

# A wonder-filled life

BY JODY BENNETT

The expression of the little girl in this photo is so delightful! It reminds us that children still have the capacity to be overcome with awe and wonder and excitement, in a way that us cynical and jaded adults seldom experience.

In the modern world where so many mysteries of science and biology have been discovered, where so many disasters and disappointments happen routinely, and where our lives are so busy, it is rare to feel awe.

Awesome has become such an overused adjective that the word 'awe' hardly means anything to us — certainly not the humbling sense of tininess in the face of great beauty or power that it used to mean. Awesome used to describe something that brought us to our knees in worship, that stopped our mouths in an 'O' of wonder, that reminded us of our creatureliness and frailty.

Modern society doesn't want to be reminded of those things. We think we are invincible, powerful and understand pretty much everything — certainly how to live successfully. (How is that working out for us?)

But every now and then one of us will stand in the desert on a dark night and look up into the vastness of space and be filled with wonderment. Or we will experience nature at its most powerful — a volcano, a tsunami, an earthquake — and be reminded again that our lives are a vapour, snuffed out as easily as a candle flame. We might be afloat on the ocean with nothing around us but water to the horizon, and be filled with a quiet fear of a bigness that we can't quite fathom. Or we may look down a microscope at the teeming life in a single drop of water and realize there are worlds within worlds that we hardly know.

I believe that sense of awe and wonderment are really important to maintain a proper sense of perspective in life; and to keep human's natural tendency towards self-satisfaction and pride in check. I believe that God made the universe and nature in all its intricate beauty and incredible variety to point us beyond what we can see, to His invisible Self.

As the Bible says: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

That first Christmas, just over 2000 years ago, the most awesome, mind-boggling, wonder-filled thing occurred: the God who made the universe (the part which we can observe is currently estimated to be 93 billion light-years in diameter!) and the fire-ball that is our sun, and the 963,000 (!) different types of insects, and every unique human



A little girl on Christmas morning. Photo: Stockphoto/Getty Images

being etc. etc., became a powerless, tiny, vulnerable human baby.

He entered His creation as a man in order to save humankind from the mess they had made with the free will He had given them. He didn't need us in heaven — He didn't need us at all — but He loved us so much

that He came that first Christmas, grew, showed us how we should live, taught us, did miracles, and then died at our hands to take away all our sin.

If that doesn't fill you with awe and drive you to your knees in worship, then consider what followed.

He rose from the dead after three days and walked and talked with over 500 people for 40 days before returning to heaven — and promising to return again to make all things right at the end of time.

He promised that we too can overcome sin and death by simply

believing in Him and what He did on the cross to atone (pay for) our sin. Just like that we get to conquer death by rising again in eternal bodies and we get to live forever in a place without pain or tears or illness or loss.

Awesome.

## HEALING AFTER YEARS OF AGONY

Vani Marshall was a high-caste Brahmin, classical Indian dance teacher and law lecturer, but her life brought her no joy.

Vani's body was riddled with an illness nobody could identify, let alone find a cure for. The pain was excruciating — she woke up with it, went to bed with it, and often collapsed from it halfway through lectures.

She prayed day and night to

be healed. As the daughter and granddaughter of Hindu priests, and as a temple dancer, there were more than three million gods she could pray to. But her pleas went unheeded.

Dedicated to a pagan goddess by her parents when she was born, Vani says she was a committed Hindu for the first 26 years of her life. "I was totally under the control of the demon goddess," she shares in a YouTube video. "When I danced in the temples I would be totally under the power of the Hindu gods."

The millions of deities felt lifeless to her, but with her family lineage, Vani did not dare share her feelings with anyone. It would have been unthinkable for her to step into another religion.

"From childhood I always had a deep hunger and thirst for the one true God," she reveals. "I could not find God in the so-called Hindu scriptures or the temples. I joined the Sai Baba cult and was involved in Hindu witchcraft and the occult but I could not find God."

She had heard of Jesus before. She remembers her childhood in Malaysia, when people would come to her door and hand out 'Jesus Saves' tracts. "I ignored them because I already had more than 3 million gods of my own, thank you."

Meanwhile Vani's body continued to torture her. "I was sick, so sick and in so much pain I had thoughts of suicide."

One night as she lay in pain on her bed, she remembered those tracts, sat up and called out to Jesus. At first nothing happened.

"I tried again — 'Jesus! The Christians call you God. I am a Hindu and I worship many gods. If You are the one true God I am seeking, I want to see You! Please help me!'"

Suddenly a light filled her room. "My room light was not turned on and there were no streetlights. But there it was, this penetrating light that filled my entire room."

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Vani Marshall

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**MASTER'S MASTER**  
SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER

# SURPRISED BY GOD'S KINDNESS



Kanishka and Cailey have been married for over 30 years.

BY AMANDA JEAVONS

Raised in a Buddhist Sri Lankan family that immigrated to Australia when he was eight, Kanishka Raffel's conversion to Christianity came as a big surprise to him in his early twenties. Now the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Australia, Kanishka's story is an example of the power of God's Word to change hearts, even in those who are not knowingly seeking him.

From his earliest childhood all the way through to his first years as a student at the University of Sydney, Kanishka identified as a Buddhist. His mother was a Sinhalese Buddhist, one of the majority ethnic group in Sri Lanka, while his father was a descendent of European immigrants and converted to Buddhism from Reformed Christianity after his marriage. Despite this, there was never any doubt as to the faith Kanishka would profess.

"We were raised Buddhist, my two sisters and I," he explains. "My mother schooled us in Buddhist prayers and chanting. As a small child, we would do that every night before we went to bed."

However, although he practised Buddhism, Kanishka admits that he was largely uninformed about it until he reached his third year at university.

"I reached the age of 20 and thought, 'Well, I don't really know very much about this.' So I read a number of books about Buddhism and by the end of that year, I was actually more Buddhist than I ever had been in my life. I was better informed, I had learned the meanings of the words I had chanted since childhood, and I was practising meditation on my own."

At the end of that year, Kanishka went on a holiday with friends, some of whom were Christians. Although he had heard some Bible stories from his grandmother and had attended Scripture classes at school, Kanishka had had little reason to think about Christianity and the Person at its center. The holiday proved to be a turning point.

"I had a conversation with one friend in particular which was really crucial," he says. "In the course of that conversation, I asked him what it meant for him to be a Christian. And he replied, 'Being a Christian means I've lost control of my life to

mental and spiritual control," he explains. "So to hear someone I respected and admired say that they'd lost control to a figure that was long dead? It was a breathtaking answer and why it stayed with me, I suppose."

Kanishka's friend gave him a copy of John's gospel and sometime later, Kanishka began to read it, an experience which he found vastly different to reading the Buddhist scriptures.

"Jesus emerges in the gospel as this vital character. He has friendships and emotions. He is engaged in controversy and conversation. He is puzzling and intriguing to the people around him and to me as the reader. In comparison, you get very little sense of the personality and personhood of the Buddha from Buddhist scripture. It's a disembodied voice. So here [in the gospel] was something that had a really gritty historicity about it. That was very challenging to me."

Kanishka says on [sydneyanglicans.net](http://sydneyanglicans.net), "The Lord saved me as I read John's gospel... In God's kindness, I saw that in response to Jesus' words and deeds, 'people were divided'. It made me consider why I was 'against' Jesus. Eventually, I realized I had no reason to oppose Jesus, and in some way that wasn't altogether clear to me, He was for me. John 6:44-45 were important. I saw that life is not an endless cycle but has a 'last day', and I was convicted that God was drawing me to His Son. So I came."

Although his understanding of Christianity was still minimal at that point, the Word of God had a significant impact on him, much to Kanishka's shock.

Jesus Christ."

His friend's answer was both unexpected and confronting for Kanishka.

"As a Buddhist, I was engaged in an activity which was aimed at achieving

"I was a very surprised Christian. I didn't have any interest in Christianity at all and suddenly I found that God had revealed His love in Jesus and that was life-altering for me. Even on a first reading, there was something about [the gospel] that was obviously generous and gracious. Certainly, I would say now that God was speaking to me through Scripture, saying that the death of His Son was a death for my sin and that this was a really wonderful gift. This was an invitation to life."

### Sharing the news

As for many people who convert from one religion to another, the issue of telling his family was multi-layered, with many emotions at play. Kanishka's mother was disappointed and troubled by his change in faith, although she became more reconciled to it over time.

"I was her only son," he explains. "I think she was fearful that I was rejecting her in some way and so I did everything I could to persuade her that this was not the case."

However, her first words to him were also kind and a gift that was only revealed to him later.

"Her first words were, 'That would please your grandmother,' meaning my father's mother. And that was a lovely thing to say," says Kanishka. "I think the gift of her words, which my wife subsequently pointed out to me, was that my grandmother almost certainly prayed for all her grandchildren. In some ways, I think my coming to faith in Christ was an answer to my grandmother's prayer."

Converting from Buddhism to Christianity represented a big change



in Kanishka's worldview.

"Prior to being a Christian, I was very much at the center of my own world. This is quite a natural way of thinking and there are certain things about Buddhism that exacerbate that. Only you can save yourself so you have to pay attention to your impulses, emotions and ambitions. So you become very inward-focused and self-directed."

With Jesus as both the Savior and center of his life, Kanishka found that everything had been reframed.

"Now I had a place in a world that was touched by God in the person of Jesus Christ, and destined to be ruled by God, in Jesus. The effect of that was an immense sense of freedom and liberty. And I had a concern for others that I had not had previously, even though Buddhism, of course, is a religion of compassion. Knowing Jesus actually gave birth to compassion in me."

Kanishka decided to pursue ministry. He was ordained in the 1990s and then appointed as Dean of Sydney in 2016.

In 2021, Kanishka was appointed as the first non-European Anglican Archbishop of Sydney. He is married to Cailey and they have two daughters.

1. The original article is from the Church Missionary Society (CMS). All quotes have been taken from Kanishka's interview with Dr Rachael Kohn on 28 February 2016 on the ABC National Radio segment, 'The Spirit of Things'.

## Coffee Break

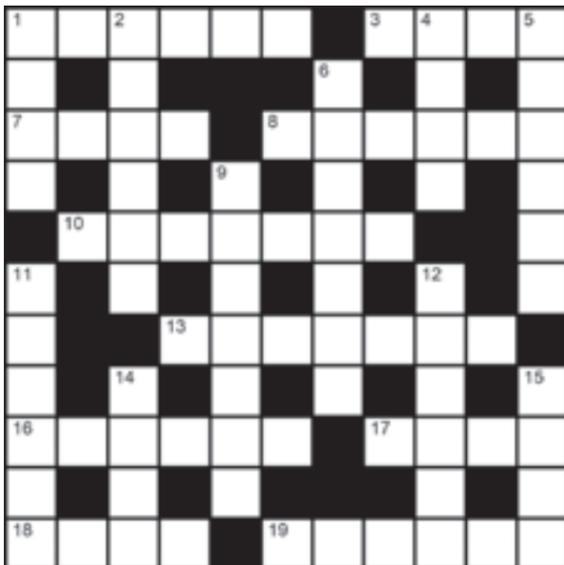
CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

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- 19 Car radiator covering

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- 5 Bible queen
- 6 Put pages in correct order



- 9 Three book series
- 11 University location
- 12 Victory wreath leaf
- 14 Blowgun missile
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## HEALING AFTER YEARS OF AGONY

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"Then I saw a form – not a face, but a form – and heard a voice. It was so loud and clear 'I am Jesus, I am God'. This was the first and only time I have ever heard His audible voice. I felt a warmth in my body and in an instant, my pain was gone."

"I felt no fear, just great peace. I had worshipped the gods of Hinduism for years but nothing happened. Jesus healed me in an instant and I felt like the lyrics of [the hymn] *Amazing Grace* ... I was blind but now I see."

Vani spent the rest of that night basking in the presence of God, but in the morning reality came back to bite her. It was Friday, when the family would go to the temple for prayers. "I told my mom 'Mom, I can't go because I saw Jesus'."

"My mom looked at me like I had lost my mind. When she came back from the temple, she brought priests to exorcise me."

The priests gathered round her, mocking Jesus and her newfound faith. Her father watched as his daughter refused to be intimidated and shook his head in deep disappointment. "Why?" he asked her.

Vani remembers to this day how crushed she felt when she saw her father's displeasure. "But I knew I couldn't

go back. Jesus had taken away my pain. He was real and that was the truth."

Halfway through the "exorcism" one of the priests stopped and said: "We cannot help her. Whatever has gotten a hold of her is more powerful."

Vani felt she had won the battle, but her victory was short-lived as her mother packed her a bag and told her to leave home and "stay with your Christian friends."

That estrangement lasted for years. "I would call my mom on her birthday and Mother's Day. She would hang up as soon as she heard my voice. She felt so betrayed."

Eventually, about a year later, her father and two brothers committed their lives to Jesus as well. At the time of his conversion, her father said to her: "Is this why you left everything to follow Jesus? I don't blame you."

Mother and daughter have reconciled, though Vani's mother has not yet become a Christian. Vani believes, however, that the ice is melting. Her mother has asked her to pray for her painful knees and has brought flowers to a neighborhood church, telling the pastor "these are for Jesus".

"The greatest miracle of all," she says, "was not that my sickness was healed. All other miracles pale in comparison to God coming to live inside of us."

## What do we crave at Christmas?

BY GREG LAURIE

ON the first Christmas Eve there were no brightly colored lights on any homes. There were no stockings that had been hung with care and no visions of sugar plums on anyone's mind. It was just another night in Bethlehem.

But world history was about to change. When Mary and Joseph arrived in town, there was no room in the inn. So the Son of God entered our world in a stable or, most likely, a cave.

Now when parents have a child, especially their first child, they call their loved ones and tell them the weight and length of the baby and the actual time of birth. On the first Christmas, God the Father also made an announcement that His Son had been born.

Whom did He tell? You would think He would have told Caesar that the Son of God had been born. But instead, God directed His message toward shepherds who were out in the fields at night, watching over their flocks.

The angel told them, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-11).

So the shepherds went to Bethlehem, where they found Joseph and Mary, and the baby in her arms.

There are a lot of good things about Christmas, of course, but as we anticipate its arrival, let's realize that Christmas cannot deliver on its promises. I think deep down inside, what we're really longing for is not Christmas but Christ. I think the anticipation we have for Christmas is a longing for God Himself. And that's the message of Christmas: Immanuel, God is with us.



# Damaged, defamed, and in despair, and yet...

Growing up, Rob Decker's home was filled with arguments, drinking, smoking, drugs, and physical abuse.

Rob would regularly escape the toxicity of his home by staying at friends' houses or out on the street — anything to get away from what he knew was waiting for him at home.

By the time Rob started high school, his life revolved around alcohol, drugs, girls and fighting.

"As a first year university student I would pick fights with seniors and I spent a month in juvenile hall," he confesses. "I was constantly looking for outlets to numb the pain of the neglect I felt at home."

This continued into his adulthood as he attempted to bury his pain with constant partying and fighting.

"By 28 my life was a complete mess and I had written myself off as a lost cause," he explains. "I was an unemployed alcoholic and drug abuser."

He recalls a Christian friend who consistently encouraged him and invited him to church.

One night he decided to go to a men's Bible study and was surprised to find everyone there so accepting. When the men offered to pray over Rob, he agreed. He says as they asked Jesus to come into his life, he felt a sense of peace for the first time.

He left the Bible study feeling refreshed and ready to make a change in his life, but two months later he found himself returning to his previous lifestyle. He was in a toxic, co-dependent relationship and any money he and his girlfriend made went to support their drug and alcohol habits.

Rob's girlfriend turned to selling herself as an escort and she was attacked by a "client". However when she contacted the police she accused Rob of being the perpetrator.

"It felt like I had been hit by a ton of bricks," Rob says. "That betrayal stung deep and my mind raced as I thought of what would happen to my life. I lost all hope. I felt I could not go on — I was done. I didn't want to feel this anymore, I didn't want to feel anything anymore."

With that thought, Rob jumped head-first through a third storey window but his foot clipped an awning on the way down and he hit the concrete on his left side. He shattered his left arm, collapsed his left lung, broke his right wrist and severed a vertebrae in his lower back.

Upon arriving at the hospital Rob underwent an eight-hour surgery.

When he was back in his hospital room, a police officer informed him that he was under arrest and being charged with rape and attempted murder.

"The doctors told me that I would likely never walk again due to the severe damage to my spine," Rob remembers. "I wasn't allowed any visitors because I was under arrest. I was all alone."

As he lay shackled to the bed, trying to make sense of what had happened, Rob remembered when he felt God's peace in the Bible study. He cried out to God, asking Him why He would allow this to happen.

"I heard this small still voice reply, 'The charges will be dropped, your bills will be paid and you will walk again,'" Rob remembers.

He says he felt an overwhelming peace, calm, and hope.

It wasn't long before Rob's ex-girlfriend withdrew her allegations against him and all charges were dropped.

A week after his first surgery, Rob's therapists wanted him to try to stand for the first time.

He felt immense pain surge through his entire body as the nurses lifted him to his feet. He was able to drag his left foot across the ground before collapsing back on the bed. The nurses and doctors were discouraged and told him there would be another surgery but Rob just smiled as he remembered God's promise. He knew everything would be okay.

Rob's huge hospital bill was miraculously paid for by the state and after six weeks he was released from the hospital.

"I was taking six different pain medications and drinking to help numb the pain," Rob says. "I felt myself slipping back to that dark place I had been before all of this so I turned my focus to God. I began praying all the time and reading my Bible. I surrounded myself with other Christian friends that would come by and take me to church."

Rob had a third eight-hour back operation where half of his back was fused together. Over the next few years Rob focused on building his body back up again and he was eventually able to come off all pain



Rob Decker

### I FELT I COULD NOT GO ON — I WAS DONE.



medication.

Wanting to return to work, he decided to return to his passion for fitness where he could use his experiences to make a difference in other people's lives.

He applied for a position as a personal trainer at a local gym where he met his future wife, Alyssa.

"Today, my life is in a vastly different place because of God's transformative love and grace," Rob says.

"God has continued to bless me and my family over the years. Alyssa and I now have a two young children — a son named Caleb and a daughter called Gianna — and I try every day to lead by example and raise them in a godly house.

"If God can take someone like me and bring me back from literally falling to the lowest of lows, He can do the same for you. If you fall, He will catch you."



# HAPPY HANUKKAH!

BY CHARLES GARDNER

AS Jews celebrate a feast known as the Festival of Light, I am reminded of what Jewish colleague Julia Pascoe told me that "If it wasn't for Hanukkah, we wouldn't have Christmas!"

Hanukkah (or Chanukah), which begins 18 December and ends 26 December 2022, marks the rescue of the Jews from the genocidal threats of Syrian-Greek emperor Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century before Christ — who of course came through the Jewish people.

Thanks to the Maccabees, who bravely revolted against the tyrant, Jewish life was restored and the Temple, which had been desecrated, was re-dedicated with the lighting of the menorah (seven-branched candlestick), which burned miraculously for eight days with only enough oil for a day — the Greeks had polluted the rest.

As for Julia, she met her Christian friend Tessa in 1996 and told her that Jews don't need Jesus, something she had been taught from a young age. What ensued was a "three-year argument".

"I had spent many years, and lots of money, going to psychics and mediums, looking for answers, but none of these things brought me meaning, purpose or peace. And while I didn't want to hear about Jesus, I was longing for all the things He seemed to be offering," Julia relates.

"Tessa shared prophecies from the Hebrew Bible that described Messiah's birth, life, death and resurrection... I could see He had all the credentials to be Messiah, but my pride would not let me admit my need for His forgiveness.

"I was wrestling with what my family would think if I accepted Jesus, and was also struggling to understand why God would allow so much suffering — my mother died unexpectedly when I was 16, and from that moment I questioned whether God even existed.



"Then Tessa gave me a book to read — *Betrayed* by Stan Telchin, a Jewish man whose daughter comes to faith in Jesus. He tries to prove her wrong and win her back to rabbinic Judaism. So he started reading the New Testament, looking for error, but as he read the gospels, he came face to face with *Yeshua* (Hebrew for Jesus), his Messiah! Eventually, Stan and his entire household came to faith in Jesus.

"As I read his book, my heart was pounding — I realized that you *can* be Jewish and believe in Jesus but, most importantly, I realized Jesus died and was raised from the dead so that I could be forgiven of sin and receive the promise of eternity with God.

"I wanted to say yes to Jesus and tell Tessa, who later told me she'd spent hours on her knees praying for me, but my pride wouldn't let me. Finally, she invited me to a Christian concert. She knew I loved music and that night a band called *Delirious* were playing.

"They sang a song called *Lord you have my heart, and I will search for yours*. The words pierced my heart — I'd been searching for God for so long, and the tears poured down my face. The band gave an invitation afterwards for anyone wanting to pray a prayer of repentance.

"I could no longer resist. I prayed, repented of my sin and, in that moment, I experienced God's redemption, His rescue, and I left that concert rejoicing!"

In many ways Hanukkah, with its focus on the temple's continually burning menorah, foreshadows the coming of Christ, the light of the world, who also calls His disciples to let their light shine for the glory of God. The special Hanukkah menorah is made up of nine candles, one for each day of the holiday plus the central *Shammash* (or servant) candle which lights all the others, perfectly fulfilling the role of Jesus, the Servant King, lighting up the lives of those who follow Him.

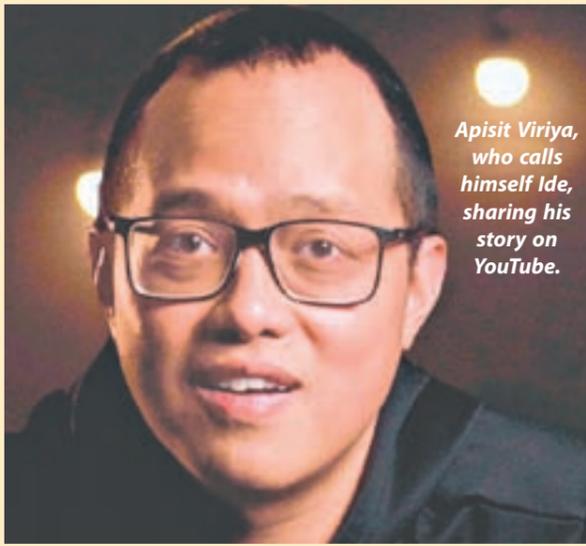
The coming of Jesus is good news of great joy for all who put their trust in Him (see Luke 2:10), not only for Gentiles, but for Jews too.

## Christmas quote:

IN 2016, the Queen said, "At Christmas, our attention is drawn to the birth of a baby some two thousand years ago. It was the humblest of beginnings, and his parents, Joseph and Mary, did not think they were important... Jesus Christ lived obscurely for most of his life, and never travelled far. He was maligned and rejected by many, though he had done no wrong. And yet, billions of people now follow His teaching and find in Him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them because Christ's example helps me see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe."

— Queen Elizabeth II, Christmas speech 2016





Apisit Viriya, who calls himself Ide, sharing his story on YouTube.

## In from the cold

Bundled up in several layers against the strange cold he'd been feeling for the past two weeks, Apisit Viriya tried to sleep. The 30-year-old American had been battling depression and an obsessive-compulsive disorder for years but this ever-present chill was something new.

Suddenly his eyes flew open in fright – he felt hands touching his body but there was nobody with him. His blood ran cold at what he saw next – a pair of disembodied eyes staring down at him.

Ide, as he is known, tells his story on the YouTube channel Delafe Testimonies, recounting how he and his younger brother were raised as Buddhists by their Thai parents even though they grew up in America.

Ide was no stranger to supernatural encounters. He and his brother had experienced uncanny things like doors opening and closing on their own and heard voices calling their names from the time they were children.

But this incident was something much more alarming. It had begun a few weeks before, when Ide says he realized a ghostly figure was following him.

He asked a monk at his family temple about the apparition. The monk told Ide what he'd seen was a dead person whose spirit did not have enough 'merit' to move to the next world.

"The next time you meditate, give him some of your merit," the monk said.

Ide did exactly that but immediately he knew something terribly wrong had happened.

"After I said that this cold came into my body. For the next two weeks I was constantly cold. I would be wearing my jacket and hat gloves indoors even with the heater on and I still felt cold."

The monks had no answers. "I asked them about God and they told me there is no god in Buddhism," Ide shares.

Instead they led Ide in rituals and appeasement offerings. When those didn't work, they told the increasingly distraught man there was nothing else they could do.

Thanks to a friend who shared the Christian message of salvation, Ide had heard of Jesus Christ but the dyed-in-the-wool Buddhist was adamant he would never become a Christian.

However, one night while Ide was driving, a preacher came onto the radio.

"The preacher started with this question: 'Do you ever feel like you're in the middle of the ocean and there's waves hitting you from every direction? Do you ever wonder why God would put you in this situation or allow you to be in this situation?'"

"Sometimes God will allow you to be in those situations so that those waves will push you closer to Him."

An amazed Ide went to his friend's church that Sunday.

"At church the worship music started and I immediately started crying, like bawling," he says wryly.

"The pastor's message was on demons and how to tell if there is demonic activity around you. He said one sign was if you feel a cold breeze and I was thinking he's describing exactly what I'm going through!"

At the end of the service, Ide went forward for prayer. "We can pray for you and you may feel better but the only way to be truly free of what you're going through is if you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior," said the pastor.

Out of respect for his parents, Ide still refused to renounce his Buddhist beliefs. He says he did feel better after receiving prayer and was hopeful that his suffering was finally over.

That night turned out to be the most terrifying of his life. "That was the night I saw those eyes and felt that hand," he says.

In desperation he asked his parents for permission to become a Christian. To his astonishment they said: "If you think that's going to help, go for it."

Ide rushed to the pastor's house and there in the pastor's kitchen he committed his life to Jesus Christ. Just before he bowed his head Ide says he heard a low growl, barely audible. After the prayer, it left and has never returned.

Gone too are the apparitions and the numbing cold. Ide shares that warmth returned to his body like an electric current that began at his feet and worked its way up to his head.

"It finally clicked that Jesus is real!" he exclaims. "The One they told me about 10 years ago is real and He is with me right now!"

"Put your trust in Jesus. He loves you and He's ready to forgive you. He's never going to disappoint you," Ide concludes.

# Iranian's face shone

BY DANNY O'NEILL

The dead bodies hanging by a noose on public streets and markets traumatized

Ramin Parsa, a child growing up in Iran during the strict Shi'ite Muslim regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

"I could not eat for two weeks, I was so shocked," Ramin says on a video posted to his channel.

Deeply motivated to live for Allah, Ramin went to the mosque every morning at 5:00 am for the earliest of five callings to prayer a day. Every morning at school, they shouted, "Death to Israel! Death to America!"

But when his dad died, life dried up for Ramin. He was no longer able to go to school.

"I started questioning my faith," he admits. "Is this really the truth? I started going down and down into hopelessness, into depression."

Death haunted him after his father's death because Islam offers no assurance that you will be admitted into Paradise. The Muslim is constantly warned to do more, to pray and fast – and even join jihad – to curry Allah's elusive favour.

"I came to the conclusion that Islam is empty," Ramin says. "I said, 'If there is no God, then who made this creation, who made the stars, who made the heaven, who made the humans? If there is a God, then why isn't He helping us?'"

In spite of it being illegal, almost every house has a satellite dish. So



Ramin Parsa with his wife.

Ramin turned on the Trinity Broadcast Network. He heard about Jesus. It contradicted everything he heard through Islam about Jesus: The Son of God did indeed die for our sins; He was more than just a prophet.

Importantly, Jesus rose from the dead. Ramin didn't immediately believe. He had been taught it was "rubbish," but later again watched the "heretical" channel.

"If you give Jesus your heart, He will change your life. He loves you," the man was saying. "He died for you and rose again from the dead."

That day, Ramin relented. "I just opened my heart and I said, 'Jesus I do not know You. I've been told that you are only a prophet. But if you are the Son of God, if You really died for me and rose again, today I open my heart to you.'"

Asking to be forgiven of his sins, he

started weeping. He felt a warm feeling fill him.

"All my body was shaking and trembling," he says. "There was such a peace and joy in my heart. It was like somebody lifted off a 200-pound weight off my shoulders. I felt like I was about to fly. I was rejoicing."

He rushed to see his mother. "Why is your face so shiny?" she asked bewildered. She knew her son had been feeling a great sense of hopelessness. The transformation was dramatic and immediately noticeable.

She had been battling cancer for years. Now Ramin laid hands on her and prayed. His mother, a devoted Muslim, was instantly healed.

"My sister saw the change in me. I was so nice. Before that I was grumpy. I was arrogant. I was hopeless. I was angry," he says. "Now my sister saw me so respectful, so nice, so kind."

His siblings have also since become Christians.

Next, Ramin went on a search to find a Bible. He pored over the Gospels, and they filled him with elation.

"I was just reading it and reading it – and I was crying. Why is this book illegal?" he wondered.

The Koran is filled with death and destruction, he says. As he read the Gospels, he saw a striking contrast: Jesus conquered the grave.

Now Ramin is no longer afraid of death. And he is no longer disappointed and hopeless.

This article first appeared on godreports.com and is used with kind permission.



## CHRISTMAS MEANS YOU ARE NOT ALONE

BY HARRIET COOMBE

FOR many people, Christmas is about gathering with family and friends, sharing gifts and good food, and celebrating the joy and hope of Christmas. For many others however, Christmas is a lonely time – a reminder of broken relationships, of physical and emotional distance, and hopelessness.

Loneliness is always painful, but Christmas can take it to another level.

Part of the hope of the Christmas story is found in a prophecy that was written about 700 years before Jesus was born. "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

Immanuel may be a familiar word to you – it appears in some Christmas songs like *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*: "Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel." But you may not

know there is a wonderful meaning behind the word.

Immanuel (often spelled Emmanuel) means "God with us" and is another name for Jesus, a description of His nature. Jesus is "God with skin on" – sent to earth to live with us and die for our sins. So Jesus' birth and death don't just mean eternal life for those who put their faith in Him, it also means that we are never alone while we are living here on earth.

No matter what you are going through, however hopeless your situation may be, or how alone you may feel this Christmas, Jesus is with you.

Sometimes people think that becoming a Christian means that you will never have to suffer again – almost as if you have your own personal genie who grants

you all your wishes. The truth is that Christians still go through hard times, but the difference is that we never go through them alone. We always have the wisdom, strength, joy and love of our Savior, who walks beside us. And the process of going through those hard times with Jesus helps transform us to be more like Him.

In Curt Vernon's song *Invite Me into Wonder*, he writes: "When hope's all but gone and all seems lost, You're Immanuel, God is with us now. When deceit's speaking lies and says I'm all alone, You're Immanuel, God is with us now."

For me, that changes everything! I'm so thankful that I have the Savior of the World, King Jesus as my best friend, Who never leaves my side.

If you would like to experience this hope for yourself, please check out the box titled "How Do I Become a Christian?" on page 11.

### GIFT OF JESUS

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

– PSALM 107:8-9 NIV

# Youth Truth

## The best Christmas

BY DESTINY BASILA

My early teen years were rough; I have depression and bipolar disorder and I'd been using boys, partying, and other things to cope. I caused problems at school and at home. I was very, very troubled.

Then, in 2019, a pastor passed out church flyers at my school. Something made me hold onto that flyer. I saw that there was a striking difference between myself and the people I knew who named Christ as their Lord.

I was empty, but they were very obviously whole. After two months of thinking about it, I decided to visit.

That first visit turned into a few. I got to know some of the members and promised that I would attend their upcoming Christmas play.

But, the day of the play, my mental health was at an all-time low — so low that I began planning my suicide. I wanted to do it that night, but I decided to go to the play first, since I'd promised.

The play's plot centered around a couple grappling with the tragic loss of their child. Throughout the play, the mourning couple turns to God for assistance. Again and again, He delivers.

I left the theatre with a clear message heavy on my heart: if I put my trust in Christ, He would save me and keep me. I felt deep in my spirit that it was true, so I leaned into it.

As soon as I surrendered, I felt an immense weight fall off of me and the Holy Spirit entered me.

I became a Christian four days before Christmas.



Destiny Basila's life changed forever one Christmas.

The suicidal urge that I so clearly felt just two weeks previous was gone. It was replaced with a genuine, lasting peace. The Lord has renewed my interests, too. I have no desire to party or entertain drama. These shifts are already affecting some of my friendships, but the Lord has been faithful in giving me a community of believers.

My new life in Christ is so much

better than the shell of a life I lived before. The sex and the parties are fun in the moment, but the good feeling never lasts. The things of this world don't deliver...they leave us empty.

On the contrary, God's love is everlasting; His goodness never, ever expires.

As told to and edited by Adira Polite and originally published on Then God Moved

## My guilt and shame disappeared

BY AUSTIN DARLEY

At age eight, I found myself in the middle of a custody war. My parents battled it out until I was 14.

As a means of coping, I began drinking and smoking. I got into a lot of trouble; honestly, the only thing that kept me above water was baseball.

Things worsened in 2016, when my best friend took his own life. I fell into severe depression and attempted suicide myself, multiple times.

I wanted to quit baseball, but others encouraged me to play in memory of my friend. So, in my second year, I tried out for the high school team and made it.

The summer after that first season, Coach offered me a job. I took the offer, while most of my teammates went off to a Christian camp. One day after work, Coach asked if I wanted to go visit my teammates at camp.

I was really tired and didn't feel



Austin Darley

like it, but something pushed me to say yes. Looking back, it's obvious that God's hand was at work.

We arrived at camp just in time for evening service.

The youth pastor began preaching about common teenage struggles, such as smoking, drinking, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.

This hit me hard.

I'd struggled with every last one of the problems he listed. It felt like God was speaking directly to me; I'd never felt so convicted in my life.

At the end of service, the pastor invited people to come down to the altar. Many went, but I was unable to move.

I was stuck to my chair, tears streaming down my face. The youth pastor eventually came over and discussed the gospel with me. I surrendered my life to Christ, for the first time, that night.

When I gave my life to Him, all the pain, bitterness, shame, and guilt went with it. That was the best decision of my life.

All I can say is that God is so good. Jesus is the greatest gift of all — one that we don't deserve.

But God loves us enough to send His Son so that we may be forgiven and reconciled unto Him.

My walk with Christ hasn't been easy; I've made and continue to make some terrible decisions, but the Lord continues to love me and mold me into the person He created me to be. It gets hard, but I know that He is with me every step of the way.

As told to and edited by Adira Polite and originally published on Then God Moved

## People pleasing wasn't enough

ELLIE'S STORY BY  
NAOMI REED

Throughout my high school years, my aim in life was to make people like me. I wanted to do well at school, have good friends, and go to the right parties. By year 12, I was doing pretty well at all that.

My teachers liked me, I had good friends and my parents were pleased

with me. It felt like I could people-please my way into most relationships.

"Then, halfway through my final year of school, I went on a Crusaders study camp. My plan was to study, hang out with my friends, and ignore all the Jesus stuff.

Up until then, my friendships had always been transactional. It's how we operated. I'll lend you my geography notes and you'll invite me to your party on Saturday night. But when I got to camp, I heard the gospel presented clearly for the first time and I saw people living it out, in sacrificial, not transactional love. They said that Jesus was their Lord, and they lived like He was. They treated me differently. They were actually interested in me personally and for the first time, it wasn't transactional.

After the camp, I went away thinking that I needed to figure out who this Jesus was. Perhaps He's not as dismissible as I thought. Back then, I had two friends at school who were Christians, so I asked them if I could go to church with them. They said yes and I went to church and I started to piece together a picture of Jesus. He was good and holy and powerful.

But I still didn't think I needed Him. I was doing well in life. I didn't need Jesus. Then I finished my final exams and I went to Surfers Paradise with my friends to celebrate. It was meant to be the pinnacle of my life, so far. I could tick off all the things that I'd been working on — academically and socially — and give myself a pat on the back. But it wasn't all great. If

the pinnacle of my life was being in Surfers Paradise, surrounded by drunk people who were vomiting in the corridors, then maybe my pinnacle wasn't all that it was cracked up to be?

At the same time, the Christian group Red Frogs came and knocked on my door. I invited them in because I still had questions about Jesus. They invited me to church and I went with them. There was a testimony and afterwards we were invited to trust in Jesus and to pray. That's when I decided I didn't want to run from God's love anymore. I realized, during that year, why Jesus came. We're not good enough for God. Even though I could people-please my way into most people's good books, I couldn't do that with God. I did need Jesus after all, because He is the only one good enough for God.

The big thing that's changed for me after coming to faith in Jesus has been in my relationships. I've found, over time, that I have a new capacity to love people — not transactionally. I can love people because God has already loved me. It's been a big change and I've had slow realizations. Even in Christian ministry, we don't meet with people because we think they're going to respond to Jesus. We meet with people because we love them, regardless. 1 John 4 says, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (verses 10-11)

It's a challenge for me every day... and I have to keep learning it. My temptation is always to go back to a transactional mindset. But every day, I can love people because love comes from God. I need a fountain of love and I know that only comes from Jesus."

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



Ellie realized relationships didn't have to be transactional.

## I HAVE A NEW CAPACITY TO LOVE PEOPLE



## LOVE IS AN ACT OF THE WILL

IT IS interesting the way we talk about being "in love".

When we say we are in love we are describing something we feel. It is referring to love as something that overtakes us as passive recipients. For example:

"I feel like I love you."

"My emotions are all churned up."

"I can't help but feel this way about you."

The trouble is that feelings change. We then assume that we are not in love anymore and that there is nothing we can do about it. Love is reduced to an uncontrollable urge that comes and goes of its own accord, like the common cold. We are victims of the urge to love or to withhold love. But the Bible talks about love as something we have agency over — something we do. It's not that we don't feel anything, but it is primarily an action, not a feeling.

When the Bible refers to love, it is about being patient and kind and never giving up (1 Corinthians chapter 13). Loves does. Love gives. Love is costly. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus, up to die for us (John 3:16). In the same way that God's love is not just in words but also with actions, so ours has to be too. Jesus said, "If you love me, you'll obey my commandments."



## Contact Challenge!

Do you have a story to tell, a tricky question to ask or want to let us know how *Challenge* has impacted you?

Email [harriet@challengenews.org](mailto:harriet@challengenews.org)



# Do you have to choose between science and the Bible?



**Dr Kurt Wise is director of origins research at Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee. He holds a BA with honours in geophysical sciences from the University of Chicago and an MA and PhD in geology from Harvard University.**

**K**urt has been passionate about science ever since he was a young boy growing up in Rochelle, Illinois.

“While others considered being firemen and astronauts, I was dreaming of getting a Ph.D. from Harvard University and teaching at a big university,” he says in the book, *In Six Days* (edited by Dr John Ashton).

As he progressed through his local primary school he longed for the day he’d be able to participate in the science fair.

“My whole life was focused on that science fair,” he recalls at the “Is Genesis History?” conference in 2017.

As the event drew closer, Kurt thought about what he would focus his project on. It had to be something that could incorporate his many hobbies and collections including taxidermy and fossils. Finally, he settled on evolution.

“I went into the school library and took out every book that they had on evolution and read both of those then went into the big city of Rochelle, to the Rochelle Library – monstrous library that it was – and took out all the books there and read both of those!”

Without the assistance of the internet, Kurt read books and encyclopaedias about his chosen topic and then designed his display.

“Dad helped me design a stair step thing, where starting at the base, you’re starting at the beginning of Earth’s history, and you step up

through time so that the last step is the present. The length of the run and each step is proportional to the length of that geologic period... I had fossils representing each one of those periods.”

Kurt’s display was large so the school allowed him and his dad to set up it up the night before.

The next day, he looked over his display and realized he had a problem – that he couldn’t reconcile his display with the creation account in the Bible.

Kurt had been a Christian since his Sunday School teacher explained the gospel and led him in a prayer of committing his life to Jesus when he was nine.

“My salvation came a few days after I decided to commit suicide. My salvation saved me spiritually and physically.”

His faith was important to him, but so was science. He found a Bible and read the account of creation in Genesis chapter 1.

He realized everything he had learned in school about the age of the earth and the process of evolution was not in line with the Bible and he couldn’t “make them fit”.

But then he had an epiphany.

“What if the days in Genesis were millions of years long? If we made

them millions of years long, that would accommodate most of the problems here. In my mind, it was an amazing solution. If you had a list of 100 problems, it took out 95 of them. But there were those nagging problems that it didn’t quite get rid of.”

Kurt says he shelved the issue in his brain and told himself it was fine and didn’t matter.

But when he was about 15 he couldn’t take it anymore and wanted to resolve the issue, once and for all.

He took a Bible and a pair of scissors and got to work.

“The question before me was, if evolution was true, how much of the Bible would I have to cut out? And so I opened up the Bible to the first page. And I read down through the Bible when I found a verse that I would have to throw out if evolution were true, I would cut it out with my scissors.”

As he got towards the end, he started to worry.

“Evolution as I understood it was true because it was what I was taught in science. It is what is in all the textbooks. It must be true. But it’s a part of science and science was everything I loved. So you’ve got on the one hand, you’ve got science, everything I love, everything of value. If I wasn’t able to do science, I was able to do nothing of any value. I had no value at all. And then there was the Bible. The question was, is evolution true or Bible true? If the Bible is true, and evolution is not, everything I loved is gone. I didn’t want to make that decision between the two.”

But when he was finished with his now “holey” Bible, he knew he had to answer the questions: is there enough left in the Bible to hold itself together?

He picked up the Bible and squeezed it between his fingers.

“No matter where I did it, I could feel the Bible giving way. Try as I may, it was giving way there wasn’t enough left to hold itself together.”

He thought back to when he became a Christian and how it saved his life physically as well as spiritually.

“I couldn’t give up the Bible. So I gave up everything I loved. I gave up science. And I cried for three days.”

The next Friday, his church youth

## IF EVOLUTION WAS TRUE, HOW MUCH OF THE BIBLE WOULD I HAVE TO CUT OUT?



### Dar and Winny

By Richard Gunther 7



## Believe it or not

BY CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

## Fantastic flea beetles

A POWERFUL catapult mechanism has recently been discovered in the hind legs of certain beetles, astounding researchers. These ‘flea beetles’ have been observed to display incredible jumping abilities, surpassing that of fleas and leaf hoppers. A recent paper, published by the online peer-reviewed scientific journal *ZooKeys*, describes their ability:



“*Blepharida sacra* can jump up to 70 cm or 100 times more than its body length, while *Longitarsus anchusae* reaches a jump of 289 times its body length; the average acceleration of *Psylliodes affinis* during take-off can be up to 266 times the acceleration of gravity.”<sup>1</sup>

Scaled up to human size, that would be like a 6 ft tall long-jump athlete leaping more than 500 yards! When we consider that fighter pilots can sustain no more than 9g for a few seconds, it is remarkable how these beetles survive nearly 30 times that force. Furthermore, these bouncing bugs can perform more than 30 consecutive jumps without tiring.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding *Psylliodes punctifrons*, the authors report: “The jump pushes individuals to a final velocity of 5.58 ± 0.5 m/s. The peak instantaneous power output (per unit mass) calculated for the hind legs in this species was ... approximately 449 times that of the fastest-known muscle ... and some 100–200 times that of a powerful rally car engine.”<sup>1</sup>

The authors of the paper claim: “Flea beetles have evolved an enormous independent spring to aid the storage of elastic potential energy.”<sup>1</sup> But such an evolutionary explanation begs the question as to how they survived before they evolved this ability — beetles that fail to escape predators don’t leave progeny, so their genes are not passed on. It makes much more sense that they were designed that way!

1. Ruan, Y. et al., The jumping mechanism of flea beetles (Coleoptera, Chrysomelidae, Alticini), its application to bionics and preliminary design for a robotic jumping leg, *ZooKeys* 915:87–105, 24 February 2020 [doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.915.38348].

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

### GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

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# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## COMMUNICATION KILLERS

BY ROB FURLONG

**AUTHOR** Tim La Haye once wrote: "As long as two people can keep the lines of communication open and freely express their feelings, differences can be resolved."

We have been exploring anger this year and the negative effect it has on relationships when expressed poorly or inappropriately; this month I want to talk about the way in which negative anger kills communication between people and what we can do about it.

There are three, basic communication killers.

**Explosion.** We have all experienced this one. You raise an issue with someone, and they immediately explode in a tirade of angry words and emotion. Explosion is a defense mechanism, and the message is loud and clear: "Stay away from me; my failure is being exposed at this moment and I do not wish to discuss this with you!"

People who explode succeed in keeping others at an arm's distance and over many years, real communication is destroyed because those around them opt for false peace as a way of keeping the exploder happy.

**Tears.** While not as volatile as exploding, tears are just as effective at killing communication. You know the drill. You raise an issue and then you are suddenly blindsided by the other person because they have burst into tears!

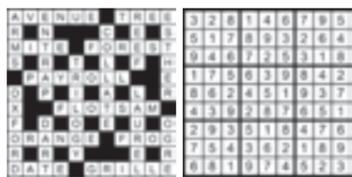
It usually goes something like this: "You have really hurt me with what you have said. You have accused me of... (you haven't!)... and I don't like the way you're looking at me!" (Hurt person then erupts in tears.)

I'm not saying all tears are wrong, but when people make this their habitual response, there is a problem. People avoid raising issues for fear of hurting the person with the inevitable result of choking open communication to death.

**Silence.** You know you have done something wrong, and the other person is angry with you for one simple reason – they are not talking to you!

I had plenty of experience with this growing up because my Dad would go for several days without talking to me or my brothers for something we had either done or failed to do.

It was excruciating. We all knew he was angry, but we didn't know what he was angry about – we had to figure it out and then apologize. Only then would communication be restored.



## HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

**What?** Salvation is an eternal relationship with God – now on Earth, and after we die, in Heaven.

*The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in me has eternal life." John 6:47*  
*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.* John 16:33

**Who?** Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16

**Why?** Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Romans 3:23

**How?** The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

*If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* Romans 10:8b-10

**Ready to change your life forever?** Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude – which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.

Thank you for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn't, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank you that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You - I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Saviour and my Master. Amen.

### What now?

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

### AS A NEXT STEP:

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

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

\* Please tick and write clearly \*

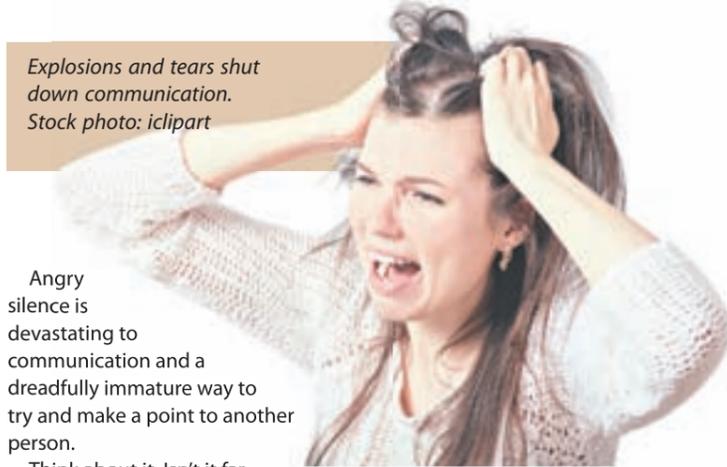
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[usaoffice@challengenews.org](mailto:usaoffice@challengenews.org)

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



Explosions and tears shut down communication. Stock photo: iclipart

Angry silence is devastating to communication and a dreadfully immature way to try and make a point to another person.

Think about it. Isn't it far better to simply say to the other person, "I didn't appreciate ... I would prefer you did ..." instead of freezing them out with the "Cone of Silence?"

Explosion, tears, and silence do not keep the lines of communication open, and they most certainly do not encourage people to freely express their feelings.

As a result, problems, issues, and differences are never resolved.

### How can we change this?

**Pray first.** Ask God to prepare the hearts of everyone involved in the conversation.

**Plan the right time.** Ask the other person for permission to have the conversation and agree on a time when you will not be distracted by other concerns.

**Speak the truth in love.** Don't shy away from telling the truth, but do it

in a gracious, sensitive, and non-accusatory way.

**Don't lose your temper.** (See "explosion" above!) Remember the wisdom of Solomon, "A gentle answer turns away wrath" and "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit (better) than he who captures a city."

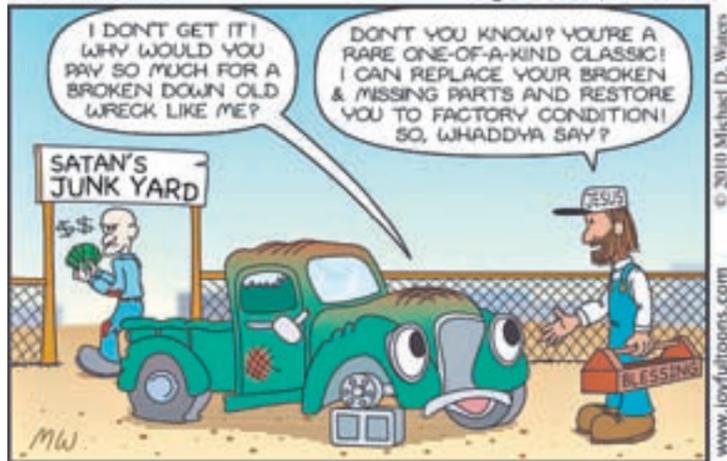
**Allow for reaction time.** Give the other person time to take in what you have said and allow them to respond to it. Hopefully it won't be with explosion, tears, or silence! (This is another reason to pray before the conversation.)

**Commit the problem to God.** Pray about it together and seek His solution.

Say goodbye to angry responses and open the door to healthy communication!

## SALVAGER

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. — LUKE 19:10 NIV

## 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 <a href="http://challengenews.online">challengenews.online</a></b>	

# What will you do with Jesus Christ?

BY WIL POUNDS

**OUR** acceptance before God depends entirely on what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross and our response to Him.

The Bible makes it emphatically clear if you accept Jesus Christ, God will accept you. If you reject Jesus Christ, God will reject you.

*"He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:18).

It does not matter who we are, what we have been, or what we have done in our past, because our eternal destiny deals with one question alone, what was our personal response to the demands of Jesus Christ?

There is only one basis upon which an individual can be declared right with God, and that basis is the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross. When any person believes on Christ as his personal Savior, accepting the fact that He bore our sins in His body on the cross, God declares us acquitted. In that moment all of our sins are forgiven and we experience peace with God.

*"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1).

God provides us with a right relationship with Him, peace with God, and a deep and satisfying joy because of what God has done for us in Christ. The reason for this joy and peace is because our becoming children of God depends entirely on what Jesus Christ did for us and what we do with Him. The apostle John summarized beautifully this great truth in these words: *"This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son has not life"* (1 John 5:11-12).

Just think of it, the very moment you accept Jesus Christ, you receive God's kind of life. There is no other way in which anyone can get eternal life in Christ. We receive eternal life in an instant by simple acceptance of Jesus Christ. It is God's free gift to us in response to personal faith in Christ.

We become the children of God and receive His kind of life by one simple act of believing on Jesus. *"As many as receive Him to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name"* (John 1:12).

The instant you accept Christ, you will become a child of God.

However, if you refuse to receive Jesus Christ, there is nothing else you can do that will make you right with God. The gift of eternal life and becoming His child depends on receiving Christ personally.

Pontius Pilate's question: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" is still a haunting question that every individual must answer for him or herself. Your response determines where you will spend eternity. Your acceptance before God depends entirely on what you decide to do with Jesus Christ.

This article was first published on [abidein-christ.com](http://abidein-christ.com) and is used with kind permission



Scottie Scheffler reacts to his putt on the tenth green during the second round of the Zurich Classic of New Orleans at TPC Louisiana on April 22, 2022 in Avondale, Louisiana. (Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images)

RIGHT: Scottie Scheffler and caddie Ted Scott line up a putt on the seventh green during the third round of the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on April 09, 2022 in Augusta, Georgia. (Photo by Jamie Squire/Getty Images)

# THE MASTER'S MASTER

World number one golfer and newly-minted Masters champion Scottie Scheffler said he's "trying to glorify God" through his golf career, giving all the credit to the Lord as he spoke with reporters about his run away Masters victory, only eight weeks after his first PGA win.

"That all goes back to my faith," Scottie said after being asked how he balances his desire to golf competitively without letting it define him as a person. "The reason why I play golf is because I'm trying to glorify God and all that He's done in my life."

The 25-year-old champion golfer didn't stop there. He went on to say "my identity isn't a golf score" and shared how his wife, Meredith, recently offered an encouraging reminder of that reality.

"Like Meredith told me this morning, she says, 'If you win this golf tournament today, if you lose this golf tournament by 10 shots, if you never win another golf tournament again,' she goes, 'I'm still going to love you, you're still going to be the same person; Jesus loves you, and nothing changes,'" Scottie said. "And all I'm trying to do is glorify God, and that's why I'm here, and that's why I'm in this position."

Scottie also said his wife regularly prays for him.

"Every day when we go out there, Meredith always prays for peace, because that's what I want to feel on the golf course, is peace and have fun and just feel [God's] presence," he said. "... and I really felt that today. I felt at peace."

Scottie said his wife helped him to remember: "God is in control, and the Lord is leading me, and if today's my time, then it's my time."

"I never expected it [this win]," Scottie told reports. "You don't expect things to come to you in this

life, you just do the best that you can with the hand you're dealt and just go from there. I never really thought I was that good at golf, so I just kept practicing and working hard."

It has been a pretty incredible year for the man his wife describes as humble and down to earth. After his first PGA win in February, he posted on Instagram: "Overwhelmed at getting my first PGA Tour win. So thankful to the Lord, [caddie] Teddy, our families and friends, and everyone else a part of the team. An unbelievable experience we will never forget."

Scottie's caddie, Ted Scott, is a veteran in the game who was on the bag for Bubba Watson for nearly 15 years previously. Ted has been planning to retire until he got Scottie's call, and knows the Augusta Course better than almost any one.

"You know, I can't speak highly enough of Ted as a person, and as a caddie," Scottie told a press conference after his win. "I respect him so much just as a person. He's such a fun guy to be around, he's a man of faith and I love him. I can't say enough about him. The qualities you look for in a person, Ted embodies pretty much all of them."

One of the biggest reasons Scottie wanted to work with Ted was because they're both Christians. They first met through a Bible study about a year before they teamed up.

The caddie told Sports Spectrum Podcast in 2018, "People a lot of times think, well, if you become a Christian, God's just gonna make everything easy for you, and that's not the case. But having the God of the universe, the Creator, on your side just makes things a lot easier to deal with. And the principles of the Bible are something that, when you use them, you can see it manifest in your life."

"[Ted] keeps things loose," Scottie said this week. "We have a lot of fun together. I respect him a lot as a person, and I respect his work ethic as a caddie. And so, for me, it's been a pretty easy relationship so far, just because I respect him so much."

Scottie believes it is faith, family and friends that give his life meaning.

"I'm a Christian guy, so that's important to me," he said in a 2019 interview with PGATour.com. "But even if you're not a Christian, it is important to spend life with people you enjoy. If you don't have close, quality friends, I don't think whatever you're doing is important. So that would be my most important advice to someone. Find something you enjoy doing, and enjoy doing it with other people."

The person Scottie enjoys spending the most time with is his best friend since high school, his wife, Meredith. On their anniversary last December he told his Insta-

gram followers: "Very grateful for one year of marriage to my best friend! God is good."

Meredith told *Golf Digest*: "At the beginning of high school I always thought he had a super humble ambiance about him, that he was just a really down-to-earth guy that doesn't take himself too seriously. Even when he had amazing accomplishments, that wasn't the most important thing about him."

One of the regular golfers at Scottie's home golf course of Royal Oaks Country Club in Dallas concurred: "As good a golfer as Scottie is, he is an even better person and the membership here certainly knows that."

"My faith affects all aspects of my life, not just my life on the golf course," Scottie explains.

"The Lord has given me a skill and I'm trying to use it for His glory. Outside of that, I'm just out here trying to do my best." ●



Scottie and Meredith Scheffler have been married for 1 year.

