

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Divorce, disco and divine intervention

BY JANICE TEO

In 1979 I discovered three things:

1. Catholic nuns can rock a tune as well as anybody.
2. Apparently you can tune into AM radio from heaven.
3. Divorce is painful, but wait for the surprise ending.

In 1979 I was 17. My biggest problems were supposed to be clearing up my acne and finding jeans that fit. Navigating the minefield of my parents' divorce was not on that list, which explains why I was so totally unprepared for it.

After they divorced, I moved in with my mum who, like me, was emotionally exhausted, confused, angry and frazzled. We should have clung to each other but in that incomparable way teenagers have of expressing affection, I made her living nightmare into a living nightmare lined with glass eggshells instead. Difficult, in other words.

Our screaming matches were like the Aurora Borealis – colourful. One day, after a particularly hysterical session, she stormed out of the flat.

I sank to the floor in a puddle of despair and tears, hitting rock bottom with a thud that vibrated through my entire life (forgive the dramatic teenage flair).

This was a far cry from my happy younger years. My childhood was filled with beach-going, travel, fun and – whatever their private problems were – loving, wonderful parents.

I was brought up in Singapore and went to a Christian school. We were all Christians, at least nominally so, right down to displaying the classic piece of wall art proclaiming “Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation.”

So God was always present and respected, but was more a kindly neighbour than our sovereign Lord.

I always found church boring and youth groups too cheesy – just too much clapping. However, I did want to get to heaven so I had dutifully raised my hand many times to “receive Christ into my life” but in truth I was not prepared to surrender and make Him Lord of my life.

It was a case of, “You can be in the car with me Lord, but I’ll do the driving thanks”.

This power struggle continued even after making yet another commitment at the grand-daddy of all services – the Billy Graham Crusade in 1978.



Janice Teo

“
In truth I was not prepared to surrender.
”

• Turn to page 2

South African-born Joe Vermeulen was a good boy. In fact, from the time he was in primary school all he ever wanted to be was the textbook definition of “good”, which to him meant never putting a foot wrong.

The problem was that no matter how hard he tried, perfection remained frustratingly out of reach.

He shared his dilemma with *Challenge News*.

“I would do something good, like give away my sandwiches at school and help my mum around the house one day and then the next day I would tell a lie and think, ‘Oh no, I’ve messed it up again – I’m back to square one.’” Joe had misunderstood the Christian Gospel – the message that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead to save humanity by grace through faith in Him.

What fuelled his admirable – but unattainable – dreams of excellence were the disjointed ideas he got from Bible lessons at school from the time he was about 10.

Each Monday, students would gather for morning devotions, led by a visiting speaker. It was a regular routine – hymns, short messages, and the occasional Old Testament story.

Joe found it fascinating. “I became very intrigued by Christianity and I was hungry for more but my understanding was very limited. I just knew I wanted to go to heaven any way I could.”

Drawn to the Old Testament accounts of how



Joe Vermeulen with his wife, Celia.

animals were sacrificed to pay for the people’s sins, Joe began looking a little too closely at the doves in his backyard.

“I thought maybe I needed to do some sacrificing on my dad’s barbecue,” he said, rolling his eyes at the memory. “Good thing I never went through with it!”

When he was 14, Joe began attending a local church near home. He got heavily involved with the youth ministry and learned more about the faith.

Every week there would be an invitation for people to commit their lives to Jesus. Thinking that he had to repeat this every time he did something wrong, Joe kept responding.

After the third time, an elder of the church took him aside and finally explained that his salvation was assured the moment he put his trust in

Jesus the first time. At last the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. “After this I finally had peace. I didn’t have to worry about dying on a bad day anymore,” he said with a laugh.

Faith and service grew hand-in-hand and before long Joe began to feel the pull towards full-time ministry. But when he broached the subject with his father he met resistance.

“My dad wasn’t keen on the idea because he thought pastors are always poor. He told me, ‘I’m not going to be paying your way throughout your life,’ and urged me to get a proper degree.”

• Turn to page 2



Joe with his guitar.

YOUTH TRUTH Page 9

Fun for Kids Pages 5,6,7

BACK PAGE

THE REAL MAIN EVENT
HULK HOGAN

Can money buy happiness?

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE happiness comes from success, possessions, and financial security. We are often told that if we earn more and own more, we will finally feel fulfilled. Yet both research and life experience suggest otherwise.

American academic Tim Kasser from Knox College in Illinois studied what truly makes people happy. He found that material prosperity does not increase happiness. In fact, people who strongly value wealth and possessions are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, health problems, substance abuse, and poor relationships. This was true whether they actually became wealthy or simply spent their lives chasing wealth.

These findings reflect a truth taught in the Gospel of Luke in the Bible, where we are warned that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. Human beings were created for more than material things – we were created for a relationship with God.

Psychologist David Myers identified four key areas that consistently lead to greater happiness:

- Deep relationships – People

thrive when they are loved and connected to others.

- Caring for others – Serving those in need brings purpose and joy.
- Meaningful work – Fulfilment grows when we use our skills in ways that matter and contribute to others.
- Spiritual growth – People who nurture their spiritual lives often experience deeper peace and resilience.

The Bible teaches that the human heart has a longing that material things cannot satisfy. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that chasing earthly things alone ultimately leaves us empty.

True and lasting joy is found in knowing God personally. Christianity is about a relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ.

This relationship brings forgiveness, purpose, and hope that goes beyond anything the world can offer. Money and possessions will eventually fade, but a relationship with God lasts forever. When we seek Him, we discover a peace and meaning that cannot be taken away.

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



Joe's love of music has led him to sharing the Bible using music.

As good as it gets

• From page 1

Ever the obedient child, Joe studied graphic design for two years. "I didn't resent it at all," he shared. "I accepted and appreciated my father's advice and honestly, none of it has gone to waste."

After the end of his second year in university, the unexpected happened – his parents became believers. Joe explained that by that time all five of his siblings had committed their lives to Christ.

"We never really preached to our parents. But they saw evidence of God in our lives and one night, my dad shared very simply that he and my mum had gone to church that evening and had received Christ into their lives as well."

Shortly after that, his father told Joe he had changed his mind about his career and promised to support his son if that was what he wanted.

"The rest, as they say, is history," chuckled Joe. In 1995 he became pastor of his first church, in a small South African farming community, where his lifelong love of music naturally led him into composing songs and sharing the Bible using music.

A visit to Brisbane several years later led to an offer to move permanently to Australia, which he did in 2002. Joe now leads a church in Perth.

"Looking back at my life I stand astonished," he commented. "Everything that God has done, the blessings He has given me and my wife Cecile – we are so blessed.

"It's not always been easy, as anyone in ministry will tell you – there are always pockets of turbulence. But the Lord has seen us through and helped us stay the course.

"To think that He would save someone like me – what an amazing thing!"

Divorce, disco and divine intervention

• From page 1

I really did want to be a good Christian – I just wasn't prepared to give up going to the disco and living life on my terms.

Until the day of the MMA (Massive Mum Argument) fight.

The radio had been on while we were arguing and after my mum left, a new song drifted onto the airwaves. It was – and I kid you not – Australian nun Sister Janet Mead's pop rock rendition of The Lord's Prayer. (Don't believe me? Look it up - it hit Number 4 on Billboard's Hot 100 of 1974.)

You honestly haven't lived until you've heard "Our Father, who art in heaven" delivered with disco backup vocals. It was like God said, "This is the moment. Release the nun."

In the midst of my sniffing, I recognised the prayer and began singing along, then praying along. The tears began afresh and didn't stop till Sister Janet sang the chorus the last time.

The instructions I'd heard so many times before resurfaced gently but insistently. "Surrender to God. Put Him in charge of your life."

And I finally did. With my face in my hands, I sniffled: "I'm so sorry God. I've tried on my own and I've made a mess of my life. Please forgive me and please take over from here."

Immediately I felt peace. It has been 46 years but I can still remember the feeling. Release, safety, cleanness.

Then the phone rang as the miracle that was my salvation continued. It was my cousin on the line, the one I only saw at funerals and Christmas.

"Hey Jan," she said. "I don't know why and I don't know what's going on with you, but I just felt the Lord telling me to invite you to my church this Sunday."

Normally I would have faked laryngitis to get out of going but instead it felt like someone had offered me the moon and stars. I said yes without even thinking, which proves divine intervention is real.

I went. I sang.

I CLAPPED.

And I didn't even roll my eyes once. For the first time in my life, I enjoyed the service. The part of me that had been closed was supernaturally opened and readily received His Presence.

Today my father, mother and sister are all Christians – an indirect result of the need the divorce created in all of us. We turned from our glib faith to a whole-hearted commitment to God.

While my parents never reconciled, they have remained friends. They may not share a life anymore but they share a faith, and that still knits our family together.

So yes, God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes through sermons. Sometimes through suffering. And sometimes through a nun singing a faith-filled, slightly funky prayer on the radio.

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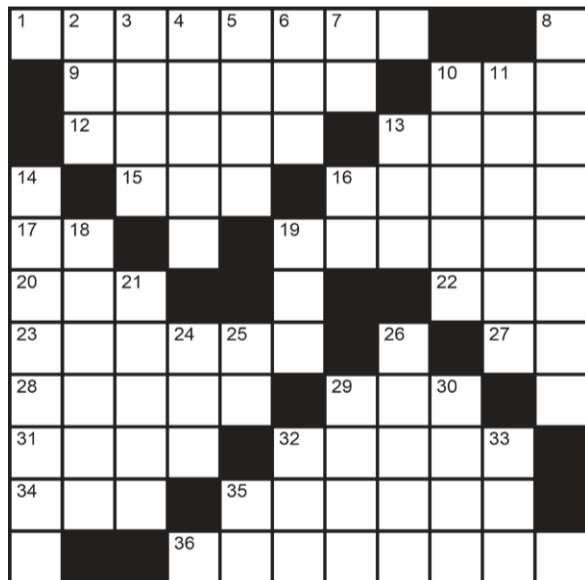


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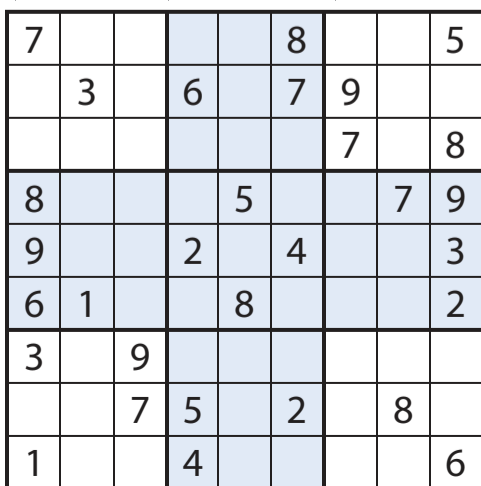
Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 South Carolina capital
 - 9 Echo
 - 10 Health resort
 - 12 School assignment
 - 13 Adriatic seaport
 - 15 Hardened
 - 16 Language of botany
 - 17 Down's opposite
 - 19 Clear, convincing
 - 20 Doze (off)
 - 22 Rank of Brit. TV sleuth Morse
 - 23 Injure by overworking
 - 27 Half an em (print)
 - 28 Beard bits
 - 29 Falsehood
 - 31 A couple in love
 - 32 Work a loom
 - 34 Neither this _ that
 - 35 Method, style
 - 36 Private things!
- ### DOWN
- 2 Refinable rock
 - 3 Not as much
 - 4 Unexpected sports outcome



- 5 Butcher's stock
- 6 Inlet, cove
- 7 That object
- 8 Artist's picture
- 10 Stuffed
- 11 Royal child
- 13 Groceries holder
- 14 Solar radiance
- 16 Olivier's initials
- 18 Mashed veg?
- 19 Tuna tin
- 21 Less damp
- 24 Elbow's site
- 25 Exists
- 26 Grand instrument!
- 29 Camera's "eye"
- 30 Balanced, level
- 32 Armed strife
- 33 Time line period
- 35 Myself



SOLUTIONS PAGE 11

Smile files...



Alan Hopps / gettyimages

Ask Y: Answers to tough questions about God

QUESTION: IS BEING A CHRISTIAN REALLY AS HARD AS IT SEEMS?

BY PETER MEADOWS

IT SURE DOES look hard to live up to all that Jesus asks of those who set out to follow Him. But actually, it is even worse than that. It is impossible!

Okay, back up a minute. Am I suggesting there's no point as we can never make it? No. Just that we can never make it if the only resource we have is our own strength and commitment. Think of it this way – our relationship with God is like a marriage where both parties say 'I do' to the other. That involves us giving all of ourselves to God but also, wonder of wonders, God giving all of Himself to us. Far from being left to our own devices and some gritting of teeth, God responds to us by giving Himself to us to get through.

At this moment a short chorus of "All of me, why not take all of me" would be appropriate. Because that is what God offers us as we make our journey.

Writing to those who were followers of Jesus, one of the first Christian leaders put it like this, "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you..." (Romans 8:11). The same writer explained that God had "put His Spirit in our hearts..." (2 Corinthians 1:22).

He was talking about the creator God living in us. Why? Because we need God's power within us if we are to live a life that pleases Him and brings us true happiness. So don't think for a moment that the best those who set out to follow Jesus get is God cheering from the sidelines like an adoring fan, enthusiastically waving the foam "You're Number 1!"

God is not a cheerleader. He is actually wanting to run in our shoes.

I remember watching one of my sons going round a racing track at the wheel of a high-powered sports car as an 18th birthday gift. I was impressed – until his instructor changed places and took control.

Then we saw what could be done and the motoring really began. But it was only possible because the one who could make the difference was in the driving seat. And that's where God offers to be to those who set out to follow Jesus. To be at work within us; at the very heart of all we are.

So it sure will be impossible if our song is to be *I Did it My Way*. But God makes us a far better offer.

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.



TRUTH AMONG THE HYPOCRITES

BY HARRIET COOMBE

WHY WOULD I want to be a Christian when they are all hypocrites? It's a question many people ask, often out of disappointment, frustration, or deep wounds caused by people who claimed to follow Jesus but didn't reflect His character.

The word "hypocrite" means someone who pretends to be something they are not. Sadly, it's true that many people who call themselves Christians have acted in ways that contradict the teachings of Christ – some even causing great harm.

So why would anyone want to be part of a group that often seems to fail its own standards?

Let's start with this: becoming a Christian isn't about following other Christians. It's about following Christ.

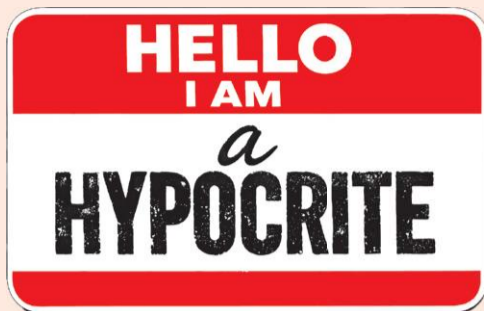
Christianity, at its core, is not about perfect people – it's about a perfect God who reaches out to broken people.

Jesus Himself acknowledged that there would be hypocrites among those who claimed to follow Him. In fact, some of His strongest rebukes were directed at religious leaders who said one thing but lived another. He called out their pride, their judgmental attitudes, and their lack of compassion. Jesus didn't approve of hypocrisy – He exposed it.

It's also worth noting that if hypocrisy offends you, you're not alone – it offends God, too. That ache you feel when someone says one thing and does another? That longing for authenticity? That desire for justice and integrity?

Those are reflections of the very heart of God. So your frustration with hypocrisy may not be a reason to reject faith – it might actually be a sign that you're closer to God's truth than you think.

But if Christianity isn't about



people pretending to be good, what is it about? It's about grace.

Christianity isn't a club for the morally superior – it's a hospital for the spiritually sick. Jesus came for the messed up, the ashamed, the lost, the confused, and yes, even the hypocrites.

Every real Christian begins their journey by admitting they aren't good enough. That's the whole point. We don't earn our way to God – we receive His mercy.

Of course, this doesn't excuse the failures of those who claim to follow Jesus. Christians are called to live differently, and when they don't, it causes damage.

Some people walk away from

faith entirely because of what they've seen or experienced. If that's your story, I'm sorry. But I hope you won't judge Jesus by those who fail to live like Him. In Jesus you'll find a Saviour who lived without hypocrisy, loved without limits, and gave His life for people who didn't deserve it. That's

Jesus. So why become a Christian?

Not because other Christians are perfect. They're not.

Not because church is always a safe place. Sometimes it isn't.

Not because you're looking to pretend you have it all together. You don't need to. Become a Christian because you've encountered the truth of Jesus – the One who sees your flaws and still loves you. The One who offers forgiveness and new life. The One who welcomes even the most broken person and says, "You belong."

Yes, Christians can be hypocrites. But Jesus never was. And He's the one worth following. ●

“
If hypocrisy offends you, you're not alone.”

NUDGE WITH KARL FAASE



Road rage

HAVE YOU EVER wondered about road rage? Why do people get so uptight with other drivers? One small mistake and people completely lose it!

Hugh Mackay, an Australian social researcher, called this "the last straw syndrome."

He believes that people are living and functioning under so much pressure that the smallest incident triggers a violent response. This may also explain some of the domestic violence that occurs in our community.

The speed and pressure of life are what causes the last straw syndrome. So many in our community are under the pressure of time, finances, relationships, or just desperation to be seen as successful. The harder we work, the more pressured our time is, and the shorter our fuse.

What we need is a release of the pressure that builds up so that it doesn't result in explosive violence.

We need the chance to slow down, to reflect and get life back into perspective. For me, prayer is that opportunity.

To stop and give my concerns to God; to allow God to take away my pressures and to change my attitude. Perhaps it's worth trying prayer in your own life today. ●

Finding light in the darkness

BY JANICE TEO

Australian Roma Flood never got to say goodbye. Each of the tragedies that blindsided her landed without warning; two of them denied her a last kiss, a final hug.

She lost her mother to cancer when she was 16, leading to her family disbanding and her father abandoning them.

Her daughter Danielle was brutally murdered – stabbed 30 times by a stranger in a women's shelter.

Years after, her husband and granddaughter waved as they set off on one of their regular joy rides on the family's light plane. Just hours later, they were gone – killed in a freak crash in the clear skies above Kings Beach on the Sunshine Coast in Australia.

Yet Roma, who still lives on the Sunshine Coast, not only survived but found a way out of her grief to become a voice of hope and resilience.

The 69-year-old retiree wrote a book titled *Despite the Odds: A story of resilience, recovery and restoration*, in which she recounts how she made it through her valley of the shadow of death and came out whole and healed on the other side.

Her book shares many of the keys that helped her, but there is one in particular – her own Master key – Jesus Christ.

Roma had become a Christian many years before, while her daughter Danielle was battling a severe drug addiction.

Speaking to the YouTube channel WhyJesus? she said the seed of Christianity had been planted when she was only 14 after reading the book *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

"That book just spoke to me and made me want to become a missionary," she told host Leigh Pryse.

But that dream got put on the backburner as life became busy and more difficult. When Danielle fell into drugs as a teenager, it was the beginning of a long struggle.

One day, Roma confided in a friend about her struggles with Danielle.

"I love going to church," this friend said. "Do you want to come along?"

Two weeks later, Roma found herself in church with her friend, listening to a sermon which changed her life.

"The pastor talked about praying for other people and it just touched me. I felt the love of God so strongly in that church," she said. "After the service some people came and prayed with me as I committed my life to Jesus.

"I could not stop crying. I had problems I didn't know how to solve but now I had Jesus and that changed everything.

"I knew that from that point that God was real and it was my relationship with Him that really helped me work through each of those different traumas I went through."

She had been a Christian for five years when one of her life's great tragedies crashed around her.

It was 1996. Danielle, who had herself become a Christian and had beaten her addiction, was staying at a women's refuge with her two



After losing almost everything, Roma found hope and healing.

children, Lysinda and Jesse. She was only there because it was a convenient place to bed down for a few nights while on holiday in Sydney and the refuge accommodated them.

The 22-year-old mother of two stayed for three or four nights and was actually packed and about to leave when she was struck by her killer, who was mentally unstable.

The killer then kidnapped Lysinda and Jesse and held them for 17 hours before they were finally rescued.

After Danielle's death, Lysinda and Jesse moved in with Roma and her husband Bernard, a qualified pilot. It was Lysinda who died with her grandfather in the plane crash in 2007. She was just 13.

It would be easy to imagine Roma's faith and belief in God to have been shaken, even

broken.

"My world started to spiral – I went into shock, frustration, anger. When you go through the initial stages of grief you're just trying to survive, to make it through another day.

"I was so angry I wanted to throw every plate in the house. I wanted to scream. I just couldn't get away from the grief – it was a weight I couldn't escape from.

"I couldn't understand why these things were happening but there was no way I could or would run away from Him. It didn't even enter my mind.

"A lot of the time I didn't feel His presence, but Scripture says He never

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“
I was so angry I wanted to throw every plate in the house.”

leaves us and I held on to that by faith. And God came through all the time, even when I didn't sense that He was around and I didn't feel His presence. He provided someone or something with exactly what I needed at exactly that point in time.

"When you really have a relationship with God, when you have experienced Him then what you have is heart knowledge," she explained.

So, instead of cutting herself off from God, she pressed into Him as hard as she could.

"And you know what?" she asked. "He was there."

"I have diaries full of the things that He did for me... just little things, but little things are big things when you're going through all-consuming grief."

She has written the book for "everyone facing challenges in life, loss, grief or trauma. Everyone needs hope and everyday keys to get through life's challenges and help them smile again."

She has learned to do just that and thanks God for giving her the strength "to continue my journey knowing that one day I will be reunited with Bernard, Danielle and Lysinda in heaven." ●

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Surrender in the storm

At 20 years old, musical theatre performer Holly McDonald found herself alone in her Sydney apartment after being diagnosed with a chronic health condition.

"I was going in and out of consciousness at home. I didn't know what was happening," she told Deliverance Down Under.

"[I] was doing eight shows a week, doing full-time uni and doing work as well. I thought it was just burnout."

But she was eventually diagnosed with type 1 diabetes – a condition that if left untreated, would put her in a coma and lead to death. However, when Holly went home, she knew that life will never be the same. "Now with everything I eat and drink, with everything that I do, I need to stick a needle in me all the time just to live."

Alone in her apartment, Holly felt like she had hit rock bottom.

"It was the first time I was angry at God."

While Holly didn't grow up as a Christian, she knew about Jesus from what she learned at school.

"I was in a Christian studies class and I was hearing these stories about Jesus and the miracles God was doing, and that spark of curiosity came alive."

But when she was 13, Holly developed depression and started having suicidal thoughts. She even made plans to take her own life.

"It got so bad that... I would write letters to my family members so that I could just leave an explanation on why I felt that way, because I didn't want them to feel like it was their fault."

Remembering the hope she learned about through Jesus, Holly began to pray every night.

"If You're so big, if You're real, if You're almighty, if You could do these miracles, perform a miracle on me and just make me happy," she prayed.

"Over time, God did that."

After two years, Holly read the Bible and prayed. Her mental health also improved significantly.

But when she moved to Sydney on her own at 19, life took a different turn.

"I saw all this partying and all this drinking that people were having fun and they were happy. I thought, 'Maybe I can try and fit in and be like that because they have something that I don't have.'

"I knew that something in me was lost and it needed fulfilling, and I thought this was where it was going to be fulfilled."

Then one day, Holly was sexually violated.

"I thought that finally I was being fulfilled, finally getting love. [But] it led to something being taken from me and it felt like I was just a body on a mattress."

A friend of Holly's brought her to church, where she found a community that supported her in her journey towards healing and rebuilding her identity in God.

"For so long that situation made me think that my identity was found in men and sex.

"But that church showed me that my identity is found in God and that I can have a relationship with Him through community."

Things were going well until in 2023, she was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

"One night I was crying on my knees and asking God, 'Why?'"

"It was then when I heard God speak, 'Holly, I can take it. I'm so much bigger than you think. I'm big enough to take you yelling at Me. I'm big enough to take all the weight. I'm big enough to take everything that you've done in your past. I've saved you from so much. I can take it all.'

"That night I just released it all to God." As she surrendered her life to God, Holly watched as her faith in Him grew.

"Those first few months after being diagnosed was just surrender after surrender. God really answered my prayers through that surrender.

"I began to have close friends to support me in faith, which is something that I never thought that I would have while growing up."

Today, Holly is living in a van and travelling around to meet new people and share with them about how they can find their purpose in Jesus.

"Why did God create me? Why am I here in this life?" she asked herself.

"God really put on my heart that I should go out and do exactly what I'm called for – to love people, to make them get closer to heaven.

"I love meeting strangers and having conversations with them and asking them about their purpose, what they think life is and why they think that they're in this world. I'd love to have those conversations.

"If I step out into my faith, turn my fear into worship, then it's going to make other people see His love."



Holly McDonald

PAIN PAVES THE WAY TO TRUE LOVE

Heartbreak has its uses. Just ask Marvyn Archer, whose deep pain ultimately became great gain.

Marvyn, 21, had been in a relationship for some time, and was certain he and his girlfriend would get married.

"But then, with no warning, my girl suddenly lost her feelings for me," he told *Challenge News*.

"That incredibly deep love I thought would never cease evaporated in a single day.

"I was willing to do anything for her and would willingly have died for her."

Picking up the shattered pieces took what some would call superhuman effort, but Marvyn knows it was more supernatural than superhuman.

"I know God let it happen for a reason," he said with conviction.

"It forced me to rely far more on Him and He is now the only thing that gets me through each day."

Marvyn's father is a pastor and Marvyn went to church, but because he believed following God meant he would have to give up control of his life, he was not willing to become a Christian.

"I knew God was better and that following Him would be better, but I also knew that if I made that choice, I would have to spend time doing 'God stuff' and that He would change everything," he said candidly.

"I would need to be looking for a way to talk about God in every conversation.

"I knew God may want me to be a missionary or do something else crazy and once I put Him in control I would have to follow Him.

"I wouldn't be able to say no anymore. I could very well have to give up everything I valued and devote my life to ministry.

"I went to church and did all the right things but it wasn't the same as having a relationship with God."

When he fell in love, he said she "ticked all the boxes" but was surprised to discover that life without God did not satisfy, even with the boxes ticked.

"Though my girlfriend and I had Christian backgrounds neither of us



After losing the relationship he thought would last forever, Marvyn Archer found a stronger and more lasting love in his faith.

was actually following Christ," Marvyn admitted.

"If He hadn't drawn me to Himself I would never have chosen to follow Him on my own. I realised I needed God to be part of my relationship."

Marvyn shared his feelings with his father, brother and a good friend, all of whom counselled him that having a vibrant relationship with God was the most worthwhile goal of all.

Finally, in June 2024, he yielded and asked God to change him.

"The very next morning as I read my Bible, I knew God had come into my life, and accepted me," he recalled.

"I was filled with a desire to share with other people and a deep knowledge that God was moving.

"Over the next three days I prayed constantly... I wanted to keep sharing about Him with others."

He helped his girlfriend to commit her life to God and said their relationship became close to perfect.

"We grew incredibly close to each other and shared our deepest feelings and most private experiences.

"We were overwhelmed with how much God had blessed us and we said countless times that no-one could be as perfect as the other.

"We saw that having God at the centre of our relationship made it so much better than it could otherwise have been. It was a million times better than we had thought possible."

And then inexplicably, she fell out of love with Marvyn.

"At this point, when I had everything I ever wanted, it all changed. I still don't understand how it happened."

The breakup hit him hard, but his faith has kept him strong.

"I don't go a day without feeling that sadness, but I also don't go a day without experiencing God's goodness.

"Many times when I've been at my worst He's given me what I needed to keep going. He never lets me face more than I can handle and He always gives me what I need.

"I want to serve Him all my life and I know that everything this world has to offer is not worth anything without God."

Indescribable joy

Mario Joseph (pictured) was born into a Muslim community in India. At birth, he was dedicated to Allah by his parents. At just eight years old, they sent him to a Muslim Arabic college to train as an imam (leader).

After 10 years of rigorous study, he reached that goal. As an imam, Mario served the people in his village. Then one day, a villager asked him, "Who is Jesus?"

He thought he knew the answer, but when he opened the Qu'ran to study, what he found surprised him. The name "Muhammad" appeared in the Qu'ran only four times, but the name "Jesus" appeared 25 times.

He also noticed the only woman named in the Qu'ran is Mary, the mother of Jesus. No other woman is named.

He kept reading and found Jesus called "the Word of God" and "the Spirit of God." The Qu'ran even says Jesus healed the blind and the sick. He gave life to the dead and went to heaven. It states He is still alive and will return.

Muhammad, on the other hand, did not perform miracles. He died and will not return.

Mario began to wonder, could Jesus be greater than Muhammad? His eyes then fell on a verse in chapter 10, verse 94 of the Qu'ran: "If you have any doubts about this Qu'ran, ask the people who read the Bible."

That led him to study the Bible. When he opened the Gospel of John, he read, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The Qu'ran calls Jesus the Word of God. Now Mario saw the Bible does too. John 1:12 hit him hard: "To all who received Him, He gave the right to become children of God."

He couldn't believe it. He could call God, "Father." The Creator of the universe, wanted him as a child.

"I can't even explain the joy I felt," Mario said, "when I realised I could call God, my Father. It was like something burst open in my heart."

In that moment, Mario surrendered his heart to Jesus.

Today he travels across the Middle East as an evangelist.





AI generated image.

Noah's ark: Fact or fiction?

Part 7: How could animals migrate from Mount Ararat all over the earth?

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.

MANY PEOPLE IMAGINE a pair of animals leaving Noah's ark and heading off on an incredibly long trip. But many centuries have passed and animals would migrate over many generations.

During the Ice Age, immediately after the flood, sea levels were much lower, providing land bridges for animals to cross. Animals could have also travelled across the ocean on floating rafts of vegetation, something that has often been observed in recent times. Also, people could have transported many animals to different parts of the world, as they are still doing today.

A real example can help. When cane toads were introduced by humans into Australia, it took only 10 years for their population to spread a distance of 2,000km. Their current rate of spread is from five to 50km per year. And toads are not as mobile as other animals such as cattle, cats and many reptiles.

After the flood, there would have been no problem for successive population waves of animals moving into 'empty' ecological niches in all directions.

Has Noah's Ark been found?

"And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the 17th day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat." (Genesis 8:4)

Most people associate the biblical mountain with Mount Ararat in modern-day Turkey. In spite of numerous expeditions to that mountain last century, no conclusive evidence of the ark has been found.

However, we can't be sure that Mount Ararat in Turkey is the mountain that the Bible is talking about (the Bible says 'mountains' of Ararat not 'mountain'). Today's Mount Ararat has a pointed peak that would make it difficult for the ark to land safely. Some creationists suggest that the ark rested on a mountain range in another area in the Middle East, and have proposed some regions to explore. Some suggest that modern Mount Ararat was only given that name in the past

few thousand years.

Perhaps the remains will never be found. After all, it was about 4,500 years ago that it landed, and it may have disintegrated or been demolished (perhaps for building materials or firewood). On the other hand, some Bible scholars and scientists believe that the ark could still be preserved. If it were discovered one day, it would remind the world of God's judgement in the past, and the judgement that is yet to come.

Why did God destroy the earth?

One of the most important lessons of Noah's flood is the reason it came on the earth. The Bible says: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* (Genesis 6:5)

The flood is a warning to all people that the Creator God cares about His creation. He cares how we behave and He will judge the earth. He will also save those who trust Him.

Everyone on the earth, except Noah, his sons and their wives, continued with their violence (the Hebrew word is *hamas*, Genesis 6:11) and corruption. So God judged them. Even though the punishment was severe, all were without excuse.

We also see that God used the flood as His way of purifying the earth – separating those who trusted Him from those who didn't. All through history, as we see recorded in the Bible, God has used this pattern of judgement and purification in dealing with people.

So we need to obey God's instructions and remember His dealings in history. Otherwise our lot will be to repeat the same mistakes and experience the same consequences, unless we heed the true history and understanding of the world as recorded in the Bible. ●

This series will conclude in the next edition of Challenge News.

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

The intricate mind

BY DRS CARL WIELAND AND DON BATTEN

When neuroscientist Dr Peter Line explained the intricacies of his scientific field, the human brain, his quiet passion was infectious.

"Around 100 billion neurons [nerve cells], each connecting to about a thousand others – that's about 100 trillion connections," he said.

"And then there are other components, playing many different roles – the complexity is enormous."

Peter explained that the brain is quite unlike a computer, and is far more complex.

"For instance, if you knock out a portion of a computer's circuitry, the whole thing malfunctions. But the brain has a lot of built-in redundancy – if part of it is damaged, other parts can usually take over some of the function.

"There are still many specifics we don't understand. How, for instance, does this transmission of nerve signals enable thinking? And how can that then lead to consciousness?"

As he is a Christian, we asked Peter what he thought of research about a "God spot" in the brain, that allegedly makes people believe in God?

"Scientifically, the whole notion is quite laughable, really", Peter said. "We can see which part of the brain 'lights up' in various situations... but that does not mean that there is a place in the brain set aside for religious experience, such as a 'God spot'.

"Although brain regions may 'light up' due to neuronal activity, we just do not know what this means in terms of enabling a person to think."

Although he had what he called "some mild religious instruction" as a child, Peter said, "I used to take evolution for granted, because that is what society conditions you to believe, although my knowledge about evolution was really no better than my poor knowledge of the Bible.

"I wrestled with the idea of God. Any belief system that could interest me had to be true – I didn't want to waste my life believing in a false God, a false religion."

Peter was a keen triathlete, even competing successfully in Ironman events, but found that they didn't satisfy him.

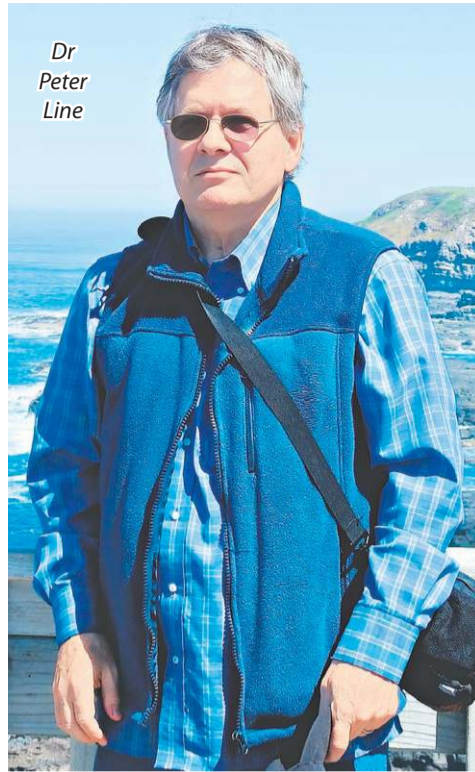
"I knew deep down that I was a sinner," he said, "but I didn't know whether heaven or hell – or God – were real. I thought I would just hope for the best if I died.

"I realised early on, though, that the idea of God creating Adam from the dust, and the idea we descended from apes, were mutually exclusive."

One day, when pondering this, Peter told God, "if You really are there, God, then You have the power to solve this problem for me."

Months later, and after having commenced a university degree, he attended a film lecture by the late triple-doctorate scientist, Dr Arthur Wilder-Smith.

He said, "I thought I was going to hear an evolutionist, but he was giv-



Dr Peter Line

ing evidence against evolution. I was taken by complete surprise, but what he said really made sense with what I knew about science. I felt a sense of relief – there is a God. I became a creationist in my heart right then, and I felt that this must be why Christians have that strong faith."

A few months after his intellectual conversion to creation, Peter decided to personally put his trust in Jesus Christ, convinced that Jesus is the Creator and Lord of all, who sacrificed His life on the cross to pay for the sins of any who would believe in Him, and then rose again three days later.



Homo erectus composite skull Peking Man.

In recent years, Peter chose to develop a specialised interest in "ape-man" claims because, he said, "People get intimidated by all of this continual propaganda on 'human evolution.'"

Peter argued that Neanderthals, Homo erectus, and the tiny "Hobbit" fossils from the Indonesian island of Flores, are examples of descendants of Adam exhibiting human variation, such as the larger than average brains of Neanderthals.

"An increasing number of researchers are now suggesting that some form of microcephaly in pygmy humans is the likely explanation for the anatomy of the Hobbit," Peter said.

Specimens like the australopithecines (e.g. 'Lucy') are, for Dr Line, examples of extinct primates that had nothing to do with human ancestry, as even some evolutionists concede.

He said, "If someone finds a supposed link between two pigs, it makes no splash, but the slightest bit of variation in some teeth of what is supposed to be in the human line, and, wow – it's almost like ancestor worship. It's really quite scientifically irresponsible. And the saddest thing is that it keeps many people from trusting the Bible, and thus coming to know Jesus Christ.

"Christians have nothing to fear from these discoveries," Peter concluded. "None will turn out to be real 'ape-men', because God made Adam from the dust of the ground, not from an ape, and Eve from Adam's side. We were specially created – in the image of God." ●

Edited article is courtesy of Creation Ministries International.

DR PETER LINE (B. App. Sc., M.App.Sc., Ph.D.) specialises in the electrophysiology of the brain. He currently lectures in cellular biophysics and neuroanatomy at an Australian university. Authors Carl Wieland and Don Batten hold doctorates in medicine and plant physiology respectively.

“
I became a creationist in my heart right then.
”

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YOUTH TRUTH

I FOUND A PEACE THAT LASTS

For years, Kiera lived with an invisible weight pressing on her chest – a relentless cycle of anxiety, fear and self-doubt. “I struggled with anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and numerous other issues in my life, always feeling alone in those struggles,” she told *Challenge News*. “I was constantly in a state of fear – unable to escape my own head. I cried myself to sleep most nights as I couldn’t rest with the constant

bombardment of fear and anxiety.” Kiera grew up knowing about God, but at the time, it felt distant. “My parents were believers so God was always a part of my life. I went to church and Sunday school. I knew how to pray. I knew all the Bible stories. I was living my parents’ faith... ticking the boxes without feeling it in my heart.” As a teenager, that connection faded. “My parents drifted away from God and I did too. We didn’t

go to church, I didn’t read the Bible and I only prayed when I had problems. I lived for myself, jumping from distraction to distraction, never feeling fulfilled.” Things began to shift when her family moved interstate. “I met a group of girls (now my best friends) who were born again believers from strong Christian homes. They prayed about everything, read their Bibles and learned about God. They had so much joy and peace in their lives. And I wanted that joy, peace and faith that they had.” She began reading, praying and going to church again – but, as she admitted, “I was pursuing God in the mind but not yet in heart.”



Kiera found hope in the storm of anxiety.

wasn’t alone and through drawing closer and relying on God, I was able to conquer those anxieties and intrusive thoughts.

“Jesus is certainly a much better fighter than me,” she added.

Kiera’s outlook has changed dramatically. “I don’t worry (much) about tomorrow and my whole attitude has changed. I can now look forward to each day, knowing I have God by my side. I have become kinder and more patient towards others. I love helping people and seeing how God can use struggles.”

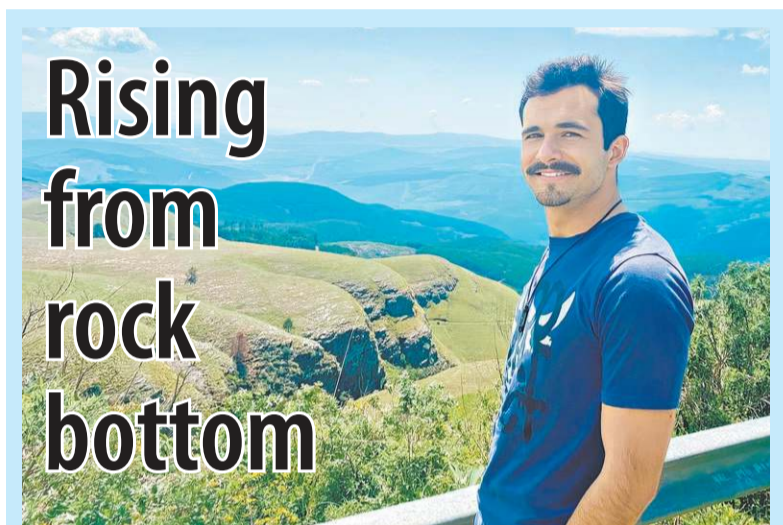
In the years since, she’s experienced answered prayers and growth.

“God has helped me in so many ways. I’ve seen protection and provision when I felt hopeless. And endless love and forgiveness despite consistent mistakes on my part. He has been faithful and true, walking alongside me every step.”

Her faith has also taken her beyond her comfort zone.

“I recently went on a mission trip to South Africa, where I was able to see firsthand the greatness of God. In ministry and bringing people to Jesus. In my own personal growth and trusting in Him. I have been so very blessed by Jesus in all areas of my life and am so thankful for all He has done for me.”

Kiera summed it up simply: “He is my hope when I had none. My peace in the stormiest seas and love when I feel unlovable. He is all I need.” •



Rising from rock bottom

Connor Vivier (pictured) had a tough life. By the time he was in high school, he had attempted suicide three times.

“I started drinking and partying at 14 and got kicked out of my home when I was 16,” he told *Challenge News*.

“In that year, I was sexually assaulted and started using drugs such as meth and cocaine.”

Connor grew up in a Christian household in South Africa and he saw his parents attend church regularly. As a child, he felt rejected by his parents and out of rebellion, Connor turned away from Christianity.

“I heard about God from when I was a child but I never believed. As my rebellion grew, I started despising Christianity,” said the 20-year-old.

“My depression grew deeper and after that year, my dad took me to live with him. I continued with drugs and alcohol and I began taking an interest in the occult.”

When he was in his final year of high school, he was using drugs multiple times a day, staying in a “godless relationship” and ready to give up on life. After surviving his last suicide attempt and another sexual assault, Connor sent himself to rehab to get help.

“There, I was still dealing with

severe withdrawals and trauma. “On my second night, I was at rock bottom. I cried out to Jesus. If He could prove His existence to me, I would give my heart to Him.”

“The next morning, I woke up without any withdrawals or anxiety and I instantly knew that He was the king of my world.”

Connor surrendered his life to Jesus.

“Everything felt clear, no more confusion. The world was brighter and I no longer wanted to look for ‘truth’ in substances or dark places. I felt so fulfilled.”

Since then, Connor has made amends with his family.

“My relationship with my family strengthened and we’ve become so happy. I got opportunities to spread the Gospel [good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection].

“All challenges I’m faced with, I give to Jesus. Even when I try to handle it myself, I remind myself that my trials must be laid at His feet. God has made promises which He has always followed through.”

Connor’s favourite verse is Luke 10:19: “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.”

“Jesus saves. You will never be too broken for Him to love you. He will turn the hearts of stone to flesh so you may love and receive love.” •

The mental battle, meanwhile, only grew stronger.

“I struggled with constant anxiety and intrusive thoughts that terrified me. No one knew about my struggle and I tried every method I could find to fix it. But I never could. I had no hope, no escape. I wished I were dead because I knew I couldn’t live like this anymore.”

In desperation, Kiera turned to faith. “I started reading and studying every single verse in the Bible on fear and anxiety. I prayed constantly to God for help and read the Bible until I fell asleep every night.”

Then came a turning point. “One weekend my friends invited me to a

Christian church camp. The preacher gave a sermon on salvation and I realised it was what I had been missing. That night in bed I tearfully confessed my sins, asking God for forgiveness and invited Him into my heart. All this time I had known Jesus in my head... But it was never in my heart and in my life.”

Her struggles didn’t disappear overnight. “I’d be lying if I said it was easy. My anxiety and fear didn’t just disappear. I still had battles to fight,” Kiera said. “But now I had someone to fight them for me and with me. I

WORDS OF LIFE BREAK THROUGH DEPRESSION

Hidden thoughts, full of death. South African student Zellie Jansen van Vuuren bathed herself in them.

She might have acted on them too if her mother had not noticed the change in her daughter.

“I had isolated myself from the world, my friends and family,” Zellie told *Challenge News*.

“Thankfully my mother came to me one day.

“She told me she was kind of angry, and that suicide and depression would not solve the problem.

“She told me, ‘Then the devil will win, because he doesn’t want us to live out our purpose in God.’”

Zellie grew up in a Christian home. She says she always knew about Jesus thanks to the guidance of her parents.

“He has always been a part of our family and we talk about Him regularly – His goodness, grace, love and protection over us.”

Zellie made a personal commitment to Him about 10 years ago, and never experienced much beyond the normal ups and downs of life.

In October 2020, she decided to pursue God whole-heartedly. It was not long after that that the depression began.

“I allowed the devil to come in with his lies, believing I was not good enough, that I have no purpose. I

chose to listen to the devil instead of God.”

Her mother’s words became a turning point.

Zellie realised she had bought into terrible lies about her identity.

“From that point I chose to listen to Jesus and His truth over me – that I am loved, chosen and redeemed.

“I am a child of God and He is my Father, Friend, Comforter, Healer, Way Maker, Miracle Worker – the list goes on and on.”

Zellie said the best part of being a Christian is that she is never alone.

“There is this peace and love within you that surpasses all understanding and you just want to share it with the world.”

The toughest part? She admitted it’s having to continually sacrifice yourself, giving your life daily to God, giving up control.

“To realise that the world will hate you and the devil will attack you.

“If not for Jesus, my parents and friends who spoke life over me, I wouldn’t be able to write my story and share my testimony with others.

“But God is good and almighty and



Zellie Jansen van Vuuren

He works all things for good. Never underestimate the power, love and grace of God.” •

Editor’s note: If you are struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts, please know help is available. Reach out to trusted family members, pastors, counsellors, doctors or mental health professionals for support and care.

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

Recipe of the month



Chocolate chip pecan cookies

I MADE THESE cookies for my husband and daughter, who are both studying hard and glued to their respective desks. The cookies were made with love and tasted wonderful; rich and chocolate-filled, chewy, but with the subtle crunch of the nuts, and just the right amount of salt to counter the sweetness. I am sure you have your favourite chocolate chip cookie recipe, but if you feel the need for something a little different, why not try these?

Ingredients (makes about 30 cookies)

- 180 g soft butter
- 120 g brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 300 g self-raising flour
- 200 g dark chocolate roughly chopped
- 130 g pecan pieces

and combine well. Once well incorporated add the remaining flour, the chocolate and the pecans and mix together gently until all the flour is incorporated and the chocolate and pecans evenly distributed.

Using a tablespoon, scoop out spoonfuls of mixture and roll them into a ball with your hands.

Place on the trays, with some space for spreading between them. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until lightly golden and cooked. They should still have a little give, but this will ensure they are gooey and chewy and scrumptious when they have cooled a little.

Serve them warm or cool completely and store in an airtight container. They will keep for four or five days.

Recipe by Margaret Warren, photo by Andrew Warren. Used with permission under a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC license.

Method

Preheat oven to 165 C.

Line two shallow baking trays or cookie sheets with silicon baking paper.

In a medium-sized bowl beat the butter, sugar, vanilla and salt together until creamy. You can use a mixer or do it by hand. For me there is something wonderful about doing this by hand, but it does require that the butter is nicely soft for the task to be truly satisfying.

Beat in the eggs one at a time. Add half of the flour

Chuck Norris: Against all odds

The world recently mourned the loss of Chuck Norris, the actor, martial arts legend and cultural icon, who passed away at the age of 86.

Known for his legendary toughness and near-mythical feats – immortalised in countless internet memes like “Chuck Norris counted to infinity. Twice” – Chuck’s real life was far richer and more complex than any joke could capture.

Chuck grew up as an extremely shy, non-athletic boy in poor rural Oklahoma with an alcoholic father who abandoned the family.

His heroes were Old West cowboy film stars such as Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and Hopalong Cassidy.

“Growing up, not having a father around, you have to create your own image of a father, and that became the image of a father that I would like to have had,” Chuck told CBN.com.

Little did he know that in time he would become a six-time undefeated World Middleweight Karate Champion, star as the hero in more than 23 films and write and produce his own hit television series *Walker, Texas Ranger*.

Chuck’s inspiration came when he was exposed to martial arts in Korea while serving in the Air Force.

“[I] was just completely taken with the physical ability of the martial artists and [earning] my black belt,” Chuck recalled.

Within eight years he achieved world recognition and holds the distinction of being the first man in the Western hemisphere to receive an eighth-degree black belt grand master in Tae Kwon Do.

After winning the world karate championships he opened a successful chain of karate schools and Hollywood soon took note, casting him in his first feature film.

Soon Chuck was a box office success. He had money, fame and influence but deep down he was miserable.

He recalled that his mother was always a solid rock for the family and never gave up on her children, despite the challenges they faced growing up.

“She influenced me spiritually and instilled in me a sense of responsibility that carried over in my later adult life. She always told me ‘God has plans for you,’ and I didn’t know what she meant at the time. I think I do now,” he told bpnews.net.

“I gave my life to the Lord at 12. I was baptised at 12.

“Then it grew stronger. And then I got to go to a Billy Graham crusade, [but] unfortunately a lot of times in the entertainment industry, sometimes you lose sight of what’s really important in your life. I lost a marriage because of it.”

The faith that he had growing up took a backseat to the life of fame and success he was now living.

Every now and again the death of a loved one was enough to remind him that he had drifted away from God but it was soon forgotten with his drive to succeed in the entertainment industry.

“Finally, my best friend said, ‘You have got to get your act together. You are really not a happy guy. There’s a woman I want you to meet. I’m going to invite her to Dallas,’” Chuck told CBN.com.

This woman, Gena, became Chuck’s second wife and together they eventually found their way back to living with Jesus as Lord over their lives.

In his book *Against All Odds*, Chuck openly shared about the mistakes they had made, as well as how God had helped them through tough circumstances,



Actor Chuck Norris and wife Gena O’Kelley in 2019 in Austria. (Photo by Hannes Magerstaedt/Getty Images)

including the difficult birth of their twins.

“I had earned millions of dollars over my lifetime,” he wrote in his book.

“I’d been a friend to several presidents, yet all the money in my bank account couldn’t help me now.... There was only one person to whom I could turn.”

It was Jesus Christ. The one who had been there throughout Chuck’s life.

“It’s amazing because people come up to me and say, ‘Chuck, you’re the lucki-

est guy in the world to be a world karate champion and a movie and TV star.’ When they say this to me, I kind of smile because luck had nothing to do with it; God had everything to do with it.”

In March 2026, Chuck was hospitalised in Hawaii after experiencing a medical emergency.

He died on March 19 at the age of 86, leaving behind a legacy that spans martial arts, film, television, and faith.

MUSIC THAT SPEAKS TO THE SOUL

WE ALL HAVE favourite songs that touch us – music that lifts our mood, sparks memories, or makes us feel alive. But what if the music you listen to could also point to something greater – something deeper than emotion, something lasting?

The Bible says, “Sing to the Lord a new song” (Psalm 96:1), inviting us to experience joy through God’s presence. It’s an open invitation to discover a kind of peace that goes beyond circumstances.

Even if you’ve never called yourself a Christian, you can explore faith in a way that connects with everyday life. Worship

music, hymns, or even contemporary songs with hopeful messages can open your heart to reflection, peace, and perspective.

Many people discover that when they pause to listen to uplifting lyrics, their worries feel lighter, their mind clearer, and their hope renewed. Often in those moments, something shifts – not just emotionally, but spiritually too.

Music becomes a doorway: a small, accessible way to taste the peace and joy Jesus promises, even if you’re just beginning to explore. You may find yourself sensing an invitation to know Him more.

This week, try listening to a song that speaks of hope or love in a deeper way.

Let it prompt questions: Who is the source of that hope? Could God really be real, offering comfort and purpose? Even if you’re just curious, opening your heart to the possibility is the first step.

Some options of where to start are *Rescue* or *Trust in You* by Lauren Daigle, *Even If* by MercyMe, or *God Only Knows* by For King & Country.

Sometimes the simplest thing – hitting play and listening – can start a journey toward discovering something life-changing.

And, if you would like to respond to His invitation, see the box entitled *How do I Become a Christian* on page 11.



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

A marriage worth fighting for

BY ROB FURLONG

ONE MOTHER'S DAY my wife Karen received a beautiful gift from our eldest daughter. It was a photo album simply titled "For my Mother" consisting of pages of photos of our family with handwritten sections by our daughter recording her special memories about her mum, the things she has learned from her and her own aspirations as a young mum.

It was a beautiful gift that spoke to Karen's mother's heart as well as bringing back a wealth of memories for her.

It reminded me of the value of growing up in a place called "family" that is safe, loving, encouraging and enriching.

As I read through our daughter's reminiscences, I was surprised at how many times she commented on the loving relationship that exists between Karen and me.

I am the first to admit we have not had a perfect relationship, but our daughter has been really impacted by what we have tried to model for

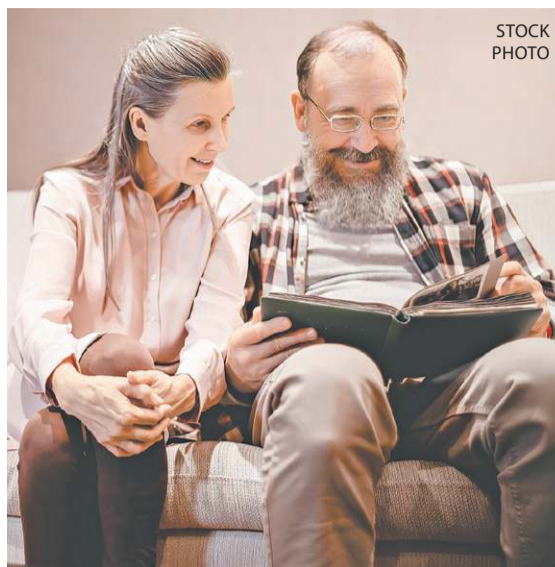
our kids. A report written by Glenn Stanton some years ago powerfully demonstrated how the traditional two-parent family model has an undeniable advantage over other family models.

In part, Stanton said: "The family is the first civilization, where we learn to treat people justly, follow rules, and become productive..."

"The traditional two parent family model (is) the best model for adult sexual relationships, the raising of children, the development of productive, responsible citizens, and the building of a safe and civilized society."

He finished with this challenge: "The real work...is ultimately up to parents themselves. Will we do what it takes to make certain that our children are born into families where a mother and father are present, each intimately involved in their care, education and development?"

Stanton underscored what many of us have been saying for a long time – a strong, loving marriage must be worked at by both husband and wife



STOCK PHOTO

Often the secret thought is, "It's too hard – nothing could change our relationship or our family."

A few years back the film *Fireproof* challenged this kind of thinking. It's the story of a young couple whose marriage has hit rock bottom, and they both decide that divorce is the only way out of the mess they're in. The marriage looks doomed until

and when this happens you pass on to your children a lasting legacy.

This is not the case in many family units today, even where both parents are present.

Often the legacy handed to children is one that has trapped the family for generations in a cycle of criticism, anger, dysfunction and poor communication skills.

If the cycle is to be broken it must begin with mum and dad who agree that enough is enough and no matter what, they will work at their relationship with each other to build a family that will contribute in a healthy way to the community.

Sadly, many couples throw up their hands in despair at this point and bemoan the fact that there is work for them to do.

the husband's dad challenges his son to a 40-day exercise called "The Love Dare" which requires him to deliberately do loving things for his wife to save the marriage.

For me, the film is grounded in real life – there is no sugar coating here and anyone who is married will relate to it at several levels.

So here is some homework for you this month. If you feel your marriage is too hard – or even if you want to strengthen a good one – have a look at *Fireproof*. I believe it will inspire you to believe again that a truly happy marriage is possible: your children will thank you for it and so will our community!

Copies of the *Fireproof* DVD and the companion book, *The Love Dare* can be obtained from all good Christian bookstores.

C	O	L	U	M	B	I	A	P	7	4	1	9	3	8	6	2	5
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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

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



Saying "I do"

MARRIAGE IS ONE of the most profound commitments a person can make. Standing before family, friends, and God, a couple pledges, "I do."

They promise to love, honour, and remain faithful through life's highs and lows. Becoming a Christian is strikingly similar – it's saying "I do" to Jesus.

When someone chooses to follow Christ, it begins with a heartfelt commitment.

It's not about checking off rules or attending church; it's about surrendering your life, your plans, and your heart to someone who loves you perfectly.

Like a spouse, Jesus promises faithfulness, protection, and guidance – but He asks for trust in return.

Marriage is a covenant, a lifelong promise that goes beyond a contract.

Christianity, too, is a covenant relationship.

You are not entering a casual arrangement; you are committing to a lifelong journey with Jesus, trusting His wisdom, mercy, and plan for your life. And just like a strong marriage, this relationship grows deeper over time. You learn, forgive, and are transformed.

Marriage requires vulnerability. Partners share fears, weaknesses, and dreams.

Choosing Jesus also calls for honesty: admitting your mistakes, your need for help, and your desire for change. Unlike human marriage, which can fail, Jesus' love and His covenant are perfect and unbreakable – His promises are secure.

In both marriage and faith, a public declaration matters. Couples say "I do" before witnesses.

Christians publicly declare their commitment through baptism or testimony, signalling that their life now belongs to Jesus.

And like marriage, following Christ is not a one-time event but a lifelong journey – one of daily choices, growth, and transformation.

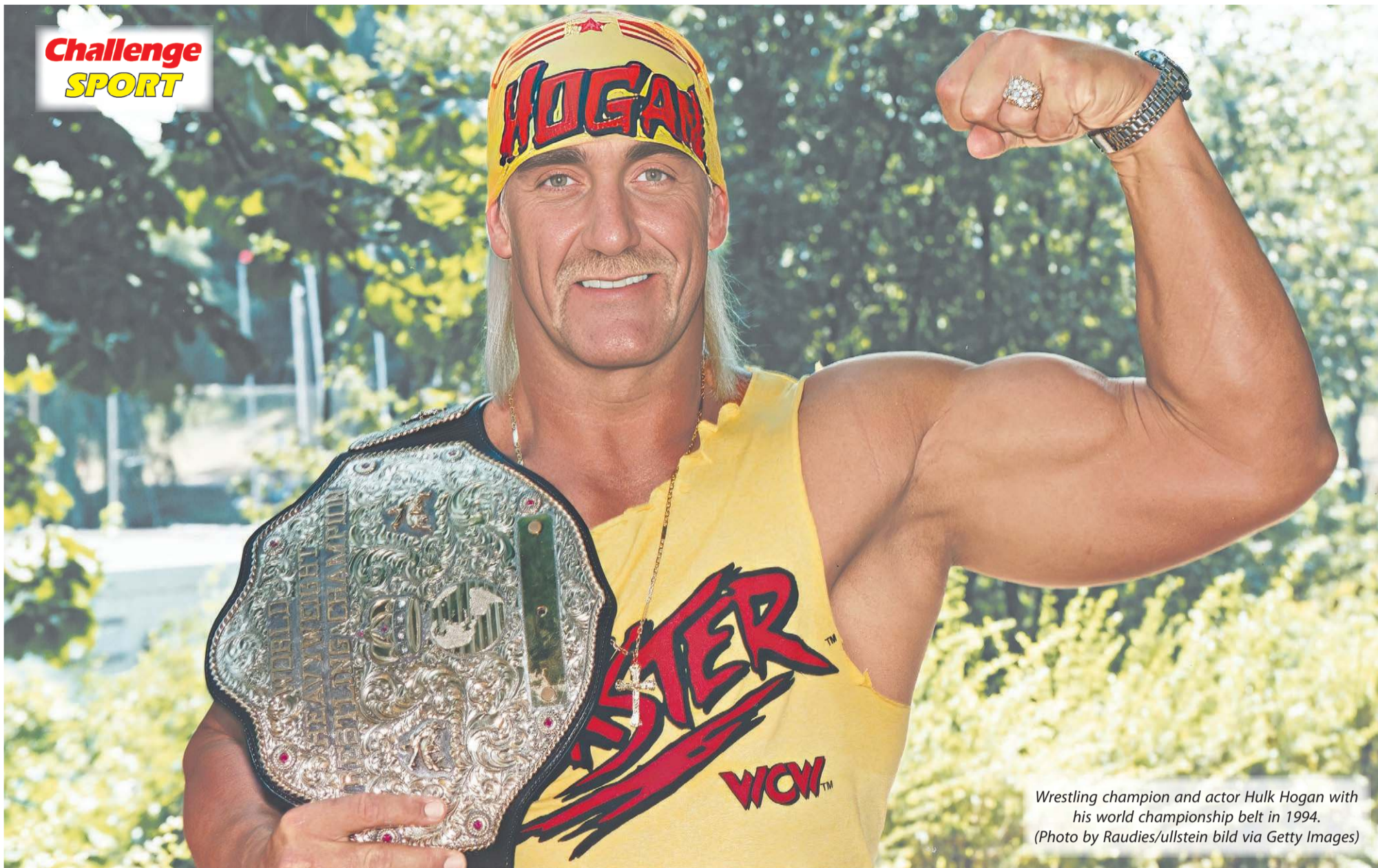
If you've ever longed for love that never fails, for peace that truly lasts, or for purpose that endures beyond the temporary, consider saying "I do" to Jesus.

Today, you can invite Him into your life. You can choose to trust Him, follow Him, and begin a relationship that will never end.

If you feel that tug in your heart, here's a simple prayer to start:

"Jesus, I recognise my need for You. I invite You into my life today. Please forgive me, guide me, and help me follow You. I choose You as Lord of my life. Amen."

By making that choice, you are stepping into a relationship that changes everything – just like saying "I do" at a wedding, but eternal.



Wrestling champion and actor Hulk Hogan with his world championship belt in 1994. (Photo by Raudies/ullstein bild via Getty Images)

THE REAL MAIN EVENT

BY MARK ELLIS

Almost a year has passed since the world of professional wrestling — and millions of fans worldwide — mourned the loss of Terry Bollea, better known as Hulk Hogan, who passed away on July 24, 2025, at his home in Clearwater, Florida. He was 71. Emergency responders found him unresponsive following a reported heart attack, and he was pronounced dead at a local hospital, according to TMZ Sports.

Hogan, the bleach-blond, bandana-clad icon who transformed wrestling into a global phenomenon, left a legacy not only of championship belts and “Hulkamania,” but of a strong Christian faith that became pronounced in his final years.



Hulk Hogan at his last televised WWE appearance on January 6, 2025 in Inglewood, California. (Photo by WWE/Getty Images)

Born August 11, 1953, in Augusta, Georgia, Hogan moved to Tampa, Florida, as a child, where his towering physique and charisma found a home in the wrestling ring.

Initially a bass guitarist in local rock bands, Hogan felt a pull toward wrestling in the 1970s, despite a trainer breaking his leg to deter him, according to *The Washington Post*. Undeterred, he trained relentlessly, his 24-inch “pythons” fuelled by what he later admitted was anabolic steroid use.

Under promoter Vincent J. McMahon, he adopted the name “Hulk Hogan,” paying royalties to Marvel Comics for the name inspired by the comic-book hero.

His 1984 WWF Championship win against the Iron Sheik, held for four years, propelled him to stardom.

He headlined eight of the first nine WrestleManias and drew 33 million viewers for his 1988 match against André the Giant, a record for wrestling broadcasts.

Hogan’s charisma and shirt-ripping showmanship made him a pop culture titan. His role as Thunderlips in *Rocky III* (1982) introduced him to Hollywood, followed by films like *No Holds Barred* and *Santa with Muscles*. His reality show *Hogan Knows Best* and Saturday morning cartoon cemented his status as a household name.

Wrestling historian Dave

Meltzer called him the greatest ticket-seller in wrestling history, stating, “You can’t possibly overrate his significance.”

Hogan’s Christian faith, a cornerstone of his later life, began at age 14 when he accepted Christ, though he admitted to “derailing” during his wrestling career, as shared in a 2024 700 Club interview.

Married to Linda Claridge (1983–2009), he had two children, Brooke and Nick.

His 2023 marriage to Sky Daily marked a new chapter of stability, with Sky dismissing

coma rumours weeks before his death, affirming his “strong heart.”

His 2023 baptism at Indian Rocks Baptist Church in Largo, Florida, alongside Sky, was a public declaration of his “total surrender and dedication to Jesus,” which he called “the greatest day of my life” on Instagram.

Wearing a John 3:16 shirt, Hogan described himself as a “meat suit filled with the Spirit of Christ,” a testing ground for faith.

Following the baptism, he invited his followers to turn to Jesus as well, saying, “Knowing of Jesus and knowing Him are two different things.”

Amidst his iconic status, he admitted that fame and fortune did not fulfill him.

“I was always a believer, but I didn’t completely surrender,” Hogan told TBN.

“I thought I could drive better than He could. I thought I could make the decisions better than He could. And now He takes His hands off the wheel and says, ‘Okay. You think you can do it better, go ahead and do it.’ So, like I said, I got tired of crashing and burning...”

“
I got tired
of crashing
and burning.”
”

He posted on his social media page about the joy of rediscovering his Christian faith.

“I accepted Christ as my Saviour at 14 years old and the training, prayers, and vitamins kept me in the game, but now that I am one with God, the main event theme of surrender, service, and love makes me the Real Main Event that can slam any giant of any size through

the power of my Lord and Saviour and so it is, even now brother, AMEN!”

Hogan invited his followers to come to Jesus, no matter what their background or condition: “I think all those people that have all the excuses for being in the wrong place at the wrong time or not being good enough. You don’t need to be cleaned up. Come to Him. He’ll clean you up,” he said.

Hogan’s legacy endures through his WWE Hall of Fame inductions (2005, 2020), six WWE Championships, and cultural impact. Tributes from Piers Morgan, who called him a “gentler, charming man” behind the “snarling beast,” and Ric Flair, who said, “No one will ever compare,” flood social media.

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