

NEW FOUNDATIONS

BY JANICE TEO

There are many lovely things to do on a bright, beautiful Sunday morning. Laying water pipes on a busy street would not be top of the list. But this is where Bernie O'Leary found himself in 1984. That morning, the Perth civil engineer was just finishing that pipe job when he heard "beautiful" singing nearby. It was coming from a church and he was immediately drawn to it.

Bernie, then 34, had been searching for spiritual truth since he was 17 and the music stirred him. He went to the church and walked in just as the pastor said: "If you can't solve your problems yourself, hand your life to the Lord, and He will solve them for you." That moment, Bernie, now 76, told *Challenge News*, changed his life.

Those words immediately filled him with peace, and when the pastor gave an invitation at the end of the service to go forward for prayer, Bernie stood up without hesitation – and then found he couldn't move. "For some reason my feet felt impossibly heavy, like they were made of lead," he recalled.

"I also felt an almost overwhelming resistance. Voices in my head were shouting at me, 'Stop! What will your friends and family think?'"

"But I knew I had to persevere, so I did. I reached the altar, knelt down and committed my life to Christ."

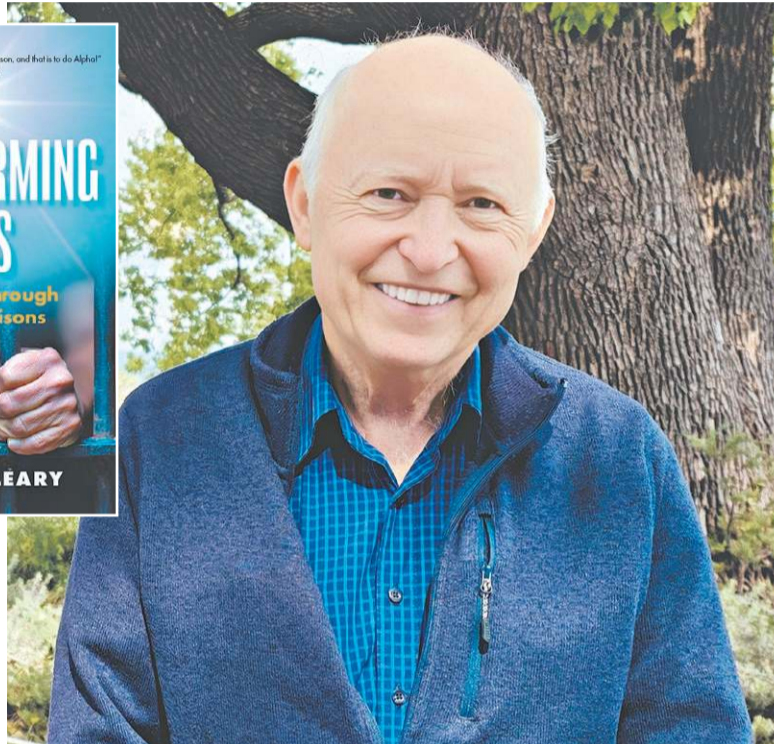
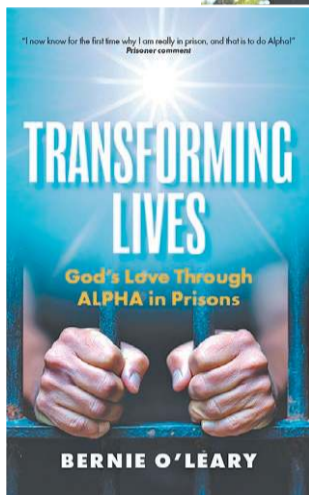
Bernie had been raised in a religious family but still struggled with questions like "Where is God? Who is God? Why are there so many denominations in the church?"

But as he committed his life to Christ, he said, "the heaviness I had been feeling lifted instantly. It just stopped, like it was switched off and I felt incredible freedom and release."

That experience launched him into a 40-year journey of ministry and service. Bernie immersed himself in the Bible and Christian studies and grew in his understanding of God's love and the Holy Spirit.

In 2000, the Alpha course, which helps people explore Christianity and the big questions about life, faith and meaning, was introduced at Bernie's church.

He loved the way Alpha addressed difficult questions about faith and soon became a key leader. "Alpha



Alpha in Prisons ambassador Bernie O'Leary. INSET: Bernie's book *Transforming Lives* shares stories of faith, hope and changed lives.

career to follow a clear prompting from God, something he always knew would happen.

"From the time I first committed my life at 34, I knew I would be in ministry," he said. "The seed was planted then."

When friends later invited him to help run a Bible study in a Perth prison, he agreed.

That event left him deeply moved. "I had never seen such hunger and thirst for God," he said, going on to complete formal chaplaincy training in 2014 for a role he never expected – prison ministry.

Soon he was asked to run Alpha at the prison.

The first course was held in August 2014 and has been held twice a year every year since.

Over 600 prisoners have now completed Alpha, in seven prisons in WA.

Hundreds have committed their lives to God as a result.

Bernie is the Alpha in Prisons Ambassador for Western Australia and coordinates the program across the state.

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BACK PAGE

BEYOND THE GAME

JADEN IVEY

fitted me like an absolute glove. All those hard questions – 'Who is God? What's the point and the meaning of life?' – Alpha helped people explore

them." After decades in engineering, Bernie felt called to full-time Christian ministry. At 65, he left a successful

The donkey's cross

IF YOU'VE EVER looked closely at a donkey, you may have noticed something interesting: a dark cross-like marking on its back. A line runs down the spine, and another crosses the shoulders, forming a subtle but striking shape.

Maybe the marking is just part of the donkey's natural colouring. Or maybe its Creator left a pattern that points to something more important.

The story of the donkey carrying Jesus is found in all four Gospels and fulfills a prophecy written over 500 years earlier: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

The four Gospels in the Bible explain that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover, entering the city riding a donkey. He was greeted by a crowd who laid down their cloaks and branches in His path, shouting "Hosanna!"

Hosanna is often described as a declaration of praise but it is actually a plea for salvation. The word comes from two Hebrew roots: yasha ("to save or deliver") and anna ("I beg you" or "please"). Combined, hosanna literally means "I beg you to save!" or "Please, deliver us!" When the crowds shouted "Hosanna" as Jesus entered Jerusalem, they weren't just celebrating – they were crying out for salvation, recognising Him as the long-awaited Messiah who could rescue them.



• Turn to page 2

The donkey's cross

● From page 1

One might expect the Messiah to arrive in a gold carriage or on a powerful warhorse. But Jesus chose a humble donkey.

The donkey isn't known for its beauty or speed. It's often seen as stubborn, plain, even insignificant. And yet, in this story, the donkey is a symbol of quiet strength, of faithfully carrying a burden without fame or reward.

It carried Jesus into Jerusalem, the very city where, just days later, He would give His life on a cross.

There, Jesus was crucified – not as a political rebel or failed teacher, but as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

He took our place, bearing the weight of our guilt, so that anyone who turns to Him in repentance and faith can be forgiven, made clean, and restored to a right relationship with God.

While it is not found in the Bible, legend says that as the donkey stood near the cross on the day Jesus died, the shadow of that cross fell across its back. From that moment on, its kind bore the shape of the cross.

But the story didn't end at the cross. Jesus didn't stay in the grave. He rose again, and His resurrection is a promise: that we can be made new. That shame can be exchanged for healing. That fear can be replaced with peace. That love, not death, has the final word.

If your heart is stirred by this idea of a God who chose humility, who sees value in the lowly, and who offers grace freely, that might be Him reaching out to you. Jesus once said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). That invitation still stands. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to carry it all alone.

You're invited – to bring your questions, your hurts, your hopes – to the One who carried the heaviest burden of all, and still bears the mark of love. For more information see the box entitled **How do I Become a Christian** on page 11.

NEW FOUNDATIONS

● From page 1

He has written a book titled *Transforming Lives: God's Love through Alpha in Prisons* tracing his journey from civil engineer to chaplain and recording the Alpha journey in prisons in Western Australia.

"I'm still amazed at how the Lord works," he added. "He lines things up for you. Or maybe He did that for me because I'm an engineer and I need straight lines!"

"Whatever the case, Christians just need to be ready to step forward for His Kingdom's sake. Like myself, you may well find it is the most awesome journey in your life! People today are desperate for spiritual meaning. They are so thankful when they hear there is always hope in God and that He can turn their lives around.

"There are far more people searching now than in the past, because of the state of the world. Wars, housing crises, uncertainty – people are asking, 'What's my future?' Alpha tells them there is a God, that He loves them, and that through Him they can find peace and eternal life."

Transforming Lives: God's Love through Alpha in Prisons is available directly from Bernie via his email, bernie.oleary@alpha.org.au. It is also available on Amazon and at Koorong.



Bernie with Alpha in Prisons founder Rev Emmy Wilson, Alpha Australia national prisons director Liza Kelder and senior pastor Jonathan Anthony.

Quotes from prisoners who have completed the Alpha program:

"Alpha softened my heart and gave me the blessing of personal forgiveness and forgiveness of others. I feel I now have the kindness and compassion that I was missing before my incarceration."
"Alpha has helped me clarify and

strengthen my relationship with God through Jesus Christ."
"I have learned to believe in God and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I have accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, to forgive others and love them."

Read Challenge News online!

Did you know? *Challenge – The Good News Paper* shares real stories of hope, transformation, and faith in multiple languages and special editions. Whether you'd like to read in Afrikaans, Spanish, or explore powerful stories from those in prison or the military, you can find it all online at challenge.news.

Ask Y: Answers to tough questions about God

QUESTION: COULDN'T CHRISTIANS FIND A BETTER SYMBOL THAN A CROSS – AN INSTRUMENT OF TORTURE?



BY PETER MEADOWS

IT'S TRUE, SYMBOLS communicate powerfully. Vast sums get spent by companies on creating an icon to convey the essence of who they are. For McDonald's it's the golden arches. For Nike, it's the tick. While for Apple, it's the... apple. So you would imagine Christians would go for something friendly – like footsteps on water, an empty tomb, or a bunch of loaves and fishes. They don't because what the cross conveys is central to everything they believe and stand for. For them, the death of Jesus – a criminal's execution – is at the heart of what He was about and what those who now follow Him believe.

You can see that from the way the four biographies of Jesus – the Gospels – take a quarter of their space to cover the final week of his life. During which time He was arrested, tried, condemned, and executed. They do so because, despite the significance and value of all He said and did during His life, the overwhelming significance of Jesus is the reason for His death.

Jesus did not die as a criminal because He was 'caught up in events'. Or was someone who got a bad deal. Read the accounts and you'll see that Jesus knew His death was coming and even what form it would take, telling them how He would die by saying, "When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to Myself" (John 12:32).

More than that, He also knew why it would happen. He told His followers, "The reason I came to Earth is so I can give My life as a ransom for many people" (Matthew 20:28, paraphrased). In other words, there was a way in which His life would pay the price for the freedom of others.

This is not to play down the richness of what Jesus came to teach us – though His words and actions. But all this pointed to the central purpose of His life. Put simply, the death of Jesus was to pay a debt we could not pay. Our own self-centeredness and rebellion towards God have kidnapped us at gunpoint and left the ransom note: "If you want to be rescued, give me more money than you can ever get your hands on – that is, if you want your life back!" And it was the death of Jesus that paid that price. Think of it this way: The younger of two brothers ran with a street gang. One night, during a knife fight he killed a man. Then he ran home to exchange bloodstained clothes for clean ones and fled back into the night.

His older brother, with whom he lived, came home to discover the garments on the floor and police sirens wailing. By the time the police arrived, he was wearing the discarded bloody apparel as though it were his own. And went on to take the blame even though he was innocent.

That is a helpful picture of why Jesus chose to die on the cross for us. To make us innocent in God's eyes and able to know Him as a loving father and develop a relationship with Him that changes everything – now and forever.

No wonder the cross – seemingly brutal but the perfect symbol of God's love to us – is so close to the hearts of all who now follow Him.

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

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Location of Victoria Falls
- 7 Fishing rod attachment
- 8 Cotton fabric
- 10 Fail to mention
- 11 Hard to see through
- 13 A Christian prayer (5,6)
- 16 Mexico's official flower
- 18 Doe's mate
- 20 Floodgate
- 21 Opera star
- 22 Highway verge

DOWN

- 2 Muslim leader
- 3 Fishhook item
- 4 Clear fluid carrying blood cells (5,6)
- 5 Typos

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- 6 Restaurant posting
- 9 Fibber
- 15 Himalayan legend
- 8 Became less hot
- 12 Infuriate
- 17 WW II enemy
- 14 Monetary unit of Canada
- 18 Soap froth
- 19 Battery fluid

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11

Smile files...



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Hope in a digital world

IF YOU'RE CURIOUS about Jesus or Christianity, you might be tempted to try out an AI app that claims you can "chat" with Jesus. Type a question, and supposedly He answers.

It sounds fascinating. Many people are curious, especially when life feels heavy, confusing, or meaningless.

But here's the reality: an AI can never truly know Jesus.

It can quote Scripture or give advice, but it can't forgive your sins, heal your heart, or guide your life with love.

Think about it. You could ask the app a question about fear, guilt, or life purpose, and it might respond with a Bible verse. That might feel comforting for a moment.

But what about the deeper transformation you're looking for – the kind of change that brings hope, peace, and meaning?

Only Jesus can do that.

He knows you personally, sees your struggles, and offers forgiveness and purpose that no algorithm can provide.

The Bible says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). This isn't a slogan. It's a real invitation to experience the living God who meets you where you are. AI can never replace that.

If you're seeking hope or a new start, the first step isn't downloading an app – it's turning to Jesus, speaking to Him in prayer, and opening His Word. He doesn't just answer questions.

He transforms hearts, offers forgiveness, and gives a hope that lasts. You don't need a simulation to meet the real Saviour.

For more information see the box entitled **How Do I Become a Christian** on page 11.

The moment my life changed

Edilbert Rajadurai's journey from Sri Lanka to Australia is a story of perseverance, ambition and a life reshaped in ways he never expected. Born in what was once called Ceylon, Edilbert grew up in a middle-class family where education and steady work were seen as the keys to security and success.

"Since childhood, my dad used to say, 'You must study and get a good job!' I was true to his words. In fact, in that part of the world, many parents like my dad were of the view that studying and getting qualifications would solve all the problems of life."

Although his father rarely attended church, his mother's faith was strong. "My father seldom attended church. He attended church only when there was a social function: weddings, funerals, and so on. The simple reason is that he was not a reborn Christian. In sharp contrast, my mother was a very dedicated Christian."

Edilbert's life followed the expected

path. He received a scholarship to study linguistics in Russia, later completed further language studies in West Germany, and in 1987 returned to Sri Lanka where he worked in state-owned television as a journalist and assistant producer. Yet satisfaction proved elusive.

"Despite having tertiary qualifications, I was doing odd jobs – lawn mowing and cleaning. Despite having all the qualifications there was something lacking in me."

In 1995, Edilbert migrated to Australia and began working in a factory in Sydney. Within a year his health deteriorated. A hernia required surgery, but persistent back pain continued, leaving him physically and emotionally worn down.

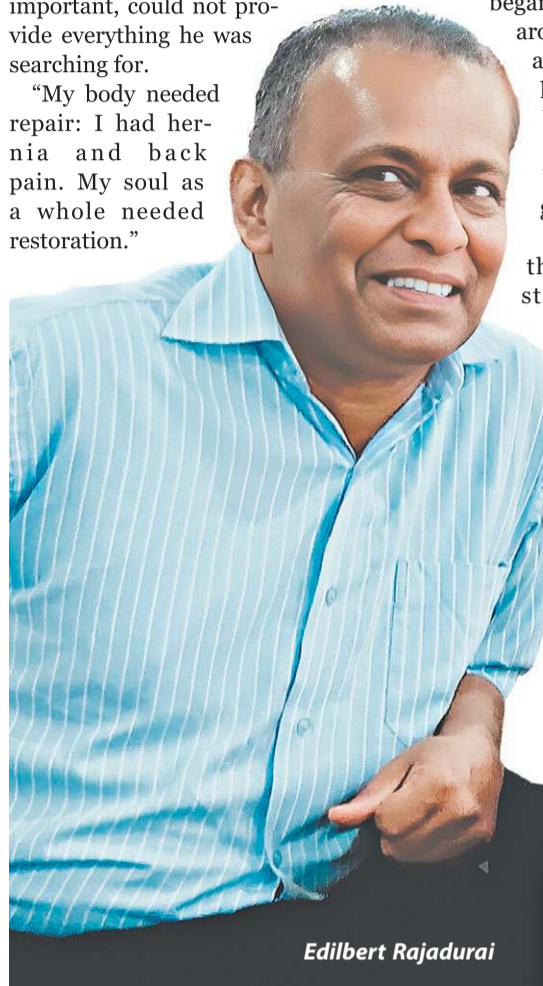
Looking back on that period, Edilbert now sees it as a breaking point. "I now realise that my body, mind and spirit needed restoration."

"My mind was corrupted at that time. My mindset was such that I was

under the firm belief that once a person gets a qualification, that person will find the way and the truth in life."

He began to question beliefs he had carried for decades, realising that qualifications, while important, could not provide everything he was searching for.

"My body needed repair: I had hernia and back pain. My soul as a whole needed restoration."



Edilbert Rajadurai

In 1996, Edilbert decided to try something new. "I resorted to prayer. Praying meant that I spoke to Jesus. Also, I attended church."

As he prayed and observed the people around him, his outlook began to change. "I looked around. I saw many people around me who did not have any qualifications but were strong believers and doing well in life. My mind began to get cleansed."

Then came the moment that would define his story. "In 1996, after starting to attend a church in Auburn, Sydney, I came to know Jesus as my real Saviour. Through persistent prayer, filled with repetitive requests, I surrendered to Jesus. All my qualifications were surrendered. My body and mind surrendered."

The following year, he experienced a supernatural healing: "My back pain disappeared."

"There was no operation or procedure undertaken. A woman who

attended that church prayed for me. I stood in front of that woman and she said, 'You have back pain! It is gone forever this minute!' It was indeed gone that very moment."

The impact was not only physical. Edilbert said his professional life soon changed as well. "Very soon after I accepted Jesus as my Saviour and shepherd, my entire life, especially my professional career changed. One day I received a phone call from an organisation which did legal work for refugees. A solicitor asked me whether I was able and willing to do interpreting and translation work in Tamil. I willingly accepted that offer."

Since 1997, Edilbert has worked as an interpreter for hospitals, government agencies and tribunals in Tamil and Sinhalese. At the turn of the century, he chose to study law, completing his degree in 2010. Today, he works as both a solicitor and a professional interpreter.

Now reflecting on the path his life has taken, Edilbert said his priorities were clear. "Now, looking back at those events, my commitments currently are based on the premise: Jesus is the way, truth and life. To implement this, I try my best to read the Bible and what I need to do as a child of Christ."

"No one is perfect except for Jesus! My commitments lay within considerations: what I should do and what I should not do, to please God."

"The easiest way to achieve this is to follow Jesus!"

That commitment, he said, shaped how he treats others. "For example, I need to forgive those who have wronged me. I need to forgive those who have dealt with me unjustly. Similarly, I have to deal with others justly, honestly and truthfully."

Edilbert summed up his journey simply: "I am very fortunate, proud that Jesus is in my life. The most important thing in life is to have Jesus as your shepherd. It doesn't matter whether you have qualifications or not!"

“
My mind began to get cleansed.
”

Faith born in tragedy

BY MARISHIA VAN DYK

I did not grow up as a believer, and for most of my life, I lived without any real relationship with God. Prayer, church, and the Bible were all unfamiliar to me. But everything changed on a single, devastating night in December 2022.

My family and I were on our way to a holiday destination when we were involved in a head-on car collision.

Everyone in the car sustained serious injuries – but my youngest son, who had just turned 14, lost his life in the accident. That moment shattered my world and left a wound in my heart that I knew nothing on Earth could heal.

While I was in the hospital, broken physically and emotionally, a woman I didn't know came to visit me every day.

She prayed for me faithfully for an entire month. At the time, I didn't understand what she was doing or why she kept coming – but her presence brought me a kind of peace I couldn't explain.

After I was discharged from the hospital and returned home, I found myself with an overwhelming yearning for Jesus Christ.

I didn't know how to reach out to Him – I had never prayed, never read the Bible, never even really set foot in a church. But I knew I needed Him. It was like my

soul was crying out to Him.

A friend of ours invited us to his church, and on March 26, 2023, I attended for the first time. That day changed everything. I felt the presence of God in a way I never had before. I surrendered my life to Jesus. Since then, I have never looked back.

The transformation in my life has been profound. I went from someone who didn't know how to pray to someone who can't go a day without speaking to God.

The Bible, once a closed book to me, has become a source of life, truth, and guidance. God has taken what was broken and begun to restore it with His grace.

Out of my pain has come a calling. I feel deeply compelled to share the goodness of God and the hope of salvation with others. There is a fire in me that wasn't there before – a desire to share the Gospel, to walk with others in their darkest moments, and to lead them to the One who can save and heal.

I believe God is calling me into ministry – not because I have all the answers, but because I know the One who does.

My life is a testimony of His mercy, and I want to spend the rest of my days pointing others to Jesus. •

Marishia van Dyk



What is Shrove Tuesday all about?

EVERY YEAR, SOMETIME in February or early March, kitchens fill with the smell of frying batter. Families flip pancakes, children sprinkle sugar and lemon juice, and communities host races and feasts. Around the world, it's known by many names – Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Day, Mardi Gras, or Carnival – but it all points to the same idea: one last celebration before the quiet season of Lent begins.

The word "shrove" comes from the old English word "shrive," meaning to confess. In medieval times, Christians would visit their priest on this day to confess their sins and prepare their hearts for Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter. It was a time to be "shriven" – forgiven and made right with God.

But Shrove Tuesday was also practical. In the days before refrigeration and supermarkets, people needed to use up rich foods like eggs, milk, and butter before the Lenten fast began. Pancakes became the perfect way to do that, turning everyday ingredients into a small feast. Over time, that tradition spread across Europe – from English pancake races to French Mardi Gras (literally, "Fat Tuesday"), to Brazil's colourful Carnival.

Today, many people celebrate Shrove Tuesday for fun, without much thought of its origins. But behind the pancakes and parades lies a deeper question that still matters: what are we really hungry for?

Lent, which begins the next day

on Ash Wednesday, is a time of reflection and renewal – a season to make space for what truly satisfies. The Christian story teaches that our deepest hunger isn't just for food, success, or pleasure. It's for God Himself – the One who made us, loves us, and can fill the emptiness that even our richest moments can't quite reach.

Jesus once said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry" (John 6:35). He wasn't talking about physical food, but about the kind of spiritual nourishment that gives life meaning.

In that sense, Shrove Tuesday can be more than a day of indulgence – it can be an invitation. An invitation to pause, to look inward, and to ask: What am I really living for? If you've ever

felt that something is missing, that longing could be your heart's way of reaching for the God who made you.

The good news is that He's already reaching back. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God offers forgiveness and new life – not through religious rituals or effort, but through grace.

If you'd like to know that peace for yourself, you can begin right now.

Simply talk to God in your own words. Admit you've tried to live life your own way, believe that Jesus died and rose for you, and invite Him to lead you. Because in the end, Shrove Tuesday isn't just about pancakes or parties – it's about preparing for something far better. It's about finding the One who truly satisfies the hunger of the heart. •



Challenge THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

WORK WITH US!

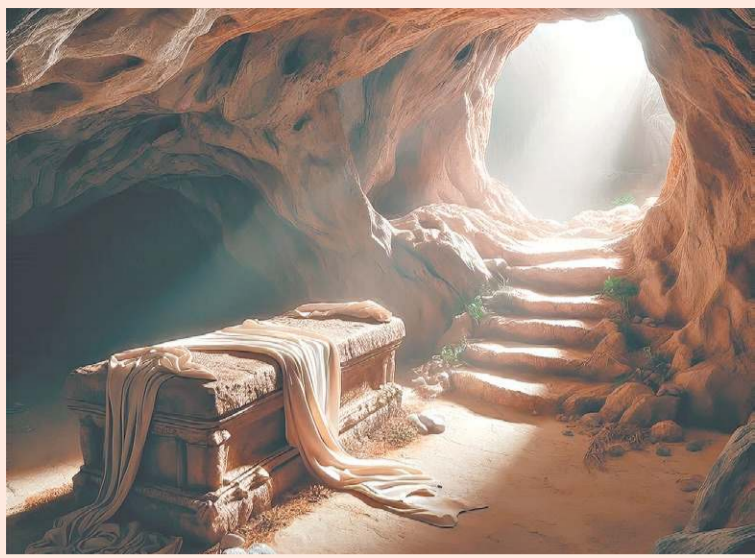
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STOCK PHOTO

The evidence for Easter

BY WIL POUNDS

MATTHEW ARNOLD SAID, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best attested fact in history.”

Some of the best books on the resurrection have been written by lawyers who set out with the goal of disproving it as a historical fact.

Sir Edward Clark wrote, “As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the first Easter. To me the evidence is conclusive, and in the high court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. As a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of men to facts that they were able to substantiate.”

The historian Luke wrote that Jesus “presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of 40 days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Jesus foretold His own death and resurrection (Luke 9:22; Mark 12:40).

After He rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to a wide variety of people in numerous circumstances, throughout the land. He showed Himself alive as “demonstrative proofs.” Let me summarise briefly the testimony of eyewitnesses to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Mary Magdalene was the first witness who saw Jesus alive after His resurrection (John 20:11-18). She was standing outside the tomb when Jesus startled her into recognising Him when He called her name, “Mary!” Surprised by joy, she grabbed hold of Him, and then rushed away to tell the disciples, “I have seen the Lord” (v 18).

Several women went to the tomb early that first Easter morning and an angel told them that Jesus had “risen from the dead” (Matthew 28:9-10). A few moments later they saw Jesus and “held Him by the feet and worshipped Him” (v 9). Jesus told these women to go and tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee.

Later on that first Sunday two disciples were walking on the Emmaus Road from Jerusalem (Luke 24:12-32). A stranger caught up with them and listening to their conversation asked what they were talking about. At the end of their journey to Emmaus they invited Him for dinner and, “Their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him; and He vanished from their sight” (v 31).

Jesus appeared to Peter (Luke 24:33-35; 1 Cor. 15:5). Jesus spent special time with the disciple who had denied Him three times.

Peter was with 10 of the disciples when the two from Emmaus arrived back in Jerusalem to tell the disciples that they had met with Jesus (Luke 24:36-43). There in the upper room Jesus suddenly appeared to the gathered disciples, greeted them, and ate with them in their sight.

A week later 11 disciples, including Thomas, were in a closed room (John 20:26-31). Thomas refused to believe the witnesses for a week and then Jesus suddenly appeared to the men and said to Thomas, “Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing” (v 27).

Thomas believed and declared, “My Lord and my God!” (v 28) Sometime later seven of the disciples who had been fishermen returned to Sea of Tiberias and talked with Jesus (John 21:1-25).

A stranger on the beach directed them to a catch of 153 large fish. John recognised Jesus first and shouted to Peter, “It is the Lord!” That was the best catch of fish those old fishermen ever had. Jesus invited them to “come and have breakfast” with Him.

Jesus appeared to the 11 in Galilee who “saw Him, and worshipped Him.” Then He gave them His commission to share the message to the world (Matthew 28:16-20).

Jesus appeared to 500 people gathered in one place (1 Corinthians 15:6), and most of them were still alive 30 years later when the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church at Corinth, Greece in 56 A.D.

He also appeared to His half-brother James, and then after His ascension to an arrogant Jewish Pharisee named Saul (1 Corinthians 15:7-8). “And last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also” (v 8).

The last recorded appearance of Jesus before His ascension was to His disciples near Bethany (Acts 1:9-12). As He stood there talking to these eyewitnesses, “He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (v 9).

The historical evidence is accurate and clear. Jesus Christ is alive! •

This article was first published on abidein-christ.com and is used with kind permission.

“
The evidence
is conclusive.”

The madness of teen George

George Palmer walked into the Melbourne Cricket Ground on March 15, 1959 with one thought and one thought only – to kill evangelist Billy Graham.

The world-renowned American preacher was in Australia for one of his crusades; to the 17-year-old it was the perfect stage to slay the world’s most famous mouthpiece of God – the God he despised.

Hidden under George’s coat was a zip gun, one of 10 he had made for himself and the other members of his gang who accompanied him.

Zip guns, though homemade, are potentially lethal firearms.

The plan was to wait until Billy gave his altar call at the end of the message and then, as the crowds headed towards him, to open fire.

George had hated God with every fibre of his being since losing his father at seven. “You’ve got no right to take my dad!” he had screamed at God. “I hate You! With all my heart I hate You!”

He said he didn’t even know much about Billy Graham at the time; all he needed to know was that he was an evangelist.

“We wanted to kill him because he stood for everything I hated,” he said. “Why would people believe these lies about a loving God?”

His anger against God consumed him through his youth and became the seedbed for a dark and terrible violence. “All I ever thought of was hurting people,” he said. “I had a vile temper.”

At school, when a schoolmate called him a dwarf for being small



George Palmer. INSET: George (right) with his brothers, Trevor (left) and Russell (centre). Photograph courtesy of George Palmer.

for his age, he whipped around and knocked his front teeth out.

“I just wanted to hurt people and things,” George admitted. When his cat gave birth, he killed her kittens. After technical college, George became an apprentice at Victorian Railways, joined the workyard gang and soon became its leader.

His gang, made up of 10 teenagers, was merciless. They once captured the leader of a rival gang, held his right hand to the ground and drove a car backwards and forwards over it five times.

During the crusade, George looked around as Billy preached his message. “What the dickens are all these people doing here?” he wondered.

Then a voice spoke to him: “What are YOU doing here, George?”

He turned around. There was no one there. He heard the question a second time, and then a third. Who could it be? Nobody except his friends knew his name.

Completely rattled, he thought to himself: “I know this is You, God. You took my dad. You hurt me so much. Why should I love You? Why should I care about You?”

The voice came back: “George, I didn’t

take your dad to hurt you or your mum. I took your dad because he was a very sick man. I would never, ever do anything to hurt you because I love you too much.”

The dam in George finally gave way. Tears poured down his face as

scenes from his life played in his mind. When Billy Graham invited people to commit their lives to Christ, George and his buddies ran forward as planned – but instead of opening fire, they bowed their heads and asked for forgiveness for their sins.

“Nine out of the 10 of us got converted that night,” shared George. “We were all a blubbering mess.”

Changes began the very next day, when George felt God leading him to apologise to the gang leader whose hand he had run over. “But God, he’ll kill me,” he pleaded.

But he obeyed the prompting and miraculously, the two men parted as friends.

God’s instruction the next day was even more preposterous – he told George to become a Salvation Army officer.

“You’ve got to be joking,” George replied. But again he obeyed and rode his bike to the Salvation Army church.

An old man he had known for years opened the door, put his arms around George and said: “I’ve been praying for you.” They wept together.

Two weeks later, George met a woman named Judith. They were married in 1964 and have served together in their church since 1967.

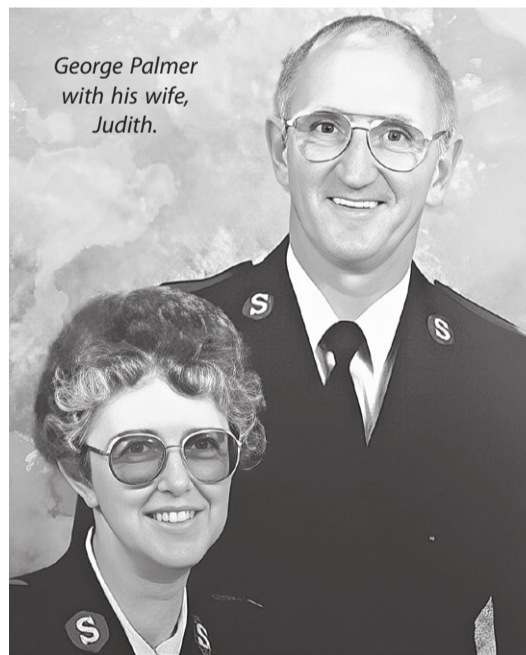
The teenager who used to snarl at God ended up serving Him for more than 50 years as a Salvation Army officer before retiring in Western Australia a few years ago.

“We were able to see so many people come to the Lord in our ministry,” he said.

“Without Billy Graham, I don’t think I’d be alive today. I can see God working in my life right from when my father died. God worked through all of that hatred and won me over. I give Him all the glory.

“God took this person who hated Him with every part of his being, and God loved him. It’s amazing how God can take a situation like we were in and change a life completely. I thank Him every day for that.” •

Parts of this article appeared in *Renewal Journal* and is used with kind permission.



George Palmer with his wife, Judith.

NUDGE WITH KARL FAASE



Believing in the dark

WAS THERE EVER a time in your life when you were curious about Jesus but unsure where to start?

Nicodemus was a respected religious leader, yet he came to Jesus secretly at night, drawn by something he couldn’t quite understand.

In this interaction, Jesus told him, “No one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3).

It seems that Nicodemus wasn’t ready to respond immediately. This is a very natural response. Not everyone who hears Jesus words will immediately want to be ‘born again’.

Faith is a journey, and questions are part of the process.

This Easter, take time to seek Jesus – open the Bible, pray, and reflect.

Find an Easter church service near you and pop in. Give his words space to develop in your heart, like an old film photo gradually coming into focus. •

MOLECULES MEET THE MAKER

BY DR ROBERT CARTER

Joel Brown was blessed to grow up in a large Christian family with godly parents. He came to Christ at a young age but didn't fully dedicate his life to Him until he was a teenager.

He explained: "Everybody has to reach a point where their parents' beliefs become personalised. My

family helped lay the foundation, but it took years for me to open my eyes. The value of the Bible and a relationship with Jesus brings meaning to everything we do in life."

Joel didn't always want to be a scientist. He initially wanted to go into music ministry. However, his interest in science developed during his high-school years, especially after spending some time working for a

well-known creationist at a science centre. This experience opened his eyes to the fascinating world of scientific research from a biblical perspective.

After completing a bachelor's degree in biology education from Pensacola Christian College and a master's degree in genetics at the University of West Florida, Joel then went to Cornell University for his doctoral work where he focused on early embryonic development in mice.

He participated in a massive experiment where researchers mutated mice and looked for birth defects. One significant discovery involved an early brain development defect that occurred before the brain even looks like a brain.

"The human and mouse brain start out flat, then roll up into a tube like a burrito," Joel explained, referring to the neural tube which gives rise to the entire central nervous system.

"If the roll doesn't happen, you get a serious defect with brain development."

The deformity was tracked to a mutation in a protein called the secretory pathway calcium ATPase I, which pumps calcium into the cell's Golgi apparatus. The work revealed how calcium regulation affects the formation and control of the cell's internal cytoskeleton, necessary for proper neural tube formation.

Joel obtained a postdoctoral fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri where he studied spinal cord regeneration in zebrafish (which can regrow broken spinal cords).

During this time, he felt called to his "true love" – teaching – and deliberately chose what he called "a tough case" – a high school in a city with significant social problems.

"I had a 100-acre outdoor classroom in the city," he recalled. "I was 50 percent park ranger, spending time outside with birds, prairies, and streams. I loved it."

Throughout his studies, Joel often felt alone as a Bible-believing scientist. "I felt like there were no other creationists out there," he remembered. This isolation was particularly challenging during the demanding years of doctoral research, when the pressure to conform to evolutionary thinking was intense.

However, Joel found strength in his faith, explaining that: "As Christians, sometimes others view our faith as a deficiency.

"However, when we have faith, we are playing with a full deck. There are a lot of things outside our ability to know, like the supernatural, that we can't test, so secular scientists are stuck.

"They can only study the materials of the here and now. That is a huge limitation for a secular scientist. Science is the handiwork of God.

"The difference between a secular scientist and me is that I'm looking to give credit to the One who deserves it."

Joel's perspective changed dramatically when he attended a lecture series at a Christian seminary during his post-doc year. Seeing other genetics-minded creationists inspired him to attend the 2023 International Conference on Creationism (ICC), where



Joel Brown at work at a dinosaur dig.

who are limited to studying only material phenomena, Joel recognises that "all science is creation science."

"Even when I was at a secular university studying mouse development, I knew that God made what I was studying, so it was creation science.

"Secular scientists are doing creation science, even if they don't realise it."

Having felt isolated during his student years, Joel feels for young believers entering scientific fields.

His advice to them is firstly to recognise their advantage by believing that all science is creation science.

"What a powerful advantage you have, even if it doesn't feel like it right now. You are not carrying all this baggage and garbage from a life away from God.

"You can really start out with a clean slate in your young adult life."

Second, Joel emphasised the importance of community: "Getting plugged into the larger body of creation science is super-important – find people who pursue science and believe the Bible at the same time."

Finally, he urged young believers not to abandon their scientific interests:

"There is a lot of good science to learn, even when not in a Christian setting. So, don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

As director of VARC, Joel continues the important work of demonstrating that rigorous science and biblical faith are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing.

His journey – from a small-town Iowa boy interested in music ministry to a molecular biologist performing leading creation research – illustrates how God can use our interests and abilities in unexpected ways. ●

This article was first published by Creation Ministries International and is used with kind permission.

DR JOEL BROWN is the director of the Van Andel Creation Research Center (VARC), on the Arizona Christian University campus in Phoenix. He is a molecular biologist and has dedicated his career to studying "stuff you can't see without a very, very expensive microscope," as he puts it.



Submerged Albizia saman tree in the water of the Mekong. Photo by Basile Morin via Wikimedia Commons.

Noah's ark: Fact or fiction?

Part 5: Where did all the water go?

BY TAS WALKER, CMI

Many doubt the biblical story of Noah's flood. To many the story seems a gross exaggeration or a work of fiction. And if Noah's flood is not believable, why trust any historical account in the Bible? People have posed many objections to a factual interpretation of this event and this article answers many of the key questions people have about the flood and the ark.

OUR EARTH IS called the Blue Planet because it is mostly covered (70 percent of the earth's surface) with water.

If the world's mountains were smoothed off and the ocean basins pushed up, making the surface even, then water would cover the earth to a depth of about three kilometres.

Noah's flood caused big mountain-sized earth movements. We see lots of examples where mountain ranges were warped and folded while the sediment was still soft. Towards the end of the flood, they were pushed up as the Earth's crust moved. The water is still here, we just live on the parts that were pushed up out of the water at the end of the flood. Some reliable Bible scholars suggest Psalm 104:7–8 describes this when speaking of the mountains rising, the valleys sinking, and the waters flowing off the Earth.

Is there historical evidence of the flood?

Cultures all over the world retain a memory of the flood in their local history. Several Native American tribes have global flood stories. One from the Choctaw tribe tells how, long ago, men became so corrupt that the Great Spirit destroyed them in a flood and only one man survived. In Hawaii, there is the legend of Nu-u who made a great canoe with a house on it and filled it with animals. The waters came up all over the earth and killed all the people and animals that weren't on the canoe.

Ancient Chinese writings refer to a violent catastrophe that occurred on Earth and a flood that covered the

highest mountains.

The Toltec Indians of ancient Mexico have a story of a few men who escaped the destruction of a great flood that covered the highest mountains. In the story told by an Aboriginal group in north-west Australia, a man, with his wives and a dog, battle their way to safety in a canoe as a bird flies in front of them with a leaf in its mouth.

One famous flood story was discovered in 1853, on tablets unearthed in ancient Nineveh. In this epic of Gilgamesh, the Babylonian Noah is called Utnapishtim. The epic has many similarities with the story of Noah's flood, which is why many scholars think the Genesis account was derived from it. But the Gilgamesh epic is typical of mythology, with magical beings, multiple deities, embellishment and an implausible cubical ark, whereas the Genesis account reads like real history. Both stories are probably referring to the same real event. Genesis preserves the original record, while the Gilgamesh Epic is a distorted version. These stories and hundreds more have many striking similarities. This evidence supports the Bible's account that all people are descended from the eight people who survived the global flood. The Bible preserves a written eyewitness account of a real event in world history.

Part 6 will continue in the next edition of Challenge News.

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he said his mind was blown.

"I had no idea there were so many other creation scientists," he said. "It was inspiring."

While Joel was content with being a teacher and planned to pursue creation science during retirement, God had other plans. When the opportunity arose, it became "the toughest decision of my life to move cross country and become director of the Creation Research Society."

The decision was made more complex by his family situation. Joel is the father of eight children between one and 13, so a cross-country move is no laughing matter.

He has been married for 15 years to an "amazing anchor", his wife Erin, who "facilitated everything" concerning the move.

Joel's approach to science is deeply informed by his faith, particularly Hebrews 11:6 (KJV): "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

"God has a desire for us to pursue and follow Him, whether you are a mechanic, a missionary, or a molecular biologist," he commented.

This perspective fundamentally impacts how he approaches scientific research. Unlike secular scientists,

GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

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CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



SHEEN'S NEW REASON TO SHINE



Stock photo

A question of identity

ONE OF THE most common questions young people ask today is not "What should I do with my life?" but "How do I identify?"

Scroll through social media and you'll see bios filled with labels – gender, sexuality, politics, mental health status, and aesthetics. Identity has become something to choose, curate and update.

But this question, as modern as it sounds, isn't actually new.

Humans have always wrestled with who they are and why they exist. In the Bible, King David asked it thousands of years ago: "What is man that You are mindful of him?" He didn't answer by looking inward, but upward – to the God who made humanity with purpose, dignity and responsibility.

Today's dominant message says identity is something we create. You discover yourself by searching your feelings, redefining your body, or choosing labels that fit your inner sense of self. The self is treated as sovereign, and meaning is something you manufacture.

Yet for all its freedom, this way of thinking has a cost. If identity is self-made, it is also fragile. It must be defended, validated and constantly reaffirmed. And when feelings shift – as feelings always do – identity shifts with them. No wonder anxiety and confusion are rising among a generation told to invent itself.

The Bible offers a different starting point.

Scripture doesn't begin with "Who do you think you are?" but "Who made you?" Identity is first received, not achieved. We are created beings, not self-originating ones. Our bodies, our existence, our limits and our gifts are not mistakes or raw material for reinvention – they are part of God's design.

This doesn't mean life is simple or pain-free. The Bible is honest about brokenness, suffering and sin. But it

refuses the idea that we can save or define ourselves by looking inward alone.

Instead, Scripture gently but firmly shifts the question.

Not "How do I identify?"

But **"Whose am I?"**

That question changes everything.

If I belong to God, then my worth is not up for negotiation.

If I belong to God, then my body matters.

If I belong to God, then my life has meaning even when I don't feel it.

The Christian faith says we are not accidents, experiments or projects in progress. We are creatures – known, named and loved by our Creator.

This is why Christians talk about finding identity in Jesus Christ.

Not because labels don't matter, but because they are not ultimate. Jesus doesn't ask us to invent ourselves; He invites us to know Him. And in knowing Him, we begin to understand who we truly are.

Jesus once said, "Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

That sounds backward in a culture obsessed with self-expression.

But it carries a profound truth: we don't discover ourselves by staring into the mirror of our own desires.

We discover ourselves when we finally look up and realise – we belong to God.

If you have never considered what it might mean to belong to God, the invitation is open. Becoming a Christian is not about cleaning yourself up or finding the right label; it is about turning to Jesus, trusting Him with your life, and receiving the identity He offers.

Anyone, anywhere, can begin that journey simply by asking Him to reveal Himself and by choosing to follow Him.

For more information see the box entitled **How do I Become a Christian** on page 11.

To the world, Lola Sheen had the perfect life. Talk about shiny – the daughter of Hollywood couple Charlie Sheen and Denise Richards absolutely gleamed with all the trappings of fame and riches.

But away from the spotlight she was an unmitigated mess, caught in an endless spin cycle of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and the occult.

Speaking on her YouTube channel/podcast Heavenly Bonded, the 20-year-old shared what it was like growing up in Hollywood with parents who were "in the industry". It wasn't pretty. Not for her at least.

"I was exposed to so much at such a young age," she said. "I was exposed to so many demonic things when I was younger, just around very ungodly people."

"This acting industry, the whole fame thing, there are very dark parts to it. It's not as glamorous as it seems."

Lola grew up a lonely girl in a fractured home. Her parents were divorced and her father had a much-publicised drug addiction – the perfect breeding ground for the dysfunction and OCD she wrestled with for years.

Desperate to fill the void created by her hollow family life, she turned to partying, drinking, divination crystals and vaping, which trapped her in an addiction to nicotine.

Depression took hold. "I got to the point where I was so desperate I would pray, seek help and guidance. I would pray, 'Just send me a miracle.' I didn't even know who I was talking to."

Her search for divine intervention opened the door to New Age practices like psychic readings and believing that crystals could bring her wisdom and safety.

Relief, if any, was always temporary and always ended with her feeling worse than when she started – an emotionally worn-out shell.

"Everything was so dark I cried myself to sleep every night. It was like I was in chains and I wondered where I would find the faith to pull me out of this."

Only 16 at the time, Lola isolated herself and did not leave her room for three months, all the while battling suicidal thoughts and dreadful nightmares.

"I would wake up every day and think how sad I was to have woken up. Truly I don't know how I made it through that time in my life – and I didn't come out of it until Jesus rescued me."

Lola recently published details of her conversion to Christianity after hitting "rock bottom", and her baptism (a public declaration of her faith) in January this year.

Her turning point came one night while she was in bed, struggling to fall asleep and wrestling yet again with suicidal thoughts.

"I just really did not see the point of me," she said. The hopelessness was almost palpable – until God showed up.

"I really don't know how else to put it except the fact that Jesus came in my room, right next to me," she elaborated. "I had never experienced anything like it. His presence came to me... And I felt this overwhelming sense of peace in my room. I felt Him hold my hand and say, 'Try this again with Me'. It felt like He told me, 'I'm here to rescue you, to save you tonight. You are going to be okay.'

"That night He carried me through the darkest valley and He fully became my refuge. I met my heavenly Father that night, Someone who would never leave me."

"I fell asleep feeling Jesus completely in my room. I woke up the next morning and surrendered my life to Jesus. I prayed: 'Lord, I want to give You my life.'"

Admitting that she found it difficult talking about her experiences with New Age practices, she said she felt she had to because, "it just shows you how good God is."

"I was into all that stuff yet He

saved me. He can save you from anything."

Lola told *People* magazine that she found a Christian church and that attending had changed her life.

"Right when I stepped foot in this church, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I want to be here every day of my life.'"

Since her baptism, Lola has launched her faith-based Heavenly Bonded podcast, where she openly talks about her struggles and her faith to encourage others.

"I feel so bad for anyone who's ever dealt with depression. It is so scary when you don't have Jesus. I did not have Jesus at that time and I had nothing to give me life. I had no hope, no faith and absolutely no way of believing I was going to be okay – I was basically hanging on by a thread."

"But Jesus came through for me. He met me where I was and chose me even though I did not feel worthy. This is what has changed my life. This is how I know Jesus is real because I did not get through that on my own strength."

"God put His hand over my life. He completely renewed my mind, He broke the chains of depression and anxiety and rescued me from the darkest valley I had ever been in."

"I didn't only find my Saviour when I met Jesus; I met my best friend."



Lola Sheen poses as she promotes family reality TV series Denise Richards and Her Wild Things at Planet Hollywood Times Square on February 26, 2025 in New York City. (Photo by Bruce Glikas/Getty Images)

Hope from the Bible

"But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31

"For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand." Isaiah 41:9-10

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

"I was very worried. But Your comfort brought me joy." Psalm 94:19

"Come to me [Jesus], all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13



Contact Challenge!

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

Email info@challengenews.org

lifestyle and entertainment

Chynna's faith holds on

In June 1990, the Wilson Phillips song *Hold On* hit number one on the US Billboard Hot 100. It was the quintessential song of summer – light, breezy and drenched in sunshine.

Yet *Hold On* begins with lyrics that are far from happy-go-lucky.

"I know this pain / Why do you lock yourself up in these chains? / No one can change your life except for you / Don't ever let anyone step all over you."

It was written in one night by group member Chynna Phillips, daughter of the legendary John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas.

"Hold on for one more day" goes the chorus – the universal encouragement to anyone going through a tough time. Chynna, who has been badly bruised by life, could well have been singing it to herself. Writing for the website Gospel in Life in 2021, Chynna, now 57, penned: "Loneliness was... the definition of who I was, a chronically lonely child."

Beginning when she was two and stretching for the next few decades, Chynna battled the lasting trauma of sexual abuse (she was molested four times before seven), the chaos of family dysfunction, her father's heroin addiction and her own disorders: binge-eating, substance abuse and partying.

Yet in the midst of the chaos there were threads of faith.

During her junior school years at a Baptist school, she was asked by some girls if she would be willing to accept



Chynna Phillips Baldwin in New York City in February 2024. (Photo by Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images for alice + olivia)

Jesus Christ as her Lord and Saviour. The girls gave Chynna a card that had a picture of Jesus on the front and a prayer of salvation on the back. "Read it," they urged her. As she began to read,

"I knew something profound was happening to me."

Chynna said she started to feel "peculiar. As if a holy scan had begun. "It was the purest, most beautiful presence. It travelled down my face, my neck, then over my shoulders, and down my chest, through my abdomen and down my legs. I knew something profound was happening to me.

"By the time I finished the salvation prayer, I knew I had been made a new creation. It still gives me the chills today.

"However, I had no idea how to get to know God. I felt

He had claimed me, but what happened next?"

What happened next was a brief but successful career as a model and then the creation of Wilson Phillips in 1989. The band hit heights of success she could never have dreamed of, but by 1993 the sheen had worn off and the girls split up.

In 1995, Chynna married actor Billy Baldwin and babies came soon after. "It all seemed utterly blissful to an outsider," she wrote, "but something was still missing."

By this time, her earlier experience with God had a layer of dust on it as thick as her lustrous blond hair. It wasn't until 2001 that her relationship with Him was rekindled.

It happened one day while she was at home and heard her nieces praying at the kitchen table with a fervour and zeal she had never experienced before. As she listened, mesmerised, she heard a small voice saying; "Chynna, go in there and tell them that you want prayer too."

"It was as if my body walked itself into the kitchen without my permission, because next thing I knew I was sitting at the table and tears streaming down my face. Tears of joy, tears of grief, tears of frustration, tears of anger, tears of relief.

"Jesus had shown up for me once again; actually, I realised in that very moment that He

had never left me. He had been with me the whole time. It was I who had walked away, not Him."

From that day forward she decided that "my life belongs to Jesus now. I will serve him and nobody else."

It was then that Chynna embraced her faith completely and she has not looked back.

She shares her personal testimony and faith journey on her YouTube channel California Preachin', using her musical talents to share the gospel message as well. Her 30-year marriage has had its share of trials – including a harrowing year in 2018 when their son Vance, then 16, was diagnosed with cancer.

"The news was devastating and I collapsed," she shared. "It was as if a Samurai sword cut me at the knees. Nothing like a cancer diagnosis to throw you into a fiery tango with God.

"But once I truly accepted the rough terrain that laid ahead for our son and our family, I went into full warrior mode. Nothing was going to crack my faith in Jesus. He was my only life preserver... I prayed day and night. The support of family, girlfriends and church was my saving grace.

"I prayed unceasingly for the entire three years that our son fought for his life. I'm beyond grateful to tell you that Vance is expected to live a long life.

"Jesus is my whole life now." •

SIMPSON AND HIS DONKEY

BY KARL FAASE

ONE OF THE great stories in Australia's history is that of Jack Simpson. He is remembered for his work in saving soldiers at Anzac Cove using his donkey.

Simpson was born in England but moved to Australia after deserting the merchant navy. Simpson enlisted in the Army for World War I and found himself at Anzac Cove on the 25 April 1915. He was instructed to recover the wounded and he used a small donkey to carry men down from the front line, often exposing himself to enemy fire.

Simpson survived less than four weeks on the front line, but in those amazing 24 days, he rescued over 300 men.

As far as we know, Simpson was not motivated by any religious or Christian ethic, but his actions do mirror those of Jesus, whose



Simpson and his Donkey statue in Canberra. Photo by Chris Olszewski via Wikimedia Commons.

life was given for all. And when Jesus gave His life, He became the seed which brings forth new life for all people.

I trust that this ANZAC day, you can celebrate and remember the sacrifices made by humankind and by our God. •

Recipe of the month



Easter truffle bark

Ingredients

- 2 ½ cups white chocolate candy melts divided
- 2 cups milk chocolate chips
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup Easter candy
- Coloured candy melts (optional)

Method

Line a 20 x 20cm baking pan with tin foil.

Add 1 and ¼ cups white chocolate candy melts in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave for 30 seconds and stir. Repeat microwaving and stirring until the chocolate is completely melted.

Pour the melted white chocolate into the prepared baking sheet. Spread out and make sure it reaches the edges and corners. Set aside to harden.

In the same microwave-safe bowl, add in the milk chocolate chips and heavy cream. Microwave for 30 seconds and stir. Repeat microwaving and stirring until the ganache is completely fluid. It will take a little work to get the heavy cream incorporated into the chocolate. Let the ganache sit for about 10 minutes until it has cooled down some.

Pour the ganache on top of the white chocolate. Spread out evenly over the white chocolate layer. Place in the fridge and let it sit until it has cooled completely and thickened. This will take about 20 minutes.

In a microwave-safe bowl, add in the remaining 1 and ¼ cups of white chocolate

candy melts. Microwave for 30 seconds and stir. Repeat microwaving and stirring until the chocolate is completely melted.

If you choose to use the coloured candy melts, add each colour in a sandwich bag. Microwave for 30 seconds and pinch the candy melts to mix them. Microwave for another 30 seconds and pinch the candy melts again. Make sure there are no bits of chocolate left. Cut small corners out of the sandwich bags.

You'll need to work quickly now. Pour the white chocolate on top of the ganache. Spread it out evenly over the ganache. Be sure to take it to the edges. Give it a tap to make sure it evenly distributed.

If you're using the coloured melts, drizzle the colours on top of the white chocolate. Using a toothpick, gently swirl them around without disturbing the ganache. Work quickly. Tap the pan on the counter to even out the chocolate.

Add the Easter candy of your choice. I used malted milk candies and candy-coated chocolate.

Add the sprinkles. Set aside to harden completely. I placed mine in the fridge overnight to harden and let the ganache thicken. Remove from tin foil and cut into pieces.

Place pieces into a treat bag and tie with a pastel ribbon. Store in the fridge! •

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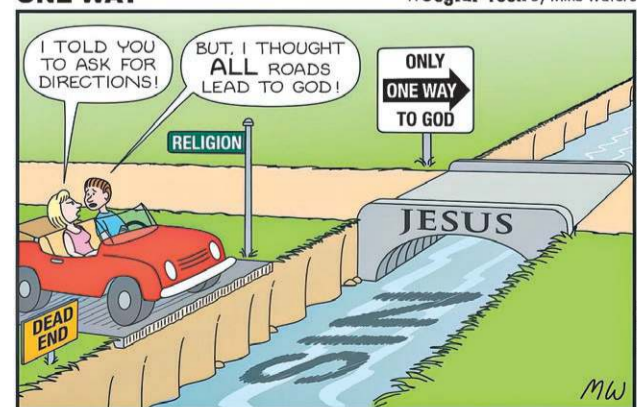
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ONE WAY

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." — JOHN 14:6 NIV

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

The kingdom beyond this world

BY ROB FURLONG

"ARE YOU A King then?" demanded the governor of the prisoner standing before him.

The prisoner undoubtedly confused him when he answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

The interrogation of Jesus by Pontius Pilate on that first Good Friday 2000 years ago highlighted the sharp contrast between the kingdoms of the world and the Kingdom of God which Jesus came to establish.

Earthly kingdoms are all about power and control, but God's Kingdom is about giving up control and living your life in submission to Him.

People who do this are "Kingdom people" and they're beautifully described by Jesus in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12.

Kingdom people know they are spiritually bankrupt. To be "poor in spirit" means you know your attitude toward God doesn't measure up and your relationship with Him is broken. As a result, you turn to God and ask

Him for His mercy.

Kingdom people grieve over their sin. You "mourn" and are in deep grief over the blackness of your own sin against God, as well as the sins of the world.

Kingdom people are dependent on God. When Jesus describes Kingdom people as being "meek", He is not calling them weak people. Meekness is a quality of strength.

A meek person is someone who knows they're strong, but God is stronger. Instead of living life in their own strength, they choose to live in dependence on God.

A meek person is someone who has the good sense to submit themselves completely to God and His care.

Kingdom people long for a righteousness they don't have. Kingdom people, more than anything, want to be like God. They know they're not righteous in themselves, so they ask God to fill them with His righteousness.

Kingdom people have received mercy from God and give His mercy to others. In other words, Kingdom

people forgive. This isn't saying they're perfect because forgiveness is a struggle for all of us, but there is a genuine desire in their heart to forgive those who have wronged them.

They understand they have no right to ask God to forgive them if they refuse to forgive others.

Kingdom people are becoming "pure in heart." Kingdom people don't believe they're perfect. They're aware of their shortcomings and look to God to make them more like Him – they understand that being a follower of Jesus is a growing process.

This means they will approach their relationships with real humility by taking responsibility for their own failings and apologizing.

Kingdom people actively work to bring God's peace to others. This is why Jesus says they're blessed. Because they have experienced God's peace in their lives, they want others to know this same peace and, they promote peace in their local communities and the wider world.

Kingdom people love and pray for their enemies. This is the distinctive characteristic of Jesus' Kingdom and why it "is not of this world."

Jesus taught that those who belong to His Kingdom are to not simply love those who love them – anybody can do that.

No – they're to pray for and love the very ones who despise and hate them for being who they are – Kingdom people, followers of Jesus.

Shortly after His interrogation by



STOCK PHOTO

Pilate, Jesus was unjustly sentenced to death by crucifixion, the full weight of the might of Roman law being brought down upon His innocent head.

He was led away to a hill, mocked, jeered and spat upon and then hoisted above the ground where he continued to endure hatred and venom being poured out upon Him.

How did He respond? Precisely as He taught His Kingdom people to respond – "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing."

And this forgiveness is available to everyone who willingly humbles themselves before God, turns from

their sin, and steps into His Kingdom, a Kingdom that is truly not of this world!

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 _____

Email address _____

Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985
info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Z	T	M	B	A	B	W	E	M	2	8	6	5	3	1	9	7	4
M	A	L	R	E	E	L	3	7	1	8	4	9	5	2	6		
C	A	L	I	C	O	R	N	9	5	4	6	2	7	8	3	1	
O	M	I	T	O	P	A	Q	U	7	9	5	2	1	8	6	4	3
O	A	D	A	D	T	E	N	1	2	8	4	6	3	7	5	9	
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Scan here to donate to the work of Challenge around the world.

Want to explore more?

Here are some free, helpful, Christian online 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 stations - CBN radio app and Trans World Radio		Resources including radio, videos, podcasts, devotionals and news - Vision Christian Media app	
Christian movies, serials and kids' shows - Good. app		Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .		Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity		The Bible explained with visual aides - Bible Project on YouTube .	
Jesus film project - 200+ videos in 2000+ languages jesusfilm.org/app youtube.com/@jesusfilm		For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app	
Christian news outlet for young adults with various content, devotionals and resources: ymi.today		Christian comics/manga - goodandevilbook.com and Manga Messiah app	
More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challenge.news			

NUDGE
WITH KARL FAASE

Second ring, first marriage

MY CHRISTMAS GIFT many years ago was a very special wedding ring. No, I wasn't married for the second time – I simply needed a replacement ring because after 20 years, my wedding ring had worn out.

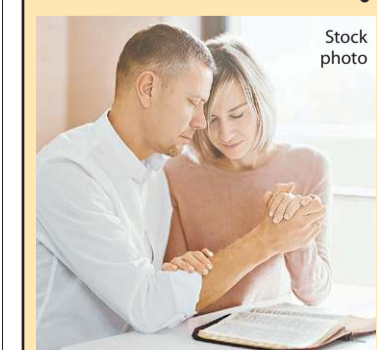
You could say this makes me a little unique in Australia with my wedding ring wearing out before my marriage. I have now been married for well over 30 years, and without claiming to be an expert, I can give three sets of three words that could really help your marriage outlast your ring.

First **"I love you"**. Sounds smoochy I know, but it is something we should express often and openly.

Second **"I am sorry"**. Being willing to admit your mistakes will go a long way to growing your marriage. No one is perfect so there is plenty of scope for these three words to be said often.

And third **"Let's pray together"**. This is recognising the need for God in our lives and relationships. Remember to turn to God for help and for the grace to continue to grow together in marriage.

If more of us were on our first marriage and second rings, the jewellers and the families of our country would be much better off.



Stock photo

BEYOND THE GAME

From dazzling college performances to early NBA stardom, Jaden Ivey has carved out a name as one of basketball's most electrifying young guards. But behind the speed, scoring, and swagger is a young man who's battled pressures few ever see – and made choices that have reshaped everything.

Born on February 13, 2002, in South Bend, Indiana, Jaden seemed destined for athletic greatness.

His mother, Niele Ivey, played in the WNBA and now coaches Notre Dame's women's basketball team. His father, Javin Hunter, was an NFL wide receiver. Jaden's path, however, was uniquely his own.

He began seriously focusing on basketball during his freshman year at Marian High School in Mishawaka, Indiana, later transferring to the elite La Lumiere School for his senior season.

At Purdue University from 2020 to 2022, Jaden quickly emerged as a top prospect. As a freshman, he posted 11.1 points and 3.3 rebounds per game, earning Big Ten All-Freshman honours. His sophomore year was even more impressive: 17.3 points, 4.9 rebounds, and 3.1 assists per game – leading to First-Team All-Big Ten recognition and a Second-Team All-American selection.

On the global stage, Jaden starred for Team USA at the 2021 FIBA Under-19 World Cup in Latvia. He led the team with 21 points in a group-stage win over Turkey and averaged 12.3 points per game across the tournament, helping secure the gold medal.

Selected fifth overall by the Detroit Pistons in the 2022 NBA

Draft, Jaden wasted no time making his mark. He averaged 16.3 points, 3.9 rebounds, and 5.2 assists in his rookie campaign. In year two, he kept that momentum with 15.4 points, 3.4 rebounds, and 3.8 assists per game. And before a mid-season injury in 2024–25, he was putting up a career-best 17.6 points, 4.1 rebounds, and 4.0 assists.

But numbers only tell part of the story. Jaden's real transformation happened off the court.

“**I have that joy that I've been searching for my entire life.**”

“As I grew up, I just started to seek the wrong things,” he told Sports Spectrum. “Even in high school, I tried sleeping with women to fulfill a certain void in my heart. As I continued to grow as a man, I was trying to fill a void. I slept with women, I tried drinking alcohol, I tried going out to party – I tried to fit in with the world, basically.”

Jaden shared his struggles with anger during college and his early NBA years, admitting it affected his relationship and that he tried to fill emotional voids in unhealthy ways.

As he and his fiancé, now wife, Caitlyn were about to have their first son, Jaden was struggling with drinking and a pornography addiction.

“I remember we were in Denver, Colorado, and I sat in the room and I'm just bawling, just crying, like, ‘I don't know how to stop this pornography addiction. I'm about to have a child. I have to grow up. There are big things happening in my life.’”

“All I could think about was my son having to go through the problems that I went through. I just called out to Jesus and said, ‘Jesus, please change my life. Just do something miraculous – just change my life, please.’”

“I always knew Jesus was there. I went to Catholic church, I went to Catholic high school, and I always knew Jesus was there. Just in that moment, I called out to Jesus, and in a matter of months, things changed for me. I had my son, and I didn't have to feel that void in that way anymore.”

Jaden said his life transformed from that point on.

“When I came to know Jesus, my life changed – did a whole 180 – and I have that peace, I have that joy that I've been searching for my entire life.”

At a March 2024 press conference, Jaden boldly proclaimed his faith, quoting John 14:6:

“I just want to say that Jesus is the way, the truth, the life,” he said. “To anyone in the world



Jaden Ivey #23 of the Detroit Pistons attempts a shot while being guarded by Pascal Siakam #43 of the Indiana Pacers in the second quarter at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in November 2025 in Indianapolis, Indiana. (Photo by Dylan Buell/Getty Images)



Jaden Ivey of the Detroit Pistons in September 2025 (Photo by Gregory Shamus/Getty Images).

that's hearing this message, the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Jesus is coming back, and we all have to repent for our sins and we have to put our faith in Jesus. He will come back when you least expect it, and it's time to wake up if you haven't put your faith in Jesus Christ.”

In June 2024, Jaden and his wife were baptised – a public expression of their Christian faith. Sharing the milestone on Instagram, Jaden declared he is “nothing without Jesus.” He cited two powerful Bible verses:

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Later in the year, Jaden revealed he faced spiritual setbacks. He found himself drifting, returning to temptations he thought were behind him.

He said the cares of the world began to reappear. He admitted, “I wasn't reading my Bible as often.”

In a moment of clarity, he sat in his car and cried out to God:

“And I'm like, ‘Lord, I know I can't do this without You. I know I see it.’ I had no peace during that time for like two months.”

He decided to surrender it all to God. “I said, ‘God, I surrender. I surrender fully. I need You. I need Your peace. I need Your love.’ And He's

there. That's just the Father He is.”

On January 2025, Jaden broke his left fibula during a game against the Orlando Magic. Speaking on the Sports Spectrum Podcast, he described the time as, “some of the toughest days I've had in my lifetime as far as pain goes.”

He also shared that just days before the injury, he had a feeling it might happen – and that he was prepared: “It's sad, but without Christ, there's no peace,” he said on the podcast.

“If your heart is in the wrong place, if your identity is only in basketball, you don't have peace. Even before when it happened, I'm just like, ‘I have peace because I know Jesus is with me no matter what, no matter what I go through, no matter the trial.’ And that's the peace that

surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

“I know this situation is going to help me grow even closer to Him, and I already feel it,” he added.

“Sometimes we ask God why is He doing this? We get in our own minds and our own thoughts,” he said.

“But His thoughts are not our thoughts. He's in control and He has the plan. He knows the outcome. He knows it because it's greater. He knows the plan that He has for our lives.”

Jaden underwent surgery and was re-evaluated in April 2025. By April 10, he was cleared to resume basketball activities and began a re-conditioning program.

His comeback was perfectly timed, as the Detroit Pistons clinched their first playoff berth since 2019. ●

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