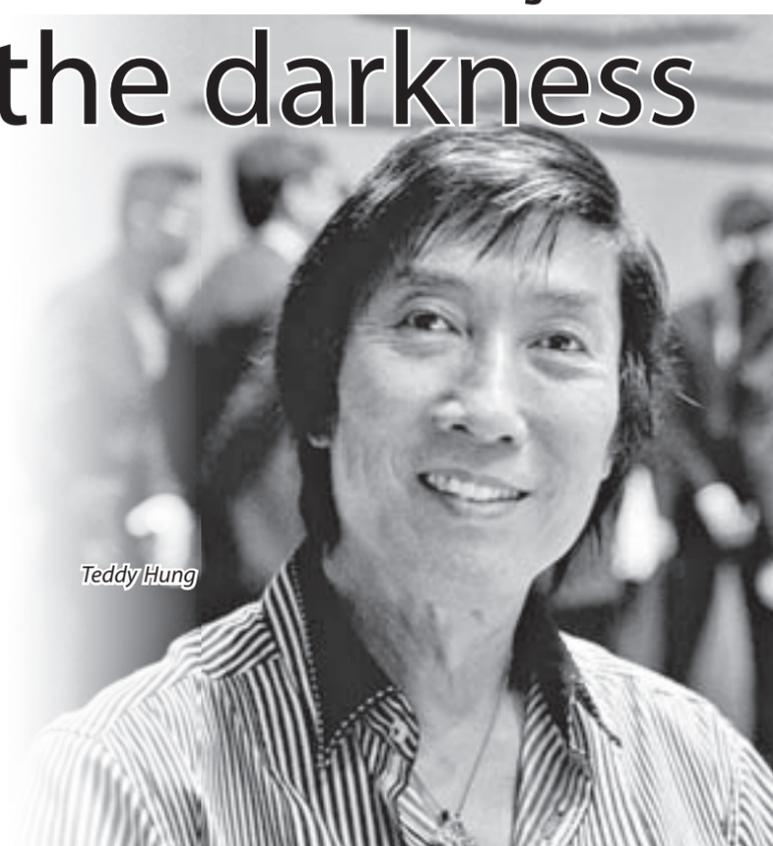
Teddy, of course, hated the pastors. He would scream at them: "Get out! I am prepared to go to hell!"

"I pointed at the Bible and I said 'Jesus! If You are real, You cure my illness and let me sleep and I will trust You.'" He was asleep before he finished the sentence.

A short time later, he accepted an invitation by those same pastors to a church concert and it was there that the fearsome triad boss bowed his knee to Jesus Christ.

It would have been nice to say everything went smoothly for Teddy after that, but they didn't. In fact, they went terribly wrong.

His gambling dens lost money and Teddy, desperate not to lose



Teddy Hung

this income, said he "applied for two years' leave" from God and established more dens in Thailand.

When they too lost money, Teddy became furious with God. He flung off the cross he wore around his neck and decided to turn his back on Jesus.

"The next few nights, I couldn't sleep a full hour," he shares. "I put on the cross again, and I fell asleep immediately. I freaked out when I woke up. I thought 'this God is formidable!'"

“ This God is formidable! ”

Confused and frightened he asked his pastors "What kind of God is this? When I believe in Him, He causes me to lose all my business; when I don't, He doesn't let me sleep!"

"My pastors said to me, 'Taking two years of leave was what you wanted, not what God wanted. Would you let your children go into illegal businesses like you are doing now? He loves you and that is why He wants to lead you out of it.'"

Yet still the gang leader struggled – he felt a huge responsibility for the men and women who would lose their jobs if he closed his businesses down.

Three years later, still unwilling to obey God, Teddy decided suicide was his only way out.

"I went home to write my will but just when I was done, God spoke to me. Jesus told me that if I killed myself, one of my sons would kill my family. I knew it was His voice and I knew this was true.

"I tore up the will and fell asleep."

When he woke up, Teddy knelt down and prayed. For the first time, he called God 'Father God'. He says God showed him heaven and hell – an experience that left him forever changed.

"The suffering in hell was so much that it was unbearable; but the joy in heaven was indescribable," Teddy shared. "God said to me 'If you continue in this business, you will only drag everyone down to hell'. Having experienced heaven and hell, I know for sure that I couldn't let them go to hell."

Teddy finally closed all his businesses and enrolled in Bible school.

He went on to found a church tailor-made for gangsters in Hong Kong. Those who commit their lives to Jesus are then given training and the opportunity to buy a legitimate franchise business as an avenue to leave the triad world.

"It is useless to tell them about Jesus but not solve their problem of finding a job outside of the gang," Teddy said.

"When I finally let go, I began to see that He will take control.

"No one can save the triad members from hell except Jesus. And when one member is saved, his whole family will see the change in him and know that this Jesus is real and very powerful. They too will come to God."

Teddy summed up his salvation experience this way: "Don't be afraid to let go of what you have: God wants to take away the bad things to give you the good; and when He gives, it will be a hundredfold."

Teddy Hung died in 2018 of cancer. He was 70 years old.

A formula for life

• From page 1

What beauty we see in the flowers and plants – the wonder of bees and the taste of honey! What about the oceans and islands and all the myriads of fish and sea creatures. We live in a world of miracles and wonders. While we can marvel at all these phenomenal things, we need to realise that once it wasn't there. Science and the Bible tell us that at one time it didn't exist. Today it does! The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 5:7, "Therefore stand in awe of God."

Live in appreciation

Thankful people are happy people. It can be hard when things are against us, but look for something to be grateful for.

Thank God for the gift of life. I thank Him a lot for my eyes. What a spectacular faculty is sight. I grew up near a boy who was born with little sight which gradually left him. It made me appreciate my vision.

But he was always cheerful and happy, and grateful for the lovely dog which led him wherever he wanted to go. He even travelled overseas with the aid of his labrador. The Bible says in Psalm 92:1, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Yes, it's a very good thing and also to thank others for all they do and mean to us. Perhaps the best way to express gratitude is sharing and giving. As Jesus once said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:15: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" How we need to thank God for Jesus our Saviour – God's great gift to the world.

Live in anticipation

Looking forward to good things puts spark into living. It may be a holiday, a special celebration, the birth of a baby, the footy finals or a visit from friends or even getting out of the hospital.

Anticipate good things in each day. Be optimistic about what might happen. Be expectant! Anticipation, however, needs extensions. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." I've attended funerals which disappoint. They refer to a life lived and what has been achieved with no hint of hope. One day a 98-year-old, just one day before he died, lustily sang the hymn *How Great Thou Art*. What wonderful words of anticipation did he sing in the last verse:

"When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation, and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart. Then I shall bow, in humble adoration, And then proclaim: 'My God, how great Thou art!'"

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Jesus conquered death and through His resurrection is able to assure believers of eternal life beyond the grave.

Adding anticipation to awe and appreciation is a great way to live.

nudge
WITH KARL FAASE

Is love unlimited?

DO YOU see love like yeast in dough or like sugar in coffee?

Some see love like sugar in coffee, in that there is a limited supply. I only ever have one teaspoon, no matter how big the cup.

But I believe love is more like yeast in dough. You can put a small amount in the dough and it slowly permeates the whole batch. In fact, you can take that dough and add it to another batch and the process repeats itself. The more you use the yeast, the greater it gets.

God's love for us and our love for others is really a limitless supply. The more we give love, the more it spreads and hence, the greater its influence. Be sure to demonstrate your love to others today.

Tass and
Karen
Saada

SNIPER FINDS PEACE WITH JEWES

Pledging his allegiance to the Arafat forces as a young Palestinian sniper, Taysir Abu Saada never expected to overcome his bitter hatred towards Jews while working in America.

Taysir, better known as Tass, was so engrained with hatred and anger as a youngster that he once tried to shoot one of his teachers.

“He went down and I thought I had hit him so I got in my car and drove off, but thank God he was not,” he says looking back.

After the incident Tass was kicked out of school and his father gave him a choice to leave Saudi Arabia and go study elsewhere. He chose America.

“Why did I want to go to America when I hated the Americans just as much as I hated the Jews?” he asks. “It was an amazing thing to me. I was so drawn. When I got to America and I lived there for a few months I realised that the Americans are very good-hearted people.”

Tass started working as a dish washer in a French restaurant and after befriending the owners, he moved out front as a waiter serving tables.

On his first day in the dining room he remembers feeling extremely nervous when serving his first customer, a multi-billionaire named Charlie Sharpe.

“He stopped talking to the lady with him and looked at me with a beautiful smile and said, ‘Thank you, young man,’” he recalls.

“That intrigued me as a person from the Middle East; when you are really that wealthy you don’t look at the little people at all, you don’t treat them right.”

Noticing an unexplainable peace and love in his manner, Tass decided he would “take good care of this man” and they developed a deep friendship.

Choosing to be trained in hotel management, Tass ultimately became a highly successful executive.

After 19 years in America, Tass wanted to buy the restaurant he started in, but his plan to move it to a former funeral home hit a hurdle.

“From my Moslem background and teaching, any place that had dead bodies has demons and ghosts in the building, so when I walked in there I was uncomfortable,” he recalls.

Relating this creepy feeling to Charlie, Tass was shocked when Charlie said “you have no fear of God”, then added that this is easily fixed saying, “I have connections”.

He tried to laugh Charlie’s suggestion off, but the meaning of Charlie’s connection so troubled him that he could not eat or sleep normally.

Within days he felt like a walking zombie and was smoking six packets of cigarettes a day trying to calm his nerves, so at their next dinner meeting Tass begged Charlie to explain his “connection”.

The following day Charlie told Tass

about the miracles he had experienced in his life. Then Tass froze when Charlie said that to have peace he must love the Jews.

“He knew how much I hated the Jews,” Tass explains.

“To me at that time a good Jew was a dead Jew.”

He became indignant when Charlie tried to explain that Jesus Christ was not just a prophet, as Muslims believed, but that the Bible taught that He was actually God, the Messiah who had been prophesied about throughout the Old Testament Scriptures.

As he stormed towards the door Charlie called him back, begging him for a chance to explain as he reached for his Bible.

“He put his Bible right in between the two of us and when he did that I jumped away from it,” Tass says.

When asked why he felt so repelled by the book, Tass admitted that he knew it was because it had the name

of God and the word of God in it.

Despite this, he did not know what the Bible actually had to say about Jesus and as Charlie started reading from the first chapter of John he was overwhelmed.

“When he started reading that Jesus is the Word, Jesus is God, I started shaking and I

lost control,” Tass recalls.

“The next thing I know, I’m on my knees on the floor with my hands lifted up, inviting Christ to be my Lord and Saviour.

“I felt like a mountain lifted off my shoulders and a joy and peace came into my heart I never experienced before.”

Although neither of the men could explain what had just happened, they both knew that by surrendering his life to Jesus Christ on that day, Tass now had peace and an eternal connection with God.

The next day he felt a strange burden to pray for a special blessing over the Jewish race he had once despised.

Shocked by the sudden love that had engulfed his complete hatred, Tass knew that the power of Jesus Christ was the only thing that could have changed his heart.

Following his radical conversion Tass established a kindergarten work in Jericho and founded Seeds of Hope, an organisation committed to bring change to families through education, economic development, cultural exchange and humanitarian aid, where he continues to share the unexplainable love he has for all races of people through Jesus Christ. •

Hard road, soft heart

The fact that Cindy Marais is alive today is a miracle. Her mother attempted to abort her – twice – and since her traumatic birth she has faced abuse, trauma and grief almost every step of the way. But there has been a shining light with her since she was a teenager, giving her the strength to continue with when life seemed hopeless.

Three days after she was born, Cindy’s parents left her and her older sister with a couple that they thought were their grandparents. She describes it as a “godly home with love, abundance and education.”

Cindy explains, “This was a normal, fantastic childhood, until I found out at age 10 that I was not family. This devastated me and the rejection was so bad that I decided to live with my mom and step dad... My world

changed into an absolute nightmare. In this home I experienced drugs, alcohol, deception, adultery and poverty.”

Cindy helped look after her siblings and learned to run the household while their mother was at the pub or smoking dagga or using narcotics and alcohol.

“This led to endless adulterous affairs, all while my stepfather was sexually molesting us. We moved from place to place – one year we were in three different schools and three different provinces. This obviously created a huge impact on my school career.”

School was the last thing on her Cindy’s mind with so much going on at home and she left in standard 7 (grade 9).

At 14 Cindy was raped by a man who supplied her mother with drugs. Petrified, she kept the assault a secret. A turning point came soon after however when a friend invited her to a Scripture Union meeting. She had heard about God from the couple who had raised her but it wasn’t until this meeting that she realised her need for a saviour – Jesus – and gave her life to Him.

“I threw myself into the church, and felt accepted and loved,” Cindy remembers.

Before long Cindy’s mother and stepfather forbade her from going to church. She recalls her mother beating her and giving her ‘medicine’ from witchdoctors, but throughout it all she clung to hope in her faith.

“All I had hidden deep in my heart was Jesus. I was all alone in a world where I was so different in every way.”

Cindy experienced multiple assaults by multiple men. “I was haunted by this fear of men and started just giving in to them. I knew a guy that had been pursuing me for some time who was separated from his wife, but



Cindy Marais

still married. He offered me his home and fell in love with me. For me this was a way out and I grabbed it. I then fell pregnant at the age of 18 and had a beautiful baby girl. But life changed and he started flirting with and running after other women. He loved to party and stopped working, leaving me to go back to work while he took care of our baby girl. We had to move into a garage, with no toilet or running water.”

Cindy longed to give her daughter a better life than she had had so she decided to leave her daughter’s father and returned home.

After Cindy’s mother stole her belongings and left for a new life in a new town, Cindy moved in with a friend and started a new life in Port Edward.

“I started devoting my life to God and was on fire for my Messiah. I met my husband – a man of honour, integrity and compassion, who taught me how to live and be a part of a family. He knew about my past but loved me and made me the queen of his life. God gave me a home, furniture and finally my own bed to lay my head on.”

But tragedy struck again when after finally falling pregnant, their son, David, was stillborn at 39 weeks. The grief only compounded the rejection Cindy had experienced from before she was born.

“I then started focusing a bit on Cindy by God’s grace and started a career. So, at age 40 I decided to do my NQF4 and do my matric... which I passed with three distinctions!”

In 2018, Cindy opened a restaurant and ran it successfully for five years.

“But when Covid19 hit the world, this took my precious husband. I was too young to be a widow but I knew God had a plan. I said, ‘Lord, you cannot give me all these tears, and not have a greater plan for my life.’”

Last year Cindy gave up her business and began volunteering at child welfare. She also plans to launch an online ministry helping people deal with mental health issues, abuse and grief in the hopes that God will use her pain to help other people.

“I have forgiven my parents and only tell this story to bring honour to God,” she says.

Looking back at her difficult life now, Cindy remains positive: “I always felt God had a plan for my life, and even though I felt abandoned, I knew God was with me. He was most certainly my strength and hope of a better life.” •

“**Even though I felt abandoned, I knew God was with me.**”

“**I felt like a mountain lifted off my shoulders.**”

Professor affirms Genesis is history

BY JONATHAN SAFARTI, CMI

Like many others in America, going to church was just a routine activity for Dr Stephen Schrader.

It wasn't until a close friend confronted him with the Bible verse 1 John 5:12: "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" that in his words, "the lights came on instantly".

He says he confessed his sin and unbelief and the need for Jesus Christ to be his Saviour from sin. "I have had a strong desire to live for Him and know His word ever since being saved."

The erudite doctor is a staunch defender of Biblical creation.

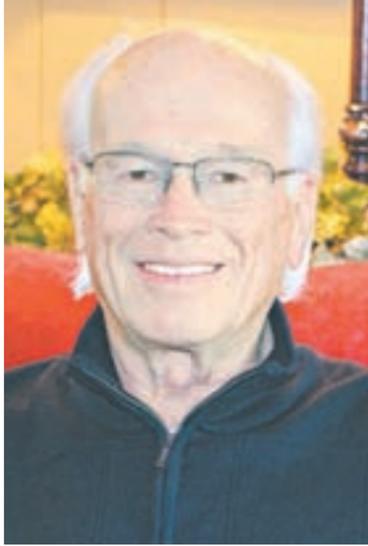
He studied under Dr John C Whitcomb Jr, co-author of the famous *The Genesis Flood* (1961).

His subjects included archaeology and languages of the ancient Near East, and in particular, the study of words that only occur once in the text (hapax legomena).

Dr Schrader points out, "The 39 books of the Old Testament are important to master because they provide the foundation for accurately interpreting the New Testament text."

He says he is convinced the creation account is a genuine historical narrative.

"A poetic account would show parallelism, while Genesis is full of a certain verb type called the 'waw



Dr Stephen R Schrader

consecutive' that makes it clear that it was written as a historical account," he says.

"It is interesting that the waw consecutive appears 55 times in just 34 verses in Genesis 1:1-2:3. The use of this verbal form is therefore significant and consistent with the narrative material found in the rest of the book of Genesis."

Many think the meaning of 'day' is hard to understand but Dr Schrader argues that "the pattern was set by God's testimony in Exodus 20:11: 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.'"

He further points out that Genesis 1 is clear enough even without that: "Yom (day) is modified in Genesis 1:1-2:3 by a numerical qualifier, so each day must be a literal day. When yom appears with a numerical qualifier in the Old Testament, it is never used in a figurative sense.

"I love how the phrase 'evening and morning' ends days one to six and ties each successive day together, but it is not repeated at the end of the seventh day as God had finished his work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day to set a pattern for mankind."

Sceptics often mock the first 11 chapters of Genesis, which detail creation, the fall, the flood and the confusion of languages at Babel. And some in the church think that these are side issues.

Why is a proper understanding of Genesis important?

"The most important thing," Dr Schrader says "is the Sovereign God, who created the whole world in six literal consecutive 24-hour days by just speaking his Word, who John reveals to be our Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3).

"And no human being was present. So all men have had to take His written word concerning His awesomeness in creating this world. Man did not evolve but was directly and supernaturally created by God on day six.

"Genesis refutes the concept of evolution and tells us that the earth



Dr Stephen R Schrader with his family.

is a relatively recent creation, and that man is not the result of millions of years of evolution. Genesis also reveals that God saw that everything He had created in the six days was 'exceedingly good'. There was no physical or spiritual death up to this point.

"Then there was the literal temptation by Satan to destroy man's innocence. Adam and Eve ate and disobeyed God's clear command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

"There was a literal judgement scene in Genesis 3:8-19 in which God interrogated Adam (3:9-12) and then Eve (3:16) and pronounced judgement upon Satan (3:14-15) before Eve (3:16) and Adam (3:17-19)."

This event, Dr Schrader adds, was the origin of death and suffering. "All views that try to marry millions of years with the Bible always place human and animal death before sin.

"In chapters 6-9 God destroys the whole world by a global flood. So things have not always been the same ('since the beginning of creation') as the scoffers during the last days assert (2 Peter 3:4-7). Things have only been the same since the end of the flood, as Genesis 8:21-22 reveals."

Dr Schrader points out that even though God pronounced judgement, He also promised a Redeemer:

"In Genesis 3:15, God gave the promise of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman Eve, who would ultimately defeat Satan at the cross of through His death and resurrection.

"The contrast between the 'first man, Adam' and 'the last Adam' (Jesus Christ) is conveyed in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 providing the contrast between 'earthly' and 'heavenly' in origin.

"Earlier, Paul had explained that the whole reason for Jesus coming to die physically for our sins, then rise physically from the dead, comes from the fact that our ancestor Adam sinned and brought physical death into the world (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). The long-age views put physical death of both humans and animals before Adam's sin. But then if death is not related to sin, how could Jesus's death pay for our sin?"

DR STEPHEN R SCHRADER

has served as Old Testament Department Chair and Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, Baptist Bible Graduate School, Springfield, Missouri, since 1995. He earned both M.Div and Th.M specialising in Old Testament and Hebrew from Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana.

Can you hear the cicadas?

PETER'S CORNER WITH PETER MIKULA

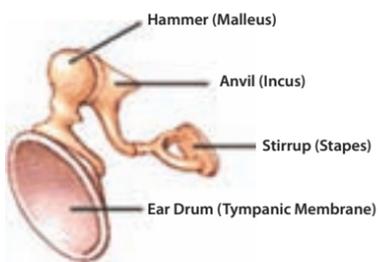
AS A young child in my home town of Canberra, many years ago, during the warm summer evenings I enjoyed listening to the cicadas chirping or singing loudly in the bushland trees surrounding our home. I thought cicadas were fascinating small insects, with their transparent wings and prominent eyes.

For me today, the cicada memory lives on. I still hear the chirping sound, but now it is inside my head 24/7, and is called tinnitus. That brings its own set of challenges that can be difficult to live with. I did not care well for my hearing in my younger years, with the cicada result I live with now. Yet despite that, my hearing basically functions adequately after an amazing 70 years, with no maintenance at all during that time.

Alongside the tinnitus, I can still hear normal conversation, noise, music and singing. I now deeply appreciate the ability to hear, and in my heart I mourn alongside those who cannot hear at all. The tinnitus leads me to marvel at how well designed and planned is our ability to hear. Just look at this diagram of the hammer, anvil and stirrup – three tiny bones essential for the ability to hear, doing their job in each side of your head, on duty 24/7. When I consider this, I ask myself how could it ever be possible for blind evolution to come up with this design, plus the process to manufacture it?

These are deep questions. How did those bones get to the precise places where they are, and in the precise order and alignment needed?

Who told them they would be needed so that our ears can hear? What use are they without all the other parts of the ear? For that matter, what is the point of having ears unless they are linked to a brain that can "listen" to the vibrations, analyse them, turn them into what we call "sounds," and give them meaning? Who told the brain that there were ears nearby waiting to be connected? Who told the ears that there was a mouth and tongue nearby just waiting to get a word in? What use is a speaker without a listener? What use is the song of a bird without a hearer?



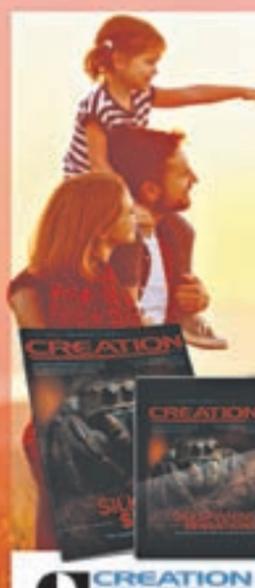
Evolutionary thinking suggests the answers involve random accident, with no design and no purpose. That the bones invented themselves without knowing what they were supposed to be doing. That ears and brains, speakers and listeners, just came to be by chance. That the hammer, anvil and stirrup came to be through millions of random steps from an original one-celled organism. Evolution requires that mutations (which are essentially accidental or chance damage to or reorganisation of pre-existing genes) caused these things, and all without knowing anything about the purpose that the "accidental damage" was going to achieve.

In recent times, I have heard people say "the universe – or the galaxy, or the sun – did it," perhaps finally recognising that evolution could not have done so?

However the Bible book of Job 38:2 gives us cause to hear something else, namely a deep question from God: "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?"

I heard those words many years ago, and I now recognise that no, it was neither evolution nor the universe that did it. The ear and everything else in creation is God's great design and plan. Who can equal it? We close our ears to Him at our great peril. I hope these words help you, as they have me, in your journey to surely trust the Creator.

Peter Mikula is a mining engineer in Kalgoorlie who loves stargazing and talking with others about Jesus.



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YOUTH TRUTH

CASSIE'S TRANSFORMATION

Cassie Bernall took a bold stand for her faith before a school shooting cut her young life short

For 17-year-old Cassie Bernall, April 20, 1999 started off like any other school day. She laced up her beloved Doc Marten boots, said goodbye to her family and walked the 100 yards to her high school in Columbine, Colorado. But by the end of that morning, Cassie was dead, gunned down by a fellow student and the date would become infamous around the world.

Cassie was raised in a Christian home by her parents Brad and Misty but she rebelled against their values and rules as a young teenager when she started hanging out with a girl called Mona (not her real name).

When Cassie was about 14, Misty and Brad discovered letters to Cassie from Mona that shocked them. The letters were about the teens murdering Cassie's parents along with graphic illustrations of how they would do it. They also talked about killing a teacher, witchcraft, using drugs and suicide.

When Misty and Brad confronted Cassie about it, she told them none of it was serious and they didn't mean anything.

But she was angry at their invasion of her privacy and threatened to run away or kill herself. They contacted the police and their church pastor and pulled Cassie out of the school she was attending. She was grounded, forbidden from seeing Mona and was only allowed to attend church youth group.

In an essay that Cassie later wrote, she admitted, "Throughout this time, I hated my parents and God with the deepest, darkest hatred. There are no words to describe the blackness I felt."

Misty writes in her book, *She Said Yes*, that she prayed for God's protection over Cassie and her friends.

"If there was anything I felt certain of at that moment, it was that we were dealing with more than a bunch of rebellious teenagers... I felt that we were engaged in a spiritual battle."

A turning point came when Cassie made friends with Jamie at her new private Christian school. Jamie remembers Cassie as bitter and hopeless when she first met her. "She told me that she had given her soul to Satan through one of her friends," Jamie says.

Jamie, who was a Christian, invited Cassie to a church youth retreat.



Cassie's parents Misty and Brad Bernall pose with a portrait of their daughter by Vermont artist Livy Hitchcock. (Photo By Craig F. Walker/The Denver Post via Getty Images)

Misty and Brad allowed her to go in the hopes it would help her.

Jamie recalls the retreat's evening worship service: "The theme of the weekend was overcoming the temptations of evil and breaking out of the selfish life. It was the singing that for some reason just broke down Cassie's walls... she was pouring out her heart - I think she was praying - and asking God for forgiveness... Later I noticed that Cassie's whole face had changed. You looked at her, and even though she was still shy, it was like her eyes were more hopeful."

“She told me that she had given her soul to Satan.”

Cassie went on to remember that night as her second birthday - the day she gave her life to Jesus and became "born again".

When Misty picked Cassie up from the retreat, her daughter hugged her, looked her in the eye and said,

"I've changed, I've totally changed. I know you are not going to believe it, but I'll prove it to you."

Over time, Cassie proved to her parents she had indeed changed. Misty recalls: "Her whole character was somehow transformed."

Cassie also had a desire to tell others about her newfound faith and begged her parents to let her move to a public school where she could reach more people.

Misty and Brad agreed, on the

condition that if she started to hang out with the wrong crowd or her grades slipped, she would transfer back to her old school.

In 1997, Cassie began her sophomore year at Columbine High School.

Two years later, she was among 12 students and one teacher who were tragically killed by senior students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who then killed themselves. Eric and Dylan were reported to have questioned some students about their beliefs in God before shooting them.

There are conflicting reports on what happened in Cassie's final moments.

One of Cassie's classmates recalls: "I couldn't see anything when those guys came up to Cassie, but I could recognise her voice. I could hear everything like it was right next to me. One of them asked her if she believed in God."

"She paused, like she didn't know what she was going to answer, and

then she said yes. She must have been scared but her voice didn't sound shaky. It was strong. Then they asked her why, though they didn't give her a chance to respond. They just blew her away." Another said Cassie was hiding under a table and Eric Harris shouted "Peek-a-boo!" before shooting her.

Brad heard the gunshots at the school from their home. When they couldn't find Cassie, they hoped she had taken shelter safely in the school somewhere. But they were informed Cassie had died two days later. Four witnesses later told them Cassie had defended her faith before being killed.

After her death, Misty and Brad discovered a note Cassie had written in 1998, which said, "I try to stand up for my faith at school... It can be discouraging, but it can also be rewarding... I will die for my God. I will die for my faith. It's the least I can do for Christ dying for me."

And the day Cassie died, she handed her friend Amanda a note. An excerpt reads: "Honestly, I want to live completely for God. It's hard and scary, but totally worth it."

Twenty-three years on, Cassie's brave stand continues to inspire people around the globe to take their faith seriously, despite the cost.

Following their daughter's death, Brad and Misty found comfort in seeking God and said He gave them strength to bear their loss. They now speak publicly and carry Cassie's message throughout the world. •

When your dreams shatter

BY BEN LAHOOD

Lacy Brunson was able to access the internet and porn in many places growing up, even through his PlayStation Portable (PSP). He was raised by his grandparents, who saved him from the distressing chaos of his parents' life: his mum was an alcoholic and drug addict. His dad came in and out of his life constantly.

"I'm grateful that my grandparents raised me because they took me out of what could have been an even worse situation," Lacy says in a video on his YouTube channel Lacy B.

"They raised me the right way. I was raised in church. I knew about God; I knew about Jesus. But I didn't want that. I didn't want anything to do with that because I saw the hypocrisy. I saw the pastors that were sleeping around with members of the church or in the same clubs that I went to. I saw people in leadership drinking."

Lacy's troubles arose in middle school when kids showed him pictures of pornography. At that time, the internet was just starting, and with it came free and easy access to lustful images. His PSP became just one more device to let sewage into his brain.

"There I was in my room secretly looking at porno and downloading it to my PSP and eventually my cell phone," he remembers. "My mind became so warped when it came to this issue because all I now saw was women as sex objects. I didn't even care."

Early on, he Lacy began sleeping around. "I had my first kid even before I left high school," he says.

Soon he added weed, alcohol and parties to the mix.

"I was never satisfied," he recognises. "They were only momentary pleasures, but I kept doing them. It was a habit." With admirable basketball skills, Lacy contemplated a

college basketball scholarship.

After the walk-on tryout for the university team, the coach called him to the office. "He told me how impressed he was."

But Lacy didn't lay off the drugs. "I was going to class high. I wasn't doing any of my homework. I wasn't studying," he explains. "I was partying on Tuesdays. It was crazy. I was reckless in college."

When the coach saw his grades, he realised Lacy was academically disqualified to join the team.

"That was an extreme breaking point for me," Lacy says. "I felt like I lost everything."

Eventually, Lacy he was also kicked out of college because of his grades.

He returned home to a listless life.

"What's the point?" he asked himself when he realised his dreams had evaporated. "I went extra hard with weed, parties, girls. I didn't care about life anymore."

Finally, a local pastor invited him to church. He attended several services until finally he cried out to God.

"If You're real like I've been hearing about all my life, I need You. I need Your help," he prayed in his seat. "I'm tired of life. I don't want to do this anymore."

The fact that he could come back to God after being turned off by bad examples of other church goers was significant.

"At 21 years of age, kicked out of school, at the lowest point in my life, I said, 'God, I'm here. If you are real, please make Yourself real to me because I'm tired, I'm lost, I need help.'"

Lacy responded to the altar call and prayed to receive Jesus as his Saviour and Lord.

"Something powerful happened in me that moment. I remember weeping like a baby. I could feel this cleansing. I could feel this weight being lifted off of my chest," he recalls.

"It felt like somebody was power-washing me on the inside. When I opened my eyes, I felt like I was in a new place. I felt love."

In place of his shame and guilt, joy and peace flooded his heart.

"I felt forgiven."

Lacy determined to live for God and stay consistent in church attendance. Since straightening up his life, Lacy now has a wife and children and is a pastor and musician.

"God's been using my life," he says. "What Jesus did on that cross wasn't just for us to go to church. What he He did was to cleanse us and set us free from the bondage, the slavery of sin. He gave us a new life, a fresh start, an opportunity and access to God." •

This article was first published on GodReports.com and is used with kind permission.



lifestyle and entertainment

DELICIOUS LEEK TART

Prep: 30 min
Cook: 30 min
Total: 1 hour
Serves 8



Method:
Preheat oven to 200°C.
Cut off

Pie crust ingredients:
1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup vegetable shortening
6 tablespoons ice cold water

Method:
Measure flour into a large bowl and add the salt and shortening.

Using two dull butter knives or a pastry blender, blend the flour, salt and shortening until the shortening is the size of peas.

Fill a wide-mouthed glass with ice. Add water to the top. Measure or pour the ice cold water into the flour mixture. Using a spatula or your hands, mix the water into the flour to form a large ball of dough. You may need to add an extra tablespoon of water if you have excess flour. If you added too much water, add additional flour until the dough is well formed but not too sticky. Handle and mix the dough as little as possible. Form dough into a disc and wrap in wax paper. Put wrapped dough in the freezer for 10 minutes or the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

When ready to use, remove dough and place on counter.

Leek filling ingredients:
1.5kg leeks (about 5 to 6 medium)
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme or 1 tablespoon dried thyme
4 tablespoons butter
1/3 cup heavy cream
1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1/4 teaspoon pepper, or to taste

root and green ends of leeks and cut leek in half length-wise. Gently rinse out interior and exterior of leeks to remove all dirt or sand. Cut halves lengthwise again to form quarters. Finely chop leeks and transfer to a bowl.

Add thyme to bowl with leeks. Heat butter in a Dutch oven or large saucepan over medium heat. Once melted, add leeks and thyme. Cook, stirring frequently, until soft and tender, about 10 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon of water if necessary to prevent leeks from burning or sticking to pan.

When leeks are just about finished, add heavy cream, salt, and pepper and stir, cooking until cream has just blended, about 1 minute. Remove from heat.

Assembly and baking
Lightly sprinkle a clean work surface with flour. Remove pie crust from fridge. Using a rolling pin, roll out into a 25-30cm circle. Place in a shallow 23-25cm pie or tart pan, pressing dough down onto sides.

Transfer leeks from pan onto prepared dough. If desired, fold sides over form a crude shell over the out edge of the tart.

Bake at 200°C until crust is golden brown and tops of leeks are starting to brown and caramelize, about 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 15 minutes before serving.

Recipe and photo from MakeBetterFood.com

Little mermaid's tale of faith

Best known as the voice of Ariel in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* and Barbie in the *Toy Story* movies, Jodi Benson is now delighting a new generation with a role in a new children's series.

With a natural talent and love of singing, dancing and acting, Jodi knew she wanted to work in musical theatre since she was a child. She made her Broadway debut in 1983 at the age of 22. The following year she married Ray Benson.

Five years later she landed the role of Ariel, which catapulted her to stardom. But behind the scenes her marriage was failing.

According to an article published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Jodi separated from her husband on and off for a year-and-a-half and "begged him for a divorce."

Ray was a Christian and had introduced Jodi to Jesus when she was 18.

"[He said], 'You know you can have this personal relationship and this is what it looks like,'" Jodi told *The Christian Post*. "It just was so wonderful to know."

But Jodi realised her own faith was piggybacking off his. Anxious about her career, she felt she had hit rock bottom.

"I had my foot on the pedal on a cliff in



Jodi Benson with her husband Ray at *The Wingfeather Saga* premiere in 2022. (Photo by Leah Puttkammer/Getty Images for Angel Studios)

California," she says. "I was ready to go; I was done. And God just said, 'I'm not done with you yet. I love you and I'm not done with you.'"

It was then she surrendered her life to God and began her own, personal rela-

tionship with Him. She now says God is, "a God of second, third, fourth, fifth chances."

"I just don't think I'd be where I'm at now if I hadn't been broken," she says. "When He puts those pieces back together again, they can be filled with power."

Jodi sought counselling and she and Ray restored their marriage and will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary this year.

After *The Little Mermaid*, Jodi had roles in *Thumbelina*, the *Toy Story* movies, *Enchanted* and continues to voice Ariel in video games.

Now Jodi is playing the voice of Nia in the new children's series *The Wingfeather Saga*. Jodi says she is proud to be a part of a series with Christian undertones.

In an interview with CBN's Faithwire, she says the biggest lesson she's learnt is that God is in control.

"He's not only God of my life, but He's director, He's casting director, He's producer, He's everything," she says.

Jodi recently released a book called *Part of My World: What I've Learned from The Little Mermaid About Love, Faith, and Finding My Voice*.

The Wingfeather Saga is available to stream for free on the Angel Studios app. •



On a Wing and a Prayer movie: deadly danger; divine drama?

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

EVER faced mortal danger? Imagine that you, your family, and a pilot have boarded a small private plane for a flight home from Florida to Louisiana. Ten minutes after take-off, the pilot dies, leaving you – a passenger – to fly the plane. How would you feel? What would you do? MGM's *On a Wing and a Prayer* depicts the dramatic dilemmas that Doug White and his family faced on Easter Sunday, 2009.

The Amazon Studios release stars Dennis Quaid (*American Underdog*, *A Dog's Journey*), Heather Graham (*Boogie Nights*, *The Hangover*), and Jesse Metcalfe (*Desperate Housewives*, *Dallas*).

Louisiana pharmacist and good ole boy Doug White (Dennis Quaid) and his family are leaving Marco Island, Florida, after his brother's funeral. As Doug, his wife and two daughters board the plane with pilot Joe Cabuk, they look forward to returning home.

Flight instruction?
Interested in the flight process, Doug sits in the co-pilot's seat. He asks Joe what button activates radio communication. Soon, Joe's head slumps over and he becomes silent, dead. Doug is facing a complex instrument panel and bewildering circumstances, thousands of feet up, with his family on board. He tells his wife to pray with their daughters. Doug uses the radio button to begin an intense series of exchanges with air traffic controllers in Miami and Fort Myers. None is familiar with the specific model of King Air plane Doug is in.

One ATC worker remembers a pilot friend in Danbury, Connecticut, with King



Air experience. Cellphones connect Kari Sorenson (Jesse Metcalfe), the Danbury pilot, with Fort Myers ATC, which relays instructions through multiple controllers to Doug. Sorenson's initial assessment – not relayed to Doug – "This guy has a five percent chance of living."

Heart pounding excitement
The film, using just a bit of artistic license, delivers the heart pounding excitement and uncertainty of the crisis. The screenwriter had the benefit of ATC audio recordings that convey the dramatic events in real time.

Doug to Miami ATC: "I need to get this thing on the ground. I'm flyin' a King Air. ... My pilot's deceased. ... I need help. ... I need a King Air pilot to talk to."

He knew he was climbing dangerously. ATC instructed him to disengage the autopilot to stop the ascent. "I'm [now] flyin' the airplane by hand," confirmed Doug in his Louisiana drawl (represented skilfully by Dennis Quaid). "You find me the longest, widest runway you can, ma'am."

ATC, later: "You doin' alright there descending?" Doug: "Oh, we're havin' a hoot." Miami ATC handed communications off to Fort Myers ATC, which asked Doug, "Are you using the autopilot, or are you

flying the airplane?" Doug: "Me and the good Lord [are] hand flying this."

Divine intervention?
Extraordinary teamwork, innovative thinking, flexibility, skill and courage under extreme pressure helped the plane land safely. Doug, whose faith is central to his life, would add divine intervention to that list.

At an ATC award ceremony, Doug told the controllers who helped save him, "God Almighty used the talents that He gave... you to save my family and me from a certain fiery death."

At another event, Doug reflected on how he dealt with the stress and trauma: "I've got the greatest counsellor of all time at my disposal ... the Prince of Peace ... Jesus." He said ATC Fort Myers staffer Doug Favio – Sorenson's pal – later wrote to tell him that Afghan war horrors and injuries had left Favio mad at God, and an agnostic. But the ATC rescue experience motivated Favio to ask divine forgiveness and to believe in God again.

Of course, viewers will know in advance – from extensive news coverage and studio promotion – that the real flight crisis had a happy ending, so otherwise-innate tension in the story will be missing. But the actors and filmmakers recreate the events adeptly to help viewers feel and appreciate the confusion, risk, and relief. A compelling drama with valuable life lessons.

Rated PG (USA) "for peril, some language, suggestive references and thematic elements." •

Rusty Wright is an author and lecturer who has spoken on six continents. He holds Bachelor of Science (psychology) and Master of Theology degrees from Duke and Oxford universities, respectively. www.RustyWright.com

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BY JOHN HUTCHINSON

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

What it means to love your neighbour

BY ROB FURLONG

"JESUS gets us." This was the message which appeared on millions of TV screens in the USA during this year's Super Bowl playoff between the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers. By advertising standards, it was a simple ad depicting people, regardless of who they were, having their feet washed by another, while INXS's hit, "Never tear us apart" played in the background. The ad concludes with some simple, but poignant statements:

"Jesus didn't teach hate. He washed feet. He gets us. All of us. Jesus. Love thy neighbour."

Not surprisingly, the ad has been heavily criticised by some, with many claiming it says Jesus condones sin and that He challenged us to love our enemies, not just our neighbour.

Personally, I think it's an overreaction and much of the criticism misses the point about what it means to "love your neighbour."

One day, a religious leader came to Jesus and asked Him what the

greatest commandment of all was. Jesus summarised it in two statements: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbour as yourself."

What does it mean to love your neighbour? For Jewish people, living in the days of Jesus, "neighbour" was interpreted to mean only other Jews. If you were not a Jew, you were not a neighbour, and therefore a Jewish person was not obligated to love you or do anything for you. Jesus turned this understanding completely on its head when He used this commandment as the basis for His story of the Good Samaritan.

Perhaps you're not familiar with the story?

It concerns a Jewish man who is travelling along a dusty road when he is set upon by violent thugs who rob him, beat him up, and leave him for dead. Two men – both Jews and active in the service of the Temple – come across the man but offer no assistance.

Finally, along comes a Samaritan traveller who, when he sees the



desperate plight of the man immediately tends to his wounds and then takes him to the next inn where he also pays for whatever care the innkeeper provides for the wounded man.

Samaritans and Jews loathed and despised each other in the days of Jesus. Think of the hatred that exists between many people in the Middle East today and you will have some idea of the animosity that existed between these people.

But in making the despised Samaritan the hero of the story, Jesus' message is clear – the person who needs our help, regardless of their status or racial background, even an enemy – he or she is our neighbour and we are to love them.

What I find especially interesting is that Jesus based His story on the commandment to "love your neighbour." It is unmistakably clear then that to "love your neighbour" is

not just a call to love people who are like us, or that we get along with.

It is a call to love our enemies as well. It's what Jesus taught, and it's also what He lived out.

A man named Paul – himself a devout and proud Jew – said, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." (Romans 5:10)

Did you hear that?

Even though the world was shaking its fist in the face of God, Jesus knew our need for forgiveness and still died for us. This is the greatest example ever of "loving your neighbour."

And it's through His example and power working in us that we can gain the strength to love our enemies as well, in spite of what they have done to us. Jesus gets us. It's why He died for us. And understanding our own weakness, it's why we can "get" others as well.

Love your neighbour...

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ

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

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

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

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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in me has eternal life." (John 6:47).

He gives life of a wonderful quality that continues forever.

What now?

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

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

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE]

* Please tick and write clearly *

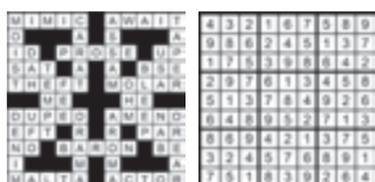
Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email address _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985
info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



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, serials and kids' shows - Good. app	
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	

WHAT'S happening to the foxes?

A fox is no friend of mine – particularly when ewes are lambing or they get into a fowl house! They love chooks, ducks and turkeys.

Since migrating to Australia, foxes have decimated precious bird life, particularly the curlews and other ground birds. But in Norway, foxes are in decline. How we wish that was the case here! Norwegian foxes, however, are different to our red reynards. They're as white as the snow itself.

But why are such wily critters in decline? It's because wolf numbers are dwindling. Why should wolf numbers affect fox numbers?

The answer is this: Instead of hunting food for themselves, white foxes became reliant on the wolves. Wolves hunt deer and goats. The foxes come in for leftovers. They have become so dependent on wolves they now can't exist without them. They've lost the ability to hunt for themselves. But, aren't we all becoming like white foxes? – dependant on others – and all our technology!

My wife often says, "How would you get on if you had to manage on your own?" Well, I know how to make toast and open a tin of sardines. Beyond that I'm pretty hopeless.

When so much is done for us we lose the ability to do things for ourselves.

Someone said recently, "I only wish Dad had taught us how to do the things he was so good at. Now he's gone we have no idea."

What about calculators and computers? Many are so dependent they can't even add up without them. We're becoming technology dependent and mentally passive.

What happens when all our time saving gadgets don't work? When I lost a particular program in my computer I felt helpless and hardly knew what to do. We're also losing the ability to think – the ability to reason. Stop thinking and your brain goes into sleep mode. Mind activation is a way of staving off dementia.

There's a worldwide religious cult which condemns individual thinking. It does the thinking for you. Its followers are forbidden from questioning anything it teaches.

That's not how it should be. Christianity does not encourage you to leave your brain at the door, but to think critically. The Bible says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good!" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

We need to activate faith and not depend on others. The Bible tells us to seek God while He may be found. Jesus said, "Learn about Me."

The Apostle Peter said, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

The best mental exercise we can engage in is to be ever learning about Jesus Christ the Son of God and His wonderful works while on earth and His sacrificial death for us – and then His resurrection from the dead.

Prayer is another great mental activity – also (Christian) meditation – thinking about all the wonders of creation and the God who made it all.

Learn from the foxes who made their survival dependant on others, and be mentally active and growing in faith, so that you can survive and thrive.

Quarterback Brock Purdy #13 of the San Francisco 49ers looks to pass during Super Bowl LVIII against the Kansas City Chiefs at Allegiant Stadium on February 11, 2024 in Las Vegas, Nevada. (Photo by Luke Hales/Getty Images)



A SOLID FOUNDATION

BY MILO HASKOUR

Called “Mr. Irrelevant” as the absolute last pick of the last round of the 2022 NFL draft, just one year later Brock Purdy led the San Francisco 49ers into the Super Bowl.

Brock got his start in football taking the humble Perry High School in Gilroy, Arizona to the state championship twice.

Even though he did well, his high school was unknown and he was shorter than most elite quarterbacks, so recruiters panned him. He was given an unspectacular three stars on scout reports.

He got an offer to the mighty University of Alabama, but Coach Nick Saban said his accuracy was mediocre. Brock felt pretty sure Nick hadn’t even watched his videos. Accuracy was and is his strong point.

Feeling he wouldn’t be given a chance at the Crimson Tide, Brock opted for Iowa State University.

Brock, who grew up in the Christian home but took ownership of his faith journey when he was in high school, recalls a life-changing moment that happened soon after he got to Iowa State. He tells Sports Spectrum Podcast that at the end of a difficult first week of fall camp, he got on his knees and asked God to forgive him for putting football ahead of his relationship with Christ.

“It was just a great reminder of where my identity is, where

it lies,” Brock says on the podcast. “And it’s in Jesus. And I continue to lean on Him. Again, the next day I didn’t go out and throw for 500 yards and was this awesome quarterback, but it was just this peace that I had with Him knowing that, ‘Hey, no matter what I’m going to face moving forward during college football, God and Jesus are going to be my identity. And whatever I face, I won’t be shaken from it.’ I’ve got a great foundation in Him.”

At Iowa State he lifted the Cyclones to consecutive winning seasons and a Fiesta Bowl win after beginning as the third string quarterback.

Pinpoint passing won him regard, but the play that made Brock stand out with his team was the time he scrambled for yards, having no passing or handoff option.



Brock Purdy #13 of the San Francisco 49ers after scoring a touchdown against the Detroit Lions on January 28, 2024. (Photo by Cooper Neill/Getty Images)

Brock needed more yards and instead of skidding to a self-protecting down like most quarterbacks, he dropped his shoulder and smashed into two defenders.

Seeing his gutsiness, his teammates went wild. Brock’s willingness to sacrifice for his players galvanized his team, demonstrating his leadership.

Despite his feats at college, once again Brock wasn’t highly regarded by recruiters, now at the NFL level. He was dismissed for being shorter than the upper echelon QBs.

Round after round of draft passed agonisingly with no one showing interest in the Iowa star. Brock was resigning himself to the alternatives: either give up football or try out at a “walk on” for the team of his choosing.

Fortunately for Brock, he got the call before San Francisco exercised their last pick. Again, Brock was the backup plan, a third string QB for the 49ers.

It didn’t matter. He was used to being underrated, and Brock did what he always did when he was overlooked. He worked extra hard, learning the playbook forwards and backwards so that if he ever got the call-up, he’d be ready.

On the 49ers, coaches and players were watching, seeing the commitment, assurance, and readiness. In 2002, Trey Lance was the starter and Jimmy Garoppolo was the backup man. In week two, Lance was injured for the season. In week 13, Jimmy suffered a foot injury.

Brock took the podium. He threw 210 yards and two touchdowns to win against the Miami Dolphins. For

the football world, which lacked the insider view of his work ethic, it was as if the 49ers had conjured a genie. Usually, the third string guy helps a team limp out of a season. But Brock went on to beat Tom Brady with the Buccaneers in his next game and in the following games carried his team into the playoffs.

“I believe in the Lord, and I trust in Him,” Brock declared. “I just go out there and I just play.”

Under the pressure of being a rookie in his first playoffs, Brock calmly produced his best performance yet, throwing for 323 yards and three touchdowns to send home the sad Seattle Seahawks and advance to divisional playoffs against the Dallas Cowboys. He beat them too. Unfortunately, against the Eagles, Brock’s arm got injured and his team lost.

“Mr. Irrelevant” – as a last-round, last-pick, third-stringer player gets teasingly called – became “Mr. Rel-

evant.” At the beginning of the 2023 season, Brock was talked about as a potential Super Bowl contender at the beginning. But after losing three games at the beginning of the season, pundits labelled him overhyped.

A bye week was all he needed. Brock bounced back. His numbers were phenomenal and MVP-worthy: #1 in QBR, #1 in yards per attempt, #1 in completion percentage.

He hasn’t lost a game since. He’s dismissed the “overhype” dismissal.

“I’m competitive. I like to win,” he says. “But I’m not defined by the wins or losses.”

This year, Brock became the lowest drafted quarterback to start a Super Bowl (Super Bowl LVIII). In the game, he completed 23 of 38 passes for 255 yards and one touchdown in a 25–22 overtime loss to the Kansas City Chiefs.

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