

MY LIFE-CHANGING CHRISTMAS

Martin Daryl Hendricks faced bullying, rejection and identity issues as a child, which had a big impact on him as he grew up. At the age of 39, he found himself broken and alone after his second wife left him. Then that Christmas he had a wakeup call like no other – he was shot at and narrowly escaped with his life. Desperate for change, he took some advice his mother gave him.

Martin describes himself as a young child as happy, funny and full of smiles.

“I loved playing in our backyard,” he recalls. “I truly enjoyed school and completed it without failing any grade.”

Martin’s father abandoned his family, which caused other students to tease him.

“I hated bullying in school and would fight anyone trying to bully me. I felt really rejected when they teased me about my father not stay-

ing with us.” Martin remembers struggling with his identity as a teenager.

Despite being a good student, in high school he started bunking off school and abused alcohol.

“I played games and would steal small items like chocolate. I would chase girls and indulge in sexual immorality and break hearts because of my first girlfriend who cheated on me.”

Martin grew up attending church but, “I did not live according to Jesus’ teachings and fell on hard times and many troubles due to double standards.”

He admits as time went on he lived a hypocritical lifestyle and believed he was better than his “sinner friends”.

“I married and divorced twice. Anger and hate filled my heart for people who hurt me emotionally or physically, and thought I was

wise in my own eyes. No one could understand me.”

When Martin’s second wife left him and their baby boy for another man, he fell into a depression.

“I remembered my mother’s words: ‘God has a plan for your life – go back to Jesus.’”

Martin knew it was time to surrender his life to Christ.

“At Christmas, 2010, some guys almost shot me dead and I was grateful to be alive... I went to stay at my mother’s place on New Year’s Eve, 2010. She prayed with me and I promised God if He gave me a last chance I would

serve Him until I died. On January 1st I rededicated my life to Jesus at a church in Braamfisherville.”

Martin says his life has completely changed since then.

“Some guys almost shot me dead... I was grateful to be alive.”

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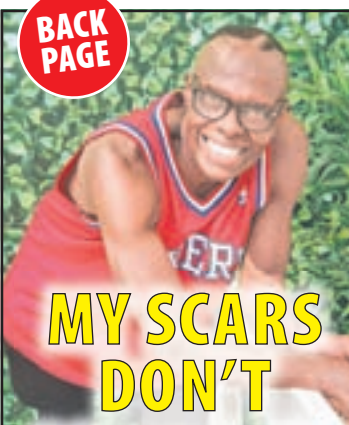


Martin Hendricks with his wife Pulane.

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BACK PAGE



MY SCARS DON'T DEFINE ME
WAYNE SIMMONS



How to cope with festive blues

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

‘TIS the season to be... gloomy?

Feeling low this Christmas season? You’re not alone. Amid cheery songs, festive parties, gifts and good wishes, many lonely people are crying or dying on the inside. Maybe you’re one of them. I was.

During a horrible year, my wife of 20 years divorced me, my employer of 25 years fired me, and I had a cancer scare. As I drove home one night, lovely Christmas music came on the radio. Melancholy aching evidenced the deep pain of abandonment and loss that I was still processing. No fun.

Blue Christmas

Romantic estrangement, family strife, and bereavement can make your holidays dismal. One of Elvis Presley’s most popular songs was *Blue Christmas*. A lonely crooner mourns heartbreaking lost love. Performers from The Beach Boys to Celine Dion, Loretta Lynn, and

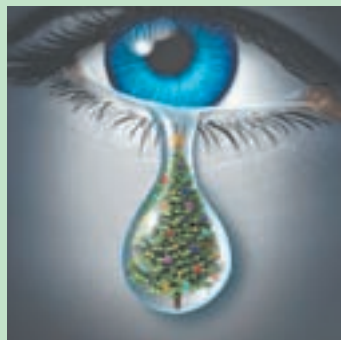
Jon Bon Jovi have recorded it.

Several factors can produce Christmas blues. Hectic activity can bring physical and emotional stress. Overspending can produce financial pressure. Year-end reflection and focus on loss can magnify sorrow.

McGill University psychologist Dr Michael Spevack notes, “Over eating and over drinking combined with a decreased amount of sleep is also a formula for extreme emotional swings.” Depression can lead to thoughts of suicide, especially among the socially isolated, he says.

The empty chair

Is your family apart this season by necessity or choice? Maybe an “empty chair” reminds you



of your pain. Does Christmas “Ho, Ho, Ho” contrast with your deep anguish?

One widow recalled how she felt during the Christmas after her husband’s death: “Little mattered to me. I didn’t want to hear carols. I didn’t want to be cheered up. I didn’t want to look at perky Christmas cards. I wanted the same thing I’d wanted every day for eight months: the strength to force myself out of bed in the morning, to brush my teeth and to eat.”

One possible influence in the northern hemisphere, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), is a form of depression the medical community doesn’t completely understand.

The Mayo Clinic recommends seeing your doctor if you feel down for days and have motivation problems.

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Saved by a miracle

It was mid-winter in Zimbabwe six years ago that Caroline Matonsi nearly died. The 48-year-old teacher was at her cousin's home when she suddenly collapsed and was rushed to hospital. Doctors and nurses in the emergency department searched frantically but unsuccessfully for her veins as they had collapsed. Hope was fading fast for the unconscious patient when one of the doctors just happened to see a viable vein on her left hand.

By the time the medical team administered medication, her sugar levels had dropped to a life-threatening 2 – normal levels for a

middle-aged woman are between 5 and 7. Caroline dodged death and knew exactly who she had to thank – almighty God. “I am very grateful to the doctors but God was watching over me,” she tells *Challenge News*.

“I serve a miracle-working God who led the doctor to find the vein in my left hand in the nick of time.

“It was God who brought me back to life and I give Him all my thanks for saving my life.”

Caroline's strong faith was nurtured from her childhood. Both her parents were devout Christians who passed on the same belief to their daughter.

However Caroline, who is now 54, did not always walk with God.

She says before she really committed her life to Jesus Christ she struggled with forgiving others.

So while she had heard and learned the Gospel (the good news that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die for humanity's sins) from Sunday school, she says she only gave her life to God in 1994 after she got married.

“I realised I am God's creation. Therefore I should live in my Father's house – God is my Heavenly Father.

“I would like to tell others that our only Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Caroline says best part about being a Christian is knowing God is there for her 24 hours a day.

“My favourite Bible passage is Psalm 23 [the Lord is my Shepherd].”



Caroline Matonsi

My life-changing Christmas

● From page 1

“I no longer tell lies or steal anyone's goods. I have made peace with God and reconciled with my heavenly Father. I have forgiven everyone, including my father for abandoning us when we needed him the most.

“I now serve Jesus from a genuine love for Him and have a relationship with God like never before...”

“The best part about being a Christian is knowing God will work everything out for my good over time. God has been so good these 13 years and His love makes me love everyone.”

Martin is now 51 and works as a pastoral and maintenance officer.

His favourite Bible verse is Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loves me and gave Himself for me.”

“I have learnt only one thing matters most; my relationship with Christ Jesus, my Saviour and Redeemer,” Martin attests.

“I want everyone to know that spending time and giving attention to Christ Jesus now is vitally important.

“I am so grateful that Christ Jesus did not give up on me and thankful that He's kept me all these years, since I was born.”

Martin has been happily married to Pulane for seven years.

“She serves God with me, together with my 15-year-old boy in the ministry the Lord has given us,” Martin says.

“Praise the Lord!” ●



BY ILSE FRIIS

A LIGHTHOUSE is designed to warn the ships of dangerous rocks or shallows and show them the way they need to go. They deter ships from running aground, preventing the ship's destruction and that of their cargo, and the lives of their crew.

Now, if a lighthouse and a ship are on a collision course, who has to move?

Of course it is the ship that needs to move, otherwise it will be destroyed. The lighthouse will always be at the same spot. It is not designed to move, but to be constantly showing the way. It will always be there to protect.

As long as those rocks or shallows are there, they pose a danger; in the same way, as long as sin is present it will destroy people (i.e. always). God's Word and principles will be a lighthouse warning us of the peril we face if we do not change our course.

His lighthouse of truth shows us the way to conduct our lives and to make the best decisions. It protects us from shipwreck and keeps us safe. If we follow God's guidelines and commands we will always receive God's best for our lives. His lighthouse is there to keep us from destruction, not spoil our fun.

Proverbs 6:23 reads: Sound advice is a beacon, good teaching is a light, moral discipline is a life path.

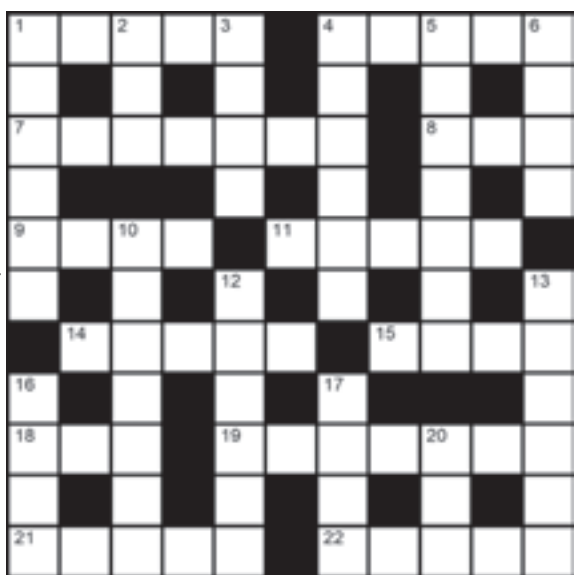
And Proverbs 2: 6-8 says: For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.

Don't you think the safest course is to let God's Word and principles guide your life?

You can start by praying to invite Him into your life, and asking Him to empower you to live as He directs. Then read His instruction manual (the Bible) and be guided by its light. ●

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

- ACROSS**
- Shoe size factor
 - Maintain a subscription
 - Sickly pale
 - Pole for an angler
 - Sax relative
 - Tendon
 - Sarcastic sort, scoffer
 - Keyboarder's goof
 - Once around the track
 - What's left
 - Large fire
 - Hostile force



- DOWN**
- Implement of combat
 - Paternity identifier
 - Cannabis fibre
 - Shrink, as from a snake?
 - Infant's room
 - The whole ___ world
 - Original Olympics site
 - Ferocious, savage
 - Tragedy's opposite
 - Spill the beans
 - Land at sea
 - Food colouring

How to cope with festive blues

● From page 1

Coping
How can you cope with Christmas loneliness? Some suggestions:

★ Spend time with people, especially positive ones who lift your spirits. Perhaps you'll be grateful for their cheer.

★ Exercise regularly and eat well.

★ Budget your gift spending and stick with your budget. Prevent January bill shock.

★ Talk about your feelings. Keeping them bottled up can mean anxiety, ulcers, sour disposition, and/or explosion.

Need a trusted, listening friend? Try a local church.

★ Give to others. Volunteer.

Medical professor Stephen Post, PhD, is convinced that giving is essential for optimum physical and mental health in our fragmented society.

He says some California physicians give volunteerism “prescriptions” to their Medicare patients.

★ Seek counsel. I used to be embarrassed to obtain professional counsel. Now I recommend it. We all can use good advice navigating life's storms.

★ Develop spiritual roots. I'm glad that before my dark days began, I had a friendship with God.

Now, I realise you may not agree with me about spiritual matters.

But – with sincere respect for you – may I politely mention a few thoughts that have made sense

to me, and which you might wish to consider? Tired of friends who betray, manipulate, disrespect, or desert you?

God won't. He cares for you, values you, will listen to you and comfort you. You can trust Him. He always wants your best.

One early believer put it this way: “Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?”

His point: God loved us enough to send Jesus, his only Son, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our wrong, our sins.

What a demonstration of love! I can trust a God like that. Then Jesus rose from the dead so he could live inside us and become our friend.

Your choice

Would you like to meet Jesus, the best friend you could ever have? Wouldn't Christmas season be a great time to place your faith in him?

You can tell him something like this: *Jesus, I need you. Thanks for dying and rising again for me. Please forgive me, enter my life, and give me eternal life. Help me to become good friends with you and learn to follow your lead.*

For more information or resources please see the box entitled *How do I become a Christian?* on page 7. ●

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

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



5				6	4			3
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SAVE ME FROM MYSELF!

Adolescence, which can already be a bewildering season of life, was even more confusing for Lizelle Graaff.

The South African teenager's parents got divorced when she was nine. And though they tried their best to minimise the trauma, "it was a difficult time for all of us", Lizelle, the eldest of three children, tells *Challenge News*. The divorce affected her sense of self and caused her to feel profound rejection, she shares.

By the time she entered high school, her father had remarried. Lizelle says he and her stepmother tried to keep her on the "safe and narrow road by providing a comfortable home with healthy boundaries".

She says her father "always tried to expose us to the truth and took us to church with him", and she has fond memories of the Scripture and Sunday School classes she attended.

Her mother, on the other hand, was the polar opposite. "With my animated mother there was too much freedom and very few boundaries," Lizelle reveals.

"In the holidays I became a social butterfly who frequented clubs, attended dances and mixed with worldly biker crowds and various unscrupulous characters.

"To top it all, I read heaps of inappropriate books which awakened unhealthy sexual appetites and lead to seeking acceptance and nurturing in the wrong places," she admits.

One might think a teenage girl would relish that kind of freedom, but the conflicting lifestyles had the opposite effect on Lizelle.

"I spent years being angry and unforgiving to my mother for allowing too much and not setting safe boundaries after the divorce," she shares.

In 1987 Lizelle spent a year in Australia as a Rotary Exchange student, where she fell in with the Hare Krishna movement and found herself attracted to astrology. She also visited a freemason lodge.

"I remember feeling uneasy about the experience. What bothered me was that I had never seen Christians as committed as the followers of Krishna and other religions, and I thought there had to be power there."

Lizelle had committed her life to Jesus Christ when she was still a child. "I had a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus from a very young age, but did not (have a personal relationship with God) until much later," she elaborates.

When she returned to South Africa from Australia, she says she realised "I needed somebody to save me from myself. I needed to intimately know the Jesus I had grown up with."

Acting on this impulse, she attended church with some friends. "My friend encouraged me to allow the Lord Himself to speak to me and lay aside my prejudices.

"At church I remember (a demonstration where) one man had two handcuffs around his wrists and as he broke them with brute force I felt something break inside of me.

"I confessed to the Lord that I had made a mess of my life. I humbly offered the broken pieces to Him and asked Him to use them if He could.

"Then I humbly asked Him to forgive all my sins and unrighteous thinking patterns and actions. He was gracious and removed all burdens of guilt from me. This happened 30 years ago, during my first year at university," Lizelle explains.

One of the best things that happened in her life since then was her mother's conversion to Christianity. "She passed away in June 2021 and made her peace with the Lord after many years of misunderstanding Him and being



Lizelle Graaff

angry at Him. For that I am eternally grateful. His love endures forever!"

Lizelle has found great fulfilment and purpose since being a Christian. "I no longer travel to see the world – I travel to be part of divine appointments wherever I put my feet," she says.

"The Lord started speaking to me in dreams and visions and words of wisdom. I have had to supernaturally depend on Him for protection and provision so many times in my life.

"I understand that there was purpose to everything that happened. We just need to trust the Lord to know better."

Lizelle's faith flows from her relationship with Jesus. "As the Son of God, He had all the strength of heaven at His disposal to save Himself, yet He chose to remain faithful even unto death on the cross.

"This makes Christianity so much more than just another religion."

Out of addiction

Despite a happy and comfortable childhood growing up in Montagu, Norman Baadjies' life took a sharp turn for the worst when he started experimenting with drugs, which quickly turned into a crippling addiction. When his life hit rock bottom, Norman remembered what he had learnt as a child.

Norman says he grew up with a strong father and caring mother, who provided everything they could for him and his younger brother to have a good life.

But in college, Norman focused on a lifestyle of partying over studying.

"After messing up and wasting my parents' money at college, I dropped out because I failed most of my subjects because a life of continuous partying and missing classes took their toll," he admits.

"I went to work as a storeman at Diskom in Worcester. Away from home I started to experiment with marijuana and progressed quickly into harder drugs – the type called 'buttons', which are Mandrax and pills crushed and mixed with dagga in a bottle neck and lit. I was quickly addicted to the drug, making plans to get my next fix, not going to work, and as a result losing my job."

Homeless and jobless, Norman started sleeping on the porch of a gangster-ravaged neighbourhood.

"But I did not care," he says. "The drug took me to neighbourhoods where I should have been killed. It broke my self-respect and self-worth and stole everything from me. My drug addiction put so much stress and worry on my parents, but I did not care."

Finally Norman knew something had to change. He recalled the "great God" he had heard about while attending church as a child with his family.

"I heard that God could change my life, as it was broken at that time," he explains.

One night he decided he would visit a church the next day. When there was an invitation to respond to the good news about Jesus Christ's sacrifice for his sins, Norman went

to the front of the church and prayed the sinner's prayer (similar to the one on page 7).

That was 21 years ago and Norman still attends the same church. Norman is now married with two daughters and has a secure job as a storeman.

"[Since becoming a Christian, I have] had a complete reset. I have my self-respect and self-worth back. I am also completely set free from the drug addiction," he testifies.

A couple of years ago, Norman's life was derailed by a crisis of doubt and the fear of dying.

"I turned my back on the church and on God," he admits. "My pastor visited me a couple of times but without success."

However, his pastor refused to give up on Norman and eventually he relented.

"My pastor called me over and I responded to his counsel. So in his house I recommitted my life to Jesus," he shares.

Norman says the best part about his life now as a Christian is "having purpose and belonging to something that gives your life purpose."

He tells others, "Jesus is the only one that can change your life."

Norman Baadjies



Does doubt mean the end of faith?

BY HARRIET COOMBE

I HAVE struggled with doubt for as long as I can remember. I doubt my friends really like me. I doubt my abilities as a writer. I doubt my husband's eyesight when he says I look beautiful. And sometimes I even doubt God.

I've hidden my doubts, afraid of the judgement that sometimes comes when I voice them. But when I feel safe and encouraged to share even the hard questions I have, I soon realise I am not alone. Doubt is a part of being a human, no matter what you believe.

On the other hand, every human has faith.

Even the most hardened atheist relies on faith for what they can't see or prove.

Maybe your doubts about God have stopped you from taking the first step in



Stock photo

following Him. Maybe you used to follow Him but your doubts became too insurmountable and you walked away.

When it comes to belief in God, it's okay to have questions and it's okay to have doubts – and in fact, we all do at certain times. Thankfully a lack of doubt is not a pre-requisite for becoming a Christian. In the Bible, Jesus is quoted as saying, "Oh, you of little faith," on more than one occasion to his followers. One of Jesus' followers/disciples even earned the nickname, "Doubting Thomas" due to his propensity for doubt – and this was someone who spent years travelling around with Jesus!

I've come to learn that doubt is just a feeling. Sometimes feelings lie and we definitely shouldn't let them control our lives. If you only went to school or work when you felt like it, how often would you go? Would you ever do the dishes if you waited until you felt like doing them?

Faith, on the other hand, is not a feeling but an action. Therefore, you can have faith while simultaneously having doubts. So what exactly is faith? The Bible says it is, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). It is trusting even in what I don't see because God has proven Himself over and over. It is opening our eyes to the truth of Bible. It is choosing to believe because of the evidence (creation, Jesus' empty tomb, Christian's transformed lives) that tells us the Bible is true, not just blindly.

While doubt is normal, if we allow it to rule and don't face the questions it raises, the Bible

says we become like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by every new idea (James 1:6).

Thankfully, the Bible also gives us the remedy for doubt. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Notice the word is hearing — an active, present-tense verb. That means we need to continue to read the Bible and hear the gospel preached — that Christ died for our sins on the cross and rose again so that we can spend eternity with God. The Bible reminds us of what God has done in the past and that we can therefore trust Him in the present. It says in Psalm 77:11, "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago."

In an article about doubt on thegospelcoalition.org, it says, "Since faith is embracing Jesus, in times of doubt I don't need more faith, I need more Jesus. And when I get more Jesus — through preaching, Scripture, prayer, community — then, maybe even in spite of myself, my faith is revived. When we focus on the Him of Jesus rather than the what of faith, doubts are reduced, relativised, replaced, and even redeemed. It might just be that the path of doubt was God's way of bringing you to a deeper, richer knowledge of Jesus Himself."

Face those difficult questions, pray about them, talk with wise people about them — but don't let doubt put an end to your faith or stop you from making a commitment to Jesus today.

Hupenyu hwangu hwese hwakashanduka

Shona translation

“Ndaiva munhu akaipa zvikuru,” anobvuma kudarwo Jameson Kamenga. “Ndaiva murwi, chidhakwa, svuta uye munhukadzi. Ndakatorwa nemupurisa uye ndaidhakwa mazuva ose.”

Jameson anobvuma kuti aivewo nedambudziko rehasha neshungu.

Chinhu chokupedzisira chaaida kunzwa akanga ari mumwe munhu aiparidza nezvaMwari!

Zvisinei, gare gare mutadzi uyu ane mukurumbira wakashata akad-zokera kutaundi rokumusha kwake, Kasempa, muZambia, somunhu achinja.

NDIYE aiparidza mashoko akanaka pamusoro paJesu.

Vaviri vavakwanyina vake vekare vama-zuva ake okunwa vakakatyamadzwa!

“Vakati, ‘Kana murume uyu aiva mutadzi mukuru akava muparidzi, isu tinogona kuregererawo!’ uye vakapa upenyu hwavo kuna Ishe zuva iroro,” Jameson anorondedzera kudarwo.

Chii chakaparira chinjo huru yakadarwo mujaya rakapanduka?

Zvakanaka, zvinoshamisa, Mwari akashandisa chirwere.

Jameson akarwara nemarariya muna 1984 paakanga ava nemakore 18, uye aifanira kuiswa muchipatara, uye pakanga pari panguva iyoyo apo mumwe mufundisi wechipatara akaparidzira evhangeri kwaari. Akanzwa nezvaJesu Kristu, munhu waMwari, achifira pamuchinjikwa kuti aponese vanhu kubva kuzvitadzo zvavo. Pakarepo, Jameson akaziva kuti ichi chaiva chokwadi uye akanyengetera munamato achikumbira Mwari kuti amuregerere

uye atore upenyu hwake. “Ndakave munhu mutsva, akazvarwa patsva uye ndikagamuchirawo simba reMweya Mutsvene ndikatanga kushandira Ishe wangu,” anodaro Jameson.

Pashure paikoko akapinda minamato yechechi nemisangano nokushingaira.

Hupenyu hwake hwese hwakachinja zvachose asi zvaive zvisiri nyore. Anoti pakutanga maive nehondo yayitika mukati make pakati paJameson wekare aida kud-zokera kuzvinhu zvenyika, naJameson mutsva aidzorwa neMweya Mutsvene waMwari achimuudza kuti arame zvakarurama.

Zvisinei, iye zvino ari kuonga zvikuru kukanganwira kwaMwari, uko kwakamusuka zvivi zvake zvakawanda, uye anoda kwazvo kubatsira vamwe kudzidza nezvaMwari.

“Vanhu vari kufira muzvivi zvavo uye ibasa redu kuenda kunovaudza nezvaJesu Kristu kuti vaponeswe. Tinofanira kuparidza mashoko akanaka munyika yose,” anorayira kudarwo.

Mavhesi maviri eMagwaro anodiwa naJameson ndeaya: Mateu 6:33 – “*Asi tangai kutsvaka umambo hwaMwari nokururama kwake, uye zvinhu zvose izvi zvichawedzera kwamuri*”; uye 2 Makoronike 7:14, apo Mwari anoti: “*Kana vanhu vangu vanodanwa nezita rangu vakazvininipisa, vakanyengetera nokutsvaka chiso changu, nokurega nzira dzavo dzakaipa, ipapo ndichanzwa ndiri kudenga, nokukanganwira zvivi zvavo. chivi uye muporese nyika yavo.*”



Jameson Kamenga is now a changed man,

MY WHOLE LIFE CHANGED

English translation

“I was a very bad person,” confesses Jameson Kamenga. “I was a fighter, drunkard, smoker and a womaniser. I even fought with a police officer and got drunk every day.”

Jameson admits he also had a problem with anger and bitterness.

The last thing he wanted to hear was someone preaching about God!

However, later this notorious sinner returned to his home town, Kasempa, in Zambia, as a changed man. HE was the one preaching the good news about Jesus.

Two of his old mates from his

drinking days were astonished!

“They said ‘If this guy who was a great sinner can become a preacher, then we can be forgiven too!’ and they gave their lives to the Lord that day,” Jameson relates.

What brought about such a great change in the delinquent young man? Well, strangely, God used illness.

Jameson fell sick with malaria in 1984 when he

was 18, and had to be hospitalised, and it was during that time that a hospital chaplain preached the gospel to him.

He heard about Jesus Christ, the God-man, dying on the cross to save people from their sins.

Right away, Jameson knew this was the truth and prayed a prayer asking God to forgive him and take over his life.

“I became a new, born again person and I also received the power of the Holy Spirit and I started working for my Lord,” Jameson says. After that he attended church services and meetings diligently.

His whole lifestyle changed completely but it wasn’t easy.

He says that at first there was a battle going on inside of him between the old Jameson who wanted to go back to worldly things, and the new Jameson controlled by the Holy Spirit of God telling him to live righteously.

However, now he is so grateful for God’s forgiveness, which has completely washed away his many sins, and so passionate about helping others learn about God too.

“People are dying in their sins and it is our duty to go and tell them about Jesus Christ so that they can get saved. We have to preach the good news all over the world,” he exhorts.

Two of Jameson’s favourite Scripture verses are: Matthew 6:33 – “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*”; and 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God says: “*If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*”

HOW TO FACE DEATH WITHOUT FEAR

BY BRANDON MARKETTE

IF THERE exists one experience that, throughout history and around the world, binds mankind together, it is death. Death is something we all must face – no exercise or diet regimen, no meditation techniques, no amount of money can avoid it. It is

the great equaliser.

The finality of death, coupled with the uncertainty of an afterlife, results in fear, for many. We see it all around us as we try so hard to stop the aging process. We hope that the next pill, the next surgery, or the next genetic discovery will be the key to extending our lives.

Not everyone, however, faces death with fear and uncertainty. A few years ago a friend of mine faced this faceless enemy. At 16 he was diagnosed with stomach cancer. The doctors tried every treatment at their disposal, all to no avail. For a year and a half, Rob was in three different hospitals in two different cities. In that time he lost 90 pounds and all of his hair. He was an inpatient and an outpatient. Sadly, after 18 months, nothing remained to be done for him.

Having reached the end of their rope, Rob’s doctors did the only thing left to do. They sent him home to try to enjoy the last days of his life. At this point, I was horribly sad, afraid of losing a dear friend and mad at God.

I was mad that God did not heal him. I was also mad that Rob would miss out on so much.

Amazingly, Rob did not share my anger. In fact, he seemed to be meeting this horrible fate with the anxiety one might experience on a first date. To this day, when I think of his peace in the face of the storm, I am in awe.

His peace was not merely an inborn, laid-back look at life. Nor did it spring from a devil-may-care attitude. Instead it came from a decision Rob made only months before the initial diagnosis. With that decision, Rob found peace with God.

Rob knew how

The peace Rob knew, he found in the Bible. In the book of Romans, he read that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). He also read, “*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 6:23).

Jesus is the one Isaiah referred to when he wrote, “*And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty*

God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). The Prince of Peace came to Earth so that each person might have peace with God. Rob decided to put his trust in Jesus, and this peace became very evident.

Our decision

Rob is not the only person who needs to make this decision, we all do. We must decide if we will accept God’s gift of eternal life. If we reject God’s gift, we are condemned to spiritual death – eternal separation from God. If we do accept, however, then eternal life is ours.

While this eternal life does not mean we will escape physical death, we can face death a lot easier knowing that it leads to eternal life in heaven. This is the truth which Rob discovered, and the ensuing relationship with God made all the difference in the world. This is the truth I have discovered, and the relationship makes all the difference every day of my life.

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I TRUST THE AUTHOR WITH MY STORY

Singer Katy Nichole released her debut single in January 2022, but before that, it had already racked up tens of millions of views on TikTok and Instagram.

The song was inspired by her experience growing up with congenital scoliosis, a rare form of curvature of the spine.

“That was kind of scary in the very beginning, because doctors were like, ‘She might not be able to walk, she might not be able to do the things that the other kids are doing,’” she says in an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). Admitting she is stubborn and strong by nature, Katy had to draw on that strength when she was 15 and underwent surgery to put metal rods and screws into her spine to straighten it.

But the procedure took a toll on her physically and emotionally, leaving her in intense pain, depressed and anxious.

“I didn’t really see a point in being here anymore,” she admits. “I genuinely felt as though I was a waste of space in every room that I walked into.”

Katy shares in an interview with K-Love Christian radio station that she considered taking her own life.

“I picked up a bottle of pills on my dresser, and I looked at it and I said, ‘It would be that easy,’” she says. “But



Katy Nichole.
Picture: facebook/
katynicholemusic

that bottle of pills fell out of my hand, and I just felt the Lord say, ‘I’m not done yet’.”

Her doctors eventually decided to remove the rods and screws. When she woke up from the surgery, she saw an incredible bright light despite being in a windowless room.

“I looked up and I saw the light again for the first time,” Katy says. “It was as if I was meeting Jesus for the first time. I know that’s kind of crazy because I’ve known Jesus my whole life ... but I just knew that His presence was all over that room.”

Katy says she left her surgery with desire to live for God completely. The experience led her to write *In Jesus’ Name (God of Possible)*, hoping she

would be able to inspire just one person. Having experienced hopelessness in her own life, she wanted others to know they were not alone. She posted a clip on TikTok and it immediately went viral. In only a few hours it had racked up one million views.

Then in January 2022, Katy officially released *In Jesus’ Name*. It went on to hit number one on Billboard’s Hot Christian Songs chart and the Christian Air-

play chart in only 12 weeks – the quickest trip to number one in the chart’s 20-year history. The song was also nominated for Pop/Contemporary Recorded Song of the Year at the 2022 GMA Dove Awards.

“I’m really just trying to encourage people that there’s a path that can lead you to peace and redemption and so many great and wonderful things,” Katy says. “I can’t express that enough. When you are finally out of that pit that you’re in, you’re actually gonna be able to look back on your life and see how God’s handprint was just on every moment. For me, that’s what I saw. I saw how God had actually just been with me in those moments and brought some form of peace, because if He hadn’t, I definitely wouldn’t be here today.”

Katy tells website JubileeCast, “There’s no story that doesn’t matter to God. Every story was written by Him, and He’s the greatest author of all time. God’s healed me, so I know He can heal someone else. I’m going to share my story and hope it will encourage others to go and share theirs.”



The eye, the inner ear, and vertigo

PETER'S CORNER

HOW amazing are our eyes? For example we can look directly at something and keep it in steady view, even while moving our heads in any kind of way! Just take a video with a phone while walking, running or jumping, and compare what the camera ‘sees’ with what we see.

It works like this – a very simplified summary! The inner ear is our main sensor of head movements, position, and balance. It does this using the ‘vestibular apparatus’ made of two sets of three hair-lined semicircular canals connected to small bags. The canals are arranged at right angles to each other. Whenever the head moves, fluid in the canals and the bags shifts and tickles the hairs, and that sends the movement information to the brain. Then the brain triggers eye movements to exactly compensate for the head movements. It happens extremely fast! Some eye muscles can make over 170,000 adjusting movements per day and not get tired. The whole system is an awesome example of designed micro-engineering.

The workings of this system impacted my wife who had some episodes of ‘vertigo’ recently. Vertigo happens like this: The hairs lining the bags are weighted with chalk crystals. If a chalk crystal becomes detached and drifts into a semicircular canal, it interferes with the hairs and tricks them into sensing movement has occurred. The brain then commands the corresponding eye movements. The result for my wife was seeing everything tilt quickly to the left and jump back again, over and over again, even though nothing was actually moving – except for her eyes. It now makes us so appreciate a working eye/balance system.

An eye without semicircular canals won’t work. All of the system has to be designed and built at once to be able to work. Evolution cannot do that – it is blind, deaf and dumb, and has no idea of what or how to design. But our Creator sure knew how to create an amazing design.

The conclusion is that nothing makes sense in biology except in the light of design. Our real challenge is to accept this conclusion.

I hope these words help you, as they have me, in your journey to surely trust the Creator. I gratefully acknowledge the below reference for background information for this article.

Peter Gurney. Our eye movements and their control: part 2. *Journal of Creation* 17(1):103–110, April 2003

Peter Mikula is a mining engineer in Kalgoorlie who loves stargazing and talking with others about Jesus.

ASTRONOMER

A Joyful Toon by Mike Waters



The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

PSALM 19:1-2 NIV

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 Christian that you know or email us at info@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: Please send me: Bible Some ‘starting off’ literature Information on a helpful church

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE]

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

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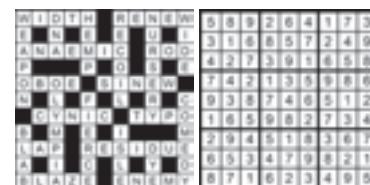
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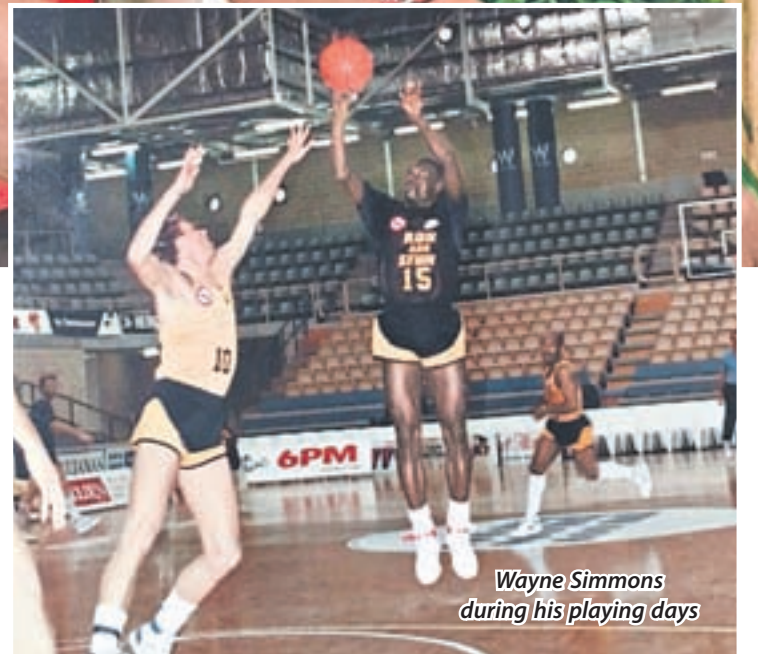
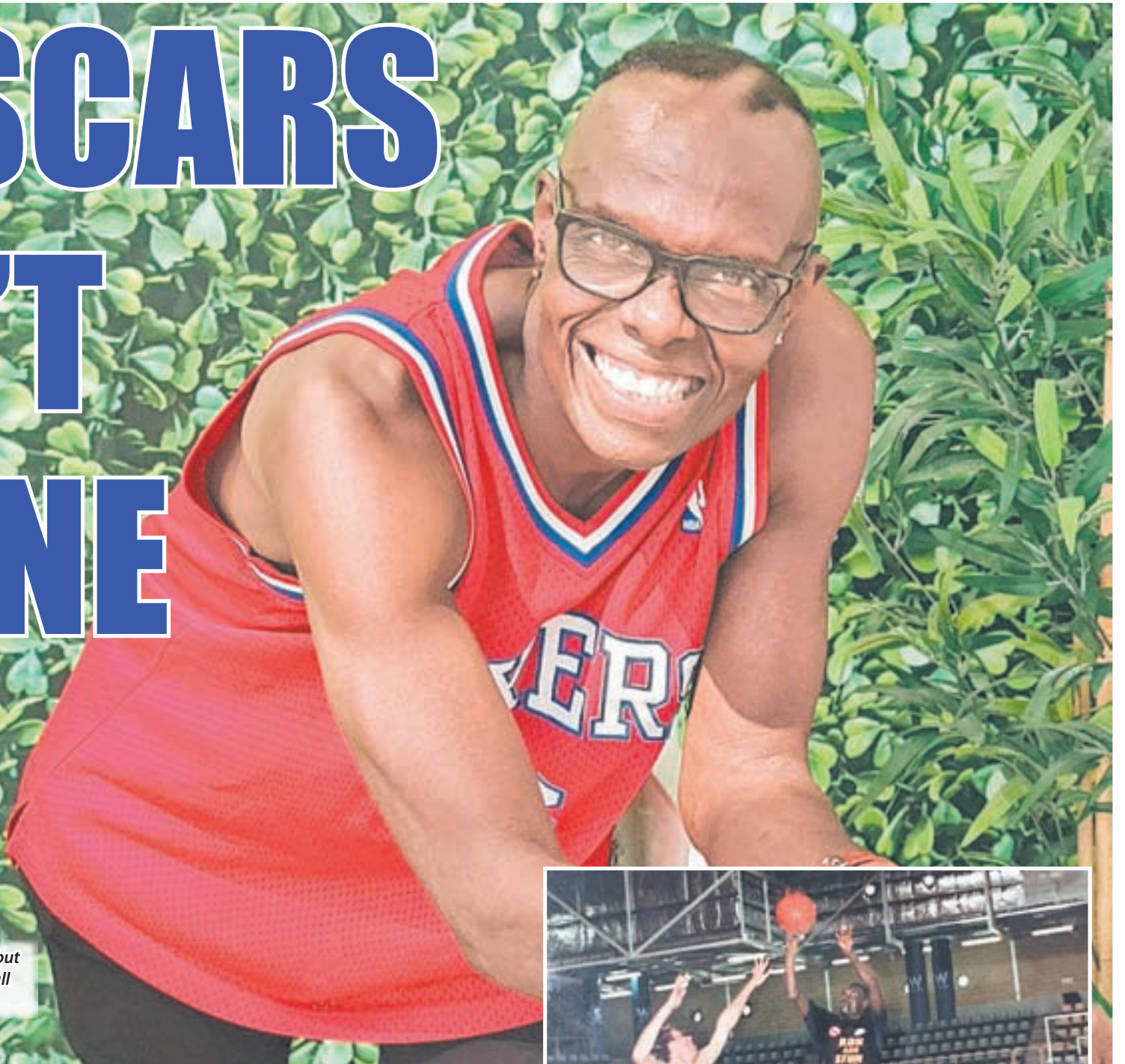
Here are some **free**, helpful, online Christian resources:

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



MY SCARS DON'T DEFINE ME

Wayne's competitive days are behind him but he stays in the game as a youth basketball coach and activity development officer.



Wayne Simmons during his playing days

It doesn't take much to remind 64-year-old American basketball player Wayne Simmons that he's cheated death more times than he's comfortable with. All he has to do is start walking or look in the mirror.

The limp when he walks reminds him of the bullet that missed his forehead by a whisker and hit him in the hip instead during his tour of duty as a Marine in Beirut in 1983 when he was 25.

The deep scar on his right leg brings back memories of the night he was at a party at the Sari Nightclub in Bali on October 12, 2002.

At 10.30 pm, in the middle of the celebrations, Wayne says he had "a strange feeling in my gut" and went back to his hotel.

Half an hour later the bombs that would kill 202 people ripped through the club.

He has that scar because the explosion was so powerful it shook his hotel and sent him catapulting into the bedpost in his room.

Then there was the time he was 14 and at a friend's house. While they were chatting on the front porch, a car slowed down and drove past several times.

When his friend, who was a gang member, ducked into the house and re-emerged with a baseball bat, Wayne knew it was time to go home.

Forty-five minutes later that friend was dead, shot by the gang in that car.

While Wayne has no physical

scars from this incident, it made an impression on him that will never be erased.

Wayne grew up in a ghetto neighborhood in New York, but managed to stay out of the gangs and drugs culture that many fell prey to.

A talented basketball player, he was spotted by the Spanish basketball team FC Barcelona and played for them from 1980-1983.

He visited Perth, Western Australia on a holiday in 1987, fell in love with the place and has been there ever since.

Within weeks of arriving in WA, he contacted basketball team the Perth Wildcats and signed on with them from 1987-1989. Not bad for

someone who was told he would never walk again after the Beirut shooting four years before.

Wayne's competitive days are behind him but his love for the game remains and he is now a youth basketball

coach and activity development officer for a city council in Perth.

Life has been good for Wayne in WA, but he carried scars on the inside from his life in New York, scars that were invisible but just as real as his physical injuries.

His father was an alcoholic and his mother struggled with mental illness. She would often "hear voices". Neither parent was very present for Wayne and his siblings — it was their grandmother who took care of them.

"I remember my grandma would

buy groceries for us and walk five kilometres carrying those bags to our place," he shares. "We lived in a ghetto, yet she was never robbed or troubled by anyone.

"I know God protected her. Without her, we would have eaten a lot more sugar sandwiches. Even today, every time I get tired in life, I think about what she did and I suck it up and keep going.

"I know she prayed for us. She would read the Bible to us and teach us about Jesus. She was an amazing Christian woman."

Wayne had grown up going to church, but, in his own words, "went off the rails later on".

"I had some things happen to me that made me question my faith," he admits. "There were a lot of family dramas and I asked myself if this whole church thing was really working for me.

"I was getting racist treatment at work too. So all in all, I wasn't in a good place."

Yet through his work as a youth basketball coach Wayne realized he needed to live the values he was teaching his students — that life would always throw tests at you but not to give up.

It was at these training sessions that one of the mothers invited him to her church. That Sunday, after an absence of 20 years, Wayne went to church.

"I can't describe what happened when I got there," Wayne says.

"All I know is that God met me there and all the stuff the pastor said made sense and really touched me on the inside.

"I started to question how I was

living and my attitude on certain things. The messages made me see the flip side of how I should have reacted to those situations.

"I saw that over the years I was wallowing in self-pity. I knew I had to clean up my life and get back to God. I had to be all in, not just ask God to put out one fire here and one fire there, so I re-committed my life to Him.

"Now on Sundays I reserve time

for church whereas in the past I'd be at basketball training."

Wayne says he has found it such a relief to be able to hand over his challenges and pressures to God.

"Being able to pray and give everything to God takes the pressure off myself.

"It's a great release to realize I don't have to do it everything myself and that I have His divine help to get through life." •

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