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# Battle for heart and soul

BY HARRIET COOMBE

It was 1969 and Peter Jackson was an Australian Army private in the Vietnam War. Walking in single file, his company patrolled the area, looking for enemy soldiers.

As they crossed a fallen log which acted as a bridge, Peter tried to ignore his fear of heights and the distance below him.

“When I was right in the middle of the log, an enemy sniper opened up – and I was a sitting target,” Peter tells *Challenge News*. “In the jungle it’s very quiet so when a machine gun opens up it’s a terrible sound. My first thought was, ‘Who’d want to shoot me?’ A whole spray of bullets fired at me while I walked across the log. I wasn’t going very fast, but not one bullet hit me. I should have died.”

Peter was only 19 when he was conscripted. He had just started teaching at a primary school in Kellerberrin, Western Australia.

At that stage, Australia had been helping the US fight against the communist regime in Vietnam for seven years.

Peter says he was a pacifist but wanted to serve his country. After completing his training, he found himself on board the HMS Sydney and on his way to Vietnam.

“My job was in the infantry. We would go out into the jungle for six or seven weeks at a time and patrol, looking for enemies. Throughout the whole year I was there I had a bullet in my rifle but I never had to fire a shot. I never saw an enemy, dead or alive.

“I believe I had people praying for me back in Australia. I’ve got a fairly positive nature and I think that helped me. Sometimes I felt afraid. When I heard the bullets flying by, my heart used to beat fast – that was quite scary.

“We had a good tour because we only lost three men in the whole year in my company, which is pretty good compared to Gallipoli where literally thousands died.”

Some of the children from the year three class Peter taught in Kellerberrin wrote to him while he was away. When he returned to Australia, he visited his old school with presents for the children (dolls for the girls and helicopters for the boys) from the class he used to teach. He got a job in a new school and life returned to normal.

“I wrote a diary in Vietnam. When I came home I threw it away. I threw my medals away. I wanted to just forget about Vietnam.”

Something had changed in Peter. “I was as flat as a tack. I found out later I had what’s called clinical depression, which is a chemi-

cal imbalance in the brain. I loved teaching but obviously the change of going from a war zone to a classroom must have affected my brain. But also the Americans sprayed a defoliant called Agent Orange. I spent a year in the jungle. They can’t say definitely that that defoliant caused any problems but quite a lot of veterans and their children have gone through stuff.

“When you’ve got clinical depression, you don’t want to do anything. Like you’re depressed or want to stay in bed, and that’s not like me.

“Back then with mental health no one ever told me to go to the doctor. But I started jogging, which stimulates the endorphins in the brain. After a few weeks I was alright.”

Since returning from Vietnam, Peter had been questioning what the point of life was. He had attended church as a child and was about 12 when he prayed to God, while at a Christian camp, to commit his life to Him. But as Peter grew older his faith became less important to him.

“I was really into the girls,” he admits with a smile.

Since returning from Vietnam he kept meeting people who were Christians.



Peter Jackson with pictures of the time (main picture and inset) he served in the Vietnam War.

“When I was 23 someone invited me to go to a Christian convention called Keswick. After that I started going to church. But I was still into the girls and going to the nightclubs.

“A year or two later, I went to

Europe and I met these Christians on the streets.

“They were sharing their stories of what God was doing in their lives. I came back to Australia on fire for the Lord. I said, ‘Okay, Lord, You’ve got me. You’re the boss.’ I made a commitment to follow Him. I turned away from sin. I stopped going to the nightclubs.”

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Former US Marine Wes Bentley with his friends in the Sudanese Army (main picture and inset).



## Malaria miracle in the jungle

Wes Bentley knew he was dying. He was deathly sick with malaria, battling a lethally high 44-degree fever.

He knew he should have gone to hospital but the US Marine-turned missionary says he distinctly heard God tell him to remain where he was in a South Sudanese village and not seek help from a Western hospital.

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**AIMING HIGH**

**OSCAR TSHIEBWE**

# Battle for heart and soul

● From page 1

In 1976 Peter married Diane and the couple travelled to New Zealand and the couple travelled to New Zealand to attend Bible college.

“That’s where the Lord put a real call on my heart to work with children – and the fire is still there. I want children to know that there’s a God in Heaven who loves them.

“I want them to know that the Jesus that I have found loves them and died on the cross for their sins.”

As well as teaching at a school, Peter (pictured below) would also run Christian kids clubs. In 1987, when he was 40, he became a full-time children’s pastor at a local church. After 12 years he started his own children’s ministry, which he continues to this day, at the age of 76.

“A few years ago, I rang up the school in Kellerberrin and asked if I could come back and do a talk.

“They said yes and I went to every class and I told them about a day in the life of a soldier. They had an ANZAC Day service, and a woman came and brought the doll that I had given her when I came back from Vietnam.”

Peter has stayed in contact with some of the men from the company he was with in Vietnam.

Life hasn’t always been easy for Peter and he has endured periods of clinical depression a few times.

“At one point someone encouraged me to go to the doctor, who prescribed medication,” he shares.

That, combined with the motto, “Happy people are the givers and the forgivers”, and his strong faith, pulled Peter through.

He continues to serve his community and now proudly marches alongside other veterans on ANZAC Day.



Peter Jackson (above and right) in his army days.



The Chaplaincy Corps in South Sudan in full swing.

# Malaria miracle

● From page 1

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Wes obeyed and as a result of his his “foolhardy” obedience to the voice of God, two generals – one known as the Butcher of Sudan – came to know Christ.

How did Wes go from being a high-flying salesman who dreamed of a Maserati to a high-risk missionary working in South Sudan for 26 years, supporting missionaries in 38 countries?

Originally, he was a US Marines sharpshooter who gave up Olympic competition to fight in the Vietnam War.

Upon leaving the Marines, he wanted to become a soldier of fortune in Rhodesia, but God got a hold of his heart and redirected his steps.

Instead of becoming a mercenary, Wes threw himself into business and became so successful he decided to buy a Maserati.

Fortunately, he consulted a Christian friend. Without explaining what he wanted to do, he asked her to pray for him. After praying, she said, “The answer is no and I again I say no.”

Some years later, Wes felt God calling him to Russia, which had opened up to the gospel after communism collapsed.

There he ministered mostly in the jails and packed theaters.

“Russia was incredibly open to the gospel back then,” he says.

After five years there, God called him to transfer his ministry to then war-torn South Sudan. There Wes married Vicky, who held 13 separate weekly Bible studies with South Sudanese women and served alongside him for 23 years.

“Sudan is an extremely hot country,” Wes says. “It’s not only hot, it’s very humid. You sleep out of exhaus-

tion, not because you’re comfortable. You literally sweat all night long.”

Today, Wes supports 1000 chaplains in the South Sudanese army through his own ministry, Far Reaching Ministries.

The idea of training chaplains arose after Wes shared the gospel with a group of soldiers and hundreds of them came to Christ. He wanted to give them a “moral compass,” he says. “What the Arabs are doing to them, they’re doing right back to the Arabs. They’re doing all the atrocities back.

“We needed to make them understand that fighting and killing is a part of warfare, but murder, rape, pillaging and plundering is not.”

It was in the first year training chaplains that Wes caught malaria (one of multiple times) and decided to weather the storm.

“I could have gotten on a bush plane and flown out to a western hospital, but I very clearly heard the Lord say stay in the village,” he says. “I knew it would be a witness to the people.”

Wes went in and out of consciousness with exceedingly high temperatures and says his survival was nothing less than a miracle.

Paul Malong, a 2.1 metre tall brutal warlord known as the “Butcher of Sudan,” would line up captives and arbitrarily decide who would live or die.

Wes says his fever peaked at 43.8 degrees Centigrade. “I knew that I was dying.” But the fever broke and he recovered.

During his convalescence, he was visited by prominent South Suda-

nese commanders Mamur and Paul Malong. Both are generals now.

“You know, Wes, when I saw you, I really thought you were going to die,” Malong said. “I don’t understand you. This isn’t your country, yet you’re willing to die for it.”

Wes replied: “If I die, I will go home to be with the Lord. But if you die, you will perish for all of eternity.”

Wes gave him Christian tapes and a video, which Mamur devoured.

On another occasion Wes challenged him: “Commander, I need to talk to you about the most important decision you’re ever going to make in your life,” he began.

“Do you want to be forgiven of your sins? Do you want to know if you were to die tonight, you’ll go Heaven?”

“Yes,” Mamur replied.

In front of 70 of his officers, Mamur bowed his head and prayed to receive Jesus Christ into his life. He then asked Wes to baptise him.

When Wes returned to his own compound, Malong was waiting for him.

Thirty minutes later, he too gave his heart to Christ and became a completely changed man.

The salvation of these two prominent military leaders was brought about by Wes’s willingness to be “uncomfortable,” enduring a short time of suffering for eternal rewards. Had he opted for the easy route, to hop on a bush plane and be taken to a Western hospital, it is hard to know when these two men would have found salvation.

This story first appeared in godreports.com and is used here with kind permission.

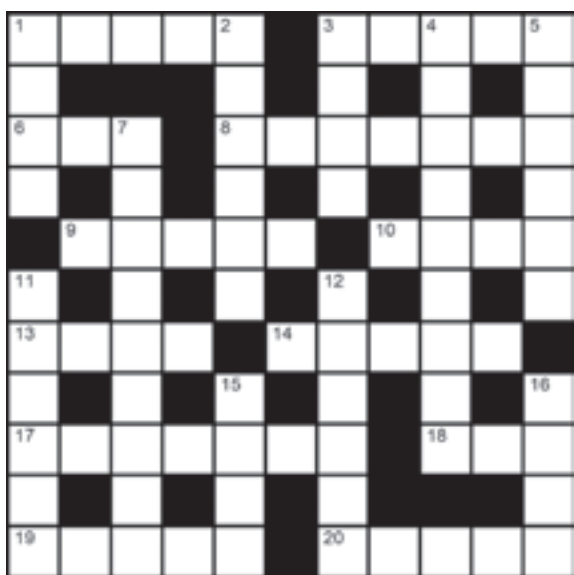
## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

### ACROSS

- 1 Fly-fisher’s target
- 3 Careless hurrying
- 6 Wrinkly faced dog
- 8 Woolly critters
- 9 Vegetable bulb
- 10 Wharf, pier
- 13 Chess piece or bird
- 14 Military trainee
- 17 Past middle age
- 18 Pool-testing digit!
- 19 Walk like you own the place
- 20 Darkest hours

### DOWN

- 1 Oopsy on the keys
- 2 Receptacle for infusions
- 3 Cape of Good \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Fleshy plant
- 5 School writings



- 7 Early explosive
- 11 Athens residents
- 12 Gorge, ravine
- 15 Horse’s slow run
- 16 Thaw, dissolve

### SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



“I know my instruments are sterilised every day, but I have no idea who does it!”

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# No longer hopeless

With visions of becoming a drug kingpin, 18-year-old Eduardo F. Rocha left his brother's house in New York with 125 grams of cocaine in his pocket and drove away to make his first drug deal. But before he reached his destination, police noticed one of his headlights was out and pulled him over. That's when they also noticed he was driving under the influence and had a large package in his jacket pocket. He was arrested before he made his first deal.

Later that night Eduardo found himself in a county jail, completely hopeless.

"I wrapped a bed sheet from an old cot around my neck and began tightening it," he recalls in an article for *Christianity Today*. "Death seemed like the only way out of this mess. I was trapped. Hopeless. Finished. As the sheet got tighter, the world started fading away. But just before succumbing to the darkness, I heard a voice in my native Spanish: 'Eduardo, no lo hagas. Hay esperanza para tu vida.' ('Eduardo, don't do it. There is hope for your life.')

That voice saved his life and set him on a new course – one that has seen him in prisons for entirely different reasons.

Eduardo's feelings of hopelessness started when he was just a boy.

He was born in Uruguay but moved to the USA shortly after. But when he was five his parents divorced, and Eduardo was sent back to Uruguay to live with his grandparents. He felt lost and alone.

Two years later his mother returned to Uruguay and met a man she would go on to marry. Eduardo and his mother moved in with the man into an apartment complex. Eduardo told *The Tennessean* he was sexually abused several times by a teenage boy from the apartment complex, who would babysit him while his mother and stepfather were at work.

Eduardo started rebelling and was expelled from several schools.

When he was 16 he returned to live with his father in the USA, where he learned he had an older brother, Danny.

"Danny had the life any teenage boy would envy: cars, clothes, money, women," Eduardo remembers. "And soon enough, I began tasting small samples of that life myself."

Eduardo started hanging out with Danny at the disco he owned. One day he saw huge bags of white powder, scales and packages wrapped in brown tape in Danny's office.

**“It was drugs, disco and girls — rinse and repeat.”**

"Danny introduced me to marijuana, but that high just wasn't enough. Before long, I tried my first hit of cocaine. From there, it was drugs, disco, and girls – rinse and repeat. I was hooked on the whole lifestyle."

But that lifestyle that led Eduardo to jail and the brink of suicide. When the voice told him there was hope for his life, Eduardo wondered if God was speaking to him.

He got on his knees and cried out: "God, if that's really you, please help me."

"When a guard gave me a Bible, I started reading the Gospels, and I was captivated by the stories of Jesus – how he would speak to people in great need and meet those needs in miraculous ways.

But the verse that made the deepest impression was 2 Corinthians 5:17, where Paul promises that 'If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!'"

Eduardo began attending church in the jail's gymnasium. One day a church volunteer hugged him and said, "I just want you to know, God loves you and I love you too."

"I had forgotten what it felt like to be hugged," he says. "That very night, October



Eduardo F. Rocha

6, 1986, I surrendered to the love of Christ, accepting His offer to be my Lord and Saviour."

Eduardo started growing closer to Jesus as he continued to read the Bible and pray.

"I went from being filled with rebellious thoughts to appreciating the gift of life, no matter the circumstances. With the aid of numerous chaplains and Christian volunteers, I overcame hatred toward my father and brother and learned to forgive them. In the Spirit's power, I battled to rid myself of foul language and break addictions to pornography and masturbation."

Eduardo was overjoyed to discover his sentence was reduced and that he was eligible for parole after three years.

He was released in March 1989, but was immediately taken into custody by immigration officers. He was deported to Uruguay and banned from ever returning to the USA.

Eduardo attended Bible College and met, married and started a family with his wife Sandra. All the while he fought to return to the USA to thank the guard and church volunteers who had led him to God. He tried six times over two decades to get a tourist visa.

He was finally able to do so in 2010, after writing to the US Attorney and receiving a pardon from the State Department.

He connected with a church in Tennessee, which hired him as the pastor of a Hispanic church two years later.

Soon he started volunteering and sharing his story in prisons, while also earning a master's and doctorate degrees.

"Over time, the Tennessee Department of Correction hired me to serve as psychiatric chaplain in a maximum-security prison," Eduardo shares. "Joy filled my heart with each conversation, hug, and promise of hope in Christ that I was blessed to share."

Eduardo is now a US citizen, a corporate chaplain for Charter Construction in Tennessee and a military chaplain for the Tennessee State Guard.

"That sweet voice that cared enough to whisper encouragement into my prison cell still cares deeply for me now," he attests.

"Life has not been easy, but I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, even to those who make terrible mistakes like mine." •

# Touched by an angel on the tarmac

Colonel Philip Exner was a deep thinker. He thought so much he ended up even more confused than when he first began.

He was looking for answers to the questions of the ages - what was the meaning of life? Was there a place for faith and if so, which faith?

"I looked at cults, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam; Greek philosophy, humanism - everything," said Philip, a retired United States Marine Corps Colonel.

"That took me down various paths, some of which brought me to the brink of despair."

Philip had been brought up by devout Christian parents. "They taught me the importance of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus - yet somehow I missed a lot of their message," he said.

"On the outside however, I looked pretty good to the casual observer," he admits.

"But in my teens I began to test, then doubt, then re-test the tenets of my faith. I had committed my life to Christ when I was younger yet I wondered if it was all real."

While this soul-searching was going on, Philip entered the Marine Corps, graduated and received his first assignment. On the day he left to join his squadron, he broke up with his girlfriend over religious differences.

"I was heartbroken, wondering why I had broken up with a girl who was very real to me for a God who seemed so distant.

"As I stoically tried to pray through my loss, I began to wonder if I might simply be talking to myself since God still felt more like a theological idea than a real friend.

"This spiritual struggle went on for hours until I reached the place I was to board the last



Col Philip Exner (ret) with his wife Sue.

plane for my squadron."

Only there was no plane because a series of mistakes saw him stranded at the airport.

The miserable soldier prayed: "Lord, I don't even know if You are real. But if You are, and if You are trying to get my attention to tell me something, I am ready to listen."

The reply he got answered his questions once and for all.

"When I finished praying, I looked up. In front of me, on the other side of the tarmac, was an older woman in shabby clothes. Her eyes were locked on mine, and she walked straight towards me. People passed between us, but her eyes never left mine.

"She got to me and said, 'I have a message for you from God. Hold out your hand'."

A stunned Philip complied. The woman held his hand and said: "I will never leave you."

She ordered him to repeat it half a dozen times, told him that line was from the Bible (Hebrews 13:5, Joshua 1: 5) and to never forget it. "When I looked up she was gone," Philip said.

In a matter of minutes, he added, people who had originally refused to help him gave him all the assistance he needed to get to his destination. "It was as though I had a seven-foot bodyguard getting every obstacle out of my way," he grinned.

"I've never forgotten the lesson I learned that day at the start of my 30 years in the Marines.

"For the rest of my career, no matter how isolated I ever felt, no matter how lonely the decision, no matter how far from home I was, no matter what the danger in which I found myself, I never doubted the abiding presence of Jesus Christ in my life.

"God had used a shabby angel to show me He does know me. He even loved me enough to answer my doubting prayer. It was a miracle."

Philip said he learned two valuable lessons. "First, we cannot think our way to God using pure logic. We need for Him to reveal Himself to us, or we cannot ever know Him in the way that our souls hunger to know Him.

"Second, although I could not 'prove' my faith, I at least concluded that Christianity was both true and the most reasonable among all other alternatives."

Philip is the executive director of the Association for Christian Conferences Teaching and Service, a position he has held since 2011.

"We try to live out lives of integrity, moral courage, and faith and must trust that, somehow, God is working through us to accomplish his work among the military and their families. He is just looking for someone to obey."

*The Shield of Faith Christian Biographies 2nd edition revised and extended*  
Editor—Chaplain Gabi Gheorghias •



Eduardo with his wife Sandra, celebrating their 32nd anniversary.

## STRUGGLING WITH DRUNKENNESS? Time for action!

**HAS ALCOHOL** got a hold on you? Here are some simple ideas to help overcome temptation based on what the Bible has to say.

Whether alcohol tends to make you aggressive or just lose your inhibitions entirely, you could one day wake up in the morning with consequences far worse than just a terrible hangover. The Bible gives some good insight into this struggle and from Scripture we can find some simple ideas you can try.

### 1. BE MOTIVATED BY GOD'S WORD

The Bible clearly says that we need to be sober-minded (i.e. not drunk) and watchful because the enemy of God, the Devil, "prowls around like a roaring lion" looking to destroy us in any way he can (see 1 Peter 5:8-11). While you might enjoy an alcoholic beverage or two, the simple fact is that the Bible tells us not to get *drunk* on alcohol (see verses like Ephesians 5:18 & Galatians 5:21). Knowing what God says on the subject can give us strength and wisdom.

### 2. SET YOURSELF BOUNDARIES

If you know deep down that one drink always ends up becoming "one too many drinks", then you need to set yourself boundaries. Set a maximum limit and stick to it.

Decide before an event how many drinks you will have, or if you will drink at all, and get someone to watch out for you. The Bible instructs those who want to honour God to exercise self-control in all things (see 1 Peter 4:7, Titus 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 9:25). If you have given Jesus control of



your life, He promises when you are tempted He will provide a way of escape if you look to Him (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

### 3. FAST FROM ALCOHOL

If you find it impossible to stop once you have had one drink, perhaps you need to stay away from alcohol all together. Jesus warns that it would be better to cut off a part of your body that causes you to sin than end up being thrown into hell (see Matthew 18:8-9). This may sound extreme but what Jesus meant is that sometimes we have to cut things out of our lives that have a hold over us so that we can be right with God. Things that give us short term satisfaction wear off eventually and leave us feeling emptier than before, while God promises us eternal life with Him. If you truly desire being with God forever, surely that reward is worth giving up everything for?

### 4. FIND ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOOD FRIENDS

Do you have a friend or relative who you trust and look up to? Ask that person to regularly check up on you and make sure you stick to the boundaries you have set out for yourself. Whether it be just when you are at parties or an informal weekly catch up, accountability provides extra motivation because you know that you will be asked to give an account for your actions. What if you don't have anyone to help you with this or perhaps all your friends are pressuring you to drink more? The Bible explains that those who have bad friends will suffer harm, will become fools and will have their good morals ruined (see Proverbs 13:20, 1 Corinthians 15:33). Is it time for you to seek out better company? A church of Christian believers is a good place to start!

### 5. PICK YOURSELF UP AND CARRY ON WHEN YOU FALL

We are all human and sometimes even with the best intentions we can fail to achieve what we set out to do. Thankfully the Bible says God is merciful and abundant in compassion. It also says Jesus sympathises with our weaknesses, because He too was tempted (although He did not sin), and that we can find mercy and forgiveness in Him when we fail (see Hebrews 4:15-16). Don't allow the Devil to get you down with negative thoughts, look to Jesus and never give up!

These practical steps may help but at the end of the day the best thing you can do is accept Jesus Christ into your life. When you acknowledge that you can't do life alone and that you need Jesus' forgiveness for the times you can't live up to God's perfect standard, you allow the Holy Spirit to enter your life and help you with your struggles. *Turn to page 7 to learn about how you can become a Christian today.*

# Drunk gets second shot

**A**lcohol was central to Duncan Oundo's life and his addiction hurt many people until the day he took a second chance offered to him.

"When I got married, at the age of 24, I was already addicted to alcohol," Duncan admits.

"My wife suffered from loneliness and felt overworked because I was out drinking so much and leaving her with the responsibilities of the house."

The rest of Duncan's family thought he was simply following in his father's footsteps and admired him for being able to drink so much.

"My father gave me money for alcohol but he never gave my wife any money for food or helped her in any way," he recalls.

As time went on Duncan's drinking increased and so did his violent behaviour to the point where nobody respected him anymore.

"I grew up in a religious family," he says, "and knew what God required of me. When my life was given over to alcohol and I became violent, I lost hope in myself because I knew that I was the worst sinner."

"I thought that what I was doing was unpardonable. I was waiting to die and to be sentenced to hell."

Then, one day while Duncan was drinking at a pub he overheard someone reading from the Bible.

"It was a man leading an open air crusade and he was speaking from

Isaiah chapter 1, verses 18-20," Duncan recalls. "These verses speak about God making our sins 'as white as snow' – like they had never been – if we would just come to Him and turn from our wicked ways."

These words touched Duncan so much that he could not stop thinking about them.

"One night I really hit rock bottom and beat my wife almost to death," he confesses sadly.

"Her only crime was that she had been slow to open the front door for me. When the people in the village found out what I had done the men threatened to kill me if she died."

Terrified for his wife and his life, Duncan remembered the verses he had heard and turned to God in desperate prayer.

"I prayed, 'Lord, if You restore my wife back to life I will give You my whole life and serve You all the days of my life'. The Lord heard my prayer and my wife revived, saving me from the furious people that wanted to kill me. It was then that I knew that God was my friend even though I was a sinner."

That night Duncan went to a pastor's house and knocked on the door.

"I told him that I had had enough of the world and that I needed Jesus Christ," he recalls.

"The pastor thought I was drunk and told me to come back in the morning. I insisted though and so he led me in



Duncan Oundo

the 'sinner's prayer' and afterwards I felt a heaviness leaving my heart to be replaced with the peace of God."

Duncan is now living each day as a follower of Jesus Christ and is a pastor of a small church.

When he stopped drinking and fighting, his wife was so amazed at the transformation in his life that she too became a Christian.

"My brothers were not pleased with my decision," he says, "but even though they chased me out of my house for betraying their 'beliefs' and left us destitute I know that the Lord is my provider."

# WOLFE PACKS HIS ANGER IN

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

**D**ue to his violent step-father, Sean Wolfe grew up to be a "really angry guy. I didn't have a lot of friends because I had a bad temper. I was very sensitive and didn't know how to process. I nurtured a hatred for myself, and through that I hated everybody else."

As soon as Sean graduated from high school, he joined the Air Force to escape home.

However, his Christian grandmother and biological father prayed constantly for him.

Stationed in Pensacola, Florida, Sean enjoyed the weekends on the boardwalk drinking, despite being underaged.

"What do military guys do when they go drinking? They go get tattoos," he says, adding that he planned to get a Celtic cross on his back with a rose vine memorializing the members of his family.

But just as he was about to leave for the tattoo parlour, his grandmother called. "Sean," she said, "don't do something you're going to regret for the rest of your life."

The timing was unnerving. But Sean brushed it off. Then his dad called. "Son you've been on my mind. Sean, I don't want you to do something that you will regret for the rest of your life."

Sean dropped the phone in complete surprise. By the time he recovered, his friends had left without him.

Sean was furious but he couldn't afford the \$80 taxi fare to go on his own so he went to a movie at the base instead.

After the movie, his commander showed up with the military police and asked where he was that day.

Sean produced the movie ticket stub. "OK," one officer said.

It turned out that Sean's friends had been drinking and gotten into a fight that day; two landed in jail.

"If I had gone (with them), I would have had an Article 15 (disciplinary action) or maybe

even completely kicked out with my past disciplinary actions," Sean says.

Sean was transferred to New Mexico, where his tech sergeant Jack Evans talked to him about Jesus one winter day.

Sean was repairing an aircraft when his hand slipped and his body slammed into the bulkhead. A string of profanities followed.

"Wolfe, you need to watch your mouth," Jack told him. In response, Sean swore at his superior.

Now, surely, he would get another Article 15 discipline.

Instead Jack looked at him in love. "Wolfe, you got a really big chip on your shoulder. Tell you what, if you come to church with me, I may forget this ever happened."

Sean accepted. At church he was stirred by the passionate sermon. "Man this guy really believes what he's saying," he thought.

He was also impressed by the response at the end of the sermon by a call for Christians to go up to the altar to deal with sin.

"I was really perplexed," Sean says. "Why would they go to the altar if they already had accepted Jesus? It hit me so hard between the eyes. No way! These people can't be serious! I was struck by it, captivated by it. It spoke volumes that they did what they said they would do."

Jack turned to him. "Wolfe," he said, "you ready to get that chip off your shoulder?"

Sean relented and went to the altar to accept Jesus, which seemed anticlimactic. There was no weeping, no angels singing, no thunder from Heaven.

"That's it?" Sean asked Jack.

"If you meant it, you'll know," Jack responded.

Later that day, Sean pulled out a cigar to smoke. But strangely, there was no desire to light it up.

"I haven't been tempted to smoke since," he says. And that night he slept like a baby for the first time ever. Previously he had nightmares. "I'd wake up all the time with night terrors."

Smoke breaks at work turned into coffee breaks. Sean never missed a church service or Bible study. Today Sean is a pastor in Hope Mills, North Carolina.



Sean Wolfe with his wife Selena.

# To hell and back – a soldier's tale

## PTSD had broken this Marine's spirit; faith restored it

BY RUDEE BECERRA

As a police officer, Chad Robichaux once had to grapple with and overpower a man barricaded in his home in a domestic dispute. When the man struggled for Chad's gun, the officer fired at him as the man's children and wife screamed hysterically.

It wasn't the only time Chad was traumatized in his use of deadly force. He also killed as a Special Operations Force Recon Marine during eight tours of duty in Afghanistan.

The killings left his mind and heart a wreck, his marriage a shambles and his soul a wasteland. If it weren't for the intervention



of a Christian man who invested in him and nurtured him back to psychological health, Chad might have ended his life.

Chad recounts the horrors of waging war on evil, both in America and abroad, in an *I am Second* video on YouTube.

When he arrived on the scene of the domestic dispute, there were 30 people standing around outside the house. The man had barricaded himself in the back bedroom with his gun. Chad and his partner demanded he drop his gun. He refused to comply, so Chad moved to disarm him with force.

"I step towards him and I grab the barrel of his rifle and I pushed it away from me and I kicked him in the groin," Chad remembers.

"When I kicked him the second time he grabbed my hand. I realized at that point that I had to save myself and my partner. I shot six times."

His partner hit him with another five bullets, and the suspect crumpled to his knees.

He looked at Chad and whispered: "You killed me."

Chad couldn't just forget the images of blood all over him. He couldn't shake the fact that he had ended a life at close range. He couldn't forget the screams of the family.

His wife was no help. She just thought it was all part of a day's work. He really needed someone to affirm him, but instead he felt rejection.

Shortly after that incident, he returned to active duty as a Marine following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He was added to the Joint Special Operations Command.

He deployed to Afghanistan with much excitement.

He wasn't prepared to see the full horror of mayhem done to other human beings. In the process of fighting evil, evil entered his own heart. He became a hateful killing machine.

"I was out of control and I didn't feel bad about it," he admits. He built a wall between himself and his family.

In April 2007, Chad returned home from his final deployment, numb, weak, and broken. He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and was removed from active duty.

His wife encouraged him to start doing jiu-jitsu. He had done wrestling and jiu-jitsu since he was five years old. On the mats, he thought he found his cure. He opened his own martial arts school and it grew to 1000 students. He started fighting again professionally and joined

the Mixed Martial Arts circuit. He was undefeated.

But because he never dealt with the underlying issues that lingered from Afghanistan, he and his wife began to drift apart. Chad started having relationships with other women. He decided to separate from his wife and sell their home. The children were devastated, begging both parents not to separate, but Chad chose to do it anyway.

He eventually realized other people weren't the problem, he was. He descended into a suicidal spiral and would sit in his closet alone with his pistol next to him: "I'd try to talk myself into taking my life and pulling the trigger."

Meanwhile, his wife was going to church and praying for him, but she was so upset with him she didn't know how to pray. She would just say, "God, let me see Chad the way you see Chad."

Help me to forgive Chad the way you forgive Chad."

She had asked him how could he have done all these professional things in his life and be successful in them, but when it came to his family, he quit? Today Chad says: "She was absolutely right and I decided that I was going to put the same professional work ethic, the same character, same discipline, same things



Marine and professional MMA fighter Chad Robichaux, pictured with wife Kathy (above) was tormented by PTSD.

that I put into my professional life into my family."

He asked his wife if she could find someone from her church to help him with the plan he had written out. He was introduced to a man named Steve Toth, who became his mentor.

Steve looked over Chad's plan and put it to him bluntly: "It's not going to work because you didn't put God in this plan."

Chad made the decision to submit his life to Jesus Christ, to make Him Savior and Lord. He was born again! Steve walked him through a year-long biblical mentorship process, teaching him how to be a man of God and leader of his family.

"When I did that, this PTSD thing that was controlling my life, it became a set of memories that I had the control over."

He came to the realization he wanted his wife back and was willing to do whatever he needed to.

"I wanted to have compassion for her and I just prayed, and I was overwhelmed with emotion and I just cried."

His kids also welcomed him into the house again.

"We were able to utilize the same process of aligning our marriage with God's word to heal our marriage."

In response to the healing that took place in their lives, Chad and Kathy created a foundation that ministers to veterans and their families who are struggling with the effects of combat trauma.

**nudge** WITH KARL FAASE

### We're all special

**THE** explosion of TV shows such as *American Idol*, *The X Factor* and *Big Brother* has changed our view on fame. It used to be the province of the "others," those more talented or better connected than us ordinary folks. Yet now it seems that fame is within our reach. No wonder thousands of people line up to make it onto *American Idol*.

This comes on the back of years of encouraging and developing the self-esteem of our youth. Helping them understand that they are individual and special. But we all need to keep in mind that insightful line from the *The Incredibles* movie "if everyone is special then no one is special."

What makes you and me special? Are we special because we are famous, or better or more talented than everyone else?

No, we are special because we are uniquely and individually created, not only by our parents but by God. God has known you from the beginning, loves you, and wants to be a part of your life. That's special.

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**SAMCF - AT EASE RADIO PROGRAM**

93.6fm

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)

**GNCRAAdmin**  
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

## Being present for real connection

BY ROB FURLONG

**MARTIN** Buber was a renowned Jewish philosopher who developed the “I – Thou” concept in relationships between people. His main idea was that when we take the time to see each other as persons not objects, the personal interactions between us are remarkably changed. We begin to listen and show genuine interest in each other, rather than using the relationship (or the person) for what we can gain from it.

His path to this idea was a painful one however. Just before the commencement of World War I he was visited by a young man he didn't know. Martin was kind to him and chatted with him in a friendly manner, but as he later told the story, he failed to perceive and draw out from him the real questions he was struggling with. Not long after the

visit, Martin learned from a friend of the young man that he had tragically taken his own life.

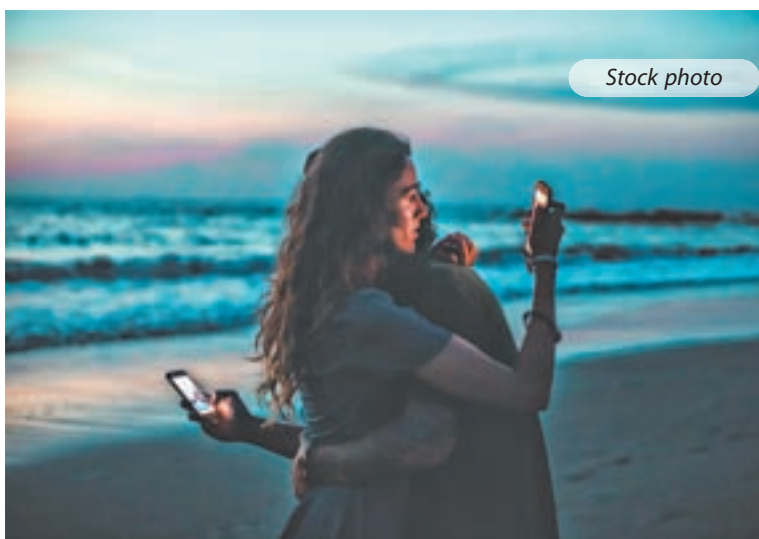
The impact this had on Martin was profound, as one author notes:

“The guilt Buber felt was not that he had somehow failed to remove the young man's despair, but that he was not fully present to him.

“He was so preoccupied by his religious experience earlier that morning, that he failed to bring the full resources of his attention to their conversation. He did not turn to the young man with his whole being to actually feel with him. Instead of genuinely listening, he brought leftovers, a courteous but partial engagement.”

Martin's story is not unique because we have all indulged in similar patterns of behaviour in our relationships, bringing only “leftovers, a courteous but partial engagement.” This is especially true in today's culture. People no longer look each other in the eye when they are talking – if they even are talking – but remained glued to their phones or tablets.

Opposite our home is a beautiful park and Karen and I frequently sit



out the front at the end of the day, catching up with each other and watching people taking their dogs for a walk. We are often amazed – and amused – by those dog owners who are obviously just “doing their duty” by taking the dog for a walk.

The dog is fully engaged, straining on its leash to go faster, while the owner is obviously angry with this behaviour, head bent over the phone, texting or reading furiously and fighting a losing battle to keep the dog in check! (The same can be said for a lot of parents taking their kids for a walk, but giving all their attention to the phone.) We often comment on how sad this is and what wonderful opportunities for real connection are being missed.

How can we do better?  
How can we be more present with each other?

I have thought a lot about this over the years and I am convinced that it can only happen we choose to see

every person as a unique individual, created in the image of God. This is not “pie in the sky” advice, but a reality. Being created in His image is taken so seriously by God that He says to strike out violently against another human being, whether by our actions, words, or neglect, is to strike out violently against Himself.

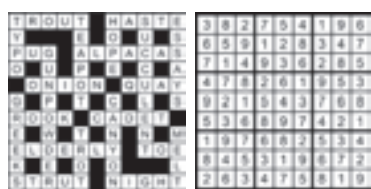
“  
**How can we be more present with each other?**”

James' warning of the danger of “cursing people who have been made in the likeness of God” is a powerful example of the sacredness of being created in God's image.

Martin Buber described the “I – Thou” relationship as one which recognises we are all created in the image of God and even though we are all different, we still respect, value, and love each other.

We no longer treat others as objects or as a “means to an end” but with “dignity and worth, affirming their uniqueness.” In other words, we truly see each other.

Who can you see today? ●



## 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)

**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.

**AS A NEXT STEP :**

**If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box**

**I have prayed this prayer.**

Please send me:

- Bible portion
- Some 'starting off' literature
- Information on a helpful church

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

**I would like to think about this.**

Please send me:

- Bible portion
- More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.
- I have a problem (see attached letter)

**\* 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

**WHATSAPP:** 083 786 3640

## 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>	

## Finding contentment

NICO BOUGAS

**CHARLES** Swindoll tells the story of a woman in West Palm Beach, Florida, who died alone at the age of 71. The coroner's report was tragic. “Cause of death: malnutrition.”

The dear old lady wasted away to 50 pounds. Investigators who found her said the place where she lived was a veritable pigpen, the biggest mess you can imagine. One seasoned inspector declared he'd never seen a residence in greater disarray.

The woman had begged food at her neighbours' back doors and gotten what clothes she had from the Salvation Army. From all outward appearances, she was a penniless recluse, a pitiful and forgotten widow. But amid the jumble of her unclean, dishevelled belongings, two keys were found which led the officials to safe deposit boxes at two different local banks. What they found was absolutely unbelievable.

The first contained hundreds of valuable certificates, bonds, and solid financial securities . . . not to mention a stack of cash amounting to nearly \$200,000. The second box had no certificates, only more currency – lots of it – \$600,000 to be exact. Adding the net worth of both boxes, they found that the woman had in her possession well over a million dollars! She was a millionaire who died a victim of starvation in a humble home. Admittedly this was an extreme case but many people imagine themselves to be poor and needy when they should be content with what they have got. Many do not really appreciate how good they have got things.

The multi-millionaire Rockefeller was asked how much it took to be satisfied, he replied, “Just a little more. . .!”

It is a funny trait in mankind that the more we get the more we want. We hear stories of the rich and famous and we envy them as though they had all that life has to offer. But are they really satisfied with all they have got?

Enough is never enough. No matter how much some people have they will always want more. There are millions of examples to which we could point to prove that wealth, prosperity and material things do not satisfy, they only create a desire in us for more. Just take a look at the stars of television and movie fame. It is amazing how many of them are addicted to alcohol and/or drugs and anti-depressants. They have it all, yet there is emptiness deep down inside of them that they are still trying to fill. There is a hunger they cannot satisfy, and a thirst they cannot quench.

Paul's life was filled with many difficulties, which he could have complained about. He faced constant stress, confusion, persecution, and beatings that left deep scars and permanent injuries. But Paul had learned an important secret to life. He said, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:11-13).

His happiness was not based on situations, it was based on his relationship with Christ. He knew he had all he needed, for it was Christ that gave him the strength for life. ●

Oscar Tshiebwe #34 of the Kentucky Wildcats lays the ball in against Nae'Qwan Tomlin #35 of the Kansas State Wildcats during the first half in the second round of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at The Fieldhouse at Greensboro Coliseum on March 19, 2023 in Greensboro, North Carolina. (Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images)



# INSPIRED BY HIS DAD

**W**hen Oscar Tshiebwe moved to the USA from The Democratic Republic of the Congo to play basketball, his high school coach ridiculed him.

“You are the worst player we ever had,” he told him.

But Oscar had faith he would succeed. His coach laughed when he told him he would one day play for Kentucky. But he did from 2021, and last year he was the consensus National College Player of the year.

In two seasons he pulled down a jaw-dropping 1317 rebounds.

Oscar grew up in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he started out playing soccer. But due to his tall height, he was encouraged to play basketball. He attended a basketball camp led by Congolese National Basketball Association (NBA) player Bismack Biyombo and a new course was set for his life.

However, when he was 13 years old, tragedy struck Oscar's family when his father died after being poisoned. His killer was never brought to justice.

Oscar told CBN what he remembered about the day his father died: “Thirty minutes before he passed he said, ‘Grab a chair.’ I grab a chair and I sit right there and he started talking to me. He said, ‘Don’t ever forget about God no matter where you go. Don’t lose God because when you lose God, you lose your life. Always listen to what I’m tell-

ing you. You gotta take care of your family.”

Oscar had been raised in a Christian home but his father's death caused him to be angry at God. He cried out to God in anger, “Why did this have to happen?” But the more Oscar spent time with God, the more he realized he needed Him.

“I said, ‘No, maybe I need to give my heart to God. Maybe I need to pay attention,’ because my daddy always told me, ‘No matter what happens in your life, don’t let that thing affect your relationship with God, because God has great plans for your life and your dream.”

Oscar put his faith and trust in Jesus. He worked hard at basketball and at 15, he moved to the United States.

“I had no family, I could not speak any English,” Oscar told CBN. “We could not communicate with anybody. Most of the people think like I was going to fail; I was going to go back home. People making fun of me, I don’t even know what they say. My coach never wanted to play me in high school my first two years, he told me, ‘You are the worst player we ever had. Like good luck with that.’ I told him, ‘I will play for Kentucky one day.’ They laughed. They made a joke. But I went back in the scriptures, read, but the scripture told us anything is possible to those who work hard and believe in God. [Editor's note: The Bible in fact says “with God all things are possible”.] I say, ‘Why the

Bible says, anything is possible, but everybody here told me it's impossible for me to get there?’ I say, ‘I will stick with the Word of God. I don’t care what people say. I’m going to stick with the Word of God. If I’m going to fail, I’m going to fail with the Word of God.”

Oscar initially played college basketball for the West Virginia Mountaineers and in his second game he was named the Newcomer of the Week. At the end of the season he had averaged 11.2 points and 9.3 rebounds per game as a freshman while shooting 55% from the field and was named to the Second Team All-Big 12 and the All-Newcomer Team.

As a sophomore, he averaged 8.5 points and 7.8 rebounds through 10 games.

In 2021 Oscar transferred to the Kentucky Wildcats – his goal achieved. At 6’9” and 260 pounds (118 kilograms), Oscar is an imposing presence on the court. In his first game he tallied 17 points and 20 rebounds in a 79–71 loss to Duke. At the end of the season he was named the Sporting News National Player of the Year and the unanimous Southeastern Conference Player of the Year.

Then Oscar had a new goal – to play for the NBA.

“I told [God], ‘I want to be an NBA player. I want to get there. I want to help other people and help my family. But I cannot get there by myself.”

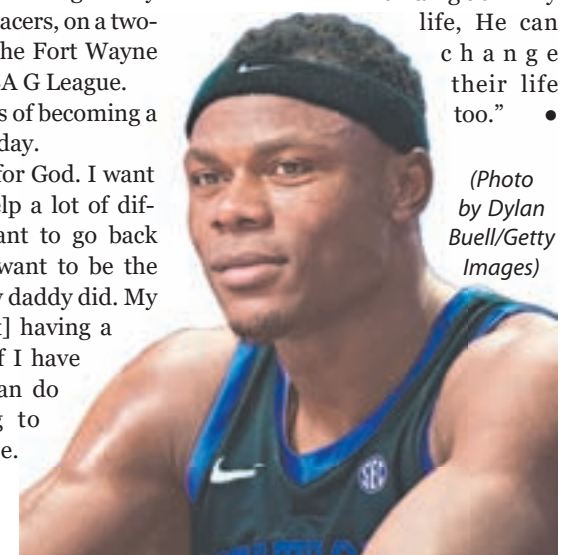
Even this goal has already been achieved, when earlier this year the 23-year-old centre was signed by the NBA's Indiana Pacers, on a two-way contract with the Fort Wayne Mad Ants of the NBA G League.

Oscar also dreams of becoming a public speaker one day.

“I want to speak for God. I want to stand up and help a lot of different people. I want to go back home and help. I want to be the example of what my daddy did. My daddy did [without] having a lot of money, but if I have money, I think I can do better. I’m going to help somebody else. I’m going to try to change the world ... I want people

to know that God is everything. I want people to know that God has changed my life, He can change their life too.”

(Photo by Dylan Buell/Getty Images)



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