

NIGHTMARE TO HOPE

The flip side of the American dream looks like this: drug addiction, prison, self-loathing, violence and despair. Just ask Alejandro Rodriguez. His life, until 2013, was the American nightmare.

He was addicted to drugs by 11, arrested at 12, a gang member at 14, and sentenced to five years in jail at 16 for possession of cocaine and a stolen firearm.

Alejandro's family moved to the United States from Mexico in search of the "good life" when he was just a child. His childhood memories are of waking up before dawn to pick cucumbers and cabbage in the field.

Alejandro recalls his father beating his mother and the police taking him away in handcuffs.

"He looked at me and my brothers as we helped wipe blood off our mom's face and wipe her tears. That was the last time I saw him."

Alejandro spent his days wandering around the neighbourhood, where he got into bad company,

cigarettes and alcohol. He was seven.

He was also sexually assaulted, an ordeal which scarred him for years.

At 11, he was snorting cocaine and taking all manner of drugs. He became addicted to porn and fell into sexual immorality before his 12th birthday.

By 13 he was constantly running away from home, was in and out of juvenile detention and got kicked out of multiple school districts.

"I had so much hate in me; I was angry at the world. I was afraid and angry but I didn't know who to talk to and no one I could truly trust."

By the time he was 16, Alejandro was using guns, selling drugs, breaking into homes and stealing whatever he could.

Buried deep under this layer of violence though, was a scared and desperate youth.

"I was tired of living the way I was," he shares. "I was exhausted, I knew I needed help, and I knew that if I didn't stop I would be killed. I didn't want to die."

Thanks to his mother's family, Alejandro had heard about God

“
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”



Alejandro Rodriguez lived the American nightmare until 2013. Now he lives with hope.



from the time he was a child, but always thought his mother and grandmother were crazy.

"They would always speak of this God they believed in and served and loved. Yet we were always in poverty and we always had to struggle.

"I didn't understand how they could love and believe in such a God."

All this changed after an encounter with the God he was so sceptical of.

It was in 2013 and he was in prison. One night just before his release, he heard an audible voice

that he thought came from the speaker in his room.

"I thought I was going crazy, I had been clean from drugs, I was sober, I was laying in my bunk and all of a sudden, I had the overwhelming feeling that someone had just entered my cell although I didn't see no one.

"Later I found out the voice was in my head and only I heard it.

"The voice was beautiful, strong and powerful yet soft and peaceful. It told me to not be afraid, that He knew me but I didn't know Him.

"That's when I prayed to be saved. For the first time in my life, I actually meant it when I called on the name of Jesus. I gave my life to Him at that very moment."

After years of misspent living, he was ready.

"I realized if I would die I didn't know where I would go. I was afraid, but more than anything, I was tired.

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New life on the inside

"I grew up with no father. I was raised by my grandparents because my mum was studying at university. I lived in a ghetto, so from primary to high school I studied with people from the ghetto.

My mother and father had many conflicts and that disturbed me a lot.

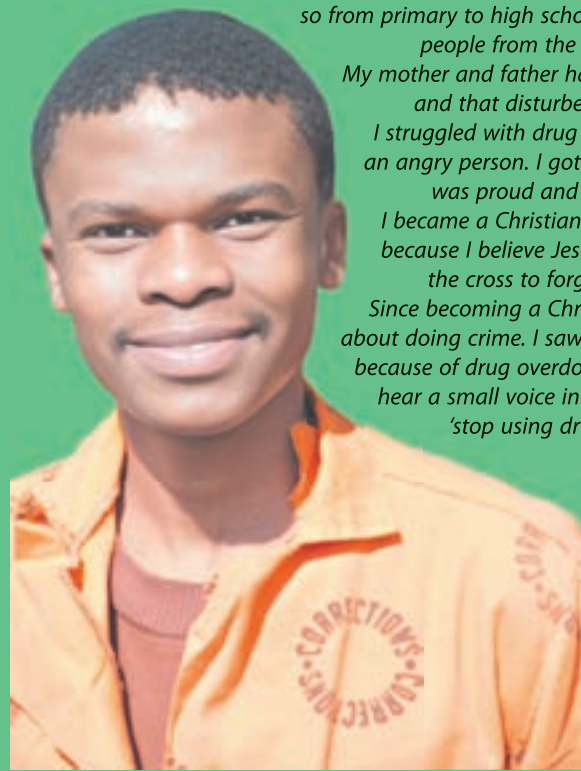
I struggled with drug addiction. I was an angry person. I got into stealing and was proud and ungrateful.

I became a Christian seven years ago because I believe Jesus Christ died on the cross to forgive my sins.

Since becoming a Christian I feel guilty about doing crime. I saw my friends dying because of drug overdoses. I started to hear a small voice in my heart saying 'stop using drugs, you're killing yourself.'

I want to tell others Jesus Christ is alive and He is the one to save our lives."

- Kganya Emmanuel



WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

AT EASTER, SOME might wonder what all the fuss is about. Who cares? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead? It makes all the difference in the world. If Christ did not rise, then thousands of believers have died as martyrs for a hoax. If he did rise, then he is still alive and can offer peace to troubled, hurting lives.

Let's have a look at where the facts lead. Paul, a first-century skeptic-turned-believer, wrote that "Christ died for our sins...he was buried...he was raised on the third day...he appeared to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve [Disciples]. After that, he appeared to more than 500 ... at the same time, most of whom are still living." Consider four pieces of evidence:

1. The explosive growth of the Christian movement.

Within a few weeks after Jesus was crucified, a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, "upset the world." What happened to ignite this movement shortly after its leader had been executed?

2. The disciples' changed lives.

After Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, most of the disciples fled in fear. Peter denied three times that he was a follower of Jesus. (The women were braver and stayed to the end.) Yet 10 of the 11 disciples (Judas committed suicide) were martyred for their faith. According to traditions, Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. What turned these cowards into heroes? Each believed he had seen Jesus alive again.



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BACK PAGE

SOUL SURFER
COREY COLAPINTO

Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: CHRISTIANS CLAIM THE EVIDENCE ABOUT JESUS IS SOLID, SO WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE DOUBT IT?



IF WE DIG deep to look at why it is reasonable to trust what history says about Jesus, we find lots of seemingly solid reasons to do so. To name just a few: What was written (called the gospels) was by those who were there at the time, or talked to those who were. It was written down close enough to the event for anyone to have been able to say, "It didn't happen that way."

And those who wrote had a huge motivation to get it right – even down to recording the things that made them look like not being the fizziest bottle in the fridge.

So – good question – how come intelligent and clever people scoff at the idea that we should trust what is written about Jesus? Why do they assume that belief has to involve us parking our brains?

The best way to face this issue is to identify those who don't have a problem with the record of Jesus' life being accurate. What you'll find, time and again, is that historians – those who deal in making sense of the past – will tell you the gospels are an amazing record of history.

In their eyes, diligent witnesses set it all out with care, archaeology supports what they wrote and we are inundated with good copies of the manuscripts to show they have not been meddled with during the passage of time.

Historians will line up to tell you that the records of Jesus' life outshine those of any other comparable figure in history.

Who are those who struggle with the events recorded in the gospels? Not historians but theologians –

those who make their living working out what God is like. They are not scientists but thinkers, some of whom have a preconceived idea as to what is allowed to happen in the universe and how God should behave.

That means when the historical record says something they have never seen happen, or they don't think could happen, they make their own judgment against the hard evidence. In their terms, the things written down are impossible – people just don't walk on water, deliver banquets for 5,000 people from a few fish and loaves, or rise from the dead – so there must be another explanation.

And the explanation they like is that it is not true. This begs a simple but profound question: "If God had come to Earth as Jesus, lived among ordinary people, done extraordinary things, suffered a criminal's death and came to life three days later, what evidence would have been left behind?" Disbelieving theologians say, "I don't like the question because it just can't have happened."

Open-minded historians say, "The gospels, of course."

The gospels record events that may seem beyond belief.

And we may find it hard to accept that that happened, judged against what goes on in the average high street on a Monday morning. But the authentic nature of the gospel record means we can be absolutely confident that the version of Jesus' life found there can be trusted. ●

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.

Gangster finds kindness in prison

When O-Tung was 17, he drank a tea that was mixed with a drop of his own blood and a drop of the gang boss's blood. This was the gang initiation ceremony he had to partake in to join the gang.

"After drinking it, I had to say these words in Chinese, which I didn't understand," he shares in a video interview by *Deliverance Down Under*. "Looking back, I realized it was a blood covenant that I went through."

Born in Hong Kong, O-Tung's father was away in China a lot, so they didn't have a close relationship. Even after moving to Australia when O-Tung was 10, they remained distant.

"I think, in his generation, they didn't really know how to connect. As a child, if you didn't have anyone speaking over your life, you'll eventually find something else to fill that gap."

The first time O-Tung got involved with séance – a ritual to connect with the dead – he was 14. Once, he felt a cold, dark presence in his room. Thinking that he would gain power, he invited the presence into his body.

"The whole bed started to shake, and my body shook, and the cold went from my feet all the way to my head."

At 15, O-Tung started selling drugs.

"I thought if I made my own money, then I could break free from my parents."

He began to join one gang after another as a way to expand his network.

"I'd go from gang to gang because I was seeking more power."

From extorting money for gangs to dealing heroin, O-Tung rose through the ranks and began expanding his drug operations.

"I made a million dollars within a year. I was so sold on thinking that this was the life that was right for me," he admits.

But despite his monetary success, O-Tung was struggling.

"Whenever I took drugs, I would be paranoid. I didn't understand why I always thought something was chasing me. When I got into harder drugs like ecstasy and acid, I would see things. I would see shadows in the corner of my eyes all the time."

Drugs, firearms, and violence were the norm in O-Tung's life.

"I was in a world full of pain, and it was a scary world. I would pray to Satan privately. I would say, 'Can you



O-Tung

protect me? I'll do what you want me to do. I'll run this kingdom for you."

But in 1999, O-Tung was arrested at Sydney Airport for possession of heroin and firearms.

"I was so arrogant. I thought I had everything covered... how could they arrest me?"

The first night O-Tung was in prison, there was a Bible in his cell.

"So, being a worshiper of the enemy, my first reaction was to pick up the Bible and draw a satanic sign on the first page and then throw it in the corner."

But on the second night, out of curiosity, O-Tung started reading the Bible.

"By the third night, I felt a voice deep in my heart say to

me, 'Aren't you afraid? You're in this place. You have no way out. Aren't you even a bit afraid?'"

O-Tung realized the situation he was in. He could either die the next day or spend the next 25 years in prison.

"So I knelt down in that moment, still full of pride, and I said, 'Jesus, if you're real, I'll give you a go.' And that's how I got saved."

"After that, there was this immediate joy in my heart. Everyone looked at me and thought, 'Why are you always smiling?'"

Despite being in prison, O-Tung sees his time there as a blessing in disguise. It was a time when O-Tung saw God's kindness and favor shown to him through his circumstances. Through a series of events, O-Tung was allowed to roam around the prison, a privilege that was rare for inmates.

With tears in his eyes, he says, "Even while we were His enemies, He already had a plan for us. It doesn't matter what you've done. If you cry out to Him, He's kind to us, and He'll meet you where you're at."

However, when O-Tung was released, he returned to selling drugs. But his operations did not go well, and soon O-Tung was left with nothing. At his lowest point, he turned back to the Bible and read the book of Hosea. It was then that he understood the extent of God's grace (the undeserved favor of God) in his life.

"I said, 'Enough is enough,' and I went back to church."

O-Tung is now married. He spends his time sharing the good news about Jesus in Sydney. ●

This story is used with kind permission from *Deliverance Down Under*. To watch O-Tung's story as well as others in video form, go to youtube.com/deliverancedownunder

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

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 - More than undercooked
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 - Military body
 - Number of spider legs
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- Metered vehicle
 - Nuclear ore
 - Three Gorges project
 - Locks
 - Ocean
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 - Water holes
 - Sports contestant
 - University ground
 - Computer woe
 - Canyon sound
 - Ringing thing
 - Faster than a walk
 - Spigot



SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



"Hold that insightful legal point until we're back from commercial!"

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NIGHTMARE TO HOPE



● From page 1

"My life had really taken a toll on me. When I felt God's love wrapping me up like a child being wrapped in a blanket, I knew right then that this warmth, this peace, was what I had been looking for all along.

"I no longer wanted to keep going down the path of destruction, I wanted to live a life I could be proud of.

"I had tried so many things in life and nothing worked, I tried money, women, drugs. I was a mess, I was afraid, but I was certain that if He would make Himself known to me, I would live for Him and preach the Gospel [the good news about Jesus]. In that one moment, everything changed!"

His tears flowed for a long time. When he was done, he says, he felt like "a child when they wake up on Christmas morning, as if I had just received the greatest gift ever.

"I felt set free and this is how I feel even today, thankful I, who was once so lost and broken, am now found and fully healed in the name of Jesus Christ."

Alejandro is now the executive director of a non-profit ministry called CHANGED in Christ, is married and has four children.

CHANGED was founded by five men, including Alejandro. Five men who, according to the website, shared one thing – "a past lived in rebellion to God. The confusion, pain, brokenness and shame that resulted only drove us further from the Lord. That is, until the message of the Gospel and the love of God finally broke through."

He testifies to the transforming work God has done in him. "God has never failed. He shows up every time. Christ comes first, everything else comes after. He is my hope and my strength."

Finally, Alejandro is living the dream. ●

I feel more free in prison

BY PAIGE DEUR

Rodger's* first encounter with the Bible came at Vacation Bible School (VBS) when he was just eight years old. While he wasn't raised in a Christian household, he remembers riding the VBS bus with his sister, learning about Jesus, and singing songs like Jesus Loves Me. On the last day, he was given his first Bible, but it sat untouched for years.

Later, in the Boy Scouts of America, he met godly men who became role models for him. At 15, Rodger started attending church with his high school sweetheart, Kara.* This was when Rodger dusted off that old Bible and began reading it, seeking God's will in his life. In October 1986, Rodger gave his life to Christ for the first time.

At 17, Rodger joined the U.S. Marine Corps and went on to serve during Desert Storm. While he experienced many blessings during this



AI generated image

time – marrying Kara, starting a family, and building a successful career – he admits that he was a “worldly Christian” for over three decades. He acknowledges that, despite his professed faith, he allowed sin to dominate his life. His choices led to great pain, both for himself and those he loved, particularly his wife and children.

In 2018, Rodger hit rock bottom. Arrested for a crime rooted in addiction,

he lost everything – his job, family, and friends. Isolated in a jail cell, Rodger reached out to God in desperation. It was during this time that Crossroads' mentorship program became a lifeline for him. Through the correspondence-based Bible studies, Rodger's faith began to deepen. He recalls the pivotal moment when a man stopped by his cell and reminded him that life wasn't over just because he was incarcerated. That night, Rodger opened his Bible and prayed.

“Jesus met me there, and the heavy yoke that I had been carrying around, dragging me down for 48 years, was lifted off my shoulders,” he shares. “I rededicated my life to Christ and was at peace like never before. He had forgiven me and removed all my sins, hurts, pains, shame, guilt, and loneliness.” Rodger's journey with Crossroads has been transformational.

“On June 9, 2019, I started the Crossroads correspondence Bible study,” he writes. “I spend more time with God than I ever have in my life – more time in His Word, more continuous prayer, and more spiritual growth than in the first 48 years of my life.”

Through years of Bible study and prayer, Rodger now feels closer to God than ever.

“I feel more free now in prison than I think I ever felt,” he admits.

His time behind bars has been a season of spiritual growth, a journey that he believes could not have happened without the trials he faced.

Today, Rodger's life is a testimony to God's grace and mercy. Though he still prays for restoration with his family, he finds contentment in his deep relationship with God.

“I understand more about Jesus, love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and even judgment than I ever have before,” he reflects.

*Pseudonym used for privacy

Used with kind permission of Crossroad Prison Ministries (CPM). CPM instructors from churches across the world guide students in their walks with Christ through correspondence Bible studies and letters of encouragement. For more information, visit cpministries.org.

A FRESH START

Phillip Kgosi Modirwa's memory of his childhood is of his father's sjambok and his belt.

“My father used to punish me by giving me a hiding with a sjambok (cane) or belt every time I made a mistake,” he tells Challenge News from inside Devon Correction Centre in South Africa prison.

“So I started lying to avoid getting beaten. He beat me like a dog. I was so stressed I started smoking. That's why I am a criminal today. I'm used to pain.”

Phillip served a three-month sentence for breaking the windows of his wife's house because he says he caught her cheating.

“I was addicted to drugs. I also stole and robbed to feed my habit and lied a lot to my parents. I took drugs like dagga (marijuana), crack cocaine and crystal meth but since coming to prison the habit is gone.

“I was born into a Christian home. I heard about God many years ago but I ignored it.

“I did not take it seriously but now I do. At this prison I heard the good news (that Jesus Christ came to Earth and died for our sins) from pastors who came from Australia.”

Phillip desperately wants to turn



Phillip Kgosi Modirwa

his life around, sharing that he had a good job before but lost it due to his drug addiction.

“I pray God helps me when I'm released that I don't go back to smoking crystal meth or any other drug ever again. I wasted my time, money and life before. When I come out of prison I want to start afresh.”

In fact, he says he now prays “for everyone in the world to give thanks to the Word of God. I pray for God to help the world and make it free from sickness.”

What is all the fuss about Easter?

● From page 1

3. The empty tomb.

Jesus' corpse was removed from the cross, wrapped like a mummy and placed in a solid-rock tomb. A one-and-a-half to two-ton stone was rolled into a slightly depressed groove to seal the tomb's entrance. A “Green Beret”-like unit of Roman soldiers guarded the grave. On Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone but the graveclothes were still in place. What happened? Did Christ's friends steal the body? Perhaps one of the women sweet-talked (karate-chopped?) the guards while the others moved the stone and tiptoed off with the body. Or maybe Peter (remember his bravery) or Thomas (Doubting Thomas) overpowered the guards, stole the body, then fabricated – and died for – a resurrection myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy and the disciples too timid to attempt such a feat.

Did Christ's enemies steal the body? If Romans or Jewish religious leaders had the body, surely they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't, and it didn't.

The “Swoon Theory” supposes that Jesus didn't really die but was only unconscious. The expert Roman executioners merely thought he was dead. After a few days in the tomb without food or medicine, the cool air revived him.

He burst from the 100 pounds of graveclothes, rolled away the stone with his nail-pierced hands, scared the daylights out of the Roman soldiers, walked miles on wounded feet and convinced his disciples he'd been raised from the dead. This one is harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

4. The appearances of the risen Christ.

For 40 days after his death, many different people said they saw Jesus alive. Witnesses included a woman, a shrewd tax collector, several fishermen and over 500 people at once. These claims provide further eyewitness testimony for the



resurrection.

As a sceptic, I realised that attempts to explain away the evidences run into a brick wall of facts that point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, rather a reasoned examination of the evidence.

Each interested person should evaluate the evidence and decide if it makes sense. Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on anyone's belief. If the facts support the claim, one can conclude that he arose. In any case, mere intellectual assent to the facts does little for one's life.

A major evidence comes experientially, in personally receiving Jesus' free gift of forgiveness. He said, “I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him [or her].”

Worth considering? ●

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

EASTER THOUGHTS

God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, 'I love you.' - Billy Graham

Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness. - Floyd W. Tomkins

The resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the [Book of] Acts. The resurrection, and its consequences were the 'gospel' or good news which the Christians brought... The first fact in the history of Christendom is a number of people who say they have seen the resurrection. - C.S. Lewis

Because Christ lives I too shall live, Oh glorious truth divine, To think that resurrection life was His And shall be mine. Because Christ lives I too shall live, I'll leave this lump of clay And lift my wings to higher heights On resurrection day. Because Christ lives I too shall live, With Him I'll ever be Rejoicing that He broke death's chains And set my spirit free. - Peter Sumner

Few people seem to realize that the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone to a worldview that provides the perspective to all of life. - Josh McDowell

About Crossroads

The Crossroads Prison Ministries mentorship program connects you with mentors who help you study the Bible.

Mentors write to you, answer your questions, share stories from their own lives, help you see how God is speaking to you through His Word and encourage you to continue to grow in your faith.

Through the mentorship program, Crossroads offers more than one dozen different correspondence Bible study courses that each contain up to 14 lessons.

Each course is designed to help you learn more about God and how to follow Him.

If you are interested in joining the program, please fill out the attached application form and mail it to us today!

Name: _____
First Last

ID #: _____

Date of Birth: _____ | _____ | _____
MM DD YYYY

Earliest Release Date: _____ | _____ | _____
MM DD YYYY

Gender: _____

Referred by: CHAL Institution: _____ Housing: _____

Complete Mailing Address: _____
Street or PO Box _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Prefiero el curso en español.

STUDENT COMMITMENT

I will finish each lesson I receive in a timely manner and, with the help of my mentors, I will complete each course that I start. I agree that Crossroads may use anything I submit, such as my picture, testimony, writings or artwork, for promotional purposes or to further its mission.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

When you have completed this form, please return it to:
Crossroads Prison Ministries | PO Box 900 | Grand Rapids, MI 49509-0900
Crossroads Prison Ministries Canada | PO Box 5037 | Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

Former correctional officer finds peace behind bars

BY AMY CAIN

David was accustomed to spending his days in prison. He worked as a correctional officer, patrolling the halls and keeping the peace between those who lived inside the cells.

Then he found himself on the other side – behind the bars.

Growing up, David was raised in a family that was religious in name only.

“We hardly went to church, never read the Bible. I knew nothing of Jesus except [He was] a baby in the manger, and He died on the cross. Both meant nothing to me. I was never taught or explained what that was all about,” David recalls. “I was never interested in Jesus; I just wanted to do what was right in my own eyes.”

But following his own rules led to a long sentence in a maximum-security prison. Although he wanted nothing to do with Christianity, God began sending people into his life to plant seeds. First, a pastor’s son in his cell block began sharing the Gospel [the good news about Jesus dying for our sins] with him. Then, David got a surprising new cellmate – a former co-worker from his time as a correctional officer who was a Christian.

“I watered the seed the pastor’s son was planting,” David shares. “I gave my life over to Jesus, and two weeks after [my former co-worker] was placed in my cell, I was transferred to a different prison. Ever since, I have been walking for Jesus.”

At the new facility, David experienced anew the fear of being mistreated when others learned he had been a correctional officer.

“Things spread quickly through prison,” he explains. “The thing is, God always protected me. No one ever did anything towards me.”

Though most men initially ignored him, one asked if he was a Christian and told him about the facility’s church services, which David began attending regularly. Others soon noticed his dedication not only to being present for the preaching of God’s Word but also to doing what it says. “Over the years, inmates watched me always going to church, and some gave their life to Christ, saying, ‘I watched you always going to church, and I watched your walk lining up with your talk,’” David says.

“Now, everyone knows me, talks to me, and asks me to pray for them or a family member. Some run from me and say, ‘Here comes that Christian,’ or ‘Here comes that preacher.’ I enjoy these comments because it shows me my life is becoming more like Christ.”



Stock photo

As David learned more about the Bible and how to follow Jesus, he supplemented his studies by joining Crossroads’ mentorship program. After finishing Tier 1, he eagerly signed up for Tier 2 and now studies alongside a one-on-one mentor.

“I always enjoyed the interaction with the encouraging letters which came with the corrected lessons. [Crossroads] courses are scriptural and have helped me grow in Christ and grow in understanding God’s Word better,” he attests. “Many Christian brothers call me ‘the elder’ or come to ask me questions about the Bible. I am far from being a Bible scholar, but it seems God always gives me the correct words to speak.”

In addition to sharing with the men at his facility, David has passionately shared his love for Jesus and knowledge of the Bible with the family members who still support him.

“My family has been giving their life to Christ as I explain to them what God has been showing me,” he says.

David has served 24 years in prison so far. Although he may never be released, he has discovered God’s purpose for him behind bars and is committed to continuing to serve Him in gratitude for His saving grace.

“I would love to go home, but it seems the Lord has other plans for me right now,” he says, referencing Jesus’ words about the fields ripe for harvest in John 4:35 and Matthew 9:37.

“I do look back over my life and see the Lord’s hand protecting me. Some of the stupid things I did as a kid – I should have died. If only we could turn the hands of time backward and

retain the knowledge we now have. Life would be much easier, I believe. But through trials and tribulations, our faith grows.

“We could not truly experience God’s love towards us in any other way. So, I thank God I did go through everything I have so far.

“I am not saying I am grateful to go through those times, but I am grateful to experience firsthand God’s love, mercy, and grace because of those times.”

As he reflects on his former life, he understands why God had to take away everything he thought was

important so he could discover what truly matters.

“I had many things before I was arrested, and the Lord had to remove those things so I could take my focus off things that are perishing and focus on Jesus, who is eternal,” David says.

“With everything I had, I had no peace. Now, I have great peace even though I am still in prison.”

Used with kind permission of Crossroad Prison Ministries (CPM).

CPM instructors from churches across the world guide students in their walks with Christ through correspondence Bible studies and letters of encouragement. For more information, visit cpministries.org.

Hope for eternity

“I’ve been more humble since becoming a Christian. I want to tell others to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, so that they can be accepted into the Kingdom of God and have eternal life. Love God with all your heart and God will love you back.”

”

- Terence Coetzee



“I have great peace even though I am still in prison.”

Sacrifice and salvation

BY HARRIET COOMBE

THE TRAGEDY OF the sinking of the Titanic is well-known across the world but you may not have heard about another ship, the Empress of Ireland, which sank two years later, in May 1914.

The 1477 passengers on board were on their way from Canada to London in foggy conditions when it was struck by a Norwegian coal ship, creating a large hole in the middle of the ship. The Empress of Ireland sank rapidly, taking just 14 minutes to disappear beneath the water. Because of this, only a few lifeboats could be launched.

Sadly, many passengers were trapped below deck, asleep in their cabins, and had little chance to escape. Only 465 people survived, making it one of the worst peacetime maritime disasters.

Among the Empress of Ireland’s passengers were 167 members of the Canadian Salvation Army, who were on their way to a conference in London.

Their cabins were near where the lifejackets were stored so they were among the few who were able to quickly put them on.

But once they were in the water and saw so many people struggling to survive, they quickly gave up their lifejackets. It is understood that they swam through the freezing water, asking distressed passengers, “Do you believe in Jesus?” If they



The Empress of Ireland. Photo: Getty Images.

said “No”, then, in an act of selfless love and sacrifice, the Salvation Army member would remove their lifejacket and give it to the other person. This came at a great cost – only eight of the Salvation Army members survived. But they chose

“They chose to die to that others could live.”

to die so that others could live and have the chance to find eternal salvation through Jesus.

The heart of Easter
I think this story mirrors the heart of Easter perfectly. Just as the Salvation Army members sacrificed their lives for others, Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life for humanity. His death on the cross was the ultimate

act of selfless love and sacrifice, ensuring that all who believe in Him could be saved from the consequences of sin [wrongdoing against God]. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us

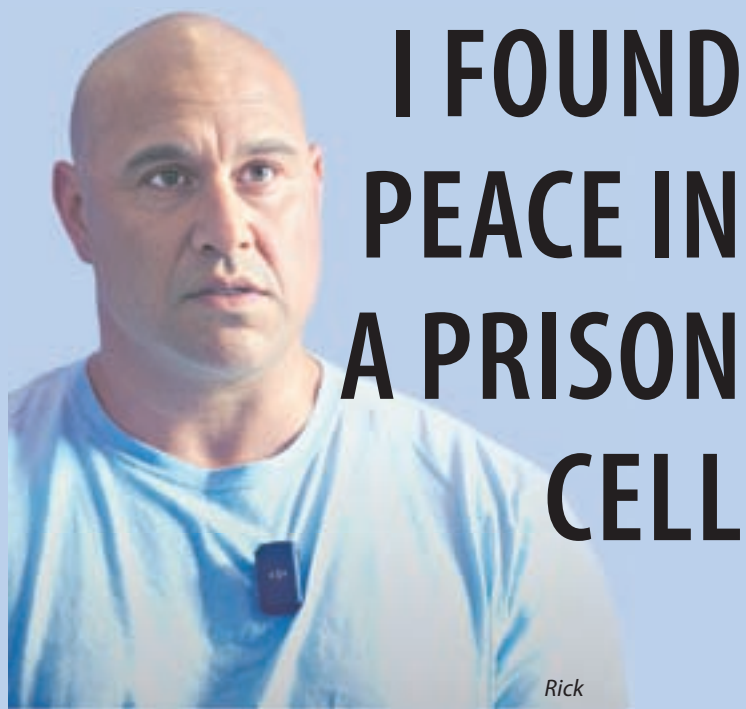
our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Good Friday is the day we remember Jesus’ death. The reason it is called “Good” is because of what it means for us – His death bought our forgiveness and eternal life. Three days later He rose again, demonstrating His victory over sin, death, and the grave, proving He is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Our response to Jesus’ sacrifice is simple. Romans 10:9 says: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Answering the question
The question posed by those Salvation Army members in freezing waters in 1914 is as important today as it was over a century ago: “Do you know Jesus?” If you have not yet made the decision to follow Christ, today can be your moment of salvation. See the box on page 7 entitled *How do I Become a Christian* for more information.

Salvation is:

In Christ Jesus	“This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.” - 2 Timothy 2:10
Present, “Now”	“For He says: At an acceptable time I listened to you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” - 2 Corinthians 6:2
Full	“This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” - and I am the worst of them.” - 1 Timothy 1:15
Free	“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 6:23
Eternal	“After He was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.” - Hebrews 5:9



I FOUND PEACE IN A PRISON CELL

Rick

Rick's childhood was filled with crime, drugs, alcohol and abuse. Crimes like robbery and theft were so common that it was normal. "I remember saving up for a Nintendo 64 and wanting it for Christmas. I opened up the Christmas presents and there's a shoebox and there was a Nintendo in there. I thought, 'Yeah this is cool,'" he recounts in a video interview with Deliverance Down Under.

"But I knew that it wasn't bought from the shop, it had come in through other means. That sort of set me up on a path of that same behaviour."

Rick was also exposed to witchcraft and the occult practices from a young age.

"My mother was into tarot cards, runes and cleansing people's chakras. "I was getting home from school [one day] and I saw people in the kitchen with ouija boards."

As he got older, Rick started shoplifting which led to stealing from houses. He also got into drugs and allowed his friends to sell drugs at his home.

"My mates used to think it was cool. But underneath it all, I wanted what they had. I wanted structure, I wanted boundaries, and I wanted normality."

Soon, Rick started getting into New Age practices.

"I wanted to be the Superman of my own story to be honest. That was it. I didn't want to rely on anyone else."

At this time, he was struggling with negative thoughts in his head.

"It got to the point where I used to hear voices in my head over and over again, telling me, 'You're worthless, you're a piece of crap, everyone else will be better off without you.'"

The voices got so bad that Rick took drugs to drown out the noise. While the drugs would work for a while, the voices would soon come back louder.

"I was stuck in a perpetual cycle of bondage." The turning point came for Rick when he ended up back in prison, where he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"When I was a kid, I was sexually abused by someone I really cared about. It just filled me with rage, to a point where I could no longer suppress everything."

"I just wanted to kill people. There was just all this rage that I had bottled down for so long that I needed medication to just numb it."

The first time Rick had an encounter with Jesus was in his prison cell. He had been disillusioned with the New Age and started reading the Bible.

"I was feeling so much rejection and abandonment to the point where I was just feeling sick and nauseous."

"It was like my spirit was so broken that it was just bleeding and it was like it was bleeding black."

"In that moment, I remember I was paralysed on the ground and I couldn't move. I was feeling so broken but I felt the presence."

"I didn't know exactly who it was then but I could look back now and see it was the Holy Spirit [the unseen presence of God] coming into my cell and a peace just washed over me."

While in prison, Rick continued experiencing God's presence. But when he got out of prison, he was faced with many temptations to return to his old life.

"I was getting phone calls to go do hits on people and do this and that and I just knew that I was at a crossroad."

"I knew about the Bible and I had enough to know that [Jesus] was knocking."

"So we took the leap of faith."

Rick and his wife moved states and they attended a conference that was held at the local church. It was there that he responded to a call to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

"I felt electricity go through my body. I've been a drug addict all my life so I know what a high is like."

"But this was something I hadn't experienced. When the electricity went through me, I just felt a fresh wind blow through me and that gave me hope."

"In that moment, that's when I truly gave my life to the Lord."

Since then, Rick has experienced healing from God through the help of church leaders. He and his wife were invited to join an online healing ministry where they got to pray for others all around the world and see lives transformed.

"That just set me up for a hunger for more," he says.

It has been six years since then. Rick and his wife are now serving in New Zealand where they live. They will be heading to Fiji on their first mission trip with their son.

"Our whole life just revolves around Him – chasing the Lord and going wherever the Holy Spirit wants us to go."

This story is used with kind permission from Deliverance Down Under. To watch Rick's story as well as others in video form, go to www.youtube.com/@deliverancedownunder

I wanted to kill my father

BY ROXY PHOTENHAUER

Ronaldo's drunken father shoved his face into the mattress so the neighbors would not hear him scream as he beat him savagely.

"When I grow up, I'm going to become a criminal and I'm going to come back here and kill you," the five-year-old threatened his father, who beat his mom too.

Of course, Dad only beat him more. So little Ronaldo ran away one night. He ran and ran and ran. He could hear his dad calling after him, but he never turned back.

When he could no longer run, he traversed 12 miles of jungles until he came to the Brazilian city of Bello Horizonte. On the streets, homeless and hungry, Ronaldo got picked up by a police officer who took him to a rehabilitation center for children.

It was supposed to be a safe place for children, but the types of kids who were taken there and the negligence of the staff made it essentially a criminal factory, Ronaldo says on a Manna Testimonies video on YouTube.

Ronaldo felt he had no choice but to join a gang. The gang's leader promised to keep Ronaldo safe and to show him how to escape the house. They fled by way of the garden and squeezed through a hole in the fence. In exchange for these services, the leader demanded one thing of Ronaldo.

"You belong to us," he told Ronaldo. "You are our slave."

The gang forced him to break into people's houses and steal their belongings. He also stole from supermarkets. He often got caught by police who would beat him.

One night, he got caught by a rival gang, who abused him all night in a cave. "They did horrible things," he says.

For fear that Ronaldo would tell the police, they threatened to kill him.

Inexplicably, one rival gang member suddenly shouted: "Let him go!" and they didn't kill Ronaldo.

In all of this, Ronaldo's thirst for revenge against his dad only grew. If his dad had raised him correctly, none of this would have happened, he reasoned.

That's when a Christian woman found him on the streets and took him to a Christian orphanage. It was very different from the other rehabilitation center. He was given food and love. He also heard the gospel [good news] of Jesus Christ.

"I came to the realization that I need Jesus for my salvation," Ronaldo says. "I was shocked when I heard that Jesus loves me. Why does he love me? What have I done to earn his love?"

At the same time, he learned he must forgive his father, a demand of the gospel that vexed him.

"No, I cannot forgive my father," he told his Christian teachers. "I have an aim in life. I have a project in life. I must go back and finish that guy off."

"If you don't forgive people their sins," they replied, "God cannot forgive you."

The conflict between thirst for revenge and longing for salvation simmered in his soul for years. How could he just let go of the evil and violence perpetrated against him and his mom?

When Ronaldo was 16 he wanted to see his dad to know if he could forgive him or if he would kill him. But how would he ever find his dad in a city of 8 million?



Ronaldo

One day while he played street hockey with some friends, he saw a woman with a little girl.

"A voice inside of me told me, that's your mother," he relates. It was an impossible chance meeting.

Eleven years had passed since he had run away. Compelled by the voice, he walked down some stairs and started walking next to her looking at her wondering if it were true.

He asked her for the time and when she looked at him, she recognized her son. She offered to take him to see his father.

"I wanted to see if I looked like him," Ronaldo says. "I knew I needed to face my past. I knew I needed to forgive him."

When Ronaldo met his father he couldn't bring himself to speak.

Then his dad said to him, "Remember when you were a child you said you were going to come back to kill me? You have the chance now."

His dad told Ronaldo's youngest

sister, Leticia, to go to the kitchen and bring her older brother a knife. She refused – three times. For her disobedience, he slapped the little girl across the face.

In that moment, "everything came back, everything he had done against me," Ronaldo remembers. "I was so angry. My whole body began to shake."

Against her will, she brought the knife. Dad sat on the sofa, put the knife with the tip touching his chest, took Ronaldo's hand and put it on the handle of the knife.

"Kill me," he told Ronaldo.

God's Spirit came over Ronaldo. "That's right, I told you I would become a criminal and I would come back and kill," he said. "But in the way, I met a love greater than anything you did against me...In Jesus' name, I forgive you."

In response, Dad snarled insults. But Ronaldo realized he was changed.

"I felt love," Ronaldo says. "I felt love for my father, the one who caused me so much hurt and suffering and wounds."

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

“I was so angry. My whole body began to shake.”

“I wanted to be the Superman of my own story.”

WITH KARL FAASE

Wake me up inside


THE BAND EVANESCENCE released a song back in 2003 called Bring Me to Life. While it's over 20 years old now, it still has some great truths to consider. The songwriter cries out "wake me up inside" and to "save me from the nothing I've become." What a great challenge for us today.

We can think that being asleep is doing nothing but it is possible to be busy, really busy and yet asleep. We can be asleep to all the opportunities around us and to what life could hold. We can be asleep in busyness, in work, in acquisition, in our relationships and all the activities that fill up our time.

There is so much more to life than working to acquire and consume. There is love of our family and friends, there is beauty that surrounds us – in nature and in art – and there's a God who cares for us.

Wake up to the possibilities in life and the opportunity of a relationship with God. Recognise that God is reaching out to you. God does not want to stop you from enjoying life but in fact to complete you and for you to experience fulfilment. You were created to live in a relationship with God.

God wants to bring you to life.



Bring Me to Life was Evanescence's first single from the album, *Fallen*.

WORDS FOR THE HEART

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Welcome to this Bible Study. Read slowly what I have written. If you have a Bible, look up the reference verses given, and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your soul through them. – ALAN BAILEY

Mark 5:21-6:3

INTRODUCTION

THE MIRACLES OF Jesus are no doubt a feature in the book of Mark. He did not perform miracles to simply show His power or to gain attention. He had genuine love for people and concern about their suffering. Of course, the miracles gave evidence that He was no ordinary man but that He was who He said He was, the Son of God. So we continue the journey.

Chapter 5 verses 21-24 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around Him.

While He was by the lake, one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus he fell at His feet and pleaded earnestly with Him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

Jesus had returned to a familiar place, the Sea of Galilee. The synagogue ruler recognized Him among the crowd and grasped the opportunity to ask for help.

He must have known the reputation that Jesus had as a healer. He showed that he had faith to believe that Jesus could heal with a touch.

Verses 25-29 A large crowd followed and pressed around Him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years.

She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed."

Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

It is not hard to visualize this happening.

The woman was not prepared to fall down in front of Jesus and the crowd, so secretly she drew near and reached out a hand of faith.

She must have had great confidence in the Lord to expect healing. But straight away she knew something wonderful had happened.

Verses 30-34 At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"



AI generated image

"You see the people crowding against You," His disciples answered, "and yet You can ask, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at His feet and, trembling with fear, told Him the whole truth.

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Obviously, this lady was very nervous and fearful. There was no need to be as Jesus was concerned to help her just as much as any other sufferer.

What a tremendous relief it was for her. And this is something we must realise. Jesus cares. He has compassion whether for an ordinary woman or a synagogue leader.

Verses 35-36 While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

This was not what Jairus wanted to hear. It would immediately change everything. Too late! She has gone. But the Lord assured Jairus, telling him to keep faith.

Verses 37-40 He did not let anyone follow Him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at Him.

The three disciples were often shown things other disciples didn't see. The Lord had His reasons for this. The people went from wailing to laughing. They thought Jesus was saying something ridiculous.

Just how we are to understand what He said is not clear. Most likely the child had truly died, but Jesus had something else in mind.

Verses 40-43 After He put them all out, He took the child's father and mother, and the disciples who were with Him, and went in where the child was.

He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha Koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you get up!") She stood right up and walked around (she was 12 years old).

At this, they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to

let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This raising of a dead person was one occasion among the few in the ministry of Jesus.

There was the widow's son and Lazarus. Naturally, there was always great wonder.

No-one thought it possible for the dead to be raised. Apparently, Jesus did not want people to have the idea that such resurrections could happen again and again. So He asked them not to spread the news. Notice His care by telling them to give the girl some food.

Ch 6 Verses 1-3 Jesus left there and went to His home town, accompanied by His disciples. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were amazed.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked.

What's this wisdom that has been given Him, that He even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us?"

And they took offence at Him.

His home town of course was Nazareth. He had not spent much time there in His days of ministry so the local people did not know much about Him aside from His membership of the family.

Now they are amazed at the words He spoke, the wisdom He displayed. It was all too much for them. They wanted the boy from Nazareth to remain just one of them. And the miracles were adding to the mystery.

The incarnation of our Lord is always going to be difficult to understand.

But it is there, clear, undeniable and for us to grasp. He is more than just a man. He is the God-Man. Mary, His mother knew who He was, but it took until after the resurrection for His brothers to believe. How thankful we should be that God has provided us with these Gospel records to give us a wonderful picture of who the Savior is and what He has done.

CONCLUSION

The Lord about whom we read is ruler at this moment. We wonder at His ministry in Bible times but we must see that He works today in peoples' lives, doing wonderful things.

We need to examine our own experience and call on Him to save us and make us what He wants us to be.



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).

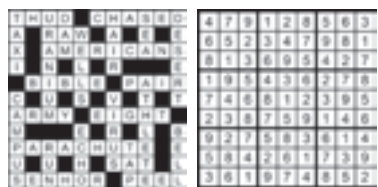
Mark records another statement that Jesus made, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles, who will mock Him and spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. Three days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

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



HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ

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

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

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

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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in me has eternal life." (John 6:47).
He gives life of a wonderful quality that continues forever.

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a fellow prisoner who is a Christian, or your Prison Chaplain.
2. Ask a friend or family member to bring you a Bible. Ask the Prison Chaplain to sign you up to a correspondence discipleship program.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find out if your prison has church services and attend them regularly.

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

* Please check and write clearly *

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Send to: Challenge Literature Fellowship, 2634 Drake Road, Lebanon Ohio, 45036

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country



SOUL SURFER

When his dad first took him surfing, Corey Colapinto was more interested in looking for sea creatures under rocks. Something changed when he was about 10. Surfing became his passion, and he began competing alongside his cousins Crosby and Griffin (currently ranked world No. 3).

Corey experienced early success at the Surfing America Championships, even defeating Griffin in the under-12 division.

However, when shortboard surfing stopped being fun and burnout set in, Corey stopped competing and started longboarding. Now a surfboard shaper and surfing coach, he shares with *The Surfer's Bible* about the biggest decision he ever made when he was 18.

"I had an injury that made me start questioning life... I was pretty depressed. I couldn't surf for six to nine months. I had a really bad knee injury.

"My buddy was inviting me to church and I kept saying, 'No, I don't know what that's about.' I kind of wanted to go because I had friends that were going, but I was stubborn and proud, and I just wanted to do things that I knew. Then one day after my buddy had asked a bunch of times and I said no a bunch of times, he asked me whether I believed in God, and I said, 'I have no idea. I don't even know, really.' I remember I was going to say no; I wanted to fight. But then I remember I really thought about it and said, 'I have no idea.' I was a little embarrassed having to say that. Then I asked

him, 'And you? Do you believe in God?' And he said, 'Yeah, I do.' And I was like, 'Wow. That's chill.'

"I didn't know you could just say that. I was raised in this school system where it's all about evolution, so I thought it went against science. Those were just the beliefs I was raised with.

"I started going to church and I was like, 'Whoa, this is really rad.'

"I still had a lot of questions, so I started reading and researching apologetics and other faith-related things. Because I said, 'If this is the truth, I want to know and I have a lot of questions for it to answer.' So I read C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. And it follows the argument from a moral side, how that points to God. I read a bit of the Bible too, but it was just a little confusing for me at the time. Then it started to make more and more sense, and eventually I became a Christian four or five months after going to church that



Corey with his wife, Heidi.

first time.

"From the very first time I went to church, my heart was crying out to the Lord, being like, 'Lord, I need You to save me!'

"I didn't understand the concept of salvation, but I just knew I needed forgiveness, and I knew I needed to be saved from my own sin that was ruining my life. I remember crying out to the Lord and saying, 'You can have my whole life.' I was there offering my life and holding it out and coming before the Lord.

"It wasn't until later that I really understood it, but I don't think you need to understand a lot. You hear the Gospel, and you already know the truth – that we need a savior and we need forgiveness. Jesus died for that, and we can receive that by His grace through faith. I was just really curious after that, so I started digging into Christianity far more. And I remember being like, 'Whoa, this is so rad and so real. How did I not see it before?' All creation points to God."

When Corey shares about his faith on Instagram, he occasionally receives negative comments.

"For a while it kind of shook me, or I was like, 'Oh, no! People don't like what I'm doing!' All that fear of man stuff. So I wouldn't respond. And all of a sudden I was like, 'Dude, what am I afraid of? I'm just going to respond and be loving and kind.'

"Sometimes people will come at me all hot and I'll just be like, 'Oh I'm sorry you feel that way. I really believe this is the truth that God has told us in his Word,' and I'll be like 'Well, why do you believe what you



believe?' And I'll just try to turn it into a conversation.

"I've had a lot of good conversations come out of that, where people are like, 'Wow, okay. I didn't know that's how you looked at it.'"

Corey refers to Matthew 16:26, which says, "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

"Those are the words of Jesus. Asking, what good is it if you get

everything you've wanted in this world? You know: pro surfing, the best waves, the best boards, you get all of it, but at the end of the day you lose your soul. The question is, is there anything more valuable than your soul?"

This story was first published by *The Surfer's Bible* and is used with kind permission. Scan the QR code to read Corey's story in its entirety.



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