

# A FULFILLED LIFE WITHOUT ARMS



Josiah Kappert was born without arms but says he is "at peace with his life".

## Crossroad destiny

Vanessa was on the adventure of a lifetime, travelling around Europe, visiting new places and meeting new people. Admittedly sometimes gullible and naive, she trusted people too easily and found herself at a crossroads, pregnant and alone. It was there that she chose a new path, and her sorrow turned to joy.

Vanessa shares her story in her book, *A Crossroad Destiny*, recounting her travels to Greece, where the Western Australian had accepted a job at a bar on the isle of Poros.

Unable to speak the language, she was reliant on her new boss, Tony, who became very controlling. Vanessa soon felt out of her depth.

She met another tourist, an Englishman named Tom, and they quickly became friends. Tom helped her escape a bad situation with her first job and her controlling boss.

One night, after one too many drinks, Tom told Vanessa he was in love with her and asked if she would have a son with him

"Thank you for the offer, but no," she replied. She was only 21, travelling and having way too much fun for such a responsibility. Still, she kept thinking about what he had said to her.

At the end of the summer, Tom returned to England. She decided to travel there too, and visit family who were not far from where Tom lived in Liverpool. They reconnected and Tom showed her around his hometown. Their relationship soon became intimate and Vanessa discovered she was pregnant. Tom was over the moon – sure that they would have a son. Vanessa however, was nervous, not sure she was ready to be a mother.

They considered moving to Australia together and visited the embassy to enquire about what they needed to do. But in the days following, Vanessa stopped hearing from Tom. She called him, but it took four days for him to return her call.

When he did, he told her, "Vanessa, I don't think I love you as much as I said I did and I think you should go home to Australia and get on with the rest of your life." Shocked and confused, Vanessa realised there was only a three-week window before it was officially too late for her to fly back to Australia. She did not want to have the baby in England, alone and scared. Sure that Tom just had cold feet and would eventually follow her, Vanessa got on a plane for Australia.

Back in Western Australia, Vanessa questioned her decision to go home. Nearing the end of her pregnancy, Vanessa began losing any hope she'd had. She was no longer the happy, optimistic, and friendly girl she once was and was struggling with thoughts of suicide.

She didn't have anything for the baby but when questioned about how she would afford a pram or a cot, Vanessa said out of nowhere, "God will provide." She didn't know why she said it. She wasn't raised in a religious home and had been involved in New Age practices like fortune telling and astrology.

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Vanessa in her younger days.

BY SIMEON NEO

When Josiah Kappert's parents found out that their unborn baby would be born without arms, they were given the option to abort. The young couple refused.

"There was a lot of grief, when [my parents] found out that I was disabled, not because it was a bad thing. It's just a surprise," he tells *Challenge News*.

Right after he was born, doctors whisked him to the children's hospital for fear of any medical complications. They weren't sure if he even had a stomach.

"There was a very real chance that I wouldn't survive, according to doctors."

Now 25 years later, Josiah lives independently in a granny flat that his parents built.

Speaking at Rally for Life in Perth, Josiah says, "I had to learn how to adapt to my condition from the very beginning of my life.

"Adapting to life without arms was challenging for sure, but it was also natural. I didn't know any better. I never had arms and so therefore I had lost nothing."

He shares that while he was just "living life and going with the flow", it was his parents who had to adapt and change things for him so that he could receive the best possible opportunities. His teachers at school were also a great help to helping him learn basic skills.

"I remember in the early days [in primary school] when we weren't sure what I could do with writing," he tells FamilyVoice Australia.

"But we worked out a very small table with a chair, and they put a pencil in my toes. And after I went, I learned how to write."

Growing up in a large Christian family, Josiah learned about Jesus from a young age.

"I had what I call the trifecta of stability," he says, referring to the love and grace he experienced in his family, school and church.

“There was a very real chance that I wouldn't survive.”

"So, even though I was different, I didn't feel too different because there was always a reinforcement that everyone was made in the image of God."

Growing up in church, Josiah learned about the Gospel [the death and resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of mankind] through the teachings of the Bible.

But by the time he was in high school, he started asking questions.

"That's when you're starting to ask, 'Who am I?' and 'What do I actually think?' So Year 10 was when I really started questioning and thinking a bit more about it."

When Josiah was 15, he had to go through major back surgery for scoliosis.

He prayed for a miraculous heal-

ing that would take away the need for the surgery. But the healing did not come in the way he expected.

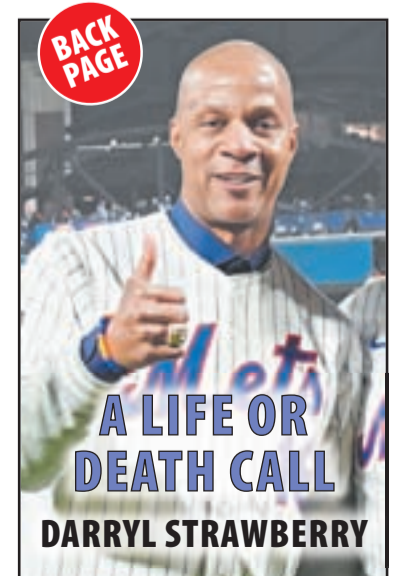
"It was probably one of the most difficult times of my life because it was the first time where I could not lean on my parents to just fix the problem.

"I had to ride through that tough time and just deal with it."

Once, he was left on the bed without help from 2am until his parents came to visit him at 9am.

"It was very difficult. I was wrestling with God, like Jacob [in the Bible], I was just angry at God."

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# A fulfilled life without arms

● From page 1

Looking back, Josiah sees how God had used those moments to humble him. "I was a very proud young guy and I needed to understand that it's not my will but the Lord's will."

After the surgery, doctors described Josiah's healing process as "miraculous". "It was the second day out of ICU but I was already sitting up. The physios were shocked."

By the fifth day after his surgery, Josiah was able to walk around the room. "The nurses that were watching were like 'wow.'"

While the medical staff saw the miraculous healing that God was doing in Josiah's life, it would take him a year-and-a-half before he could see it for himself. "The thing is, people look for that big moment where you accept Jesus Christ into your life.

"For me, it's been a series of little steps because it took me a year-and-a-half after that to finally understand what was going on."

It was during this season that Josiah wrestled with anger and bitterness. But he also found unending grace.

"And so I understood that I can surrender my life to God and trust that His plans are good. His intention is for the best for my life. And so I can trust in Him."

Speaking about his disability, Josiah adds, "Here's a guy who shouldn't be happy, shouldn't be at peace with his life. And humanly, that is not possible. It's not possible for someone in my condition to be satisfied and happy.

"But I am and I attribute that to a loving God."

Josiah holds two degrees and is currently pursuing a Master of Education.



Josiah Kappert

# I WAS A HINDU GURU

BY RABI MAHARAJ (ABRIDGED)

Because of vows my father had taken before I was born, he never spoke to me or paid me the slightest heed. How I wanted to hear him say, "Rabi. Son." Just once. But he never did.

For eight long years he uttered not a word. The trancelike condition he had achieved is called in the East a state of higher consciousness and can be attained only through deep meditation.

"Why is father that way?" I would ask my mother.

"He is seeking the true self that lies within us all, the One Being, of which there is no other," she would reply. "And that's what you are to do too, Rabi."

Father had set an example, achieved wide acclaim, and it was inevitable that upon his death his mantle would fall upon me. When my father died I was just 11 years old.

After his funeral, I became a favourite subject for the palm-readers and astrologers who frequented our house. It was encouraging to learn that all agreed I would become a great Hindu leader. I was obviously a chosen vessel, destined for early success in the search for union with Brahman (the One). Already many people were bowing before me, laying gifts at my feet and hanging garlands of flowers around my neck at religious ceremonies.

While vacationing at an aunt's ranch, I had my first real encounter with Jesus. I was walking along enjoying nature one day and was startled by a rustling sound in the underbrush behind me. I turned quickly and, to my horror, saw a large snake coming directly toward me.

In that moment of frozen terror, out of the past came my mother's voice, repeating words I had long forgotten: "Rabi, if ever you're in real danger and nothing else seems to work, there's another god you can pray to. His name is Jesus."

"Jesus! Help me!" I choked out, hardly audible.

To my astonishment, the snake wriggled off into the underbrush. Breathless and still trembling, I was filled with wondering gratitude to this amazing God, Jesus. Why had my mother not taught me more about Him?

One day my cousin's friend, Mollie, came by to visit. She told me that Jesus had brought her close to God. She also said that God is a God of love and that He desires us to be close to Him. As appealing as this sounded to me, I stubbornly resisted, not willing to surrender my Hindu roots.

Still, I found myself asking, "What makes you so happy? You must have been doing a lot of meditation."

"I used to," Mollie responded, "but not anymore. Jesus has given me a peace and joy that I never knew before... My joy is because my sins are forgiven. Peace and joy come from Christ, through really knowing Him."

I wanted her peace and joy, but I was absolutely resolved that I wasn't going to give up any part of my religion.

As she was leaving, she said: "Before you go to bed tonight, Rabi, please get on your knees and ask God to show you the truth – and I'll be praying for you."

So I did, and for the first time in my life I felt I had really prayed and gotten through – not to some impersonal

force, but to the true God who loves and cares. Then I fell asleep.

Soon after, I went with my cousin Krishna to a Christian meeting. The preacher's sermon was based on Psalm 23, and the words, "The Lord is my shepherd," made my heart leap. After explaining the Psalm, the preacher invited people to open their heart to Jesus. I could delay no longer.

Quietly, choking with emotion, I began: "Lord Jesus, I've never studied the Bible, but I've heard that you died for my sins so I could be forgiven and reconciled to God. Please forgive me all my sins. Come into my heart!"

Before I finished, I knew that Jesus wasn't just another one of several million gods. He was the God for whom I had hungered. He Himself was the Creator. Yet,

He loved me enough to become a man and die for my sins. With that realisation, tons of darkness seemed to lift and a brilliant light flooded my soul.

After arriving home, some in my family seemed wounded and bewildered by my decision; others seemed happy for me. But before it was all over with, 13 of us had given our hearts to Jesus! It was incredible.

The following day Krishna and I made a big pile of the idols, Hindu scriptures, and religious paraphernalia we had, and burned them. The tiny figures we once feared as gods were turning to ashes. We hugged one another and offered thanks to the Son of God who had died to set us free.

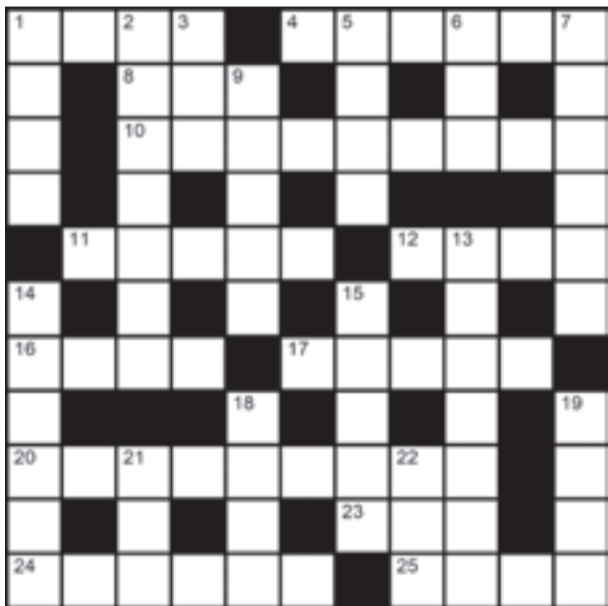
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Rabi Maharaj with his wife Franci.



## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

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  - Sports contestant
  - University ground
  - Computer woe
  - Canyon sound
  - Ringing thing
  - Faster than a walk
  - Spigot



### SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



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

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## Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

**QUESTION: DOES THE CLAIM THAT GOD IS 'HOLY' HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH REAL LIFE?**



**THIS IS A** great question. And when it comes to 'real life', to talk about God as being 'holy' has everything to do with it. Real life is about knowing the God who made us and experiencing His help to live the kind of life He has in mind for us.

All of which involves taking into account what God is like – which is where 'holy' comes in. It is easy to imagine that God is much like a puppy dog – safe, agreeable and okay to take on – no matter what. But that's not how Jesus conveyed Him. Not as 'safe' at all. That's not because God is nasty, cruel or vindictive, but because of the very substance of what He is. Let me try to explain.

Day by day you sit within reach of an electric socket and don't give it a second thought. Of course you are careful. You don't stand in a bowl of water, lick your fingers and stick them in the sockets just for the fun of it. You are simply happy to use electricity to run your appliances.

But many miles from you a huge power station is generating raw, naked, electrical power. This electricity is nothing like the few meager watts that help keep your hair curled, your model train chuffing or your toaster toasting. No way. If this kind of electricity went straight into your home there would be a meltdown. Everything would be left as a charred blob on the landscape.

We can too easily assume the

great God of the universe to be like common domestic electricity. Tame. Safe. Manageable.

But those who heard Jesus' offer to follow Him knew God to be like the raw power that comes from the electricity plant.

The ancients had a technical word for this kind of power – 'holy.' God is holy. Pure, powerful and unspoiled goodness. A searchlight, not a flashlight. A forest fire, not a flickering match. A tsunami, not a wave.

And 'holiness' consumes anything that is not of the same substance – in the same way darkness is consumed by light, forests are consumed by fire and whole swathes of land are consumed by a tsunami.

What turns that raw electricity in to a safe power that makes life work better? A transforming sub-station. A go-between that stands between the ultimate power and us. And that is exactly what Jesus came to be – so we could have real life.

By His death on the cross Jesus stood between God and us – and goes on doing so. Through our faith in Him we have a way to relate to an all powerful and 'holy' God. To know Him. And to make it possible for that same God to be our strength and help. This is what makes 'real life' possible.

Peter Meadows is the co-author with Joseph Steinberg of The Book of Y the basis for the eight week Y Course that explores life's biggest questions.

# I finally understood

For almost all his life, Simon Beasley felt like he didn't belong anywhere.

He was bullied at his oral school for being deaf, and then bullied at the deaf school for having gone to an oral school in the first place.

He turned to sport, hoping to find his place there - and he excelled.

"I love sports," he tells the Why Jesus? YouTube channel.

"That's how I found my freedom.

It helped me communicate in the hearing world. I was involved in everything from football to athletics to basketball."

Unfortunately, it was also in sport, where the young teenager played in the adult men's team, that he was introduced to "grown-up men's attitudes towards drinking and women".

There were drinks when they won, drinks when they lost, women when they won and when they lost.

"Many of them didn't realise how young I was; I was only about 13 to 15," Simon continued.

"I copied them because that was the only way hearing people would socialise with me. When they were drunk it made them more relaxed."

Simon said he felt under immense pressure all the time - school was extremely difficult to navigate as a person with a hearing impairment. For instance, he remembers being smacked for using sign language.

He recalled being filled with anxiety and trauma that impacted him right into adulthood.

Eventually Simon was accepted into an integrated school, where he wasn't bullied as much and had an interpreter on staff to help him navigate his classes and studies.

He said he became quite popular there, becoming a peer leader and sports captain.

Being a perfectionist, however, Simon said those accolades were a double-edged sword as they added to the pressure to perform.

"I struggled with depression and anxiety and I'd drink a lot and then I'd cry a lot. And then I was introduced to marijuana. I felt completely overwhelmed with trying to do my sports and studies and I started to withdraw. I didn't want to go out to football anymore, I didn't want to play basketball anymore; I just didn't want to do anything."

Simon's problems continued after he left school when he turned to drink to cope. "As soon as the bottle shop opened I'd be there. I lost my driver's licence from drinking.

"I would say I wanted to stop but it was always 'next week'. For 25 years, I couldn't stop."

Simon had never been a church-goer, but he lived close to one in Melbourne and remembers how people in the church would wave at him as he walked past.

Encouraged by their friendliness, he approached the pastor and volunteered to help in their feeding program.

"That was how I began going to church," Simon laughed. "I went for the free food and to volunteer!"

A friendship developed between Simon and the pastor, who would pray for Simon and read the Bible with him.

"It was very hard for me to understand but then one day, as the pastor was explaining the Old and New Testaments to me I finally understood!

"The Old Testament is about judgement and punishment and the New Testament is about the opportunity for redemption - and I was kind of in the middle, not knowing which way to turn."

Excited by what the Bible meant for him personally, Simon attended church more regularly, but confesses it took three more years before he surrendered to Christ.

"I went to church but then I'd drink at home. When I went to church I'd feel like I was a good, kind, lovely grace-filled man but inside there was still the darkness. My old habits were so comfortable, so easy.

"When I was drinking I didn't have pain and didn't have to worry about anything. My brain wasn't working for years."

The Bible, he said, became like medicine to him. "I'd read it and read it and every time I'd always feel really good but then the next day I would feel the same struggle."

Simon's breakthrough happened in a most unexpected way - through a brochure that asked: "What's your outlook?"

"I suddenly realised I couldn't fix



Simon Beasley now says he has been released from darkness into the light.

my problems because I kept looking back over my shoulder. I had to look forward, into life as a New Testament believer, as someone whom God has redeemed."

Another miraculous milestone in Simon's life was being accepted into a rehab program called Eagles Corner, whose purpose according to its website "is to empower the deaf and hard of hearing by building bridges to connect, contribute and participate in the wider community."

It is run by Michael Carter, who showed up one day at Simon's church and told the pastor he felt God had sent him to see if anyone there was interested in joining the program. This was a Godsend for Simon, who had been turned down by every other rehab organisation he applied to.

Simon today is transformed. He is now a trained therapy assistant and is on the Eagles Corner team as its Cultural Integration Coordinator. He also works with the Karli Health Centre in Victoria as a therapist.

"I am free from all the trauma and pain of my past. The Lord has totally changed my life.

"Jesus is my day, my sun, my life, my night, my moon. He's my night watch guard; Jesus looks after me 24 hours a day. I thank Him for releasing me from darkness into the light." •

## CROSSROAD DESTINY

• From page 1

When Vanessa's son was born, she named him Willem, Billy for short. Her roommate in hospital, Julie, told her she was a Christian and was praying for her. The two became good friends and Julie shared her faith with Vanessa.

"God loves you very much," Julie told her. "He has a plan and a purpose for your life. Jesus died on the cross for our sins so we can be forgiven and have eternal life."

Julie invited her to church but Vanessa quickly declined. But the two grew closer and over time, Vanessa's understanding of Christianity began to change.

Finally the time came when Vanessa accepted Julie's invitation to visit her church. At the end of the service, the pastor said, "Jesus died for the lost and the broken-hearted. Is there anyone here who would like to receive forgiveness and receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour?"

Vanessa raised her hand and gave her life to God. There was now hope in her life, but Vanessa still felt sad about her situation and wondered if anyone would ever love her. She suddenly felt convicted about having sex outside of marriage and asked God to forgive her.

It was then she had a supernatural encounter. A strange yet familiar voice spoke to her in her bedroom: "If you will put Me and My kingdom first, I will add all these things to you."

For just a second, she had a vision of a tall, large figure of a man in a white gown with a lantern in one hand and his other hand clenched in a fist as if he was about to knock on a door. Vanessa knew the vision was of Jesus. She called Julie, who told her the words that were spoken were from the Bible (Matthew 6:33). Julie also showed her verses in the Bible that prohibited the New Age practices Vanessa had been involved in.

That evening when she went to bed she had another



Vanessa now has hope in her life.

vision, this time of a scary-looking man. Horrified, she called out for Jesus to help her and the man disappeared.

Thankful for the power of Jesus, she drifted off to sleep only to be woken later in the night to her bed being rattled and lifted off the ground. She had no doubt that the unseen realm was real - good and evil, Jesus and Satan, angels and demons.

The next day Vanessa destroyed the astrology books she owned and went and bought herself a Bible. While at the Christian book shop, she saw a man, Bruce, from the church she had attended.

He was kind and attractive but Vanessa held out hope that eventually Tom would come to Australia and they could restart their lives together. A Christian friend prayed with Vanessa that God would either open or close the door with Tom. Ten days later, Vanessa received a letter from Tom saying that he had married his ex-girlfriend and that they now had a child together.

She and Bruce started getting to know each other and one night, he asked Vanessa to marry him and she accepted. They married 11 weeks later and went on to have two children.

"Life happens to us all and we cannot escape this life without some disappointment," Vanessa writes in *A Crossroad Destiny*. "The disappointment can be viewed as a crossroad of choice, one of opportunity. I recommend calling out to the God who created the heavens, the earth, and everything in it. Repent of your sins and the bad choices we have and ask for forgiveness. Our sin has been paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ. All we have to do is repent and wait on the Lord. His promises will overtake you if you choose to put Him and His kingdom first. There is no other way. Jesus says, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" (John 14:6)

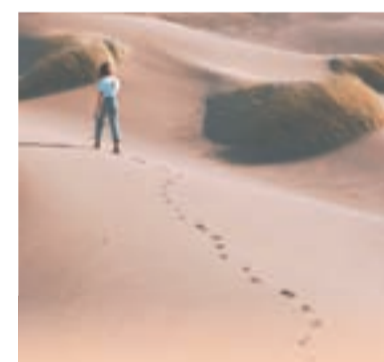
**Challenge**  
THE GOOD NEWS PAPER  
**WORK WITH US!**  
**Finance officer**

CHALLENGE NEWS is currently seeking a skilled Finance Officer/Bookkeeper for our Perth office to play a crucial role in supporting the ministry's accounting and paper distribution functions.

This role will suit someone who has worked in a similar ministry organisation, with extensive experience in all aspects of bookkeeping, financial control and a strong knowledge of Reckon software.

The position will initially be two days per week and could suit applicants who are looking for a position during school hours.

To register your interest and receive further information, including responsibilities and a job description, please contact John Palandri (john@challengenews.org) or Len Lawrence (accounts@challengenews.org).



### Leaving old paths

BY KARL FAASE

THERE ARE MANY metaphors for life and one is walking a path, which is following a route created by others. There are times in our lives when we look at the path we are on and we recognise it's leading us towards disaster. Do you feel that way about your future? What do we do if we are on the wrong path?

Here are three suggestions:

First - Repent. This is a term the Bible uses which means stop the direction you are going and turn back. Second - Replace. You need something new; replace your old path or actions with something new. Third - Refuse. There is always the desire to go back to what you know. Don't do it. Refuse to go back. Find a new path following Jesus.



A depiction of Kairos. Photo by Grigur via Wikimedia Commons.

## A statue in Athens

BY JOHN HUTCHINSON

**ANCIENT ATHENS WAS** a city of statues. A visitor said, "There seems to be more statues here than people."

One of them was of a young man running with hair covering his face. But, strangely, the back of his head was bald. It was odd. But its name said everything. It was named 'Kairos', which means opportunity.

Opportunity unlatches the gate of possibility. You go nowhere without opportunity.

The statue is calling for action – for opportunities don't hang around.

They race past and we need to grab them by the hair as they do. The bald part on the back of the head is letting you know that once opportunity passes there's nothing to hold – it's gone!

### The opportunity to live

What a spectacular, mind boggling opportunity it is to be alive!

Biologically, we have less than a chance in zillions of being born. And, in the endless expanse of eternity, there's one slim slot of time for you and I – and it comes with all the marvellous faculties of sight, hearing, memory and mobility – from which we have the opportunities to learn and interact, grow and experience something of the wonders of creation!

Many are not doing well with their opportunity. In fact, some are making a proper hash of it. We're not here for long. The Bible says: "Be wise...make the most of every opportunity." (Ephesians 5:15-16)

### The opportunity of faith

The opportunity to live opens up a further opportunity – the opportunity of faith in God. Don't miss it! Within humankind there's an awareness of something beyond us – an awareness of the unseen – an awareness of eternity. That's the way God wired us. The Bible says, "God has set eternity in the hearts of men." (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Sometimes the opportunity of faith comes running toward us. It might be the message of a preacher, a Sunday school lesson or the witness of a Christian. The Bible says, "Faith comes through hearing and hearing the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

A Roman governor once had this priceless opportunity. Before him was a man named Paul who was on charges for preaching about Jesus. Acts 24 says, "Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla... He sent for Paul and listened to him as he

spoke about faith in Christ Jesus." (v24)

Felix listened as Paul spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. What an opportunity for Felix – listening to Christianity's most famous convert – the man who violently committed Christians to prison. But, after encountering the risen Christ on the road to Damascus he became Christianity's greatest advocate. That's what it's all about – faith in Christ Jesus.

We're not told what Paul said. But no doubt Paul told Felix of how Jesus changed his life on the Damascus road.

Paul may have told him about the wonderful teaching of Jesus and His mighty miracles. He would've told Felix about how Jesus gave His life for us and how He was crucified and then rose from death and how we can find forgiveness and life through faith in His name.

Then Paul said something which frightened Felix. He went on to speak about "righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come... and Felix trembled." (v25)

And so he should, for Felix had little regard for human life and had done some

very bad things.

Here was an opportunity for Felix to not only hear about Jesus, but to accept Jesus as his Saviour and Lord.

Here was his opportunity to be forgiven for all the terrible things he had done.

Here was his opportunity to enter into a new experience of life – and what did he do? He said to Paul, "That's enough for now! When it's more convenient, I'll send for you." (v25) I guess there have been many like Felix who've heard about Jesus and all He did for us and let it pass.

The Bible says: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

The Bible says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." (Isaiah 55:6)

A more convenient time may never come. Don't miss the opportunity of faith in Christ Jesus.

But sadly, Felix let it all pass. That's dangerous. Eternity is at stake. Don't miss your opportunity for faith in Jesus Christ and to be saved from your sins.

Do it today. Repent of your sin and accept Jesus as your living Lord and Saviour and be saved for all of eternity.

See the box on page 11 entitled *How do I become a Christian* for more information. •

# HE FORGAVE ME

BY SIMEON NEO

**K**athy Kloppenburg led a tough life. Her mother was mentally and physically abusive, while her father did little to stop the abuse. On her 21st birthday, Kathy left her home in the Netherlands for New Zealand.

"To get away from my mother, I went to the furthest country on Earth that I could go," she tells *Challenge News*.

She married a man 18 years her senior, and they had three children together. However, the marriage broke down when her husband was caught getting involved with two 12-year-old girls. By then, Kathy was already pregnant with their third child.

"So I was on my own with no family. I had to get my nursing diploma again... But it was very difficult because I had three little children," says the Perth resident, who moved to Australia two years after relocating to New Zealand.

Despite her best efforts, Kathy found it challenging to balance her nursing training, which required her to work odd hours, and raising her children.

"I wanted to be the perfect mother. The problem was I knew what I didn't want, but I didn't know how to be the perfect mother. I didn't have a good role model. And so, mentally, I was very down."

With no options left, Kathy had to do the unthinkable. She gave up her children to the government.

"I went to the government and said, 'I don't want my children anymore, because I can't look after them properly.' And the government took them."

"That was a very low point."

In those days, Kalgoorlie was known for its brothels and red-light district. To earn a better income, Kathy turned to prostitution.

A year later, things began to change. While driving one

day, she heard a Christian song on the radio. Though not a Christian at that time, she was struck by the lyrics.

"I was convicted that I was in the wrong place. I knew this was not what God wanted for me."

Kathy had attended church as a child, where she learned about who God is. So when she felt convicted to leave her job as a prostitute, she obeyed.

"I moved to Perth, got my life in order and sought emotional help."

In Perth, Kathy attended a church with a strong Dutch community and returned to nursing. It was there that she eventually surrendered her life to Jesus. Since then, she has seen her life transform.

"Before, I was very depressed. I was angry. I felt hopeless and helpless. Then I became happier, less depressed."

Kathy eventually got her children back. Today, she has a strong and thriving relationship with her three children and often spends time with her many grandchildren.

"I saw His guidance. And so I started to rely more on Him," she shares about her relationship with Jesus.

"He forgave me and made things right with my children."

But life has not been smooth for the 74-year-old, who has heart failure and was diagnosed with lung cancer two years ago.

"The doctors say it's not a case of if it will grow, it's a case of *when* it will grow. But God has been very gracious, and it has stopped growing and spreading. It's still there, and you can see it on the X-rays."

"But it's not doing anything, and the doctors are very amazed."

"So many people are praying for me. And they see the miracle that the cancer has stopped growing." •

Kathy Kloppenburg



## Teen's walk to remember

BY CHARLES GARDNER

**T**eenager Howard Garbutt was taking a walk with his younger brother Philip to visit his grandma just three miles from their home near the Yorkshire city of Hull.

But as they passed St Columba's Church at the top of their avenue, it was as if an invisible revolving door drew them in and they found themselves listening to a preacher.

"I could see Philip was getting agitated after a while, asking how long we would be staying, but I was riveted by this man and his message," Howard says. "He enthused about Jesus rising from the dead and talked about forgiveness of sins."

"Even though I'd attended Sunday School for years as well as occasional church services, I realised this man had the answers that no-one had ever told me. He knew Jesus as a real person. I'd never heard anything more real."

"He concluded by asking us to think about what he'd said and come back the next night."

"It was too late to visit grandma and, when we got home, Philip announced to everyone, 'Howard's got religion!'"

"I returned the following two nights, by which time I realised that Jesus had become the sacrifice for our sins."

"Then the preacher, Ken Pillar, quoted Jesus as saying, 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone



Howard and Pam Garbutt.

hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him, and he with Me.' (Revelation 3:20)

"I could almost hear the Lord knocking on my heart's door. So when I got home, I simply knelt down and invited Jesus to come into my life."

"There were no bright lights or angels, but just the most powerful experience of Jesus being there. The joy just bubbled up in me and I knew that I was on a journey and that my life would never be the same again."

"Sundays became the best day of the week and I was soon joining others on the streets

sharing the good news."

Howard was 17 at the time, and it has been 60 years since he made that awesome decision, which didn't go unobserved.

About a year later, his mum said: "We have been watching you and we want what you've got. When your dad comes in, will you pray with us and help us find Jesus?"

In fact, the whole family turned to Jesus, with Philip and older brother Robin both giving their hearts to the Lord some six months later.

Howard is now a retired commercial artist, married to Pam, and still living in the Garden Village area of East Hull. •

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

# IT'S WRITTEN IN THE STARS

BY JONATHAN SAFARTI, CMI

Science has been astronomer Donna Mullenax's lifelong interest.

She says: "I grew up on a farm in West Virginia. Surrounded by rocks, mountains, animals, farm machinery, and stars.

"I fell in love with figuring out how things worked. I was always exploring. My family also processed their own meat, which allowed me to study the anatomy of a variety of animals.

"God also gave me a love of mathematics, which blended well with science, especially physics.

"Having orthopedic issues from birth also increased my desire to learn how the human body and X-rays work. The connections between science disciplines are just fascinating to study and to see the bigger picture of the created universe. My childhood was a blessing filled with opportunities to experience a wide range of science."

Donna was raised in a church, but being raised in a church doesn't make you a Christian any more than growing up in a stable makes you a horse. In Donna's case, she didn't commit her life to Christ until a revival meeting when she was 14.

However, like many Christians, Donna was saved but did not have a consistent worldview.

"My worldview was blurred," she says. "The Bible was true, but I did not have the discernment and understanding to realise some of what I believed was against what the Scriptures taught.

*Donna as a teenager holding a pair of chicks raised on the family farm in West Virginia.*



"I was blessed to have a high school biology teacher who was a Christian and did not teach the evolution chapter."

In Donna's undergraduate study, she realised that old ages in geology and astronomy or evolution in biology had problems. She thought, "this does not make sense" or "this cannot be right."

However, she would never challenge old ages in geology and astronomy or evolution in biology. "I learned the material, passed the exams, and moved on."

The conflict didn't come to a head until Sunday school, with a Genesis-compromising leader:

"The teacher stated that nothing in the Bible before Abraham was true because science had disproven everything. I sat there speechless.

"Here I was, the science major in the class, and I had nothing to say. I left church that day angry with myself. I could not defend the Bible. I had no support for my Creator.

"After some heartfelt conversations with a Christian friend, I realised...

the way I viewed the world was not consistent with the Bible.

"I also did not have the ability to defend what I believed. I promised Jesus that if He would teach me and provide resources for me to learn, I would never 'not have an answer' again.

"Jesus has answered my prayer. I started reading books by (Christian authors) Henry Morris, Steve Austin and John Whitcomb. I attended conferences like ICC (International Conference on Creationism).

"I started to read the Bible to answer the questions I had in the back of my mind. Everything started to make sense. Do I have answers for everything? No, but I know who does. And I know the answer will agree with Scripture.

"Adding long ages to Genesis 1 rejects/denies the rest of Scripture."

A major issue is the origin of death and the relation to God's goodness and the Gospel.

"Death before the end of Day 6 means not everything was 'very good'. Death before sin means death is not the result of sin." But then, how could Jesus' death pay for our sin?

She also points out that the Bible's timeline is clear. "The genealogies of Genesis 5, 11, and Luke 3 are so detailed. Yes, there may be some fluctuation of a few years here and there, but not millions and billions of years."

The worldview conflict is very real, as Donna found out – not just for herself but for the young people she works with and their parents.

"Young people are taught long ages via school, media, movies, etc., and then they start to doubt the Bible.

"Students have come to me with, 'Ms Mullenax, they just discovered

“**Do I have answers for everything? No, but I know who does.**”

”

## The incredible Iguazu Falls of South America

BY TAS WALKER, CMI

**THE IGUAZU FALLS** of South America are among the most spectacular falls in the world. At the border between southern Brazil and northern Argentina, they drop 80 metres (260 ft) in two steps over layers of black basalt rock.<sup>1</sup> Islands along the edge break the flow into numerous separate waterfalls. When the river is high, some 300 waterfalls cascade along the 2.7 km (1.7 mile) edge – longer than either the Niagara or Victoria Falls.

The basalt exposed at the falls is just the top part of an enormous pile of successive volcanic lava flows some 1,000 metres (3,300 ft) thick. Called the Serra Geral formation, these igneous rocks cover a huge area, some 2,000 km (1,300 miles) from north to south and 1,000 km from west to east, within an area geologists call the Paraná Basin. They are described as a large igneous province (LIP) called the Paraná Traps.

The Paraná Traps represent one of the largest eruptions of volcanic magma onto the continents anywhere on Earth. Global-scale forces within the earth mobilised the red-hot, basaltic magma and pushed it up to flood a large area of the continent. This crustal movement eventually led to ocean basins sinking, the continents uplifting, and the floodwaters receding from the earth.

These basalts have been assigned an evolutionary age of some 130 million years, i.e., early Cretaceous.



*The Iguazu Falls. Photo by chensiyuan, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

However, the geology transformation tool<sup>2</sup> reveals that the volcanic rocks were emplaced some 4,500 years ago in the middle of Noah's Flood while the floodwaters were rising on the earth.

The basalt was emplaced quickly. Not long after, the waters of the Flood peaked to cover the whole continent to a depth of a kilometre or more.

Forces within this water eroded the top of the Paraná Basin to produce a relatively flat plain still visible over large areas today.

As this continent continued to uplift, the floodwaters still on the land flowed into what is now the ocean until they were gone, as described in Genesis 8. In the process they eroded canyons and waterfalls. In the 4,500 years since the end of the Flood, the Iguazu River has flowed across the Brazilian Plateau, dropping down at the Iguazu Falls, and joining the Paraná River where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay meet.

The incredible Iguazu Falls and the rocks over which they flow are a tiny reminder of the power of flowing water, and of the true history of our world, which has shaped the heritage of everyone alive today.

References and notes

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*Donna Mullenax, astronomy and physics lecturer and passionate creationist.*



this or that.' I often remind my students that when a 'discovery' or something comes up that contradicts Scripture (or even when it does not), give it time to run through the peer review process. Scripture is always truth. Interpretation of science is based on the person's worldview."

Fortunately, real scientific observations don't conflict with the Bible. It's just the long-age interpretations that do. Donna points out, "Archaeology continues to prove areas of the Bible that people consider incorrect as very correct. Fossils declare a massive, catastrophic flood. Anticlines and synclines (large-scale upward and downward curves in rocks) demonstrate the power of the flood."

She points to the intricate mathematical equations governing the universe: "They all point to the power and awesomeness of our Creator and the truths in the Bible. It has always amazed me that we can write equations for so much of the known universe. It does not make logical sense for a universe to happen by chance and be ruled by equations. Evolutionists often say that the laws of science governed how the universe formed. My question would then be, where did the laws originate?"

Astronomy provides evidence for a young solar system, too, as per articles she has written for *Creation* magazine: "I love comets. They cannot be denied. Their very existence is evidence for a young Earth. Pluto continues to surprise astronomers with its younger and younger appearance."

Her recommended pathway to clarity in this area is to study scripture. "Even though the Bible is not a science textbook, God will open your eyes to His creation if you read with an open heart and mind.

"The more I study science, the more I see the power, creativity, and glory of my Saviour."

Donna is one of the very rare cases of a female with hemophilia B, where blood doesn't clot easily. Her highly unusual condition prompted her to study genetics and mutations deeply.

"It seems God planned for me to inherit the mutated genes from my mother and father such that I would be a 'bleeder'. It has been a great opportunity to witness and talk science with others regarding this special trait.

"I was born with a purpose. I was born with orthopedic and bleeding issues. I pray I can help others." •

**DONNA GRADUATED FROM** West Virginia University in 1996 with bachelor's degrees in physics, mathematics, and secondary education. While there, she undertook some work with NASA. She also has a Master of Science in Physics and has taught physics and astronomy at Georgia Southern University.

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# YOUTH TRUTH

## FROM FANTASY TO FREEDOM



Jazlyn Tham

### My double life became whole

BY SIMEON NEO

**W**hen Jazlyn Tham moved to Perth from Singapore, she had no ambition or purpose. She felt insecure and found little meaning in life.

"I was lonely and desperate to fit in, so I would do anything for attention," she tells *Challenge News*.

She struggled to make friends with the girls in her class, so she sought companionship through relationships with boys. But when those relationships failed, she felt the void in her heart grow wider.

"My self-esteem dwindled through the years as I fought to feel worthy to the people I cared about. I felt like God was a distant parent telling me what to do. And all I had to do was nod 'yes', repent [express regret for wrongdoing] the next Sunday, and do it all again."

Growing up in a Christian household, Jazlyn was familiar with Christianity and knew about God.

"I was brought up as a regular churchgoer and gained a lot of head knowledge about Christianity over the years. I went to church every Sunday to hear that Jesus loved me, then lived Monday to Saturday as if He did not."

When Jazlyn entered her late teens, things got worse. She craved more freedom and started lying to her parents. By the time she graduated from school, she was living a life of partying, alcohol, smoking and drugs.

"I continued going to church to prevent any suspicions about what I was doing outside. I hid my life from my church friends out of guilt, yet I couldn't give up this worldly freedom that I idolised."

Once, while she was leading worship at church, she fell asleep on stage under the guise of praying.

"I was at my lowest in those

days and so ashamed of who I had become," she admits. "I felt so far from God."

When Jazlyn moved to Perth, she was introduced to the Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF) in Perth, a student-led Christian club that meets for Bible studies, speaker events and social get-togethers.

"I was looked after and ministered to. There were times I felt too guilty and wanted to step away, but God encouraged me, and I kept showing up."

Jazlyn decided to start attending church again and recommitted her life to Christ. But this time, she allowed her heart to be changed.

"I was crushed upon realising how far I had strayed from the faith," she admits. "I mustered the courage to give up the worldly pleasures that seemed fun but only served to damage my physical, mental and spiritual health."

With the help of her community from church and OCF, Jazlyn's faith began to grow.

"I reconnected with my old friends from church and felt liberated from the lies at last. I also found encouragement from sermons and meeting new friends who were grounded in Christ."

Jazlyn is now married and continues attending church with her husband. She is also serving regularly on the worship team at her church. Reflecting on how her life has been transformed, Jazlyn sees a change in her heart and her attitude from the old person she was.

"I was loved by the people around me and reminded that I did not have to do this alone. It was a painful process losing some loved ones, but I have never looked back since."

"Despite my rebellion and selfishness, God welcomed me back with open arms like a prodigal son." ●

**W**hen life gets difficult, many of us turn to some form of distraction as a means of escape from the harsh reality.

Growing up in a broken family filled with abuse, Rhyme Murray turned to anime (Japanese animation), pornography and marijuana as a form of escape.

His parents eventually divorced and Rhyme went on to have three stepfathers, which left him confused and struggling with his self-esteem.

"I got engulfed in pornography and escaped reality through anime and weed," he tells *Challenge News*.

"I also ignored my heart, acting like someone I'm not and taking the forms of characters I like in the anime." Rhyme had known about God his entire life as his mother attended church.

But it was only in August 2019 that he made the decision to give his life to Jesus at a friend's swimming pool.

"I decided to become a committed Christian because I have nothing on Earth that I want more than Him, who saved me from all my sin."

But life was not all smooth for Rhyme even after he accepted Christ.

"Life was hard at first after I gave my life [to Jesus]," he recalls.

"I lost friends, bonds, the trust of my parents and my social skills perished."

"God then showed me it was His



Rhyme Murray

purification process and gave me new godly things."

Though the process of refinement was difficult, Rhyme got to experience God's providence and goodness.

He found new friendships and his relationship with his parents grew deeper than before.

"I have an amazing mother and father. I can have full-on heart-warming talks with my dad about God and he educates me."

Rhyme has also learned to uplift and encourage in his interactions with others rather than to tear down.

He has since been freed from his addictions to pornography and anime, choosing to stay grounded in reality.

"I'm more focused on reality instead of fiction."

Even now, Rhyme admits that he still struggles to obey what God says in His Word, especially when life gets difficult.

"The hard part is staying commit-

ted to God's Word and remembering Scripture when times get tough.

"[But] the best part about being a Christian is knowing that God will provide for me in times of trials and adversity."

"God can take a broken and empty heart and refill it with His love and show you that His love is within all of us."

Rhyme's favourite Bible verse is Matthew 18:1-5: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me." ●

**"I'm more focused on reality instead of fiction."**



### Regrets

**REGRETS - WE ALL** carry them. It is only those people who suffer from a chronic lack of self-awareness who carry no regrets.

This choice we wish we hadn't made, an angry word out of place, a relationship that was unwise and unhelpful.

Regrets are common but our responses will be unique. Be sure to make regret your motivation, not your condemnation. Recognise where you can do better and focus on achieving that outcome. There is no point beating yourself up over past failure.

Our best response is to take our regrets to Jesus, here is the place of forgiveness and restoration.

God has never expected perfection from humanity, but God waits for our repentance so that grace can be extended. ●

# lifestyle and entertainment

## A GIFT I COULDN'T IGNORE

Top children's entertainer and successful country music singer-songwriter Colin Buchanan has earned six Tamworth Songwriters awards, a handful of ARIA nominations, and nine Golden Guitars, as well as produced 29 music albums and spent many years as a beloved *Play School* presenter.

In 2023, Colin was honoured by being inducted into the 54th Roll of Renown for his lasting contribution to the Australian country music industry.

He says, "Getting this is a little like getting a prize for eating chocolate – all I've done is what I love!"

Of his children's albums, *King of Christmas* is an Australian classic; in particular his *Aussie Jingle Bells* is now a staple at school end-of-year concerts.

"It sorta just happened," Colin recalls. "I was learning to play the guitar in church, and in Sunday school, and involved in youth group, and it just felt natural to write songs.

"So, I just dabbled in that. It wasn't until I released my first four country albums that I thought, 'maybe the time is right to record some of these songs (for children).'"

He goes on to relate how the success of his first independently-produced children's record *Remember the Lord* in 1996 caught a leading Australian Christian book store completely by surprise.

"I still remember getting a phone call two days after the [bookstore's] catalogue came out... 'We've created a monster... and it's called Colin Buchanan.'"

The bookshop was packed with children, all fans of Colin!

"The Lord really blessed



Colin Buchanan at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in 2023. Photo by Jakob Pulley, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

it," says Colin, referring to his music.

"It has always felt like a natural thing to do. It's a little inexplicable, I suppose.

"It's like if you said to a preacher, 'Why do you preach and not sing? What attracts you to that?'

"I suppose it's because God gives gifts, and you get drawn in obedience to Him and you want to use those gifts for Him."

Born in Ireland to Christian parents, it wasn't until he was nearer his teens that Colin made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

"A Sunday school teacher

explained to me clearly that I was an enemy of God but that God had made the first move in terms of peace with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection was the only way I could have an eternal relationship with God," recalls Colin.

"The consequence for refusing Him would be eternal death. So, what do you choose?"

"For me, it was like chocolate. How could you not choose to accept God?"

"Others might have different feelings about this but, for me it was very clear that I wanted to be God's friend.

"I wanted peace with God and this was a free gift I just couldn't ignore."

So, at around 10 years of age, Colin accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour and told God that he would live for Him and Colin's journey of faith began.

"I was on *Play School* for a while," he says, "and I lived in a faith community in Burke for a time.

"It was there that I learned to do everything for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

"I just love kids," Colin continues, "particularly their honesty, and after they were my audience for a while I realised what Jesus meant when He said 'you must become like a little child to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

Even though he is primarily involved in kid's ministry, Colin believes that it is vitally important for everyone to have the chance to accept Jesus Christ.

"I like to give an allegory of a drowning person," says Colin. "If someone was drowning they would grasp a life ring that was thrown to them. It's the same for someone who wants to become a Christian.

"They are drowning in the consequences of disobeying God and Jesus is the life ring that God has thrown out to them.

"Although they deserve to sink to the bottom, He pulls them aboard the ship and assures them of their place with Him in Heaven.

"He also changes them into people who love Him and want to obey Him in all they do.

"Jesus Christ has given me hope and purpose in life and He can do the same for everyone right now," Colin concludes.

“All I've done is what I love!”

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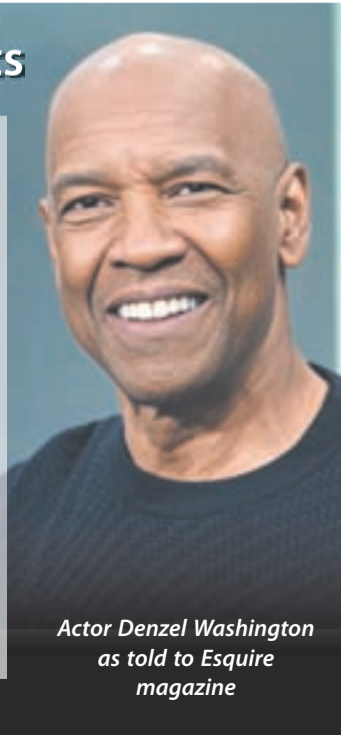
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### Faith snippets

“God is real. God is love. God is the only way. God is the true way. God blesses. It's my job to lift God up, to give Him praise, to make sure that anyone and everyone I speak to the rest of my life understands that He is responsible for me. When you see me, you see the best I could do with what I've been given by my Lord and Saviour.”



Actor Denzel Washington as told to *Esquire* magazine

### Recipe of the month



## STRAWBERRY PIE

**THIS DISH IS** like summer in pie form. Be sure to use fresh picked strawberries from your farmer's market or local orchard.

**Prep: 1 hour**  
**Rise: 2 hours**  
**Cook: 25 min**  
**Total: 3 hour 25 min**  
**Serves 8**

#### Ingredients

- 1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening
- 6 tablespoons ice cold water
- 1.3kg fresh strawberries
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/2 tablespoon low- or no-sugar pectin
- Generous pinch of salt
- Reserved strawberries
- 1 cup cold heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon sugar

#### Method

**Pie crust:** Preheat oven to 180°C. In a large bowl, blend flour, salt, and shortening using two dull butter knives or a pastry blender until the shortening is the size of peas.

Fill a wide-mouthed glass with ice. Add water to the top.

Measure or pour the ice cold water into the flour mixture. Using a spatula or your hands, mix the water into the flour to form a large ball of dough. You may need to add an extra tablespoon of water if you have excess flour. If you added too much water, add additional flour until the dough is well formed but not too sticky. Handle and mix the dough as little as possible.

Form dough into a disc and wrap in wax paper. Put wrapped dough in the freezer for 10 minutes or the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Roll out onto a lightly floured surface and place in a deep dish pie plate.

Place a second pie plate on top of the pie crust to weight it down.

Bake at 180°C until edges

are golden brown, about 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for at least 10 minutes before adding filling.

**Filling:** Wash and hull strawberries. Place any overripe, smashed, or second tier berries in a measuring cup until you have 1 1/2 cups. Reserve remaining strawberries.

Place 1/2 cup of second tier berries in a food processor and process until smooth. In a small saucepan, combine pureed strawberries, sugar, cornstarch, pectin, and salt. Whisk until combined.

Heat over medium-high heat, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula.

Heat until a boil and then cook for two minutes at a boil. The mixture will bubble up and then thicken and darken, ensuring that the pectin and cornstarch are fully dissolved.

Transfer strawberry syrup to a large bowl and add reserved strawberries. Gently mix until well coated.

**Assembly:** Pour strawberry filling into baked pie shell. If you wish, you can turn over the strawberries on the top layer so that no cut sides are showing, but honestly, it tastes the same no matter how you arrange the strawberries.

Chill in the fridge for two to five hours. After five hours, the syrup may become a bit watery or runny, but the pie will still taste great.

Just prior to serving, beat cream and sugar on high with an electric hand mixer until thick and fluffy, about three minutes. Serve as desired.

From MakeBetterFood.com

**“There is only one secure foundation: a genuine, deep relationship with Jesus Christ, which will carry you through any and all turmoil. No matter what storms are raging all around, you'll stand firm if you stand on His love.” – Charles Stanley**

# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## Are you in a Mexican standoff?

BY ROB FURLONG

**BACK IN THE** late 19th century two Mexican noblemen were out for an afternoon ride in their horse and carriage. Unfortunately, the two carriages, travelling in opposite directions, met halfway in a narrow back street. Both men refused to back up, each insisting that they were there first and had right of way. The impasse lasted for days, with both men sending servants to fetch food and water from home while waiting for the other person to back down!

Eventually the problem was resolved by the local authorities who ordered both carriages to back out of the street so that the rest of the town could get on with their lives! Thus, was born the term "Mexican standoff" which is often portrayed in movies as two or more people who each have their weapon of choice trained on the other with no one making a move for fear that it may be their last.

The Urban Dictionary defines the Mexican standoff as "a situation in which no one emerges as a clear

winner. A poor man's mutually assured destruction." The description goes on to say that the standoff can only be resolved by "diplomacy, a pre-emptive strike or surrender."

Relationships are often caught in Mexican standoffs – perhaps you are in one right now.

You know what I mean.

You and another person have had a heated exchange, and angry words have been said. You both feel the other person is wrong and that you haven't been listened to. The argument hasn't been resolved and each of you has retreated into an angry silence, waiting for the other person to back down – welcome to the relational version of the Mexican standoff!

Sadly, many people feel that



STOCK PHOTO

they freely breathe that same grace into their relationships with other people. How sad it is when people are caught in a standoff, waiting for the other person to admit they are wrong before resolving anything.

Sadly, my grandmother lived out her relationships in this way, and her life was filled with much sadness and remorse as a result.

Over the years of my marriage there have been many times when I have had to surrender my right to be right to bring a resolution

to whatever the issue was between Karen and me at that time.

This isn't easy, but true peace and harmony never is – sometimes you must be willing to back down, even if you are right, in order to open up the kind of dialogue that will ultimately lead to true resolution in the relationship.

What is the alternative?

The definition referred to earlier describes it well: to paraphrase, the destruction of the relationship is mutually assured – no one will win because no one can win!

Jesus said that peacemakers are "blessed" – they are people who breathe grace, God's grace, into their relationships.

Where in your relationships do you need to surrender your right to be right and breathe God's grace into them?

the only way they can resolve these types of impasses is to initiate, as the definition says above, a pre-emptive strike: get in quickly and blow the other person out of the water with an angry outburst before they try to do the same to you!

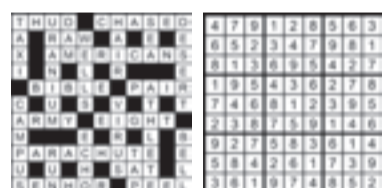
You may succeed in forcing them to back down, but the problem will not be resolved – the next time an issue arises the scene will be well set for another standoff and this time you may be the one who is pre-emptively struck down!

A statement from the book *The Peacemaker* is worth considering. It simply says, "Peacemakers breathe grace."

What a wonderful, uplifting thought!

When you reflect on it carefully you come to realise that peacemakers really do breathe grace.

They have breathed in God's grace into their lives and as a result of that,



## 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 :

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE]  Please send me:  Bible  Some 'starting off' literature  Information on a helpful church

\* 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

## Want to explore more?

Here are some free, helpful, Christian online resources

Online Bible - <b>Olive Tree app</b> (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)		Audio Bible - <b>Bible.is app</b> , or <b>Youversion Bible app</b>	
Christian radio station - <b>CBN radio app</b> (different channels for all genres of music)		Christian podcasts and sermons - <b>Edifi app</b>	
Christian movies, serials and kids' shows - <b>Good. app</b>		Daily thoughts and inspiration - <b>Our Daily Bread app</b>	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - <b>Youversion Bible app</b> .		The Bible explained with visual aides - <b>Bible Project on YouTube</b> .	
<b>Alpha Film Series on Youtube</b> - an online introduction to Christianity		For kids - <b>Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app</b>	
Comic book Bible online - <b>goodandevilbook.com</b>		<b>Manga Messiah app</b> Christian comic with free games app, illustrated in Japanese-style art	
<b>YMI</b> (meant to be read as "Why am I?") Christian news outlet for young adults with various content, devotionals and resources. <b>ymi.today</b>		More inspiring faith stories - <b>back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online</b>	

## From opium fields to top tourist village

**A VIETNAMESE VILLAGE** has undergone a dramatic transformation. Where there were once opium fields, there are now picturesque rice terraces and manicured vegetable plots.

Once made up of almost all drug addicts, Sin Suối Hồ village is now one of the top tourist attractions in Southeast Asia.

Pastor Hang A Xa describes the bleak period in the village's history to CBN News.

"We were selling opium like selling chickens. Everyone was addicted so no one worked in the fields. We did not have food, just leaves from the jungle. People were fighting. It was a very messy time," Pastor Xa says.

Pastor Xa's father, Hang A Lung, was an opium addict and the village chairman.

Due to this position, the government gave him a radio so he could listen and stay informed about its policies.

But Lung only knew the Hmong language, not Vietnamese. The only radio program he could understand was a Christian broadcast which shared the good news about Jesus and excerpts from the Bible in Hmong.

"My father heard the Gospel [the good news about Jesus coming to Earth to die for mankind's sins] and became the first believer," Pastor Xa shares.

"He wanted our whole family to receive Jesus. He summoned my brother who was studying in another town to come home right away. He said, 'You need to receive Jesus. If He comes, we all go to Heaven, and you go to hell.'"

Lung found a Bible in his language and read it and shared it with other villages.

Through their study, they felt convicted to quit drugs and live a life pleasing to God.

Instead of opium, they planted orchids which became a source of income.

They also started running various other businesses.

Ten years later, Sin Suối Hồ village was recognised by the government as a top tourist destination and in 2023 ASEAN recognised it as a top tourist attraction in Southeast Asia.





Darryl Strawberry of the New York Mets bats against the Pittsburgh Pirates during a Major League Baseball game at Three Rivers Stadium in 1987 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Photo by George Gojkovich/Getty Images)

# A LIFE OR DEATH CALL

Throughout his 17-year-career, Darryl Strawberry has made eight consecutive All-Star game appearances and captured four World Series championships.

Yet, the Mets and Yankees star was suspended three times throughout his career which was overshadowed by controversies, drugs and incarceration. Growing up in a home that was filled with abuse and violence, the former athlete struggled with anger and brokenness.

“My early years were a real struggle because I grew up in a very broken, dysfunctional home,” he tells the *Jesus Calling Podcast*.

“My dad was a raging alcoholic and he would come home night after night, drinking and disturbing the whole house and waking us up in the middle of the night.” One night, his father had come home drunk.

“My older brother Michael said, ‘Why don’t you just get out of here and leave us alone?’ And [my father] actually pulled out a shotgun and said he was going to kill the whole family at that particular time.”

Darryl’s older brother grabbed a butcher’s knife while Darryl got

hold of a frying pan. Though only 15 and 14 at that time, Darryl and his brother were determined to protect their mother. “And had it not been for Mom getting us out of that house that night, it would have been a tragedy in my life,” he recounts.

After that day, his parents divorced and his mother was left alone to raise five children. Though peace had finally come to the household, the anger and brokenness from growing up with abuse had remained. Baseball was an outlet that he could use to channel his anger and hurt. His talent got noticed and he was drafted as the first pick into the New York Mets in 1980. That was the beginning of his life as a star baseball player.

But despite his achievements, Darryl could not escape from the pain from his childhood. Eventually, the pressure to do well drove him towards alcohol and drugs.

“I did everything to make me feel good,” says Darryl in an interview with *CBN News*.

“I drank alcohol, took amphetamines. Later down the line, I got introduced heavily into cocaine, which was my outlet and my escape. That was the biggest escape for me. When I found that,

I can escape away from everybody and everything.” His struggle with addiction soon led to his suspension from baseball. Darryl’s career was hitting rock bottom.

“My mom passed away. I wasn’t going to play any more baseball, because I had been suspended from the league for drugs. I went through that battle, and I just kind of like had had enough.”

It was at this point when he got invited to a convention by evangelist Morris Cerello. This was his first encounter with God.

“That weekend, all I did was cry when I heard him up there preaching,” he says.

Darryl’s career got back on track after he got out of rehab. He was asked to play for the Yankees in New York and he helped his team win the ‘96 and ‘98 World Series championships. He also married his second wife, Charisse. However, his drug habit resurfaced which affected his marriage.

Things took a turn for the worse when Darryl was diagnosed with colon cancer. Though he was miraculously back on the field again after six months of treatment, he got arrested for soliciting a prostitute and drug possession. Once again, his life had hit rock bottom. Over the next few years, Darryl lost everything, including his career and his marriage.

It was at a drug convention centre where he met Tracy, whose influence as a Christian had encouraged Darryl to turn to God once again.

“I just had to surrender. I had to get with God myself.

“I had to separate myself from everything and everybody. God was calling me, and it was either I was going to answer this call or I was going to die.”

Darryl made the decision to come back to God. In 2006, Darryl and Tracy got married and they founded the Darryl Strawberry Foundation, which is dedicated to children and adults with autism.

Though Tracy had a direct influence on his faith journey, Darryl also credits his late mother. Darryl and his siblings had found their mother’s journal under the bed where she wrote prayers for all five of her children to be saved.

“Her faith is probably why I am who I am today, where I sit today,” says Darryl. “Because her prayers were, ‘God, knock him off his throne, save him. I don’t care what you do. I’m not concerned about his celebrity lifestyle, his fame, and his

fortune. Do what only You can do: save him.” Since rededicating his life to God, Darryl has been used in powerful ways to reach out to the rest of his family – including his estranged father. “God... speaks to me: ‘How dare you not forgive him when I forgave you.’

“I asked my father to forgive me, and he did. A tear came out of his eye and he said, ‘Yes.’ And I just lost it. I just laid in his lap and cried so hard.”

Darryl led his father in a prayer of repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord.

Reflecting on his faith journey, Darryl says that, “I had every earthly thing. I had money, I had fame, fortune, women, whatever it was. But at the end of the day, I’m so glad that He found me where I was in a pit and brought me to a pulpit.”

Today, Darryl is an ordained preacher, sharing the hope of Jesus Christ.



Darryl in October 2024. (Photo by Daniel Shirey/MLB Photos via Getty Images)

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