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MISSION RECLAIMED

After years of partying, failed relationships, and drifting through his Air Force career, one serviceman's encounter with a mentor overseas sparked a life-changing shift that led him from self-destruction to service, resilience, and leadership.

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Matt Sinkhorn was seven when his mom slammed the door in the face of a woman witnessing about Jesus.

"If my parents don't need Him, I don't need Him," he concluded, a rejection that stayed with him for two decades until he met a Christian military man.

Matt Sinkhorn was always a good student because his dad was a teacher at the same school he and his twin brother attended.

He went to college to study anthropology because looking at old bones fascinated him.

But when he got out on his own — at college, Matt couldn't handle the freedom. While his father had been present at the school, there was accountability, with less peer

pressure to try alcohol or drugs.

"I was a teacher's son. They thought I was going to narc on them," Matt says. "They pushed me aside."

But at college he tried weed and later dropped acid. Soon he was skipping classes. After two years, he had lost weight and flunked out of college and was forced to return home. His twin, attending another college, did the same.

"When there were no parents around, it was like, 'Wow this is amazing. We can do whatever we want,'" he says.

Getting kicked out of college was a shocker. "I had never not been good at school," he admits. "My mom freaked out."

But he didn't mend his ways. Instead, he got a job as a busboy earning minimum wage and continued drinking.

Eventually, both boys figured they were too much of a burden to their parents and so they joined the Air Force, where they continued partying unabated. Matt cycled through a failed marriage in New Jersey before shipping out to Korea, where his pursuit of pleasure knew no bounds.

By age 28, he was in England hanging out with airmen much younger than himself. His life had become monotonous.

That's when Mark Stoneburner, an older man from the Christian organisation Navigator's, showed up in the Air Force dorms.

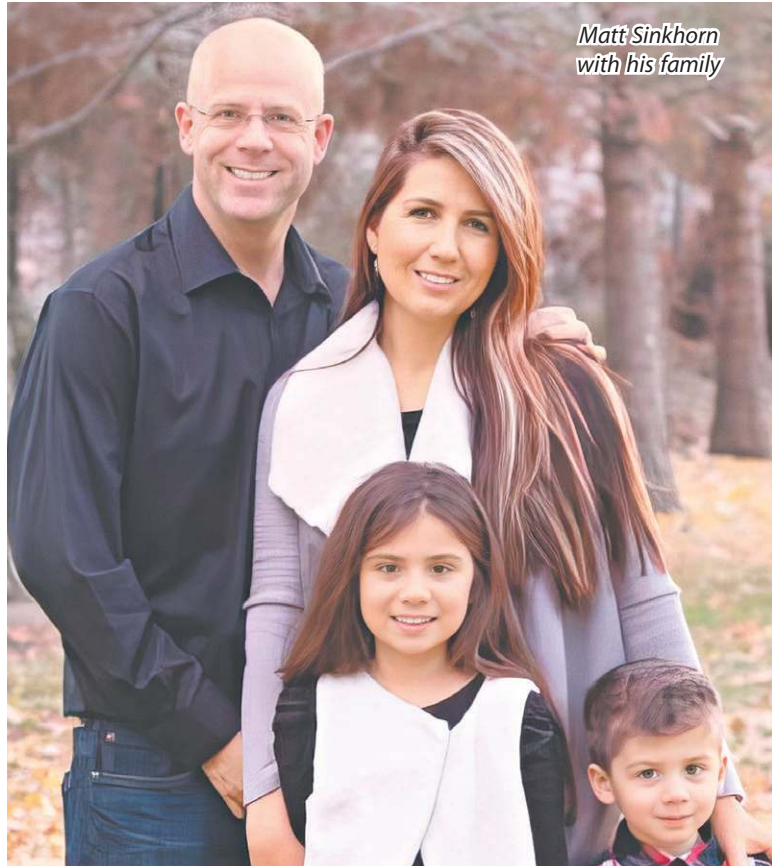
Matt somehow knew the book in his hand was a Bible, but what took him aback was the visitor's appearance.

"When I saw him, I actually saw that he was glowing," Matt says. "There was this light that was inside of him. I said to my friend Elena, 'Do you see him glowing?'"

Matt walked up to him and asked, "Why are you glowing right now? What's going on?"

Mark chuckled, chatted and asked, "What's your purpose in life?"

Matt said: "My purpose in life is to work to make money so that I can



Matt Sinkhorn with his family



Matt (centre top) in his military days.

have been written by man. I was blown away. No man writes that. If the Bible was written by man, it would have been a big Christmas list," Matt remembers.

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What are we made of?

BY JEREMY CLARE

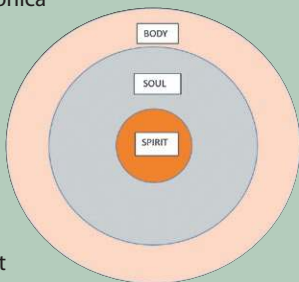
AS MILITARY LEADERS at all levels, we are dealing with human beings who happen to have volunteered to be soldiers, sailors and airmen/women. Leaders also are just such human beings, regardless of rank, experience, pay, job title, or perceived importance.

The majority of military training focuses on the physical, mental and psychological challenges of the profession of arms. Training and education concentrate on the body and mind in considering the inevitable stresses, pressures and traumatic incidents of active service. Spiritual resilience features, but for that perspective to be universally relevant and to be taken notice of, we need to revisit what we believe we are really "made of" as human beings.

Consider the well-known model of spirit, soul and body — employed by St Paul in his letters to the church in Thessalonica ("May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

This can be illustrated schematically:

The diagram visualises three "layers": an outer body layer (peach-coloured), which encloses both our soul (grey) and our inmost spirit (red). These are not separable parts, we are just one whole person! Health of, or damage to, one layer affects both the others.



The soul comprises our mind, our will and our emotions; in spiritual terms, all these three are fought over daily. The soul therefore becomes a regularly contested battlefield, open to influences both from the outside and from within.

The battlefield of the soul

How does that grey layer (and our grey matter!) become a battlefield? Starting with the eternal cosmic battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, every individual experiences a daily personal taste of that clash. It can often be very much more than a taste — sometimes it is a non-stop struggle for weeks or months on end.

Military readers do have the distinct advantage of understanding the language of armed combat! For our mind and emotions to be prepared well, in combat-readiness, we need to know our enemy.

He attacks mainly through the outer body layer and mostly via our natural senses.

Coming from the outside inwards, processed and stored in our brain, we experience worldly attractions and desires, our culture, our reading, our news media, our influences, our choice of company, our screen time etc.

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go to the store to buy food so that I can eat so that I can go to work."

"That sounds kind of purposeless," Mark replied.

As Matt thought it over, he realized his life was exactly that, mundane and purposeless.

They agreed to get together weekly to read the Bible.

But Matt, from the time he saw his mum slam the door in the face of the nice lady talking about Jesus, was resistant to Christianity.

"Do not try to push your junk on me," Matt cautioned Mark. "As soon as I hear you saying, 'You need to...', I'm going to walk away."

They started reading the Gospels. After just a few times together, Matt had one persistent question, "Who wrote this?"

One thing was the command to forgive, feed and take care of your enemy.

"I was floored. The more I read, the more I realized the Bible couldn't



BACK PAGE

Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God



QUESTION: SURELY IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I BELIEVE AS LONG AS I DO BELIEVE?

ACTUALLY THERE MAY be no bigger issue than what it is we believe in. That's how it is in life so why should it be any different when it comes to our relationship with God?

For example, imagine you are about to leap from an airplane to make a sponsored parachute jump. You do the training, understand the techniques, and believe the physics of billowing parachutes will not let you down – other than gently. You are free to choose your own parachute – the one you 'believe' in. There are three options. One has bloodstains on the outside and a tag saying, "Secondhand – one unlucky owner." The next has a note saying, "Packed by the Scouts to raise funds." The third is in the hands of your highly experienced instructor – he packed it himself and has double-checked everything. Which one are you wearing? I thought so. Because it is what our faith is in that matters – not how much faith we have or even that we have some at all. A small amount of faith in the right parachute is never worth trading for an overwhelming faith in the wrong one. To put it another way, the fact that you believe the train you are on will take you to your hometown is of no value if its intended destination is a different location altogether. Your belief, however sincere or how many others may share it with you, is not going to change anything, for you or the train.

It's not the fact that we may have a belief, however sincere, but what that belief is in that is the real issue. So assuming you want your belief/faith to lead to you a close relationship with the God who made you, what or who does that faith need to be in?

The answer has to be, "In the one who will get me there." And that must be Jesus. That's the reason He died on the cross – to offer you forgiveness with God and His companionship forever, if you'll trust/believe in Him. But, of course, to believe 'about' and to 'believe in (trust in)' are two very different things. It's like someone with their hands and face caked with dirt and grime saying, "I believe in soap." Ask what they mean and they say, "Well, I believe soap is a good thing and to be much admired. I believe soap has made a great difference in world history. I believe soap has a lot to offer. I believe soap would get me clean if I were to use it."

In the same way, so far as Jesus is concerned, He does not ask us merely to admire the excellence of His life or the quality of His words. Rather He asks us to actively believe by trusting in His death on the cross to work in our lives – by faith.

Peter Meadows is the co-author with Joseph Steinberg of *The Book of Y*, the basis for the eight week Y Course that explores life's biggest questions.

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

- ACROSS**
- 1 Loch Ness site
 - 7 Off-ramp
 - 8 Changing house
 - 10 Inviting store sign
 - 11 Restored to health
 - 13 Winter sleep
 - 16 Beard removers
 - 18 Gardener's gear
 - 20 No longer a teenager
 - 21 Bath stopper
 - 22 Good-looking, ... man
- DOWN**
- 2 Farm harvest
 - 3 Identical individual
 - 4 Kabul's country
 - 5 Take off, as a plane
 - 6 Abrasive tool
 - 8 ___ of pearl
 - 9 Action word

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- 12 Shrek's bestie
- 15 Clothes presser
- 18 Coop females
- 14 Adequate for need
- 17 Friend in war
- 19 Flower's stalk

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7

Smile files...



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Soldiers gear up with Challenge



Hot off the press: Namibian soldiers take a moment from training to read the latest Military Challenge.

Redemption on the beat

Antigua and Barbuda police inspector Francis Dinard was a thief long before he became a policeman.

Francis, now 60, tells *Challenge News* he used to steal from his grandparents when he was a child.

This was even though he had been brought up in a devout Catholic family.

"God bless their souls," he says. "My grandparents did their best, but Jesus Christ was never taught to me. I was taught religion, but never about having a personal relationship with Him.

"I made First Communion and Confirmation, but to this day I have no idea what those mean. The only thing I knew then was that I was looking forward to the next party."

In 1980, when he was 16, he accepted an invitation to go to a church youth service.

"At the youth meeting I heard about hell for the first time in my life. I found out that hell burned bad people up, that they will be cast there and tormented forever.

"That created a fear in me that I had never experienced before.

"So when the pastor gave an invitation to accept Jesus I did. I got saved that night."

He says the fear of eternal damnation left him immediately and that he felt like a different person.

Then – disaster. He found out he had gotten his girlfriend pregnant.

"That was too much for me as a young believer and I backslid. I joined a band and sang worldly music. This went on for many years, even though I kept on feeling the Lord tugging on my heart."



Francis Dinard

In 1985 he migrated to Antigua and Barbuda but says nothing changed for the better; in fact everything seemed to be going wrong.

"I became very rebellious. My mother and I were at war with each other because I began having children, one after another, as a teenager."

His goal at that time, he shares, was to have 100 children and never

get married.

However, his lifestyle and the very strained relationship he had with his mother took a toll on him and he rededicated his life to the Lord.

"After that I saw life differently. I found meaning for life.

"I wrote to my mother and asked for her forgiveness for all the pain I had caused her over the years. This saw our relationship grow in a wonderful way, to God be the glory.

"I got involved in ministry and evangelism [telling people about the good news about Jesus], which helped me to grow and be strengthened as I met with other believers to pray and study the Word."

Francis says despite his questionable choices earlier on in life, he always wanted to be in the armed forces but his application to the Dominica police force was rejected.

After a short stint with the Volunteer Defence Force in Antigua and Barbuda, he was accepted into the police and has been serving for 38 years.

Francis' favourite verse is from 1 Corinthians 2:9: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love Him."

"This verse reminds me that nothing in this world can be compared with what God has in store."

THIS EDITION BROUGHT TO YOU BY SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Why SAMCF exists

- To actively support the ministry of the SANDF chaplains;
- To help build up the individual member to spiritual maturity in his/her relationship with God, family and associates;
- To stimulate and encourage SAMCF members to meet regularly for Bible study, prayer and fellowship;
- To stimulate and encourage each SAMCF member to give witness to his/her faith in word and deed, and to give active support to the Church of his/her own denomination; and
- To be an instrument through which others in the SANDF are led to commit their lives to Christ.

If you would like more information about SAMCF please contact your unit or area representative or post to:

SA Military Christian Fellowship (SAMCF)
PO Box 1545, Sun Valley, 7985, Cape Town

Website: www.samcf.org.za – Email address: samcf3@gmail.com

Tell us your story of coming to Jesus and encourage other soldiers for Christ!

SEND TO:
Capt Lourens:
samcf3@gmail.com

Faith on the frontlines

At Colonel William McKenzie never brandished a gun in WWI but as a military chaplain he showed extraordinary bravery in accompanying the troops into battle, rescuing the wounded from beneath bodies and burying the dead with dignity and affection.

Known as "Fighting Mac," he volunteered for the war at age 44 and kept the troops spirits up with prayer meetings, Bible studies, sing-a-longs and sporting events. He won many men to Christ with his practical Christianity and cheerful demeanour.

One Light Horseman is reported to have said after returning to Australia: "We left on the same troopship ... On the voyage over, I heaped insult after insult on that man.

"I tried to spoil his influence and hinder his work. But he never showed the slightest resentment, in fact he countered my sneers with smiles, my scorn with serenity.

"Day after day he drew and won me... He reminded me of the Man who was called 'the Friend of Sinners'."

Mac was born on 20 December 1869 in Scotland, as the third of nine children.

In 1884, when he was 14 years old, his family migrated to Australia and farmed sugar cane near Bundaberg, Queensland.

In July 1887, Mac became a devout Christian at the age of 17 through the influence of the Salvation Army.

On 21 June 1899, William married fellow Officer Annie Dorothea Hoepfer in Horsham, Victoria.

By 1911, they had four children and had settled in Bendigo where William was a Salvation Army Brigadier.

Mac was officially appointed as chaplain to the 1st Brigade of the Australian Expeditionary Force on 25 September 1914.

He was attached to the 4th Australian Infantry Battalion.

On 25 April 1915, he arrived at Gallipoli with the first troops to land, however he stayed on the boat helping doctors attend to wounded men. On 10 May he was allowed to disembark and in his first 10 days ashore, William buried approximately 170 men, often while under fire.

Col Stringer relates in his book 800 Horsemen how the Aussie troops begged "Fighting Mac" not to risk his life during the Battle of Lone Pine, the bloodiest battle the Australians had fought.

However, he replied: "Boys, I've preached to you and I've prayed with you. Do you think I'm afraid now to die with you?"

After the battle, William wrote: "My experiences of getting the wounded out of the trenches, over the dead and dying was sickening ... as Turkish guns were busy day and night. I buried in all something like 450 killed in this charge."

Mac showed his Christian character in practical ways like relieving an exhausted digger of their heavy pack and carrying it himself as they went into action; offering spiritual counsel to hundreds of men; writing letters of consolation to loved ones back home, and dragging men 'by their ears' out of brothels to save them from VD and vice.

Stringer writes: "The Diggers loved him almost to a man and described him as 'big hearted',



Lt Colonel William McKenzie

'incorruptible', 'considerate of the feelings of the individual', 'one of the bravest of the brave', 'a friend of sinners' and 'a man with an unalterable common sense'.

A friend described Mac as "a big, brown-faced man in khaki facing that hell [battle] with joy and triumph in his heart, listening. Always listening, in the midst of the tempest, for a voice from Heaven."

That voice, which Mac believed was an angel of the Lord, saved his life many times.

He is quoted as saying: "I could give six instances in the past week when a prompt attention to his (the angel's) instructions has saved me from those big shells. I now know that if I pay heed and obey God I shall continue unharmed until my work is finished."

William never did fall on the field but the strain of his immense work load, caused the kind-hearted padre to suffer many bouts of ill health and depression.

Mac was mentioned in despatches and later gazetted a Military Cross on 3 June 1916.

He was requested to return to Australia and did so in early March 1918. After that, he continued to have poor health and suffered from nightmares and memory loss, which these days would probably be called PTSD.

Stringer writes: "He was the most famous man in the AIF and many people travelled hundreds of miles to grasp his hand and thank him for some kindness he had shown a loved one... 'Fighting Mac' inspired many books and magazine articles. [He] spoke of the love of God and His forgiveness for all humanity."

William didn't like the spotlight though and soon left Australia to do a stint of mission work in China.

He formally retired from active ministry on 1 March 1939.

Mac's long illnesses ended on 27 July 1947. He died at the age of 77 and was buried in Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney, after a procession through the streets followed by teary-eyed diggers marching six abreast.

Loved and transformed

BY HARRIET COOMBE

YOU MAY HAVE heard that Jesus accepts you just the way you are. And that's true – He meets you right where you are, no matter your story, your past, or your struggles. He knows you are broken, and He loves you anyway.

But the deeper truth is this: He loves you far too much to leave you the way He found you.

Maybe it shows up in addiction, pride, jealousy, bitterness, or sexual brokenness – whatever it is for you, the Bible puts it plainly: "You were dead in your transgressions and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

Not just sick. Dead. Spiritually lifeless because of our sin. Sin is anything we think, say, or do that goes against God's way. It separates us from Him and damages our relationships with others and ourselves. But thankfully, He sent Jesus to rescue us and reunite us with God.

"God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

He lived the perfect life we couldn't live. He died the death we deserved. And then He rose again – to offer you real life. Forgiven life. Changed life. Eternal life.

"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

God doesn't just forgive sin – He changes hearts, making you a new creation. And this transformation happens through the work of the Holy Spirit – God's presence inside us, helping us grow, guiding us, and giving us strength to turn from wrongdoing and follow in Jesus' footsteps. He gives peace that lasts, joy that's real, and hope that doesn't fade.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

This isn't about being good enough. It's about a relationship with the One who made you, knows you, and gave everything to bring you back to Himself.

He's not in the business of improving lives. He's in the business of raising the dead. This new life is received by faith – not by trying harder or fixing yourself, but by trusting in what Jesus has done for you. You don't have to fix yourself before you come to Jesus. Just come.

Talk to Him honestly. Ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him you want the new life He offers. You could pray something like this:

"Jesus, I know I've messed up. I've tried to live life my way, and it's left me empty. I believe You died for my sin and rose again. Please forgive me. Make me new. I want to follow You."

If you meant that, or even if you're still unsure but want to explore more – you've taken a first step. Keep going. Open a Bible. Find a church where you can grow, ask your questions, and discover what it means to follow Jesus together. Jesus isn't afraid of your doubts – He's big enough for all of them. ●

PEARL HARBOUR: A miraculous conversion

CAPTAIN MITSUO FUCHIDA

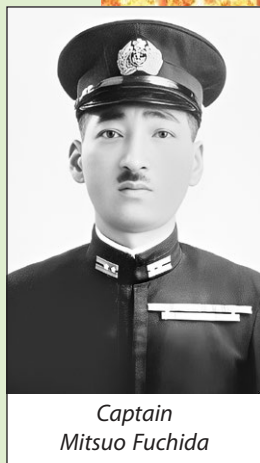
was more excited than usual as he awoke the morning of December 7, 1941. As general commander of the Imperial Japanese Air Squadron squadron, he made some last-minute checks on intelligence information before going to warm up his plane.

Three hundred and sixty Japanese planes led by Captain Fuchida headed toward Hawaii. He knew the objective of this mission: to surprise and cripple the American naval force in the Pacific.

The destruction left behind included 20 naval vessels and among them were eight massive battleships, and more than 200 aircraft. The human cost was over 2000 military and civilians killed and more than 1000 injured.

Fuchida was the first over the target and the last to leave. It was his voice that sent his aircraft carrier the message "Tora! Tora! Tora!" (Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!) indicating the success of the surprise mission.

After Pearl Harbour, he had many close brushes with death including six crashes into the sea. Recovering on board after an appendectomy, the ship was bombed and both his legs were broken and he was thrown into the sea. He realised he was the sole survivor of the seven Air Commanders and the thirty two squadron leaders who took part in the Pearl Harbour attack.



Captain Mitsuo Fuchida

It was not until the war was over that he realised why God had kept him from death on so many occasions.

After the war ended and his military career was over, he became more unhappy and depressed. This was further aggravated by his call to be a witness at the war crimes trials.

On his way to give evidence and as he got off the train, he was handed a leaflet entitled "I was a Prisoner of Japan."

The leaflet produced by the Pocket Testament League documented the experience of Jake DeShazer who was held in a Japanese Prisoner of War camp. Jake described how he was cruelly treated. He told about his violent hatred for the Japanese guards.

But one day, the prisoners in the camp were given Bibles. As Jake read it he came to understand that the book was more than a historical story.

Its message of love, grace and forgiveness became relevant to him right there in his cell and

he accepted Jesus into his life. His life changed and his entire attitude toward his captors changed too. His hatred turned to love and concern, and he decided that should his country win the war, and he be set free, he would someday return to Japan to introduce others to this life-changing Bible. Jake DeShazer did return to Japan after the war as a missionary.

Now Fuchida had Jake's story, printed in leaflet form, in his hand. It was all about a forgiveness he could not understand and could not explain. Since the American had found that peace in the Bible, he decided to purchase a Bible.

Eagerly he read the Bible and sought help from the Pocket Testament League representative on how to become a Christian. Now he understood about the love of Jesus and for the first time he understood the meaning of Jesus dying as a substitute for his sin.

His actions at Pearl Harbour could not be changed but now he was aware of why God had kept him from harm. His new mission in life was to tell others how they can overcome the hatred in their hearts and minds.

He learnt that Jesus is the only One who was powerful enough to change his life and inspire him with God's thoughts. Jesus was the only answer to Jake DeShazer's tormented life and He is still the only real answer for people today.

God's forgiveness is powerful and life-giving. When we feel it deep down it can be infectious and really change our lives.

Is there someone who would benefit from your forgiveness today? ●

Adapted from 'Pearl Harbor and the Christian Connection' by Tim White from Pocket Testament League

What are we made of?

From page 1

These combined forces are strong; they move in and will attempt to take control of our soul, first to shape and then to dominate our mind, will and emotions. Of course, these outside influences are not all bad or wrong – many are just part of normal life, some are good things. However, evil forces can use them strategically and cunningly, rather like the Trojan horse.

Any battlefield worthy of the name needs opposing armies, so now we need to highlight the role of the spirit, our inner self, our core layer, and our conscience. This spirit, in company with the Holy Spirit, the unseen presence of God within Christians, can provide powerful friendly forces, well capable of keeping the mind, the emotions and our will (our decision-making) in line with God's will. Spiritual strength and resilience can help us hold unhelpful external forces at bay, and regularly defeat them.

The role of scripture

You will be aware of a whole publishing and internet industry devoted to self-help books and programmes for the general improvement of our lives: physically, emotionally, psychologically, financially and ethically. Some such products are helpful and effective and might be considered as friendly forces. The majority however are very limited in spiritual warfare terms – they lack the heavyweight firepower of appropriate scripture.

God makes hundreds of promises in both Old and New Testaments, and many are specifically couched in terms of winning battles! These foundational truths, and the key verses below, need to be both memorised and faithfully believed to become powerful in our daily warfare. This is especially true when we feel at a low ebb.

"The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

"Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me." (Psalm 23:4)

That real living presence of God within us amplifies these inner beliefs, giving them greater influence and power than all the outward pressures that life can throw at us. The verses provide a reassuring view of the balance of forces in the spiritual ORBAT!

This tiny sample of scripture might appear to some as foolish, an irrelevant force in the cosmic battle; but that is only because you need the Spirit to understand them fully. These words need to be applied in the Spirit of the Christ who "holds all things together", including our body, mind, will and emotions. That is how we are designed, for our spirits to be in overall control.

Conclusion

The colour grey chosen for the battleground of the soul is deliberate. Shades of grey can vary from bright, almost white (a spiritual high perhaps), to something approaching pitch black (a dark night of the soul). Our soul's mood on any day, facing any situation, is a complex amalgam of our actual situation, our perceptions, our state of mind, our emotions, and our chosen focus. This might all seem unconvincing to those with a Godless view of our humanity. Atheistic thinking leads us to consider humans not as being made in the image of God, but as highly sophisticated, evolutionary extensions of the animal kingdom.

But the reality of the cosmic battle is not so much to be debated as to be understood and built upon... right now. We need to strengthen our spiritual core ready to combat enemy forces, both literal and spiritual. The battle over the soul needs to be fought and won daily during the routines of peacetime, in order to be fully prepared for the tedium, the trepidation and the terrors of war. Are you ready? See the box entitled **How can I become a Christian?** on page 7 for more information.

The most reluctant convert

BY MARK ELLIS (ABDRIGED)

C.S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, was born in Belfast to a solicitor and a clergyman's daughter.

When his mother died of cancer in 1908, nine-year-old Lewis felt abandoned, and his father's grief only deepened the family's isolation. Though he was taught to pray and attend church, Lewis later recalled in his book *Surprised by Joy* that his mother's death triggered a spiritual crisis. He had prayed fervently for her recovery, and when she died, it marked the beginning of his disillusionment with religion.

Lewis likened his experience at boarding school to a concentration camp, run by an abusive headmaster. Lewis and the other students were taken to church twice on Sunday, but he was put off by the liturgy. Still, he feared for his soul, and began to pray, read his Bible, and attempted to obey his conscience in a dutiful fashion. Joy (as Lewis viewed it) was absent from his life. He described joy as a profound and intense longing for something transcendent, beyond the mundane experiences of everyday life. As he continued his studies at prep school he admitted, "I ceased to be a Christian."

Instead, Lewis was drawn towards atheism. "Little by little... I became an apostate, dropping my faith with no sense of loss but with the greatest relief," he wrote. At Malvern College, he found himself "living like so many atheists or antitheists, in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world."

The Great War

Although Lewis passed his exams to enter University College at Oxford, World War I interrupted his first term. Half the college was converted into a hospital for wounded soldiers. On his 19th birthday, Lewis arrived in the front-line trenches. As a Second Lieutenant, he participated in one extraordinary incident, capturing 60 German soldiers, the significance of which Lewis downplays in his book. Following the Great War, he returned to his studies at Oxford. He began to entertain the notion that there must be some great mind behind the universe. Still, he resisted the Christian God.

Christian writers like George MacDonald, G.K. Chesterton, and George Herbert began to draw his attention, while the anti-religionists such as George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Gibbon, and Voltaire, suddenly seemed thin, "tinny," lacking in depth.

New Christian friends

Then Lewis made two new Christian friends: H.V.V. Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien. "Friendship with the latter marked the breakdown of two old prejudices... I had been warned never to trust a Papist, and... never to trust a philologist (a scholar who studies language in historical and literary contexts). Tolkien was both."

Lewis picked up Chesterton's *Everlasting Man* and for the first time saw the Christian outline of history in a way that made sense



C.S. Lewis

to him. He was shocked when one of his unbelieving friends made a surprising admission. "The most hard-boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good."

As Lewis reflected later about this period, he felt caught in the tension between God's sovereignty and man's free will. "The odd thing was before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice," he observed. "I could open the door or keep it shut...I chose to open."

"I say, 'I chose,' yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite," he discerned.

Convicted, Lewis was horrified as he examined his life. "I found what appalled me: a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds."

He recognised his need for God. "Total surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded... the demand was simply 'All.'"

Alone in his room, Lewis dropped

to his knees. He described feeling "the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me... I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."

Lewis' perception at this point was that his conversion was to theism [belief in the existence of a god], but not to Christianity. He started attending his parish church on Sundays and his college chapel on weekdays.

But the more he examined the claims of Jesus Christ, the more they seemed to resonate as truth. Then, on a sunny morning in 1931, he drove to the Whipsnade Zoo in Bedfordshire with his friend J.R.R. Tolkien. "When we set out, I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo, I did."

Receiving Jesus as his personal Saviour and Lord was not an emotional experience for Lewis. "It was more like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake." His long quest for authentic joy was now realized, but in a funny way, receded in importance to him. "The subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian," he observed. "It was valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer."

As Lewis discovered, his pursuit of joy and truth led to an unexpected and life-changing revelation – that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the World.

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Mission reclaimed

From page 1

"Why would I feed my enemy?" "I don't get that. Who would write that? It is 100% impossible that people wrote this."

The creeping realization was that the Bible could only have been written by God.

It had 66 different books, penned by 40 different authors, over 1400 years, from Iran to Rome, and yet they all agree and point to the need for the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The truth was suddenly dawning on Matt.

So one night on Cromer Beach, with a beer in his hand, Matt reviewed his life and everything he had learned from the Bible and came to an inevitable conclusion.

"It's now or never," he told himself. "You've done enough reading to know that you have created your own version of God and you don't know the real God who made you." Outside of God, he recognized

everything was meaningless.

"I was educated. I could get the girls. I could make people laugh," Matt remembers.

"But I knew all that was temporary. I knew I was going to die one day. I realized that if I died right then, I wouldn't be with God." So he prayed.

"Lord, I want to give you my life. I don't have all the answers, but I don't want to go back to what I was."

And with that plea, he became born again – a new person spiritually.

Back in the United States, Matt joined a church, where he grew in his understanding of the Bible and in his relationship with Jesus, broke his addiction to cigarettes, went regularly onto the streets to tell others about his new faith, and met his wife, Esmeralda.

After a few years, he was ordained as a pastor. Today he lives and ministers in Palmdale, California.

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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 (GNCRA) 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 GNCRA website (www.gncr.org.za). The program can also be listened to or downloaded any time from the GNCRA 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



GNCRAAdmin

032 533 3215

www.gncr.org.za

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

GOING WILD FOR CREATION

Gary Bates of Creation Ministries International interviews South African wildlife guide Deon Kruger. Deon's 35 years of experience makes him very familiar with the environment, ecology and animals of Africa. He shares his knowledge through a biblical lens, taking the Bible's history as a given. But it wasn't always this way for him.

South African wildlife guide Deon Kruger was raised in church, but at around age 10 he started to question the validity of the Bible.

In particular, he remembers seeing the typical cartoonish pictures of bathtub-like Noah's Arks, with elephant trunks and giraffe necks sticking out of a small boat. "Even as a child I realised that Noah could not fit two of every type of animal on board a vessel like that," he says.

Questioning the reliability of Scripture in such areas led to questioning the infallibility of the Old Testament and perhaps they were just stories. This led to questions about the crucifixion and resurrection such as "if God – Christ – was the supreme Creator, why did He have to suffer pain? It made no sense to me."

Sadly, when seeking answers, he was told not to doubt but to just believe the Bible! Unfortunately, a lack of answers has caused countless young people to abandon their faith. "When I first started in the safari industry – on top of my previous doubts – this was the first time I was hit hard and fast with the theory of evolution.

"In the industry, it is accepted unquestioningly. It's become almost a religious ideology. Evolution forms the basis of the training and instruction of all game rangers.

"It involves the geology of the land, animal husbandry (breeding), the evolution of animals and their adaptation to their environment, and more."

For example, he says, "Take the rock hyrax which is very prevalent in South Africa. The standard evolutionary view was that an ancient relative of this creature was the ancestor of all horses.¹

But now guests are told by their guides that this animal is the closest living relative of the African elephant. On the surface, this seems ludicrous, but no one even questions it. And if you do, you're met with ridicule.

"The evolutionary view has lately shifted once more, so the elephant's 'closest relatives' are now supposed to be sea cows."² Especially on the African continent, with its supposedly ancient rock formations and fossils of alleged human ancestors,



This baby rhino was orphaned through poaching.

the 'millions of years' influences any conversation regarding nature.

As a South African, Deon was exposed to the idea that his country was the evolutionary 'cradle of humankind' – based upon, for example, the Sterkfontein fossils.³

This has been further perpetuated in recent years with the discovery of Homo naledi fossils in a cave system in South Africa.⁴ Being told that a 'scientific view' takes precedence over Scripture, he started to add the deep time of millions of years to the Bible.

He ultimately identified with 'progressive creationism', which includes long ages of death and bloodshed before Adam's sin. Although this was a seeming 'best fit' at the time, he notes: "Deep down I was still not reconciled with this explanation. It caused me to doubt other areas of Scripture.

"I reached a point where even though I was a believer, the biblical accounts of the Old Testament became irrelevant to me. I thought that perhaps our Bibles were not inerrant after all; but where, then, does the truth begin?"

Ultimately, Deon abandoned the 'creation story' and church became a legalistic and religious activity.

Then his father gave him a sermon by a well-known pastor about biblical creation. This was the first time he'd ever heard any biblical explanations, so Deon wanted to know more. This led him to Creation Ministry International's website, where he immediately typed in the questions

about Scripture and science that had irked him for so many years. He says the information he found was revolutionary and returned him to a solid faith in God. "Suddenly I went from believing there were no answers to being overwhelmed with cogent scientific and biblical explanations."

When Deon started his company, Discovery Safaris, he did not feel compelled to give the evolutionary version of things. Now, however, he is keen to judiciously share aspects of his biblical worldview. This often leads to more questions, which he is only too happy to answer. Deon explains the way in which natural selection, for example, is insufficient to explain molecules-to-man evolution. His explanations often challenge them to consider how chance mutations could possibly produce such incredible design features – regardless of natural selection – or how much time is involved.

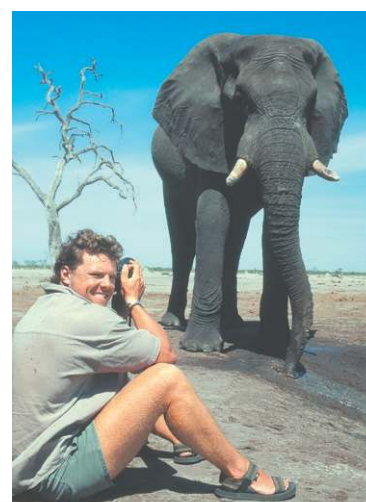
Take giraffes for example. Due to their amazing long necks, they require special design features. These prevent them from blowing their brains out when lowering their heads to drink water or passing out when they lift them up again.

Deon obviously loves his job, but we spent some time discussing how cruel and brutal the African bush can be. Aware of biblical history, Deon understands that this is a consequence of the Fall. It's clear that the rebellion of our first parents has affected all of creation.

Fortunately, though, Deon says safari tourists seldom encounter such violence. Instead, they notice how strikingly beautiful and big the animals are. One simply marvels at the variety, majesty, and beauty of God's creation. Seeing such incredible creatures in their natural setting is something Deon will never tire of.

References and notes

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Deon getting up close and personal with an elephant.

Deon photographing an elephant at a waterhole



Q: Are there contradictions in the Bible?

A: While some claim that the Bible is full of contradictions, this simply isn't true.

The number of apparent contradictions is actually remarkably small for a book of the Bible's size and scope.

What apparent discrepancies do exist are more of a curiosity than a calamity.

They do not touch on any major event or article of faith.

Here is an example of a so-called contradiction. Pilate ordered that a sign be posted on the cross where Jesus hung.

Three of the gospels record what was written on that sign:

In Matthew: "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." In Mark: "The king of the Jews." In John: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

The wording is different, hence the apparent contradiction.

The remarkable thing, though, is that all three writers describe the same event in such detail – Jesus was crucified.

On this, they all agree. They even record that a sign was posted on the cross, and the meaning of the sign is the same in all three accounts!

What about the exact wording? The gospels were originally written in the Greek language, which didn't use a quotation symbol as we do today to indicate a direct quote.

The gospel writers were making an indirect quote, which would account for the subtle differences in the passages.

Here is another example of an apparent contradiction.

Was Jesus in the tomb for two or three nights before His resurrection?

Jesus said, prior to his crucifixion, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

Mark records another statement that Jesus made, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles, who will mock Him and spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. Three days later He will rise" (Mark 10:33,34).

Jesus was killed on Friday and the resurrection was discovered on Sunday. How can that be three days and nights in the tomb?

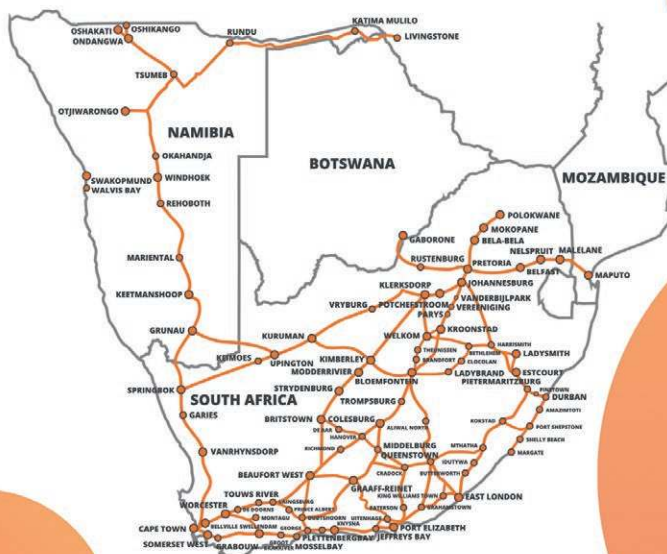
It was a Jewish figure of speech in Jesus' time to count any part of a day or night as a full day and night.

So Friday, Saturday, and Sunday would be called three days and three nights in Jesus' culture. This is typical of apparent contradictions in the Bible.

Most are resolved by a closer examination of the text itself or through studying the historical background.

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Living without shame

BY ROB FURLONG

U.S. HUMOURIST GARRISON Keillor was once asked in an interview what the most important thing in the world was.

Keillor responded, "To lead an honest life. To be able to walk anywhere without fear, without self-consciousness, and without worry that your lies will be discovered."

It is a powerful observation because it explains why many marriages (and relationships) struggle.

They struggle because the people concerned live with the fear that they will be found out for who they really are and will no longer be loved.

Another word for this is shame.

What is shame?

Shame is the feeling of humiliation you experience when you have

become the object of derision or contempt by others.

I remember this feeling well when as a self-conscious 14-year-old I was mocked and humiliated by another boy in front of our whole class.

But far and away the most common form of shame we experience is the humiliation we feel when we have been disobedient or done what we thought was unthinkable.

The roots of shame are found in the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God in the Garden of Eden and is recorded for us in Genesis 3.

Instead of becoming "enlightened spiritually" they are plunged into spiritual darkness when they eat the fruit and attempt to hide their failure from each other by covering themselves with fig leaves, before disappearing into the bushes in a futile attempt to conceal themselves from God.

Shame always drives us to hide ourselves in order to prevent people from seeing who we really are.

Because if people know what we are really like they may not like us, and we are not equipped to handle that kind of rejection.



STOCK PHOTO

Author and counselor, Larry Crabb, spoke of the impact of his shame on his relationship with his wife:

"Like every man, I am silent just like Adam was silent. Sometimes I stand dumbfounded in the face of my confusion.

"When my wife asks me to share even the smallest part of myself, I occasionally bristle. When she cries, I may become angry with her. Her tears frighten me, because I don't know what to do with them.

"When she tells me I have done something wrong, I defend myself to the bitter end. If she finds fault with me, I find 10 things wrong with her.

"I use words, I speak, but I use words to destroy relationship – as the serpent did in the garden.

"Yet if my wife were able to scratch beneath the surface of my anger, she would find that I am ashamed of what is inside of me. What if I share my most intimate thoughts, dreams, and doubts – and she rejects me?"

"Recall my story. I am a man who feels like an imposter. I already assume that I have nothing to offer. It is better, I wrongly think, to hide behind my silence."

If a woman or a man never deals with their shame they will go through life as an emotional cripple, living with the constant fear of being found out and forever trying to project an

image about themselves that is false.

There are two great gifts that I have experienced in marriage that build a relationship of deep trust and intimacy.

The first is the gift I have given my wife, albeit imperfectly, of sharing my deepest hurts, insecurities, hopes, fears and dreams.

The second is the gift I have received from her – her unconditional, non-judgemental and accepting love of me.

With these two gifts, which we have reciprocated to each other, we have forged a lifetime of growing intimacy.

And there is still a greater gift – the grace and forgiveness of a loving Father God Who takes all our shame away through His Son, Jesus.

There is no need then, to hide from each other or from God!

"Our greatest need and God's greatest gift are the same thing: forgiveness of sins. And to receive it we have only to ask and pass it on. But to ask for it we must first admit that we need it. Instinctively, we wriggle."
- Pete Greig

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

Thankfulness

BY PETER BRAIN

MANY YEARS AGO, Albert Einstein wrote, "A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend upon the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving."

The truth of Einstein's experience is borne out by the way that parents seek to teach their children to say "thank you."

I can remember my mum and dad saying, "Don't forget to say 'thank you.'"

The Sunday school chorus reminded us to be thankful not only to others but to God the source of all blessings. Do you remember it?

"Count your blessings, name them one by one.

"Count your blessings, see what God has done.

"Count your blessings, name them one by one.

"And it will surprise you what the Lord has done."

Thankfulness has many very attractive cousins: contentment, generosity, respect and trust in God to name a few. Ingratitude on the other hand spawns many ugly habits in us.

These include jealousy, covetousness, bitterness, pride and discontent.

The observation that "sickness is catching and health isn't" alerts us to the fact that we need to actively train ourselves and encourage one another to be thankful (both to God and to others).

I've never heard a parent saying, "Remember to be ungrateful!"

Thankfulness practised can transform us, our families, workplaces, community and churches.

Dr Arch Hart reports that, "In one university study, people suffering from a painful neuro-muscular disorder were instructed to regularly keep a record of things they could be grateful for. A kind word from someone. A gift from a neighbour. The smell of orange blossoms in the spring.

Life is full of little things to be grateful for, and the sufferers learned to count their blessings.

The results were astonishing. Improving in their pain management, they felt happier and emotionally more stable."

In the Bible, God commands us to be thankful – not only so that we recognise our dependence on Him but it also for our good.

In my own experience it does me good because being actively thankful towards God takes me out of my sinful propensity to feel sorry for myself and at the same time recognise the wonderful provision

He has made in giving me the friendship and help of others. I am so grateful to God for His innumerable blessings.

"God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart." — Charles Spurgeon



FIGHTING FOR HOPE

UK professional boxer Mark Prince won 20 out of 21 fights, including the World Boxing Organisation intercontinental light-heavyweight title in 1997.
Photos: facebook.com/dmarkprinceobe.

In May 2006, successful UK professional boxer Mark Prince's life fell apart at the seams.

His 15-year-old son Kiyán, a promising soccer player with Queens Park Rangers club, was stabbed to death while trying to stop a fight in London.

"It was my worst nightmare come true," he told YouTube channel TNT Sports Boxing.

"I think I lost my mind... I made some mad, crazy, screaming, crying noises... My heart was torn up."

Mark was no stranger to tough times. His father, he told Stephen Tomkins from Christian publication *Reform Magazine*, had been a harsh disciplinarian.

"This was the only thing that spoiled my childhood," Mark said.

"He beat us to the point of emotional damage. He beat my sister one time till she couldn't see out of one eye."

As a teenager, Mark ran away from home.

"I was on the streets at 15, bumming around, sleeping in cars, just surviving really."

"I was a hurting kid, wanting love and attention."

I met new people; they introduced me to weed. All my problems seemed to go away when I was smoking and drinking.

"I got into the mindset of the streets: the only way to 'make it' and get the clothes and the cars was crime."

"I was doing fraud, robberies."

"More friends and more drugs came into the picture."

He lived like that for six years, and then suddenly woke up – both literally and figuratively – when he was 21.

"Something happened to me. I remember waking up, looking at my friends smoking a crack pipe, and just felt like a waste of life."

"I used to believe I was going

to be somebody. I had this crazy thought: What can I do? Well, I can fight. Why don't I use what I've got? I wonder if I can transform my reputation from the streets into the ring as a professional."

Which was exactly what he did. Immersing himself in his chosen sport, he went on to win 20 out of 21 fights, including the World Boxing Organisation intercontinental light-heavyweight title in 1997.

It was during that time that he



Boxer Mark Prince holds his OBE medal, awarded to him during an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace, on March 19, 2019 in London, England. (Photo by Dominic Lipinski - WPA Pool/Getty Images)

also began to think more deeply about his upbringing.

"I'd been brought up to know God," he said.

"When I grew up we sang hymns and had Bible texts, we had that sense that there was a greater power, and you valued someone else's life."

"In 1997, I began to investigate what impact it had on my life, and I began to fall in love with God for myself."

"It made me a calmer person, more purposeful. I went through a lot of healing."

Then in 2006 came the phone call that changed his life forever. It was from his daughter Tannisa, who was screaming down the phone that his son, Kiyán, had been stabbed.

"I said a prayer to save my son from getting killed, but what I said was: 'Please help me to accept it if this does happen.'"

"I thought: 'Where do you even have the sense to come out with that?' But now I've gone through it, I look back and I know it is accepting what's happened in life that allows you to move on."

"Many people are still in the same place – in pain and in hurt and anger – because they can't accept what's happened."

At the hospital, he saw things that would "never leave [his] head and experienced pain unlike anything before."

And then there was the rage – so intense that he smashed his fists into the hospital walls and left blood trails everywhere.

Then through the agonising fog, he heard God ask him: "Do you trust Me to bring something good out of something horrible like this?"

"I told God I couldn't fight this anger, and felt like I had to kill this guy [Kiyán's killer], but I had to let

go of that. I had to accept that God is still in charge.

"God gives and God takes away. I prayed that prayer and I cried like a baby, and said: 'Show me what You need me to do.'"

There was no bringing Kiyán back, but there was a way to forever honour his life.

After he died, Mark founded the Kiyán Prince Foundation, a charity in memory of his son.

"I began getting invitations to speak. I felt this was God working and I needed to say yes."

The foundation works to stop knife crime and youth violence. It organises seminars and provides mentoring and physical fitness programmes, all aimed at steering youth in the right direction.

Mark poured himself into this work so completely that he was awarded an OBE in 2019 for his role in battling knife crime.

That same year, the stadium where the Queens Park Rangers trained was officially renamed the Kiyán Prince Foundation Stadium.

But Mark never forgot it was God

who picked him up and breathed new life into him when he had no strength left. Receiving the Helen Rollason Award for outstanding achievement in the face of adversity in December, he said:

"I am proud that at a time when everything seemed like there was no hope, that I stayed believing and trusting that Jesus Christ my

“
I was doing fraud, robberies.
”

Saviour was going to use me to do great things still in the name of my son. I'm proud of the fact that I didn't give into revenge.

"I didn't give into bitterness and anger and unforgiveness and all the

things which try to hold onto us as human beings. God has given us a choice, we can choose no matter what happens to us... we've got a power of choice. We can choose how we deal with it.

"We haven't got the choice of what happens, but we have the choice of how we deal with it." •

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