

# Marine finds freedom in prison



LaDavid Taylor and his family

BY GRAYSON POPE

When LaDavid Taylor was young, he never felt at home. He was brought up in Dallas by his mother and his stepfather, who was his only father figure from the time he was a toddler.

“The way that he showed love – he always provided, but he didn’t talk much... He was a wise man, but we didn’t talk much,” recalls LaDavid. His mother was young, and she and LaDavid had their issues, too. LaDavid struggled with feeling

abandoned and misunderstood, so he tried figuring out life on his own.

That didn’t go so well.

**Getting back on track**

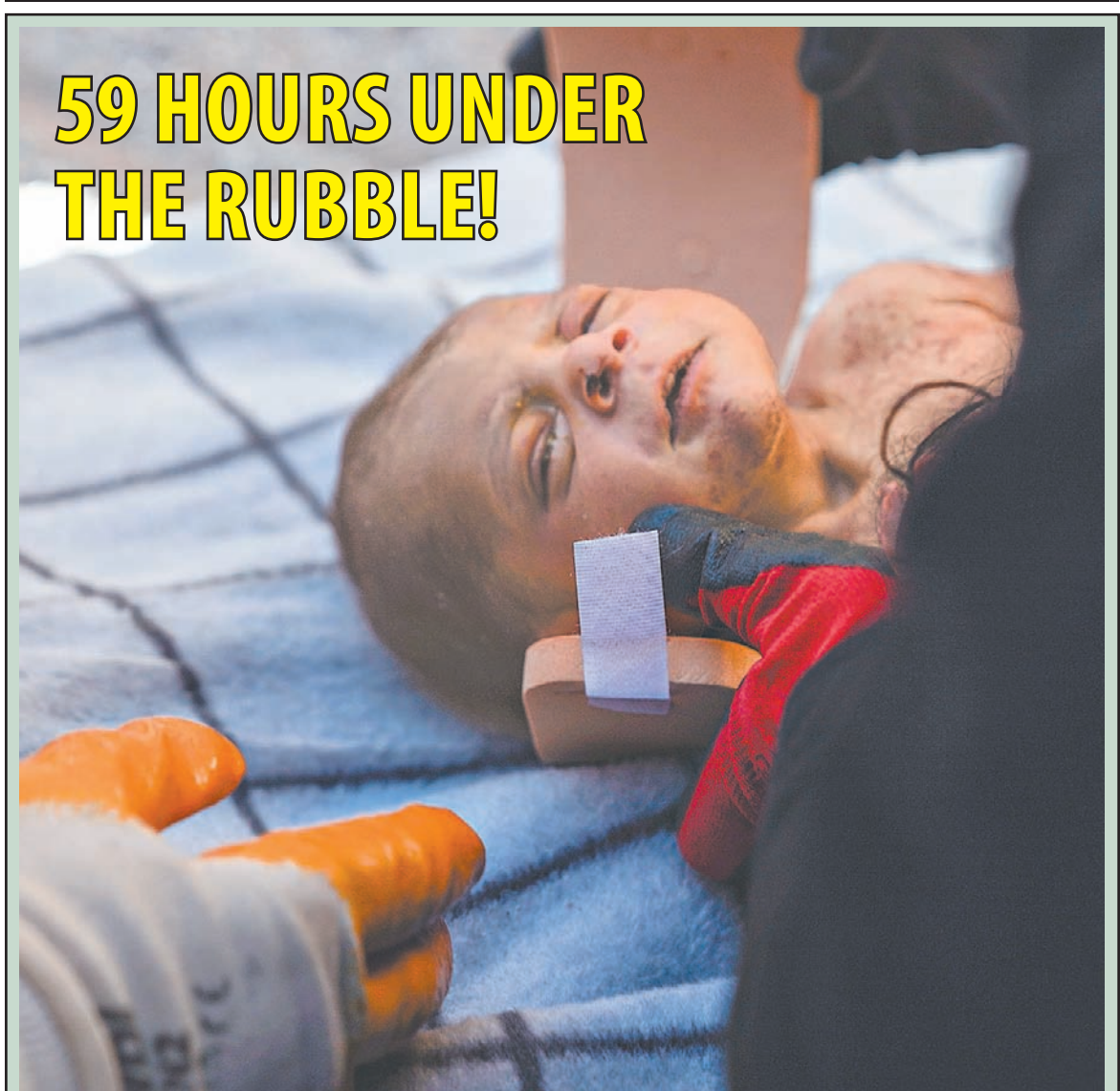
“I needed molding; I needed mentoring,” he says. As an adolescent, things spiraled downward. “I got into the streets and a lot of foolishness.” LaDavid believed in God, but he would often get upset with Him and turn away from Him.

LaDavid knew he needed to get his life together, so he joined the US Marines. He really enjoyed life in the corps – until he hurt his knee, essentially ending his military career.

That sent him into a depression, which he numbed with alcohol. One day he woke up in a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital. A friend had brought him there after finding him unconscious at home. The doctor told him his liver was damaged. “[He said], ‘All it’s going to take is for you to drink you a couple more beers, and you’ll die,’” LaDavid remembers. “That was it for me.”

Determined to get healthy, LaDavid stopped drinking. Unfortunately, the friend who had brought him to the VA was on a different path.

The friend started drinking and became aggressive, even taking the keys to LaDavid’s car. The two men fought over the keys. The friend had a gun.



**59 HOURS UNDER THE RUBBLE!**

**HATAY, ANTAKYA, TURKEY, 8 February, 2023:** Soldiers attend to a 20-day-old baby who was rescued 59 hours after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake. The boy was reported to be in good health and passed on to an ambulance crew. (Photo by Ibrahim Oner/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)

## Unforgiveness destroys your heart

BY BILL ADAMS OF THE CHRISTIAN POST

MANY have heard of “The Nazi Hunter,” Simon Wiesenthal. He’s famous for tracking down Nazi perpetrators of the Holocaust and bringing them to justice. Fewer know of Wiesenthal’s wrestling with the conundrum of justice versus... Forgiveness.

The beginnings of his inner struggle are documented in his 1969 book *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. The author tells of when he was a Polish-Jewish concentration camp prisoner, assigned as an orderly, disposing of medical and human waste at a German field hospital.

Unexpectedly, a young SS soldier, near death from his wounds, summons Wiesenthal to his bedside. He proceeds to confess all his trespasses, including aiding in the murder of 300 Jewish women and children who had been herded into a house, set ablaze, and gunned down when they tried to escape the hellish flames.



The entrance gate to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland

This German soldier seeks forgiveness from a Jew. His final words to the prisoner are, “I know that what I am asking is almost too much for you, but without your answer I cannot die in peace.” Mentally dazed from malnutrition, cruel treatment, and the surreal nature of this confession, Wiesenthal is dumbfounded as to what to say or do. In the end, he says nothing, leaves the room, and

spends the rest of his life wondering what he should have done.

Should he have forgiven the dying soldier? What could he have even said that would absolve the man’s guilt? Does a Nazi murderer, though sorrowful, even deserve forgiveness?

Can you forgive a crime that was not against yourself, but against others? What about justice – wouldn’t forgiveness undermine justice? But couldn’t he at least have tried to help a desperate man die in peace?

**BACK PAGE**

**SURFING THE STORM**

**BIANCA BUITENDAG**

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# Marine finds his freedom in prison

• From page 1

After a struggle, LaDavid shot him twice, which led to a sentence of 25 years in prison. He was 24 years old.

### Surrendering his will

LaDavid felt the full weight of what he had done. At the end of his own resources, he told God he didn't want to turn away from Him anymore.

"[Then God] told me to prove to Him that I love Him," says LaDavid. "And that meant just basically, 'Seek My face in the middle of your darkness.' And I grew from that."

Prison might be a dark place, but LaDavid stayed focused on trying to seek God and to grow in his faith during his sentence.

Hoping to improve himself and prepare for life after his eventual release, LaDavid applied to join the Prison Fellowship Academy.

The Academy uses targeted curriculum, compassionate coaches, and restorative community to replace participants' criminal thinking and behaviors with renewed purpose and biblically-based life principles.

Graduates complete the yearlong program as change agents and good citizens inside and outside of



LaDavid and his son

outside." He credits the Academy with helping him grow in his faith and his character.

### Living for something greater

One of LaDavid's favorite Academy classes was Alpha, a course facilitated by Prison Fellowship that creates a space where people have conversations about faith, life, and God.

"Alpha took me from head knowledge of my faith with Christ to an intimate knowledge, just

through asking questions and being able to evaluate my personal views about my own faith," he says.

While LaDavid was growing as a person, he was also growing as a dad. He signed his children up for Prison Fellowship Angel Tree, a program that serves incarcerated parents by giving them a pathway to restore and strengthen relationships with their children and families.

The year before his release, LaDavid asked his girlfriend – who stuck with him the entire time he was incarcerated – to marry him. She said yes.

LaDavid was released in 2018 at 44 years old. He and his family are doing well. LaDavid has since started a janitorial business, and it's prospering.

He also has a role with Alpha's Inner City Initiative in Houston, which allows him to continue with his favorite part of the Academy program. He says his favorite part is building relationships with groups, local non-profits and churches so that together they can support their community.

Of course, life after prison isn't easy or stress-free, but LaDavid has learned to take things one day and one step at a time, keeping his eyes focused on Jesus.

"There's always problems," LaDavid says.

"But God has given us a peace to walk through them that has been so smooth. I don't understand it. But I'm grateful."

The greatest lesson LaDavid learned from his time in the Academy is one he is still practicing today: "Live life for something greater than yourself."

The original of this story can be found at [www.prisonfellowship.org](http://www.prisonfellowship.org) and it is used with kind permission.

## HOW UNFORGIVENESS DESTROYS YOUR HEART

• From page 1

Contemplating Wiesenthal's moral dilemma, I was struck that the matter of forgiveness is either very simple or it quickly becomes highly complex. The simple side of forgiveness comes from the root meaning of the word...

Forgive: to cancel a debt.

At its root, forgiveness really is that simple. When I release another from their debt to me, whether material or emotional, I walk free and full of life — every time. But, if I pause to consider the injustice of the matter, I grow troubled and unsure if forgiveness is the way to go.

Thanks to God and His great grace (undeserved love), the answer to my conflict is settled in Christ...

Justice is His to execute. Forgiveness is mine to extend. A friend used to put it this way: "I take them off my hook and put them on God's."

If forgiveness is not that simple, then it quickly becomes astoundingly complex. The complex side of forgiveness comes from trying to figure out the how, the why, the when, the where, the how far, the how much, the how often... Meanwhile, there is no question as to how important the act of forgiveness is to Jesus of Nazareth. Central to his simple, yet profound, teaching on how to pray, he declares...

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matthew 6:12 NKJV) And Jesus then adds: For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Did that last part grab your attention? It should. Seriously.

First comes the fortifying promise of God's forgiveness for us when we forgive others. That's God's exercising of justice based on the shed blood of Christ. But then comes the sobering warning of God's necessary judgment on us when we do not forgive others, even as the atoning work of Christ's

sacrifice stands. If this is how seriously Jesus deals with forgiveness, how dare we presume to claim the "justice" of what we think is owed to us?

LORD, please forgive my trespasses...sure, but against who exactly...?

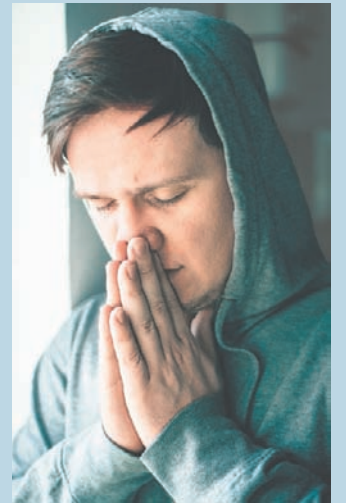
Psalms 51 gives us the answer: Have mercy on me O God...against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight that you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when you judge. (Psalm 51:1, 4)

The potential complexities of forgiveness are settled when we understand that we are in continual debt to God for His goodness and our inherent rebelliousness against Him. It's called

sin, and for it His justice demands His judgment upon us. Yet in Christ, by His blood sacrifice and resurrection life working on our behalf, we can ask the Father, over and over again, to...

Forgive us our trespasses (against you, LORD), as we forgive those who trespass against us. It's really that simple: Know the freedom of release from your debt to God as you release the debt others have to you. All this is accomplished in Christ, and it is ours for the repenting.

As you might pray this today, embrace the core value, according to Jesus... Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

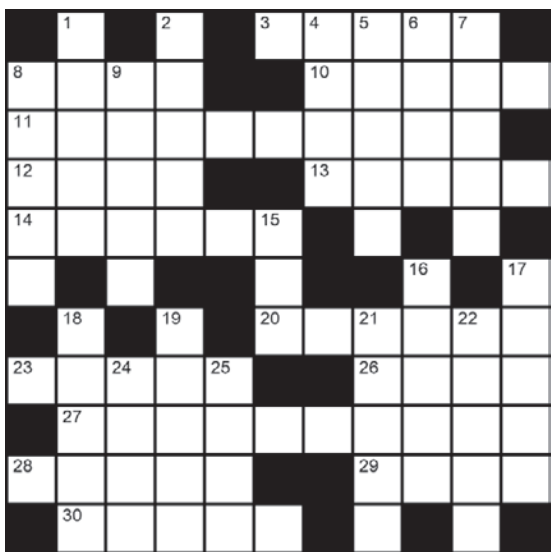


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“ Know the freedom of release from your debt. ”

## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

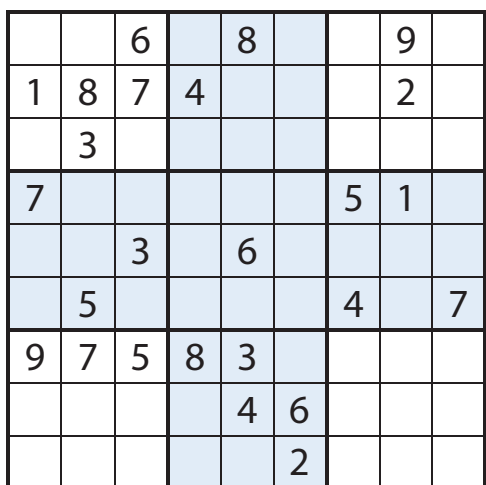
- ACROSS**
- 3 Speak, talk
  - 8 Brewed beverages
  - 10 To quarrel
  - 11 Sewage disposal
  - 12 Battery fluid
  - 13 Fable writer
  - 14 Harbor a grudge
  - 20 Clerical assistant
  - 23 Event you usually sleep through
  - 26 Australian gem
  - 27 Temporary camp, often for troops
  - 28 Relating to ships
  - 29 Boats like Noah's
  - 30 Former capital of Japan
- DOWN**
- 1 Tranquility
  - 2 Onstage whisper
  - 4 "Cheerio!" (2-2)
  - 5 Gave one's best shot
  - 6 These puff up easily
  - 7 Speak at length (3-2)
  - 8 Pre-Soviet rulers
  - 9 Licorice-like flavor
  - 15 Facial twitch, eg
  - 16 Pickled bud used in cooking
  - 17 Boadicea's subjects
  - 18 Opening shot in billiards
  - 19 Chocolate source
  - 21 Julius, for one
  - 22 War machines
  - 24 Grudging resentment
  - 25 Distilling grain



### SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



"I'm putting out an alert. Our innovative spirit has been reported missing."



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# Leaving his Mark on the army

**W**hen the weather behaves itself the Mediterranean island of Cyprus is bewitching beyond compare. When it doesn't...well let's just say Major Mark Hibbert-Hingston of the British Army found out the hard way how bad it can get.

Several years ago when Mark was still in active service, he was leading company training in Cyprus when it began to rain. And rain. And rain.

"It was wet, very wet," recalls the now-retired officer, who is 67 and lives in the UK.

"It got so bad that our tents had blown down and away. Our live firing exercises were curtailed owing to safety concerns because of the weather."

In a case of the worst possible timing, that was the day Major Hibbert-Hingston's Commanding Officer was due for a visit. At a briefing to prepare for the CO's arrival some of the men asked the Major what they would do if the weather didn't clear in time.

The good soldier said a silent prayer and told them: "Everything will be alright."

The weather did indeed clear, the sun came out, and the CO's tour was successful. Later, after the CO left, Major Hibbert-Hingston's boys told him: "Thank goodness for your hotline to God!"

"They were right of course," Mark grins. "God did grant my prayer - and believe me I DID pray - although not all our prayers are answered in the way we might expect!"

Wise words from a man who by that time had been walking with God for half his life.

He did not always possess such spiritual insights. In his younger days he describes himself as "having religion but no relationship. When I was growing up nobody told me anything about having a 'relationship' with Jesus Christ," he says emphatically.

Be that as it may, he tells Challenge he always tried to do what was right and he supported the Army chaplain as best he could.

"I came from a close, two-parent family," he adds. "We attended an Anglican church and my life probably looked



Mark Hibbert-Hingston with the sword his great-great-grandfather, Major Hugh Robert Hibbert, was awarded by his home town for bravery during the Crimean war.

okay to the casual observer. I did commit some sins and I did drink but nothing excessive.

"I was generally honest and forgiving. I believed myself to be a Christian but it was all being done in my own strength, and I learned that could only take me so far."

He admits it was more difficult in the Army to exert moral leadership. "I was also subject to peer pressure from other junior officers and sometimes went along with the crowd."

His lightbulb moment happened on a ski trip to Switzerland, where he says God found him, and not the other way around.

Some of the group were Christians and so were the ski instructors.

"I watched them as they interacted and behaved and I saw the Christians having more real fun than the others in the group; I saw how the instructors actually lived out their faith and realised, finally, what it meant to have a relationship with Christ and not just a religion," he points out.

"That's when I prayed 'sorry, thank You, please.'"

His simple prayer had a profound effect on his life as this verse from the Bible came to his recollection: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance,

as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." - Joel 2: 32

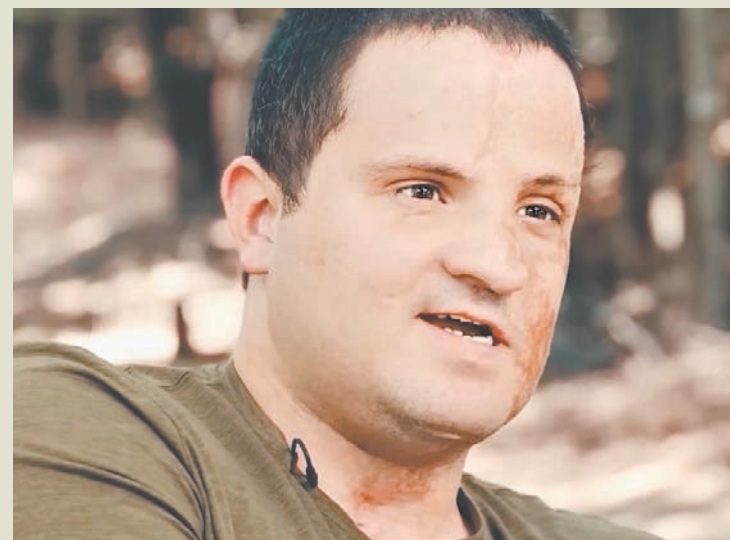
One of the biggest shifts in Mark's approach to life since becoming a Christian is that he now rests in the Lord's strength and not his own.

"I want to tell other military personnel that we don't have to be strong," he asserts.

"He alone is strong enough and our burden is light when it is His burden we carry. I want to tell them the way to share their faith is to be open but not pushy. That way they will gain the respect of others.

"I'm still a work in progress. I've had serious illnesses which have tested my faith and I had difficult times as a company commander, times when my faith was tested. But I knew God was always there with me." ●

## I thought suicide was my way out... now I'm enjoying life again



Jeremiah Willis was left with fourth degree burns after a tragic accident.

**J**eremiah Willis was on leave from the marines when he was involved in a car accident that left him with multiple broken bones and fourth-degree burns. Unable to join his comrades on deployment in Afghanistan, he felt worthless and saw suicide as the only way out. But when he miraculously survived, he began to wonder if he was spared for a reason. Sharing his story with CBN, Jeremiah says he joined the marines in 2007, a year after he finished high school.

"I loved it," he shares. When he went on leave, a friend picked him up to take him home. "We were just heading down the road and playing around like kids will do. We hit a tree and the car burst into flames. I broke my pelvis, collapsed a lung, broke my jaw in three places, my nose and my cheeks." Jeremiah's friend sadly died on impact.

"I woke up in the hospital after being in a coma for a month," Jeremiah recalls. "I couldn't move my legs."

He was informed that he had fourth-degree burns, which penetrated through his skin and into his muscle, fat and bones.

"Things didn't get better from there - they only got worse," he explains. He says it bothered him when people visited him and told him that God had a plan for him. "With infantry marines there's not really a place for God, so it was more of an irritation."

Jeremiah attended physical therapy every day but he could barely walk.

"When they finally decided to replace my hip, they tested my body's inflammation and it was three times what normally a person could endure." A few years later, the Marine Corps invaded Afghanistan.

"I felt kind of worthless because I wasn't able to help them," Jeremiah shares. "I had a friend that was killed when he stepped on an IED. I had to go present the flag to his family a week after that. It just really ripped me apart. I didn't want to go anywhere." Jeremiah remembers sitting alone in his apartment feeling depressed and ignoring phone calls. Then his retirement papers came through and he hit rock bottom.

"When you took away the Marine Corps from me, I didn't really have a purpose. I remember just being in a full on rage. I just wouldn't calm down and I remember thinking that I could not deal with this for the rest of my life. I was sitting there for a while on the edge of my bed with the pistol sitting right there and I put it up to my chin and I pulled the trigger. It stopped right when I hit my head. It didn't knock me out, it just felt like I got hit in the face with a sledgehammer."

The bullet had passed through Jeremiah's head. He was "dumbfounded." It was then that Jeremiah knew God had saved his life.

"I could definitely feel a transformation in my heart that maybe even without the Marine Corps I'll have a purpose."

Although the shooting did not kill him, it did cause him to start having seizures.

"I had this really bad seizure and I fell and fractured my skull," Jeremiah recalls. "I almost died. I spent a week in a coma."

When he woke up, Jeremiah returned home and considered what had happened to him and the choices that had led him to this point.

"That moment was when I surrendered to God - not holding on to anything else. I just started concentrating completely on God."

Jeremiah's health problems continued. He remembers having trouble gaining weight and sleeping due to his hip pain.

Despite telling his doctor over and over about his pain, nothing was done about it for years. Then he developed a large cyst about the size of a baseball at his incision scar. "It was just getting bigger and bigger and it was turning black," he remembers. "Finally when I kept going to the ER about it, they cultured it and it was a flesh-eating bacteria, the antibiotic-resistant form of staph. So then I had to stay in the hospital. They took all the hardware in my body out. I didn't have a hip and they had to leave it out for seven months and that was a hard time... I think that God kind of sent me through His own boot camp as far as toughening me up because even in the period without a hip, my faith became so strong and I think all that comes from God and from prayer."

When the doctors put his hip back in, Jeremiah finally felt some relief and was able to sleep again. He can now walk miles every day.

"It's nice to be able to enjoy life again after all this time. I don't think I could have gotten through any of that without God... There's no medicine for a broken spirit except for God." ●

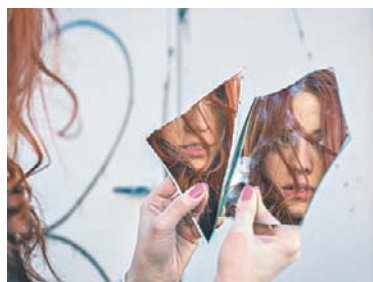
## The enemy within and the power to change

**I DON'T** watch horror movies but I do find the concept of the horror flick "Us" very intriguing. In the movie, a family encounters their doppelgängers and spends the entire film trying to escape their deadly grasp. The family is good, while their doppelgängers are evil.

The movie subtly yet strongly reveals that our greatest enemy and the most frightening thing we can encounter is our own worst selves.

It frightens me even to contemplate what my own worst self looks like.

My kids have seen glimpses of her when I really lose my cool. Sometimes I see her in the rear view mirror in my car when other drivers are being particularly frustrating. My parents certainly met her during



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my teens. And I hear her voice in my thoughts often, before I censor myself. The truth is the depth of anger, callousness, pride and ugliness I see in myself even now does scare me sometimes, but it is nothing to who I used to be or what I would have been if Jesus hadn't saved me when I was six and

His Holy Spirit hadn't been at work refining me ever since. I thank the Lord for that!

I think we all have the potential to be killers and abusers in the right circumstances.

Just as none of us really know whether we would eat human flesh if we were in extremis and starving, so none of us knows the depths of depravity we would go to without societal restraints.

However, turning to Jesus defeats the power our shadowy evil doppelgänger (sinful nature) has over us and gives us the power to change, and the instructions, in the Bible, to live as our best, most loving selves, following the only human being who never had an evil doppelgänger, Jesus Christ. ●

## Trusting God... even in the dark!

"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." - Corrie ten Boom'







David Lucas once thought worst thing anyone could ever do with their life was become a priest but everything changed during his time with the armed forces.

## I USED TO RIDICULE THE LIFE I NOW LIVE

All David Lucas ever wanted to be was a military man. The Canadian, who had grown up camping and exploring the outdoors as well as playing rugby and wrestling competitively, loved the discipline and challenge of military life.

He was also pulled by the desire to do something meaningful and to serve his country and fellow man. "I loved the military and I thought I could happily spend years serving."

After school he joined the Canadian armed forces as an infantryman and went on to become a peacekeeper, serving in Bosnia after the UN and NATO intervention in the 1990s Balkan conflict.

It was there that David witnessed the evil and atrocities that men do to each other in battle. His idealistic bubble burst and suddenly the man who up to then had thought the Christian faith 'ridiculous' turned to God.

"I hadn't grown up in a Christian home; in fact I used to be quite antagonistic towards the faith," he says in the Good News Paper.

"I thought Christianity was ridiculous and I remember a conversation where I stated that the worst thing anyone could ever do with their life was become a priest." Yet here he is today - an ordained deacon in the Church of England. He smiles as he says: "When I became a Christian, this of course changed, but I always remembered it.

**“** I loved the military and thought I could happily spend years serving. **”**

"In retrospect I can see that God had always been present, directing me, disciplining me, and meeting me in various ways. All of this came to a head while on tour in Bosnia and I came to faith in Jesus.

"Before my tour was over, I realised I was no longer interested in continuing with the military but wanted to know more about Jesus."

After he left the military David completed his theological studies. He says this was an "incredibly formative" time in his life.

"I lived in a Christian community, I read the Bible for the first time, learned to pray and took my first steps in Christian mission and service.

"Days were given to studying Scripture and prayer and it was during this time that I really came to love Jesus."

He did not immediately move into a full-time role with the church but started his own painting and decorating business. He also got married. David and his wife Hanna have four children, one of whom has followed in her father's footsteps and is doing a PhD in Theology.

David committed himself to his Christian life with the same zeal that he did to his military service. He led several ministries in his church, took classes at local universities and served the community he was in.

Before long, friends and mentors began asking if he would consider becoming an ordained minister.

"As I explored that possibility, I found God's leading hand guiding me to the UK," he reveals. "I had always imagined I would serve in Canada but discerned that God wanted me in the UK."

He and his family moved to Durham, in the North-east of England, six years ago.

"What makes me most excited is honouring and being part of God's good work in people's lives," he shares. "I love telling people about Jesus and encouraging them in their faith. I want nothing more than for them to know God's love for themselves and the good news of Christ's death and resurrection."

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# My body image was my obsession



Justin Macaluso

An unhappy childhood. A string of broken relationships. Life-threatening bulimia. Former US Marine Justin Macaluso had every reason to hate his life.

"I had a really unstable childhood," says Justin in a video on his YouTube channel.

"I moved around a lot. Between kindergarten and 12th grade I went to 10 or 11 different schools so I couldn't put down roots. At home I felt like I was constantly walking on eggshells."

He says his environment got worse as he got older and he lived with the pain of rejection, sadness and fear.

"I tried to fill that emptiness with other things in life - I thought if I found the perfect girl the emptiness would go away," he sighs. Instead what he got was break-up after break-up. He went to church a handful of times with some friends but said services left him feeling "weirded out".

"I wasn't raised in a church-going home. I grew up as an atheist and believed there was no God. The few times I did go to church I just got creeped out especially when the name of Jesus was mentioned.

"I just didn't see any evidence for God. At school we were taught evolution and the Big Bang theory so I got to the point that I just knew God didn't exist. I thought people who believed in God were stupid. If anybody mentioned the Bible or church my brain would just switch off."

After he finished school Justin joined the US Marines. Feeling he was too scrawny he got into body building - and that opened up a whole new can of worms.

"I obsessed over my body image," he shares. "Everything revolved around how I looked." Friends told him to slow down because he was "huge already". But Justin didn't see that - all he saw was his scrawny former self. "I'd say 'what are you guys talking about? I'm not huge'."

One day, out of the blue, he saw his reflection and jerked to a stop. "I thought 'who is this person who looks like The Hulk'? And then I knew I had really gone too far."

Wanting to reduce his bulk, Justin immediately went gung-ho in the other direction. He cut down on his calories and tried to stop eating junk food - but that just gave rise to

a craving for the stuff. Bulimia set in. "Every time I went to a restaurant I made sure I knew where the bathroom was so I could go after the meal. I felt shame every time I ate something bad but I couldn't stop myself because there was always this voice in my head telling me 'it's okay. You can just throw up after'."

"My condition got out of hand very quickly. I had lost complete control. This thing had me in total bondage. I joined Overeaters Anonymous but nothing helped."

Then he met a girl. Their relationship developed quickly but being a Christian, she broke it off because of Justin's staunch atheism. As she put the phone down she said: "For what it's worth Justin, read Lee Strobel's book *A Case for Christ*."

"Okay," said Justin, but in his heart he thought: "Yeah right. I was devastated she was breaking up with me...and for what? How could she let God dictate her life?"

Yet his curiosity was piqued. He bought the book, smugly convinced it would do nothing to challenge his atheism.

He opened the book. Forty-eight hours later, he shut it, closed his eyes and committed his life to Jesus Christ.

"If you had told me that reading this book would change me I would have said absolutely no way. As an atheist I couldn't think of anything worse than being wrong about God because that would have eternal consequences.

"But the evidence Lee Strobel presented was just overwhelming. I

had mocked God my whole life and yet here He was, revealing himself to me in the pages of this book.

"All of a sudden I knew Him. Knew Him more than I knew anything or anyone else, more than I knew my own mother.

"I don't know how else to explain but I suddenly understood what it meant when people say that they've been born again. I felt like I had become a completely different person. I had been living in an upside-down world my whole life and then suddenly it got turned right side up.

"I had this deep sense of awe. It was as if I had a hidden file in the back of my mind that said 'open in case God is real'. I never thought I'd ever say this but yes, He is real."

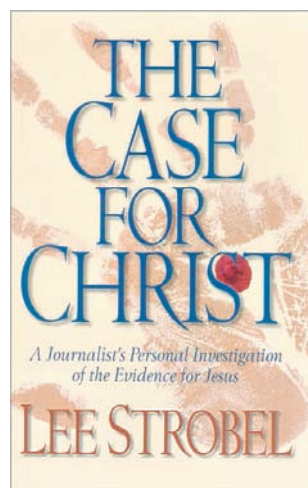
Justin shares that there was no "lightning bolt" miracle that healed his bulimia. He still struggled with it. But one day after a particularly bad episode, he thought to himself: Hey, why don't I just pray to Jesus?

"You have to understand I was an atheist for so long I wasn't used to having a God I could pray to," he chuckles. "I just said: 'Please help me Jesus'."

Within weeks Justin was rid of those chains. "It was just through reading His Word and being renewed in my mind that He set me free."

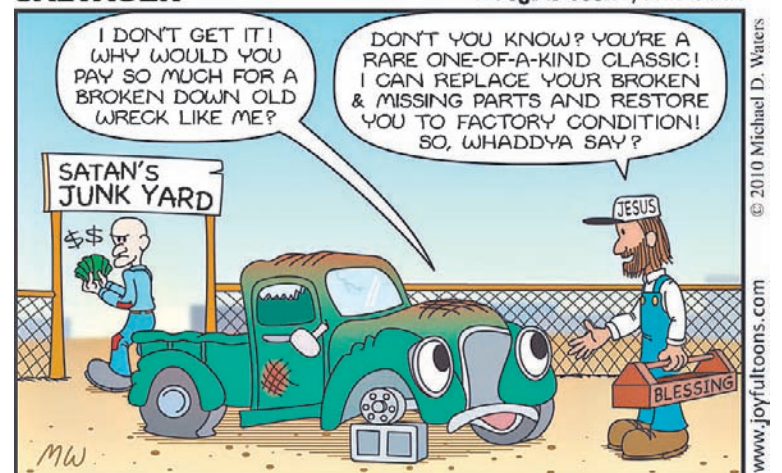
To put it into perspective, he had tried for almost two years to get better. Nothing worked. "Now it's been 12 years since I prayed and I've never had the urge to throw up food again.

"I never thought that I would become a Christian but here I am and I owe everything to Him. I want to give hope and encouragement for fellow believers and for those that don't know Jesus. I want you to know that there's something so wonderful out there that is so much better than anything that this life and this world have to offer."



### SALVAGER

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

— LUKE 19:10 NIV





Ilse Friis climbing Mount Kilimanjaro

## Experience the adventure

BY ILSE FRIIS

IN 2006 I had the privilege to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

Part of our preparation was to hear the account of and receive some valuable tips from a man who had done the climb the year before.

Even though it gave us a better picture of what to expect, the experience at the end of the day far outweighed just talking and dreaming about this adventure. In the same way, we can grow up hearing about other people's experiences of faith and God, but until we set out ourselves to find God, we will never really understand what they are describing.

We can grow up in a Christian home, go to church, and hear about other people's relationship with Jesus, but it is not the same as having the life changing experience ourselves when we surrender our lives to Christ, ask His forgiveness for our sins and make Him the Lord of our lives.

Then we will start to understand what Christians mean when they say they: feel washed clean and new; have unquenchable joy; experience inexplicable peace; and feel that everything is suddenly more beautiful.

In Jeremiah 29: 13 God says, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." What a wonderful promise! We do not have to be satisfied with "hearsay" of what other people experience, but when we look for God we WILL find Him and experience Him ourselves.

Christianity is not a set of rules and Bible stories, but a relationship with a living and loving God.

Don't you want to make that choice today, to invite Him into your life and experience an intimacy with Him for yourself? See how on page 7.

**In God's eyes, the greatest heroes of faith are not those who achieve prosperity, success, and power in this life, but those who treat life as a temporary assignment and serve faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity.**

– Rick Warren

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# Ian leaves a legacy of faith

IAN DURIE  
(1944-2005) GREAT BRITAIN

Ian Durie was a green beret, a commando, the director of one of the largest regiments in the British Army and finally retired as a Colonel Commandant. In 1987, his outstanding service was recognised and he was appointed an OBE (Order of the British Empire).

Yet when his daughter Emily speaks of him, she doesn't list his outstanding military accomplishments.

Instead, this is how she describes him: "My father was a busy man with the most enormous zest for life—he was the best example I know of someone who lived life to the full. Despite his busyness, and his success and seniority, family was of utmost importance to him. He had been brought up in a close-knit family, and the value of family was woven into his very being.

"I was always surprised that other people viewed him as a senior army officer; within our home, he held no such pretences.

"He was always humble and great fun to be around. Our family has had its fair share of health issues, and he was always deeply caring and practical in his approach to supporting both Janie (his wife, my mum), and us with our children.

"He was a brilliant husband and father, who loved deeply and gave sacrificially of himself to his family and friends. As a child, my memories are of him being very present and active in all areas of my upbringing. I knew he loved me utterly and believed in me."

The reason for Colonel Durie's gentleness can be found in his upbringing. His Christian mother had a great influence on him.

According to The Shield of Faith Christian Biographies, he committed his life to Jesus Christ while still a child and his character was shaped by his belief in God and His provision.

As Ian's faith deepened and he experienced the reality of God the Holy Spirit, his life centred increasingly on God rather than himself and was a huge testimony to the generous and gentle God he served.

In 1991, when Ian, by now a brigadier, was deployed to Iraq, he was very concerned for his wife and daughter.

He spent the weekend praying for God's guidance and is said to have been reassured by God that Janie and Emily would be safe, allowing him to go with confidence to war.

Ironically, it wasn't war that killed Ian - he died in a car accident in Romania in 2005, at the age of 60.

Ian was a natural pastor. His biography says "he cared with instinctive ease for all sorts of people from the privileged to the oppressed and marginalized".

He also led Alpha courses (an introduction to Christianity) at his church and established outreach projects and believed strongly that chaplains should be better trained to



Ian was a loving husband to his wife, Janie.

deal with the ethical and moral problems arising from modern warfare.

Throughout his military career, Ian was a member of the Officers' Christian Unit and in 1993 began his association with Military Ministries International, an organisation dedicated to changing lives and changing nations through serving Christians in national armed forces across the world. He eventually became Executive Chairman.

"He loved being a grandfather," Emily says. "He was interested in every area of his grandchildren's lives. They came to know him as someone who laughed a lot and always noticed them. His Christian faith permeated his love of his family. He prayed for us every day and modelled faith beautifully.

"I will always be grateful for the way he modelled to me a profound faith and trust in a God of love, whilst being able to be honest about the ambiguity of unanswered questions.

"That was a real comfort to me as we battled to come to terms with his death in 2005. He loved the African saying 'God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good' holding within it the faith of a loving God who is big enough to hold all our questions and pain, even when we fail to find answers."

## PART OF A BIGGER PLAN

BY GREG LAURIE

THE worst travesty of justice in human history was the trial, execution, and murder of Jesus Christ. The very Son of God had come to this planet to walk among us, heal us, and deliver the greatest teachings ever given to humanity.

And what did they do? They beat Him, nailed Him to a cross, and left Him to die. But this was all part of a bigger plan. Jesus did not have His life taken from Him; He came to lay down His life for our sins.

Jesus said, "For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NLT). From the greatest tragedy came the greatest good: salvation for everyone and the forgiveness of sin. You see, Jesus didn't stay on that cross. He rose again from the dead three days later, and He is alive. Is Jesus Christ living inside of you?

He is standing at the door of your life and knocking. He is saying that if you will hear His voice and open the door, He will come in. You can pray and ask God to forgive you of your sins, and Christ will hear your prayer.

Are you down and depressed and hurting? Jesus is saying, "Let me come in. Let me refresh you and give you rest. Let me give you the meaning and purpose of life that you been searching for."

Jesus gives us the hope that when our lives on this Earth come to an end, we will go to Heaven. Not everyone has that hope. Heaven is not the default destination of every human being. It is only the future destination of those who will put their faith in Jesus Christ.

"He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins – and not only our sins but the sins of all the world" (1 John 2:2 NLT).

### SAMCF - AT EASE RADIO PROGRAM

Please be advised of a new Military Radio Program - AT EASE, presented by the South African Military Christian Fellowship (SAMCF) and hosted by the Durban-based Good News Community Radio (GNCR) located in La Merci, KwaZulu Natal. The 30 min AT EASE program is aired every Tuesday evening @ 18:00 / 6pm on the KZN radio frequency 93.6FM.

For those not living in the Durban area who cannot tune in to listen live, the broadcast is live streamed on the GNCR website ([www.gncr.org.za](http://www.gncr.org.za)). The program can also be listened to or downloaded any time from the GNCR Podcast found on their website under Podcast, Local Program and under AT EASE.

Typically the following slots are aired during the 30 min program:

- Weekly Devotional.
- SA Navy Band music.
- Weekly Christian Testimony from the Challenge Newspaper.
- Interviews with SAMCF and AMCF (Association of Military Christian Fellowships) members and other AMCF Support Organisations.
- Presenter: Pastor Chris Meyer.

For further information please contact:

Capt (SAN) N. Howell - 083 701 3104  
Capt (SAN Rtd) Peter Louwrens 083 786 3640  
E-Mail: [samcl3@gmail.com](mailto:samcl3@gmail.com)

GNCRAdmin

032 533 3215  
[www.gncr.org.za](http://www.gncr.org.za)

"The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it" Psalms 68:11 NKJV





# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## BECOMING A PIECE OF WORLD PEACE

BY ROB FURLONG

*"A smile is the beginning of love."  
— Mother Teresa*

**A**gnes Gonxha was born in Skopje, the capital of modern-day North Macedonia and at the age of 18 entered the Order of the Sisters of Loreto with the intention of becoming a missionary to India – she arrived there in 1929. Known then as Sister Teresa, she was deeply moved by the overwhelming poverty and destitution of people living on the streets of Calcutta and sensing the call of God, in 1948 began working to alleviate their suffering.

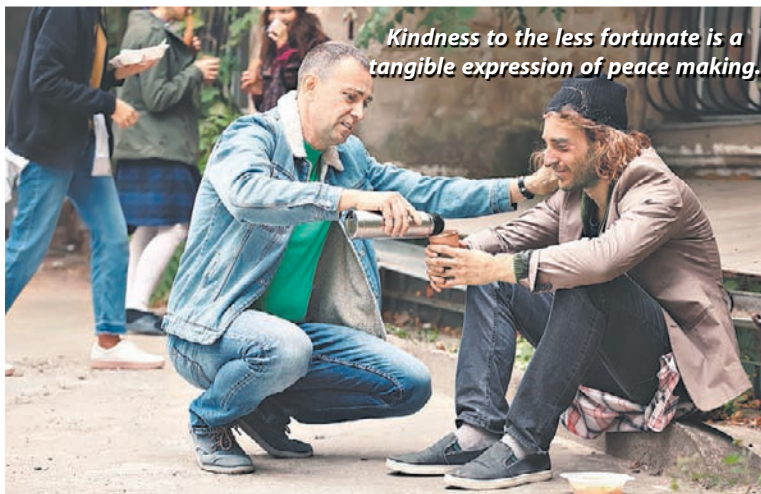
Eventually joined by a group of young women, she founded the Missionaries of Charity with the vision of providing "wholehearted free

service to helping the poorest among the poor." They worked with AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis sufferers, allowing them to die with dignity in the Mission's hospice, provided food, and founded orphanages, schools, and mobile clinics. In time her ministry grew to 4,500 nuns serving in 133 countries.

It has long been recognized that poverty is a major threat to peace in the world, and because of her work to overcome poverty, she received the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. Now known as Mother Teresa, she was asked at the time, "What can we do to promote world peace?" Her reply was profound in its simplicity:

"Go home and love your family."

In a speech not long after, she expanded on her answer by saying, "I have found the poverty of the West so much more difficult to remove. When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread, I have satisfied. I have removed that hunger. But a person that is shut out, that feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person that has been thrown out from society – that poverty is so



*Kindness to the less fortunate is a tangible expression of peace making.*

hurtful and so much, and I find that very difficult."

Mother Teresa demonstrated that everyone, regardless of race, gender or religion is precious to God. She treated all people with dignity.

We can be the same kind of people.

She was once asked why she cared for suffering people who never became Christians and she responded by saying, "Because everyone needs to know that they are loved when they are dying, even if they do not accept Jesus." She understood that every person is precious to God, known and deeply loved by Him.

This includes you.

I have been encouraging people to be peacemakers by committing to a Peace Declaration I recently wrote:

*We, the people of this community, declare ourselves to be people of peace.*

*We believe peace begins with each one of us and that peace in our world and communities is achieved through multiple acts of love, courage, and kindness.*

*Peace can be expressed through a*

*friendly smile to a stranger, by helping a neighbour in need, standing up bravely for truth and justice, and respecting each other, regardless of culture or faith.*

*Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Therefore, we commit ourselves to being peacemakers in our community.*

With God's help, every one of us has the capacity to bring peace to our world.

When we welcome someone into our circle of friendship who is usually ignored, we bring peace.

Helping the poor, smiling at a stranger, or refusing to "blow up" at the shop worker who is only trying to do their job, are all small ways we can encourage peace. And we are most like a peacemaker when we choose forgiveness over hatred.

Jesus came to bring us peace with God and peace in all our relationships by healing and restoring them.

Share God's love today by smiling at someone you don't know and commit to being a peacemaker in 2023 by committing yourself to the Peace Declaration, and asking God to help you live it out.



### How can I become a Christian?

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

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

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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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.

<p><b>AS A NEXT STEP:</b></p> <p><b>If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box</b> </p> <p><b>I have prayed this prayer.</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible portion</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some 'starting off' literature</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information on a helpful church</p>	<p><b>If you have not prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box</b> </p> <p><b>I would like to think about this.</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please send me:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible portion</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have a problem (see attached letter)</p>
--	--

**\* Please tick and write clearly \***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Age and occupation (it helps) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to:** Capt (SAN Rtd) Peter Louwrens  
PO Box 1545, Sun Valley, 7985  
Cape Town, South Africa

**Fax to:** 086 672 2396 **Email to:** samcf3@gmail.com

### Want to explore more?

Here are some **free**, helpful, online Christian resources:

Online Bible - <b>Olive Tree app</b> (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - <b>Bible.is app</b> , or <b>Youversion Bible app</b>	
Christian radio station - <b>CBN radio app</b> (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - <b>Edifi app</b>	
Christian movies/TV shows - <b>Good. app</b>	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - <b>Our Daily Bread app</b>	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - <b>Youversion Bible app</b> .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - <b>the Bible Project on YouTube</b> .	
<b>Alpha Film Series on Youtube</b> - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - <b>Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app</b>	
Comic book Bible online - <b>goodandevilbook.com</b>	
More inspiring faith stories - <b>back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online</b>	

## The power of gratitude

**I**n his article, "Gratitude: The Brain's Amazing Fertilizer," author Charles Stone documents scientifically-proven physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of practicing gratitude. His research in neuroscience is fascinating. He writes that there's a tonne of research that says having an attitude of gratitude gives you more energy. For example, in a research study one group of participants kept a journal listing things for which they were grateful. A second group recorded what annoyed them. People in the first group reported feeling more energetic and happier than the second group.

Charles lists other benefits. Grateful people are more other-centred and willing to help people, and that gives them a greater sense of significance and completeness. They sleep more deeply. They feel better physically. They have less anxiety.

All that's pretty amazing, isn't it? Then there's the fact about how our brains are wired.

Did you know the human brain has five times more negative circuits than positive ones? It's called "negative bias". That's why it's much easier to be negative than positive. Or perhaps we should say, it's much harder to be positive.

Practicing gratitude forces our minds to focus on the positive, which actually rewires our brains.

Maybe that's why the apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8: "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable – if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy – dwell on these things."

He also encouraged the Thessalonians: "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

From author, CEO and pastor Chip Ingram in an article from Joy! Magazine, October 2022

### Wise words

**THE** problem we have in our culture is that we do not fear God. To fear God means to take Him seriously, rather than taking Him casually. We live in a culture that simply treats God casually but still wants God's blessing. We want God to bless our families. We want God to bless our country. And yet, we turn our backs on Him while asking Him to bless us. The scripture says everyone who fears God is blessed. That means, your blessing is directly connected to taking God seriously.

— Jonathan Evans

\*\*\*\*

**IF** Christianity is true — and we have good reasons to believe it is — then we face judgement after death. There would be eternal consequences for those who have rejected God's offer of forgiveness for their sins. We don't face the nothingness of nonexistence; instead, we either face an eternity with God or separated from Him. That's the real truth about immortality.

— theologian Clay Butler Jones



# SURFING THE STORM



*Bianca Buitendag of Team South Africa surfs during the women's Gold Medal match on day four of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at Tsurigasaki Surfing Beach on July 27, 2021 in Ichinomiya, Chiba, Japan, while a rainbow lights up the dark sky behind her. (Photo by Ryan Pieterse/Getty Images)*

**B**ianca Buitendag's earliest memory is driving to the beach in the early hours of the morning with her dad, with surfboards on the car roof, the smell of coffee emanating from a flask next to the driver's seat, and a map spread out wide.

"That's what surfing was to me from the beginning – an excuse to explore, an excuse to adventure," Bianca writes in her website bio.

Since that first memory, Bianca has gone from strength to strength. By eight she was already competing in surfing competitions and she took part in her first international tournament at 13. She spent most of her adult life as South Africa's top ranked surfer and represented the country at the 2020 Summer Olympics where she won silver in the women's shortboard competition.

Bianca was born in George, Western Cape, South Africa in 1993 and describes her background as traditional Afrikaans. When she was 12, her family moved to Victoria Bay, where Bianca would spend hours before and after school in the ocean.

Bianca says her father, Collin Buitendag, was the one who pushed her into her first wave and introduced her to surfing. He was one of her staunchest supporters, often travelling with her to competitions around the world. Sadly Collin passed away 2015, when Bianca was 21.

"Nothing prepares you for that moment," she explains in a video with CBN South Africa. "You never

imagine that it will happen to you and then it does... I really felt like I lost the protection and the guidance. I was like in the world alone."

In the midst of her grief, Bianca didn't care whether she won or lost competitions. However later that year, she finished at her career-best at World No. 4 in the World Surf League rankings. It also made her the most successful South African professional surfer – male or female – of the past 18 months.

Bianca says she held onto faith while mourning the loss of her father.

"A lot of times you read 'The Lord is my strength' in the Bible and you

kind of flip past it and it's just theory, but when you can't get out of bed because you're in such a dark place the Lord really is your strength – it becomes very much practical."

Bianca spoke about her faith in a video by The White Shack,

sharing that despite being raised as a Christian, it wasn't until she was an adult that she embarked on a journey to make her faith her own. Bianca now says she has found the overwhelming truth of God's love.

"I celebrate it every day," she shares. "It is what keeps me going."

In an interview with This Life Online, Bianca says, "It's a pity that for some people, tradition has taken so much away from His wonder, but for me personally, it's impossible not to believe. God has held my hand tightly through all these years, through the dark and scary.

His love liberates me and I believe Him every time He says the word 'new'. New morning. New mercy.

New hope."

After Collin's death, Bianca knew her professional career would soon come to an end.

But then it was announced that surfing would be included in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and Bianca's mother urged her compete. Her mother's recent battles with colon cancer, which was removed, and lymphoma, which she is still fighting, inspired Bianca to compete.

She says it was "vasbyt en gebed" (resilience and prayer) that gave her the strength to bring home a silver medal, which she dedicated to her mother.

During the final, Bianca says she felt like she was part of something bigger than herself.

"A big rainbow just appeared out of a typhoon sky and I just knew God was with me," she shares.

Following the Olympics, Bianca retired from professional surfing.

In a Facebook post on July 28, 2021, she wrote: "Ever since my father passed away, my life's ambitions have changed drastically, and my heart quickly moved away from chasing heat scores. It has been over five years since, enough time to respect all the commitments I have made, to my beautiful country, myself and many others. The Olympics has coincidentally acted as the perfect opportunity for closure. I will, however, never stop rushing towards saltwater at every opportunity. The sea is my therapy, the place I feel closest to heaven."

The 28-year-old thanked those who had supported her throughout her career and added: "Most importantly – although I like to believe that I'm tough and independent, I want to acknowledge my Heavenly



Father, who has held my hand tightly through all these years – through the dark and scary. He has been my best friend, my closest companion. Ever since my first contest at eight years old, my last sentence before every heat has been, 'Father, I trust You, have Your way.' After all these years, I can confidently stand knowing that His will did, indeed, prevail."

After retirement Bianca will help run a Christian organisation called Life Community Services in George in the southern Cape, where she is overseeing construction of a primary school. •

*Bianca Buitendag gestures after competing at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 in Japan. (Photo by Ryan Pieterse/Getty Images)*

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