

SEARCHING FOR TRUE HEALING



BY SIMEON NEO

In 2012, Sharon Abrey experienced one of the most difficult seasons of her life when she lost her younger brother to suicide.

“That was a shock to our whole family. We didn’t know he was depressed,” she told *Challenge News*.

“I was like a robot for two years. It was only after I brought myself to his grave and grieved, did I start having emotions again.”

That day, Sharon decided to choose life and live the best she could. So, she started on a journey of self-healing, which led her to learning about meditation, yoga and

mindfulness. In the nine years that followed, Sharon dabbled in practices like reiki healing, psychics and the law of attraction and meditation.

“I was constantly searching for truths, for answers and healing,” said the 46-year-old Perth local.

She shared that as a child, she had experienced a traumatic incident which impacted her greatly.

“All throughout my life I was trying to find the right man, the right relationship, the right thing to be doing. I was all over the place and lost.”

At 20 years old, Sharon married her first husband, but it turned out to be a bad marriage, and they divorced.

“He was abusive and there were drugs and alcohol involved – it was frightening.”

In 2021, she entered a relationship with her boyfriend whom she met at a freedom movement rally in Perth.

“Some of the beliefs were wacky. We thought we were aliens here, to raise the consciousness of the planet to 5D. It’s embarrassing to tell you that because now I know it was all a lie.”

In their search for truth, they would watch YouTube videos on topics like Keylontic science (a spiritual metaphysical framework which claims to heal, activate DNA, raise consciousness, and guide spiritual ascension) and about teachers who

claimed to channel higher beings.

“But I found out that many of these teachers were lying. I researched them and found testimonies of their children explaining that they were compulsive liars.”

It was then that she began to question if everything she believed in was the truth.

“How do we know what the ultimate truth is?” she thought.

In her years of searching for healing and exploring spiritual practices, Sharon noted that she would feel good for a while but that feeling never lasted for long.

“It was like a surface-level ‘better’. It wasn’t a deep healing. It was enough that it kept me searching for more, so I was never satisfied.”

Then her partner, who was not a Christian, showed her the testimony of a woman who had turned away from her career as an astrologer and clairvoyant and converted to Christianity.

“It made so much sense to me,” said Sharon. “I started listening to countless New Age to Jesus testimonies on YouTube. With each one, I became more and more convinced of the lie that I was in, and that Jesus is the truth.”

Growing up on a small farm in Bedforddale, Sharon shared that she had “always believed in God in some way, like many people do.”

Sharon Abrey today – living in peace, purpose, and joy after years of searching for truth. INSET: Sharon dabbled in New Age practices before finding answers and peace.

A rebel redeemed

BY JANICE TEO

Fifteen-year-old Arnold Nyamhamba was grinning when he walked into his school principal’s office expecting to see his mother. He attended a boarding school and his mother visited regularly.

But she wasn’t there this time. Instead, the principal handed him a letter. Arnold’s smile died instantly as he read it.

The letter, which was from his uncle, read: “Your mother is very unwell and she cannot visit you. She may not visit you again. She has been in hospital for weeks and is in a lot of pain.”

“That letter filled me with trepidation,” Arnold, now 35, told *Challenge News*.

“It was terrible to think that I might never see my mother again. Fear engulfed me.”

Arnold was born and raised in Zimbabwe and led a comfortable middle-class life.

His parents were staunch Christians who insisted their children attend church whether they wanted to or



Arnold Nyamhamba with his wife, Tanya.

not – the latter often being the case with Arnold.

In his teen years he got up to the usual hijinks: rebelling against school rules, sneaking drinks and cigarettes, and watching pornography.

“I was exposed to the wrong things and tried them because I wasn’t in a deep relationship with God. I was young and naive and stupid.

“All that changed when I got that letter. There and then I decided to seek a

higher source to heal my mum.”

He went with a friend to a Scripture Union meeting, where he experienced something he had never felt in all his years of attending church – the presence of God.

“I was so overwhelmed by His presence I cried during the sermon. At first I thought it was because I was worried for my mum, but now I realise it was because of the presence of God.

“It made me feel so peaceful that I surrendered my life to Him immediately.” His behaviour changed dramatically after this.

● Turn to page 3

YOUTH TRUTH Page 9

Fun for Kids Pages 5,6,7

BACK PAGE

FILM, FINS AND FAITH
ALAN VAN GYSEN

● Turn to page 2

SEARCHING FOR TRUE HEALING

● From page 1

“But we never read the Bible or went to church.” In watching the testimonies, Sharon was intrigued by how they spoke about power in the name of Jesus.

“I was having night terrors, and I had a lot of fear at night as well. So, I started crying out to Jesus for help.”

Though the fears and night terrors didn't go away immediately, she saw that over time, they started to disappear. She also heard the Gospel (the good news that Jesus died and then resurrected for the forgiveness of our sins) multiple times through the many testimonies she read and watched.

“When I realised that there was in fact power and authority in His name, I thought well, He must be true. He must be alive.”

Gradually, Sharon surrendered her life to Jesus and accepted Him into her heart. She also started attending church and reading the

Bible. However, her relationship with her boyfriend broke.

“My partner thought that I had gone crazy and that I was in a cult. He tried to convince me that it was a lie while I tried to convince him that Jesus is true. We were clashing and arguing.” Eventually, they split up.

“I'd lost a lot in that two-and-a-half-year relationship. But I've gained eternal life through Jesus Christ. I gained the most precious gift.”

Since accepting Jesus into her life, Sharon has a new love for people, including strangers.

“With the same love I would have had for a partner or my friends and my family, I now have that same love for strangers and so I love to share the Gospel, so that they too can come out of darkness and be saved.” She has also become closer to her family, who have since become Christians.

“Now I have so much peace and contentment. I have so much joy in working for God.” ●

Pilot finds new horizon

BY CHARLES GARDNER

Piloting more than 800 Trans-Atlantic flights at supersonic speed is not something many of us can boast about.

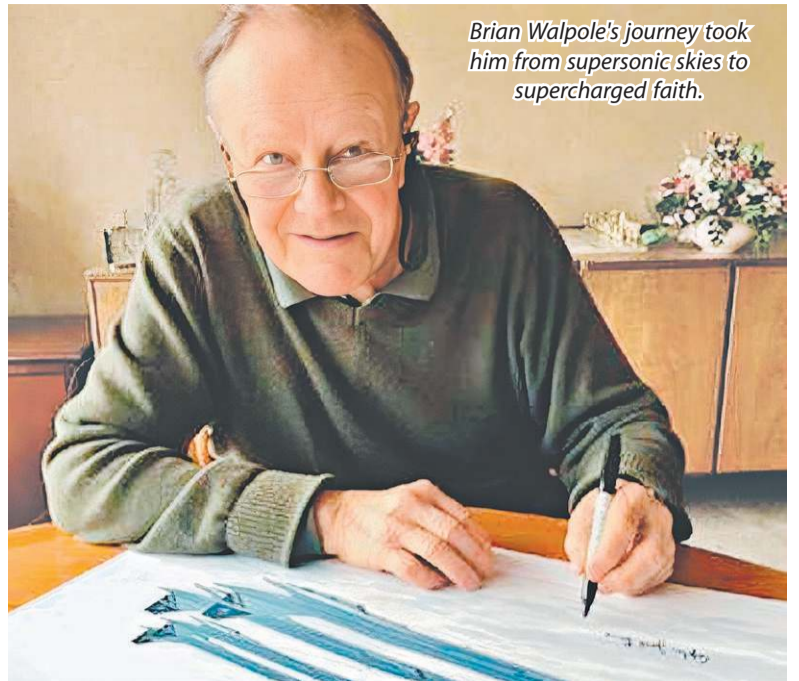
But Captain Brian Walpole has it all in his logbook, and though the story of his engagement with the heavens is certainly an uplifting one, it is his flight to faith that he credits as being of far greater importance.

A former RAF officer from Surrey, England, he began flying in a two-seater Tiger Moth biplane and progressed to flying jets in aerobatic displays before switching to commercial aviation.

But captaining Concorde for British Airways, flying at 1,350mph (twice the speed of sound) and at one time being boss of the entire supersonic operation, was clearly the peak of his career, as he recounts so enthusiastically in his autobiography *Captain Concorde* (Grace and Down Publishing, 2024).

Yet it was not the highlight of his life. For it was only after he committed himself to Christ in his late 40s that he was able to fully appreciate the magnificent vista of the curvature of the earth from an altitude of 60,000 ft. And whereas he had to use the stars for navigation for crossing the Pacific when flying Boeing 707s, they now spoke to him of the awesome beauty of the Creator he had come to know and worship.

Although befriending an RAF chaplain early in his career led to a habit of carrying a small copy of John's Gospel wherever he went and his father was a great example of a devout believer, God was very much off his radar – until tennis stopped



Brian Walpole's journey took him from supersonic skies to supercharged faith.

him in his tracks! His daughters Julie and Shelley were high achievers in the sport – Shelley once beat the legendary Steffi Graf and also played Chrissie Evert in the opening round of the US Open.

It was at a tennis dinner that their proud dad got chatting with the well-known commentator Gerald Williams, eventually accompanying him to church.

This triggered a long search for answers, his scientific mind needing to analyse the truth or otherwise of the Gospel.

And it was largely thanks to a book called *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell that Brian was finally convinced that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead and he was forced to agree with CS Lewis that, “Christianity, if false, is of no

importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

By his own admission, his journey to faith had been pedestrian and gradual. But his beloved wife Rosemary got there at supersonic speed on a visit to church while her husband was away flying.

Their daughter Shelley subsequently married the pastor's son, also a minister, with whom she is now serving God in Canada.

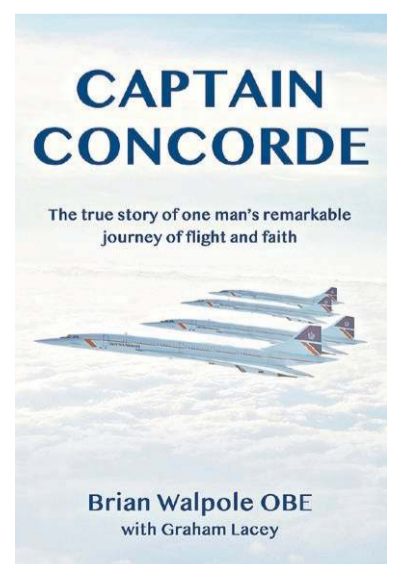
Brian turned around the fortunes of Concorde which in its early days was billed by some as a ‘commercial corpse’ losing money hand over fist. But he steadied the ship into a profitable venture and was awarded the OBE.

It was not until well after Brian's retirement that the brilliant Anglo-French piece of engineering wizardry was itself retired in the wake of New York's 9/11 atrocity which effectively ended the commercial viability of supersonic flight, coming as it did just a year after the disastrous Air France crash on take-off in July 2000.

Now past 90, Brian continues to be a devoted disciple of Jesus (Rosemary died suddenly in 2017) and, asked what advice he would give, particularly to young men, said: “Investigating Jesus and what he did for us on the cross is the most important thing any of us will ever do in our life.”

The advice given in the little Gospel he carried around in his early days had been so apt, that “what the compass and instruments are to the naval officer and the ordnance map is to the field officer, so the Bible is to us in our journey through life”. ●

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Brian's book about his life.

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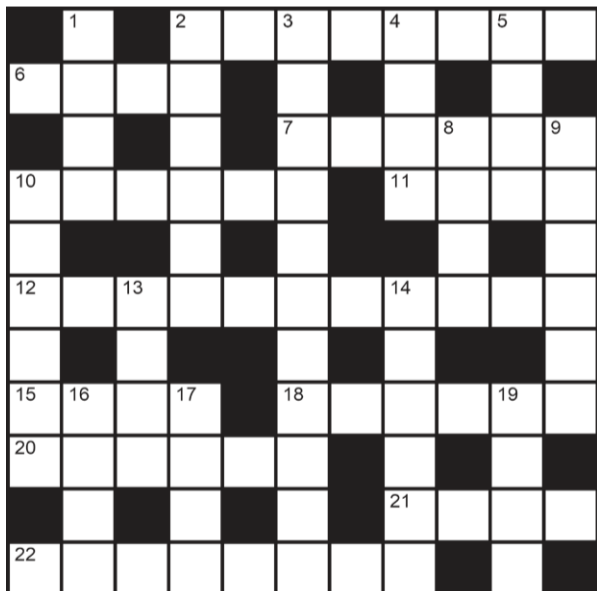
Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 2 After today!
- 6 Toy with tricks (2-2)
- 7 Sweetness and sourness
- 10 Byproduct of a belly-flop
- 11 Fruity pastry
- 12 Facts or knowledge
- 15 Use axe
- 18 Pisa and Eiffel
- 20 US state in the Pacific
- 21 Reduced amount
- 22 Gives an assurance

DOWN

- 1 Barrel band
- 2 Pizza paste
- 3 Science of numbers
- 4 Oxide forming on iron
- 5 Antonym for under
- 6 Metered vehicle
- 7 Bee injuries
- 8 Change, swap
- 9 Move like lava
- 10 Barbers cut it
- 11 Tree with fronds
- 12 Beach or bath needs
- 13 Puff up, as bread

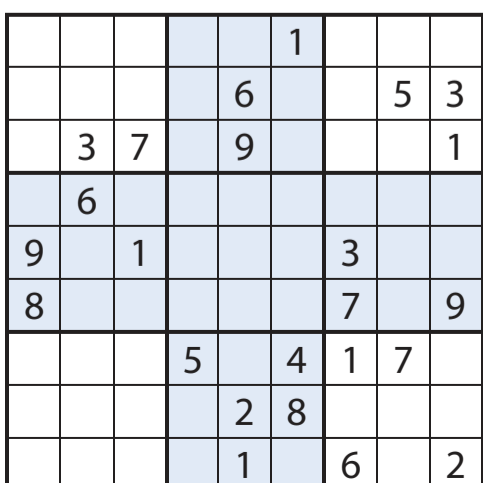


SOLUTIONS PAGE 11

Smile files...



Elephant Seal. Vicki Jauron, Babylon and Beyond Photography / gettyimages



Ask Y: Answers to tough questions about God

QUESTION: I HAVE LOTS OF IDEAS ABOUT GOD, ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?



IT DOES SEEM to make sense on the surface – to use brain power and commonsense to work out who or what God is, what He's up to and what He wants from us. But to get the right answers there must be a lot more to it than that, for some pretty obvious reasons.

For a start, what about the limit to our knowledge? Humankind has yet to even find a cure for the common cold. So, what's the chance that we have enough brain power to figure out what the Creator of everything is like all by ourselves?

More than that, there's also a limit to our capacity to understand. A child asks “Why?” and “How?” and “Why?” again – and again. The parent has the answers and would love to be able to give them. But the child's intellectual ability does not stretch far enough – to say the least.

The final problem is our in-built bias. For example, have you ever been to the dentist for a check-up hoping they would find nothing wrong – even if potential disaster was lurking somewhere beneath the enamel? I know I have – being more interested in my own self interest than finding what was true. In the same way there's a bias when we start asking ourselves God-questions. We automatically limit our investigation and conclusions to things which fit our comfort zones and the way we'd like things to be. But God may well not be like that at all.

The good news though is that the God who made us knows all this – and acted accordingly. It's a bit like Ikea providing a personal guide when you are struggling to make sense of a piece of self-assembly furniture. Only better.

The God we are interested in is also interested in us – to the extent that He came among us so we could know what He is like. He came as Jesus, to be among us and to help us get the picture.

In fact, God has done what I would have to do if my goldfish were ever to come to know what I think of him. I'd have to become like him and enter his fishy little world. And, at the event we call Christmas, that is what God did Himself. We've not been left to our own feeble reasoning, prejudice or self-interest when it comes to knowing what God is like. He sent Jesus so we could know. ●

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.

A rebel redeemed

• From page 1

He stopped rebelling and says his faith “grew exponentially”.

He held Bible study classes and even formed a choir – and his mother did indeed recover. Arnold calls this his “first wave” of zeal for the Lord.

Like all waves, however, it reached a peak – then crashed. Two years later, peer pressure, ridicule from schoolmates, a sense that he was missing out “on all the clubs and fun stuff” and his parents’ divorce led to Arnold losing his early passion.

“I got really angry with my dad. I grew so bitter I considered myself fatherless even though he was alive.”

After the divorce, Arnold said he watched his mother struggle with depression and became depressed himself.

“My academics started failing. I had lost the will to do well in life. It was a very tough time.”

Ironically, it was his father who paved the way to a new life for Arnold in Australia. He intervened when Arnold’s grades began falling and told him to go to university in Perth.

This was the start of what Arnold considers his second wave in his spiritual life.

Money was so tight in Perth that he had to defer his studies for a year so he could earn enough to pay the tuition fees.

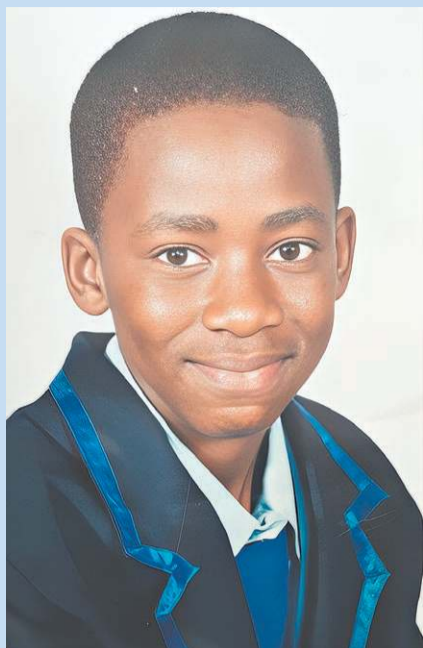
He was living in a shared house where beer was the staple diet. “You might not find food in the fridge but you would always find beer – that’s the kind of household we were.”

“I was under so much stress but I tried to do things by my own strength, outside of the will of God. I asked God, ‘Where are You?’

“I started to pray again but my relationship at that time was nothing like when I first committed my life to Him – I used God like the triple zero emergency number.

“Yet all through this I could feel the prayers of my mother, who never stopped praying for me.”

So it was only fitting then, that it was his mother who was the catalyst for Arnold’s third and final wave – the one that brought him safely back to God’s shore.



Arnold Nyamhamba as a child.

When Arnold was 26, she visited him in Perth, where she suddenly experienced excruciating stomach pain.

Doctors in Perth told her she had three enormous fibroids in her womb – one as big as a child’s head – and would need to have them removed.

Arnold brought her back to Zimbabwe for the operation but before she went into hospital, they were invited to a healing service by a friend.

By this time, he had become an almost total sceptic.

“But God has a way of moving and for me it was when I saw the miracle He gave my mother during that healing service.

“My mum’s pain was an 11 on a scale of one to

10. It was just beyond description. “But after she was prayed for, she was immediately healed. She was able to run up and down with absolutely no pain!

“And then I heard God telling me – ‘Your time has come. Come home.’

“The words really went deep into me and since then I have rediscovered the faith of my youth.”

Today Arnold is married and has three sons.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce and is a successful businessman and corporate governance coach.

His wife Tanya was with him on that fateful visit to the healing service in Zimbabwe and rededicated her life to Christ at the same time. •

“
Your time has come. Come home.”
”

HIGHWAY EXIT

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. - Matthew 7:13 NIV

A LOVE THAT HEALS

In an industry that thrives on image, Dorothy Cheng looked like she had it all. The London-based model has worked with brands like Adidas and Thierry Mugler, and walked the runway for London Fashion Week.

But for seven years, Dorothy battled depression, eating disorders and an increasingly low self-esteem. She wrote in an Instagram caption, “I believed that if I just became this or achieved that, I would finally feel confident. Like I would finally prove I was somebody. That I was worthy all along.”

Sharing with Tonya Raymond on YouTube, Dorothy said that even at a young age, she found her self-worth in making other people happy.

“Growing up, my uncle would also be really critical of my appearance, and all these feelings manifested into having an eating disorder and attracting the wrong partner.”

Born and raised in Hong Kong to a Korean mother and Chinese father, Dorothy grew up in a Christian household where she attended church regularly.

While her parents did their best to instil Christian values in her, Dorothy struggled to reconcile the values she was taught and the actions of the Christians in her life.

“[I was taught that] Christians are supposed to be loving – they shouldn’t be critical, they should be caring – but I wasn’t really seeing that in my relatives.”

At 17, Dorothy moved to London for college. Free from the watchful eyes of her parents, she drifted into a life of partying, alcohol and drugs.

“Back then, I thought Christians are so judgmental. I didn’t want to be any part of it,” she admitted.

“So from the class clown high school girl, I transitioned into this clubbing girl. I used to be that girl who got black-out drunk every weekend. That was my identity.”

Then in 2023, Dorothy found herself reeling from a painful breakup.

“I used to find my self-worth in men. I put so much emphasis in men and how they perceived me...”

“I was just so desperate to find love that I was seeking it in all the wrong places. I needed to be validated because I didn’t know who I was so I needed someone else to tell me my worth.”

Sharing on her YouTube channel, Dorothy explained, “During the relationship, it got really toxic where the highs were really high and the lows were really low.”

Throughout the relationship, she felt belittled and put down.

“I felt myself getting smaller and smaller.”

One day, she found out that her boyfriend had been cheating on her. “I just couldn’t take it and I broke up with him.

“It was honestly one of the hardest mental battles that I had to fight through. I wanted to text him so badly. I didn’t care how toxic he was. I wanted to text him and I felt so lonely.”

Dorothy had reached the lowest point in her life.

So she turned to different methods of healing herself, from immersion in self-healing techniques to going



Behind the glamour of the runway, Dorothy Cheng was fighting a hidden battle for self-worth.

through mental health therapy. She also started attending church again and reading the Bible for herself, starting with the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

But with all the different voices ringing in her head, Dorothy felt confused.

“Initially, I felt a lot of resistance. I had been leaning toward New Age

spirituality and wasn’t sure if Jesus was truly God, or if it was the ‘universe’ I had been believing in,” she told *Challenge News*.

So she prayed, “Lord, if You’re the one true God, can You reveal Yourself to me?”

“Once the veil was lifted, I experienced His love through the Scriptures in a way I never had before. I was deeply moved by Jesus’ humility and love. It was unlike anything I had ever

encountered.

“The more I read His Word, the more discernment I had. I started feeling convicted of sins [any thought or action that goes against God’s way] I had turned a blind eye to for so many years.

“As the veils were lifted, I began

“
I needed someone else to tell me my worth.”
”

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to see just how much of a sinner I really was and how much I needed His mercy.”

While she continued attending therapy sessions, Dorothy stopped participating in New Age practices. Once, while on a train, Dorothy realised that the urge she had to contact her ex-boyfriend was gone, along with the hurt from the heartbreak.

“I was so incredibly joyful; I began praising God in the train.”

Since surrendering her life to Jesus, Dorothy has experienced a “deep, unexplainable peace and joy. I felt so free. I wanted to shout from the mountaintops about His love.”

Dorothy now uses her Instagram page (@yeeyancheng) to share about her faith and words of encouragement. •

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Meaningless becomes meaningful

Jose was born and raised in Cebu, Philippines, the eldest in a family of four children.

“My dad died when I was 15, and two years later my entire family – my mother and my siblings – migrated to Australia,” he told *Salvos Magazine*.

After finishing high school, Jose worked hard with a major banking institution and investment companies to help support his family.

“In retrospect, it was a relatively successful period of my life – I had a good job, my siblings completed their studies, my sister and my youngest brother both got married, I had a great relationship with my family, and I had a few good friends.”

Everything changed in 2003 when a friend invited him to his house to watch football one Sunday afternoon.

“As naturally as pulling out a can of beer from the fridge, he pulled out a glass pipe and a clear plastic bag with a crystal substance. It was a substance I came to know and fall in love with – ice, aka crystal methamphetamine. According to my friend, this drug was a source of wisdom. He reasoned to me that all professionals took this drug.”

Jose was hooked from the moment he tried ice. It made him feel confident and numbed the pain of the grief he felt.

But it also kept him awake – for days at a time. Then he would drink a bottle of whiskey to go to sleep.

“At first, there was a daily choice about whether to take ice, but the addiction rapidly took hold of my life, and it became a matter of when, not if, I would get my hands on ice that day. Within six months, I was spending \$1000 a week on my habit. This was all fine until I ran out of savings.”

Jose’s addiction led to him losing his job, his car and his house.

“I had to move back to my mum’s house. I racked up credit card debt to fund the addiction. I started to break into my brother’s home to steal stuff to pay for the drugs. Eventually, my mum kicked me out, and I became alienated from my family.”

“I became desperate to do anything to get the money to chase the high. I turned to crime to support my habit, from theft to fraud. I shoplifted, I stole mail, I stole credit cards.”

“They say there are three places an ice addict will end up: prison, hospital, death. In my 13 years of addiction, I experienced the first two.”

Jose recalls the loneliness he felt when he was released from an 18-month prison stint and no one was waiting for him at the gates. He quickly numbed that feeling as he immediately went to a dealer’s house to score.

When Jose was again arrested for

possession in 2015, he was given the option to attend a drug rehab in another state. He took the offer but intended to escape once he got there. However, as he walked through the airport, he had a realisation.

“I looked at everyone else with their luggage, and they were happy. Then I saw my life as it really was, and not the delusion in my head. I was 45 years old, and the sum total of my life was a black garbage bag, the contents of which did not belong to me.”

“It was the reality check I needed. I smashed my phone to eliminate the temptation of getting in touch with any dealers or former connections and spent 11 months in that treatment centre.”

During the program, Jose learned new routines to develop new patterns of living. He woke up at 5.30am, did

things he didn’t want to do (like raking leaves every day), and learned new skills like creating smart goals, budgeting and cooking. He also attended therapy that facilitated emotional healing.

“This is important because when you take the drugs away from an

addict, what you are left with are the reasons they need to use in the first place.

“One day at a time, I got clean... In the beginning, my recovery was dif-

ficult. Just because I became sober, it didn’t mean life got easier.”

Finding a job and getting a house were challenging and despite being clean for more than six months, he was still an addict.

“I couldn’t see the point of life. I was still the same person. I had no hope. Nothing mattered. Nothing made sense.”

“Then, one morning, maybe three or four in the morning, I got up to open the door for a puppy we had at the rehab farm.”

“As I was opening the door, I tripped over my Bible, which opened at the book of Ecclesiastes, and I read the words “meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless”. I was just stunned.

“I realised that righteousness and foolishness do not matter unless we are anchored firmly to God. I realised also that I didn’t have to look for God because God came for us through Jesus. That was really the beginning of the journey.”

Surrendering his life to Jesus, Jose began attending church and participated in programs and services to help him recreate his life.

Jose has now been sober for more than eight years. He has graduated university and provides peer support and anti-ice education workshops in schools as well as in Juvenile Justice Centres alongside the *Salvos* throughout Australia.

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“
I couldn’t see the point of life.”

HOPE FOUND IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIP

Growing up in a country town north of Adelaide during the 1950s and 60s wasn’t easy for Heather Dieckmann.

Her mother faced a constant struggle to make ends meet in a home marked by emotional neglect and family violence.

Her younger brother Garry was caught stealing toilet paper from the school bathroom at 10 and was reprimanded by his teacher. It would be months before the school found out he didn’t have any textbooks because there wasn’t enough money at home to buy them.

Heather’s father fought on the frontlines of Papua New Guinea in World War II and came home with deep psychological scars as a result.

After the war, he spent long hours at work and even longer ones at the pub, often stumbling home in a drunken stupor.

At times, he would chase the family around their property in an intoxicated rage brandishing whatever weapon he could find.

The family home was unfinished. Some rooms had no doors, the toilet was a backyard encl-

sure with a bucket and the bath was in the room that Heather shared with her brothers. For privacy, there was just a flimsy curtain.

In this environment it was no surprise that Heather rarely felt safe or secure. By 17 she had become a single mum and was forced to leave home.

Who knows how her life might have turned out had it not been for *The Exorcist*, the horror movie about a girl who becomes possessed by the devil? It literally put the fear of God into Heather.

Her widower, Robert, explained, “The film opened Heather’s eyes to the spiritual dangers all around her. She was traumatised by it.”

“Shortly after watching the movie she began reading the Bible and attending church and not long after that she gave her life to Christ and was baptised [a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ symbolising the believer’s cleansing from sin, death to their old life, and resurrection into new life through Christ].

“It’s fair to say Heather’s life changed dramatically after receiving Christ. She truly found her life’s calling.”

She immediately began sharing her newfound faith and joy with family and friends.

Younger brother Garry, the toilet paper thief, outwardly

mocked her but one night after a long talk with his sister, quietly and privately gave his life to the Lord.

His toilet paper theft days long behind him, Garry became an ordained minister in Sydney and led their mother to Christ in 1974.

Heather’s effect on her friends was equally profound.

“She started testifying to her friends about the love of Christ and encouraged many other unmarried mothers to attend church,” Robert revealed. “Soon, her best friend became a Christian too.”

Robert and Heather met at church in 1973. Not long after that, Robert led her father to Christ.

Heather had another way of sharing the Gospel (the good news about Jesus Christ) – in song. She had an excellent singing voice, Robert said with a smile.

The Singing Chaplain, as she became known, often sang at nursing homes and community clubs and always included a healthy sprinkling of gospel songs.

In 2003 Heather and her daughter Hannah spent several months in Kenya.

They set up a Christian kids’ club at an orphanage in Nairobi and then spent time at a village in Kisii overseeing a women’s Bible study and prayer group.

Up until her passing in April 2025, Kenya held a special space in Heather’s heart.

“Heather is proof that no matter what we face, Christ is there, guiding our faltering steps, pointing the way to life,” said Robert.

What is Pentecost all about?

BY HARRIET COOMBE

I AM NOT a good waiter. I don’t mean ‘serving food at a café’ waiter (although I wasn’t the best at that either). I mean the ‘waiting for something to happen’ type of waiter.

As a child, I would wait impatiently for my birthday. I’d start the countdown when it was still hundreds of days away. And as the day grew closer – single digits, then hours – I could physically feel the excitement bubbling up within me.

If I had to deliver a presentation at school – something that filled me with anxiety – I always requested to go first. I wanted to get it over with, be put out of my misery. For me, the waiting was worse than the actual task.

But what about waiting when you don’t know what exactly you are waiting for, or when it will happen? That was the experience of Jesus’ followers after they had witnessed Him die on the cross, rise from the dead, walk among them for 40 days, and then ascend to the heavens.

He left with instructions to wait and a promise that something was coming that would change everything. But as they gathered together, there must have been uncertainty.

Jesus had promised them a Helper. But who was that? How and when would He arrive?

It turns out they had to wait 10 days after Jesus’ ascension for what is now known as Pentecost. It is one of the most important moments in the Christian story, yet often one of the least understood. It marks the day when God’s Holy Spirit – the Helper Jesus had promised – was poured out on ordinary people in a way that turned the ancient world upside down.

The room they were in filled with a sound like a violent rushing wind. What looked like tongues of fire rested on each person present. And

suddenly these ordinary men and women found themselves speaking languages they had never learned.

Then the apostle Peter stood up to address the crowd that had gathered in the streets. This was the same Peter who, just weeks earlier, had denied even knowing Jesus three times on the night of His arrest. But something had clearly changed. With a boldness that had no natural explanation, Peter declared that Jesus of Nazareth – crucified, buried, and raised – is both Lord and Messiah.

It was a message that demanded a response. “What shall we do?” they asked. Peter’s answer was straightforward: repent, be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That day, about 3000 people responded and were added to the community of believers. The church had been born.

So how does any of that affect you and me thousands of years later?

Well, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is still being poured out on ordinary people today.

Pentecost shows us that Christianity isn’t just a set of beliefs or rules – it’s a relationship with God, who wants to dwell with us, guide us, and renew us from the inside out. The message Peter preached that day hasn’t changed: forgiveness is still freely offered, not because of what we’ve done, but because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross and through His resurrection.

If you have never made that step of faith, the invitation is open to you right now. All it requires is an honest turning – away from living life on your own terms, and towards the God who made you, loves you, and sent His Son to bring you home.

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



Stock photo of an ammonite fossil.

Noah's ark: Fact or fiction?

Part 6: What about geological evidence?

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.

WHEN WE LOOK at the world from a biblical perspective we can see the geological evidence for the flood everywhere. Someone said once, 'If I hadn't believed it I wouldn't have seen it.'

After a worldwide flood, like the Bible describes, we would expect to find billions of dead things, buried in rock layers laid down by water, all over the earth. And that's exactly what geologists find (billions of fossils in sedimentary rock layers worldwide).

Altogether, about 75 percent of the continental surface is sedimentary rock. Thick layers of gravel, sand and silt were laid down by water and have cemented into hard stone. Billions of plant and animal fossils are entombed inside.

Fossils point to catastrophe and rapid burial. They could not have been buried slowly over thousands of years or they would have been eaten by scavengers or rotted away. There are lots of spectacular examples, like an ichthyosaur that was buried while giving birth. The baby ichthyosaur was fossilised too, snap-frozen in time (see image below). And there are fish that were buried so quickly they did not have time to finish their meal.

All around the world, from the deepest oceans to the highest mountains, we find evidence of Noah's flood. As you travel around the globe, you see how the landscapes of the earth preserve the effects of Noah's flood, from plateaus and canyons to coal seams and cliffs. The evidence is all over the earth for everyone to see!

How could fossils millions of years old form in the flood?

Many people don't connect fossils with Noah's flood because the fossils are supposed to be millions of years old. But those ages are just people's opinions; they are not measured directly. There is much evidence to indicate the world is only thousands

of years old.

For example, a piece of wood was found enclosed in sandstone from a Sydney quarry. The sandstone is said to be over 200 million years old, yet when the wood was analysed for carbon-14 it indicated it was only thousands of years old. Scientists decide which date to accept depending on how it agrees with their prior beliefs about the past.

People used to think that fine laminations in sedimentary rocks meant they accumulated slowly over thousands of years. However, when the Mount St Helens volcano exploded in June 1980, eight metres of finely-layered sediment were deposited in just one hour. Geologists now realise that multiple fine layers can form quickly.

Canyons don't need millions of years to form, either. Although Burlingame Canyon (north-west USA) looks like it eroded slowly over many thousands of years, it was cut quickly during torrential rainfall and flooding in a few days.

Many people think rocks take millions of years to harden, but that is not correct. At a flour mill in the USA a sack of flour was petrified (turned to stone) in a few weeks when the mill was flooded by mineralized water.

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (1650), there were only 500 million people on Earth. Population growth has been staggering. Our present world population of 7 billion people is hundreds of thousands of times too small if people have been on the earth for millions of years. Today's population is consistent with the length of time since the flood, 4,500 years ago, not with evolution over millions of years.

Part 7 will continue in the next edition of Challenge News.

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



Stenopterygius (ichthyosaur) birthing specimen. Natural History Museum, London, 2017. Photo by Stephen O'Connor via Wikimedia Commons.



Richard Dawkins and Josh Timonen. Photos from Photos from YouTube/Living Waters.

I was Dawkins' right hand man

Richard Dawkins, one of the modern "New Atheists," is a household name, and probably one of the best-known atheists in the world. He's written many books, including his 2008 bestseller *The God Delusion* and his 1986 book *The Blind Watchmaker*. Now his former "right hand man" Josh Timonen has come to believe in everything that Dawkins opposes.

Josh had grown up in a Christian household and attended church regularly, but walked away from the faith at about 17 or 18. He was a musician playing in a band, through which he learnt several useful skills like website creation, graphic design and video editing. After rejecting Jesus' existence as a concoction of myths, Josh decided to become an atheist.

For five years, from 2006-2010. Josh Timonen became one of Dawkins' closest companions, helping Richard create his website, produce documentaries and sell merchandise. Josh even designed the famous atheist "A" logo.

He earned a public "thank you" from Dawkins in *The God Delusion*; Dawkins even dedicated his book *The Greatest Show on Earth* (2010) to Josh. However, when Josh decided he wanted to part ways with Dawkins, Richard sued him, leading to a three-year legal dispute. This led to some shunning from the atheist community, Josh says on a Living Waters YouTube interview.

Still an atheist, he went on to be a software developer in Portland, Oregon. Cracks started showing in Josh's worldview when rioting and looting broke out during the 2020 pandemic and so many of his friends were endorsing what Josh called "this new evil on display". Realising that whatever page these people were on, he wasn't on it, Josh and his wife and child moved to Waco, Texas. After starting to home school their daughter, they were looking for a place for her to find community. They found it at a local church, though they originally did not plan on becoming Christians but just wanted to make friends.

After meeting several individuals in the church, and realising how this moral foundation benefitted the community, Josh was prompted to begin reading Scripture; he started by reading the entire New Testament.

Josh also read *The Case for Christ* by journalist and Christian convert



Josh more recently, talking on the Living Waters Podcast.

Lee Strobel. Reading that book – and others – Josh realised that there is good evidence to believe in the real life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; as a result, he decided to place his faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

The process of his conversion took place over 2020-2021. He made the revelation of his change of heart on an episode of The Living Waters Podcast. Living Waters is a ministry founded by Ray Comfort.

"I had to deal with the fact that it was real, that Jesus was real," Josh said in the interview. "That to me is the defining piece – Jesus actually lived, He actually died, and He actually

rose [from the dead]." He added: "And not only did He live, but He lived a sinless life. Who else are you going to believe than someone who has lived a sinless life? And I have to deal with that. I can't just push that aside and say, 'Oh, it's a myth.' No, these are real events. And then, I'm being asked to do something [repent and surrender]. It's a personal thing between Him and me. And that's where it kind of struck differently [reading about sin and the need to repent of it]."

He admitted: "I didn't have an answer for every atheist thought that came to me from my past 20 years. I was still thinking through everything; but that conviction was there, that seed, that initial peace that I knew was true. And the rest would figure itself out."

Josh's wife was on a similar journey and also gave her life to the Lord.

Josh – despite rejecting Christianity in his early adulthood – considered the evidence for Christ and did not find it lacking.

Christians are not called to a blind, unintelligent faith, where they check their brains at the front door of church.

Rather, there is good historical evidence and sound philosophical and moral reasons to have faith in Jesus Christ.

“ I had to deal with the fact that it was real.”

GET ANSWERS FOR YOUR FAMILY

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YOUTH TRUTH

Why should I read the Bible?

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED IS happening. After years of decline, Bible reading is rising – especially among younger generations. Recent studies show that nearly half of U.S. Gen Z and Millennials now read the Bible weekly, with younger men often leading the way.

At the same time, fewer people are convinced the Bible is completely accurate. Only about one-third of adults say they believe it is 100 percent accurate, even though engagement is increasing.

This raises an important question: If fewer people believe the Bible is fully accurate, why are so many returning to it?

Some might think it's simply because people are searching for something to be a source of peace, wisdom, and hope. While that is part of the reason, it doesn't tell the whole story. The Bible isn't just a comforting book or ancient advice – it is historically reliable, internally consistent, and rooted in real events. People are drawn to it not only for guidance and hope, but because it truly is an accurate record of God's work and His plan for humanity.

Can we trust the accuracy of the Bible?

You don't have to be religious to ask this. Even from a historical or literary standpoint, the Bible is a remarkable document. Scholars – religious and secular alike – take its reliability seriously for several reasons:

1. It has unparalleled manuscript support.

The New Testament alone has over 5,800 Greek manuscripts, tens of thousands in other languages, and fragments dating within decades of the original writings. Many classical texts – like those of Plato or Aristotle – survive in only a handful of manuscripts copied centuries later. Yet their accuracy is rarely questioned.

2. It was written by eyewitnesses or those recording eyewitness testimony.

The Gospels, Acts, and many letters were written within living memory of the events they describe. People who saw Jesus, heard Him teach, or knew Him personally were still alive when these texts circulated, making false claims easy to challenge.

3. It has remarkable internal consistency.

Across roughly 1,500 years, 66 books, multiple authors, and vastly different cultures, the Bible maintains a unified storyline about God, humanity, justice, and hope.



STOCK PHOTO

That alone is astonishing.

4. Archaeology consistently supports it.

Archaeologists continue to uncover names, locations, cultural practices, and political details that align with biblical accounts. The Bible is rooted in history, geography, and real events.

5. Its impact on individuals is undeniable.

Millions testify that reading the Bible has brought comfort, conviction, hope, direction, and transformation. Even for those who don't believe in God, the effect of Scripture on people's lives is striking.

What the Bible ultimately says

At its core, the Bible is not merely a historical document or a set of moral teachings. It is a story about a God who loves people deeply and personally.

It tells us:

- We were created for relationship with God.
- We've all wandered from Him.
- We cannot fix ourselves through effort or self-improvement.
- God came to us to restore what we broke.
- Jesus lived perfectly, died sacrificially, and rose again so we could have real, eternal life.

The invitation of the Bible is simple: Come home to God.

An invitation for you

You may not consider yourself religious. You may have doubts, questions, or even painful experiences tied to faith. But if you're curious – if something in you wonders whether there's more – then you're exactly the kind of person the Bible speaks to.

If you want to begin a relationship with God, you can start right now with a simple prayer:

"God, I want to know You. I admit I've gone my own way. I believe Jesus came for me, died for me, and rose again. Please forgive me, change me, and help me follow You."

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

CONFUSION TO CLARITY

Eliza Ottens grew up in a home where faith was a daily part of life.

"Both of my parents are born again Christians," she said. "I grew up going to church on Sundays and saying prayers with my family. When I was about six years old, my Sunday School teacher led us in the sinner's prayer [a request for God's forgiveness and an invitation for Jesus to guide your life]."

Even so, she admitted, that early commitment didn't mean she truly understood what it meant to follow Christ. "I went off that moment thinking I was saved, but still living my life as I wanted and was living my parents' faith instead of my own."

By the time she reached high school, Eliza had begun to drift. "I got in with the wrong group of friends who lived very worldly lives. I began to put on an act. I was a girl who became more concerned about popularity, who swore all the time at school, but at home and church, I was an angel."

The dual life she was leading weighed heavily on her. "I continued to make friends with the wrong people. This really affected me, and I felt very lost. By year 10, I realised that I was living two different lives. My group of school friends lived very worldly lives, and I always felt a heavy weight of guilt when I was around them."

The death of her grandfather at the end of year 10 brought her questions about life, death, and eternity into sharper focus. "This got me to think more about heaven and hell and whether I was really saved."

Searching for something real

Eliza took steps to learn more



Eliza Ottens found true peace and purpose after a pivotal encounter.

about faith, hoping that knowledge would bridge the gap she felt.

"My school offered a course with a Certificate III in Christian ministry and theology. I wanted to be saved, but I felt so anxious about saying it myself, because I thought that I might say it wrong. For some reason, I thought that completing the course would make me saved, because I would know more about God and the Christian perspective of life."

Looking back, she recognised the flaw in that approach.

"I realise how silly and lazy I was. I was relying on looking like I was a Christian rather than actually truly being one. I was taking no responsibility for myself, and was not taking God seriously. Even though I went to church every week, prayed and read the Bible, I looked back and realised how lost I really was."

A friend's invitation to a Christian camp provided a turning point. "I felt very out of place amongst friends," Eliza recalled.

"My friend and I went for a walk. She asked me, 'So how are you going with Christ?' I didn't have an answer, but looking back, my silence was an answer in itself."

Three months later, another camp brought her to a pivotal moment.

"On Saturday night, someone was preaching. I don't remember what he said, because the realisation hit me – I was not saved. All of a sudden I felt lonely and sad because I knew that if I died that night, I would not go to heaven. I kept this very quiet because I was embarrassed. My dad was the church pastor, yet his daughter was not a Christian."

A life changed

The next morning, Eliza's life took

a decisive turn. "I was with a friend getting ready for church, when she suddenly turned to me and asked, 'Eliza, are you born again?' I burst into tears because I knew I wasn't. We quickly ran off to church, and afterwards we went for a walk. It was on that walk that she led me through the sinner's prayer.

"After I prayed, I felt an unexplainable peace and joy. I was saved, and this time I knew it."

A month later, Eliza was baptised (a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ), marking the start of a new chapter. Her faith began shaping her decisions in profound ways.

"In Year 12, I was convinced that I would study business at university and become an event manager. God prompted me to go to an open day at a teacher's college. I went because my friend really wanted to check it out. It was there, in the library, that God told me that I needed to be there."

Moving from the farm to the city for university presented challenges, but Eliza saw God's provision.

"I had no idea where I would live, but God provided a place for me to board with a Christian teacher. He also provided me with a job as an educational support officer in the school.

"I completed my first placement, which helped me gain experience working with students, and it gave me the finances to go on a mission trip that I really wanted to go on. The trip was life-changing and really helped me to grow in my faith."

Eliza reflected on how far she's come: "God has done so much for me, and I cannot wait to see what He has in store for me. He has the best plans, and I need to trust that."



True freedom

IMAGINE GROWING UP with complete freedom. It's what most of us believe we want!

For author Augusten Burroughs, complete freedom was the experience of his teenage years. He could do what he wanted – skipping school, doing drugs, following any desire of a young man's heart. So did he really experience true freedom? Burroughs reflected on this and said that instead of feeling free, he actually felt trapped. There was nothing to break free from, so he was left feeling stuck, with nowhere to turn.

Freedom is not a lack of constraint, which ends up as just a dream to avoid responsibility and run away from life.

Jesus promised us true freedom. Freedom from the knowledge that you've disappointed yourself, others and God. Many of us are so crippled by this pain of disappointment that no amount of the freedoms that life can offer will fix our pain.

Why not turn to Jesus today and find true and lasting freedom?

Contact Challenge!
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CAREER BREAKER TO CAREER MAKER

Many people in the field of professional acting yearn for new bodies. Better, younger, fitter, healthier.

They should talk to actor Nick Shakoor about how he got his.

Let's start at the beginning.

Nick's grandfather was a Greek orthodox priest. "He was all about Jesus," he told author Michael Foust, who interviewed him for the Crosswalk channel on YouTube.

"He'd go door to door and pray for people, pray for the sick even after church. Church was just a fragment of what he did."

Though he grew up in a Christian environment Nick did not have a personal faith. Then he was offered the role of Zebedee in the global hit TV series *The Chosen*, about the life of Christ and His disciples, and everything changed.

Initially, he wanted to refuse the role, telling the *Washington Times*: "I was mumbling to myself, I can't believe I'm going to play a 55-year-old fisherman on a religious project. This is the final nail in the acting career."

He could not have foreseen how successful the series would become. What began as a crowdfunding project has ballooned into a seven-season phenomenon that has so far reached 280 million viewers, won prestigious awards and is credited with showing Hollywood just how popular and sought-after faith-based content is.

But at the time Nick was offered the part, the world-



Nick Shakoor as Zebedee in *The Chosen*.

wide sensation was just its creator's dream project. So you could forgive him for thinking he would be committing career suicide.

But during the third season he had a vision in his apartment, according to God Reports.

"It's like somebody beamed a projector from my right shoulder and left into the ceiling where I saw a gilded cage encrusted with diamonds and rubies and like a floral design all over this cage with a key and a door," Nick shared.

"There were people in silhouettes all around the cage applauding and they had kind of like a smile like the Joker did. It looked kind of disturbing. A secondary image projected onto the ceiling of this white dirt road with green pastures and a blue sky in the sun.

"I was like, 'Whoa what the

heck is this? Why am I being shown this right now? No matter where I walked around in the apartment the projections wouldn't go away, and I'm like, am I supposed to pick one?"

Then he heard a voice: "You're at a crossroads right now, you're at a fork in the road. You can have one of these and you've got to pick."

Nick chose the dirt road as he prayed: "God, you know I want a huge life, I want to live large but not with material things, not with cars. My soul is crying out for something bigger."

Later, he attended a church conference with a friend, where he was impressed and freaked out at the same time.

While driving home, he felt a strong sense of God's presence and cried out: "God my soul is lost, it's been lost for a long time, I need You now, not only do I need You, but I need what You and Jesus have to offer."

The next night, while being prayed for by a group of friends at the conference, he experienced what he described as like a meteor hitting his body.

He told Michael it felt like "the Holy Spirit going from outside to in and it set my

body into flames.

"For somebody like me, who poked fun at people for being so into Jesus I never thought I would experience something like this. It's so unexpected.

"It felt like my organs were all being burned away and I was being vibrated in micro-waved at the same time – that's the best way I can describe it!"

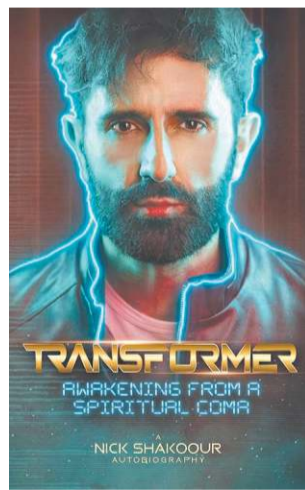
He told God Reports: "From the bottom of my feet the fire just started building to the top and then by the time it reached my head I almost was going to run out because I felt the sensation of passing away."

But he did not pass away; he passed into a new life, a life that he now lives wholeheartedly for Jesus. For Nick today, the faith he used to just pretend to have while on the set of *The Chosen*, has become real life.

"I always believed in God and believed in Jesus... but there wasn't a knowingness like there is now."

"I literally feel like I was given a brand-new body – brand new everything. My mind is blown by what's happened."

In 2025, Nick released an autobiography called *Transformer: Awakening From A Spiritual Coma*.



Nick's book about his life, *Transformer: Awakening from a Spiritual Coma*.

Recipe of the month



Patatas puttanesca

WHEN MY CHILDREN were younger, we read Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, relishing every page, enthralled by the Baudelaire orphans and their deliciously dreadful uncle, Count Olaf. The making of pasta puttanesca for a dinner party for their uncle and his friends (rather than the roast beef he had requested), and the ensuing explosive scene was a highlight, especially their father's dramatic rendition of the hysterical Olaf – "Roast beef! I ordered roast beef!"

This recipe is a riff on the traditional pasta puttanesca, using new potatoes and sun-dried tomatoes, rather than fresh. It is packed with chilli and salty capers, parsley and olives – not for the faint hearted! It came about because I found organic sun-dried tomatoes at my local fruit shop, and although a somewhat dated ingredient, they are so rich and full of flavour when truly dried in the sun and not treated with any preservatives that I had to revive them in this recipe.

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

1 kg small new potatoes
6-8 sun-dried tomatoes
1 tablespoon capers
1 long fresh red chilli, finely chopped
1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes
6-8 kalamata olives, sliced
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
2 tablespoon olive oil
salt and pepper

for 10 minutes to soften.

While the potatoes are cooking, heat the remaining oil in a frying pan that is large enough to hold the potatoes. Toss in the capers and cook for a minute. Add the chilli, chilli flakes olives and parsley and cook for another minute.

Lower the heat and add the tomatoes and their soaking liquid. Cook until almost all the liquid is evaporated.

Check the seasoning and adjust with more salt and pepper if needed and then set aside. When the potatoes are done add them to the pan and toss them carefully so they are covered with the tomato mixture.

Serve hot or warm. Great as part of a tapas selection, or served for dinner with grilled beef and a crisp salad. Pass more dried chilli flakes for those who like extra heat.

Method

Preheat oven to 180 C.

Place the potatoes in a shallow oven tray. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, season with salt and pepper and roast for 20-30 minutes until cooked through. It depends a little on the size of your potatoes how long this will take. They need to be soft when skewered with a sharp knife, but not crispy on the outside as a normal roasted potato would be.

Slice the tomatoes into small pieces and place in a small bowl. Just cover with boiling water and set aside

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

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TAKING A MOMENT TO CONNECT

EVERY DAY, WE'RE surrounded by signals – Wi-Fi searching for connection, phones pinging with messages, notifications from social media, calls from friends, emails from work. We are constantly connecting, trying to stay linked to people, information, and the world around us.

But even in a crowded, hyper-connected life, we can still feel isolated. We can have hundreds of contacts in our phone, yet feel lonely in the quiet moments. We can scroll endlessly for news, entertainment, or validation, but none of it truly satisfies. The connection we crave goes deeper than likes, messages, or updates – it reaches to the heart.

That's because the deepest connection isn't found in devices or apps – it's found with God. He is always present, always listening, always ready to respond.

Consider taking a moment to pause and disconnect from the constant messages, notifications, and demands vying for your attention. Maybe it is time to open yourself to God – and discover peace, clarity, and a sense of purpose and fulfillment that no other relationship or activity can provide.

For more information on how to take that step and begin a relationship with God, see the box entitled *How Do I Become a Christian* on page 11.



BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Love, loss and Mother's Day

BY ROB FURLONG

LATE LAST YEAR my wife Karen's mum went home to be with Jesus, so Mother's Day this year will be a bittersweet time for us. We will remember the wonderful woman of God Mum was, but we will also grieve the fact she is not sharing the day with us.

As you well know, Mother's Day is a special time when we honour our mums, thank them for all they mean to us and for the impact they have made on our lives. If we are married and have children, then it's also a time for us to celebrate our wives and show our genuine appreciation for their role in the raising of our family.

I well remember the first Mother's Day Karen and I shared as new parents. We had agreed that we would "not make a big deal" about Mother's or Father's Day and try to keep the whole thing simple. As a young dad and husband, I foolishly took this agreement literally and so when the day arrived, I did absolutely nothing to celebrate it!

And I mean nothing – no special meal, no present...not even a card. I couldn't understand why Karen was so frosty with me at the end of the day! Let's just say that I learned my lesson well and today I am a reformed man – I have not allowed another Mother's Day to go by without taking the opportunity to genuinely celebrate my wife and what she means to our family. It is in that spirit of celebration that I offer the following thoughts.

We celebrate mums because of the enormous and inexhaustible reservoir of love that they have for their families. "There is only one pretty child in the world," says the Chinese proverb, "and every mother has it." No one loves her family or children like mum does. We celebrate mums because they sacrifice for their family in so many ways. Teneva Jordan said, "A mother is a person who seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie." Mums put themselves out in so many ways as they raise their families and they do it without expectation of reward.



Stock photo

When you stop and think about it, it's amazing to think how much mums achieve in any given week. An author highlighted this by saying that "working mothers are guinea pigs in a scientific experiment to show that sleep is not necessary to human life." We celebrate mums because they can do amazing things with food. A couple of humorous quotes are worth noting here: "The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for 30 years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found."

And this from American funny man, Buddy Hackett: "My mother's menu consisted of two choices – take it or leave it."

Centuries ago, a King by the name of Lemuel instructed his readers to celebrate their wives and mothers. He wrote of the good wife who was priceless, whose worth could not be

measured in terms of earthly wealth. He described her as a sacrificial, hardworking and loving person. Above all, he praised her for her relationship with God – one that was vibrant and strong.

Such a woman was to be praised he said – the word conveys the idea of being congratulated – by her husband and children. (You can read the full text in Proverbs 31 in the Bible). In Lemuel's time, women were not generally viewed in such praiseworthy fashion. Lemuel's approach and attitude were truly revolutionary for its era.

So, speaking from experience, my advice is, go all out and celebrate your wives and mums this Mother's Day; they will appreciate it and they deserve it. And while you are at it, don't forget to celebrate them throughout the rest of the year as well!

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



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	

What is Mother's Day all about?

EVERY MOTHER'S DAY, children around the world wake up early, arrange flowers, burn toast attempting to make breakfast in bed, and scrawl heartfelt messages inside cards. It has become one of the most widely observed celebrations – but behind the chocolates and bouquets lies a rich and even radical history.

Where it all began

Honouring mothers stretches back centuries. Ancient Greeks held festivals for Rhea, mother of the gods, while Romans celebrated Hilaria for Cybele, a mother goddess. In 16th-century England, 'Mothering Sunday' fell on the fourth Sunday of Lent, when domestic servants were given leave to visit their mothers, often bringing gifts of flowers and simnel cake.

The modern Mother's Day owes its existence largely to one determined American woman, Anna Jarvis. After her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis – a community activist who organised Mother's Day Work Clubs to care for wounded soldiers during the Civil War – passed away in 1905, Anna campaigned tirelessly for a national day of recognition. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson officially proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Ironically, Anna spent the rest of her life opposing what the holiday became, lamenting its commercialisation and calling it a 'Hallmark holiday'.

How the world celebrates

Today, Mother's Day is observed in over 50 countries, though not all on the same date. Families gather for meals, children make handmade cards and craft projects, and flowers fill shop windows. Restaurants are packed. Phone lines are busy. Social media fills with tributes and old photographs. In many African and Asian cultures, the day also honours grandmothers and maternal figures throughout the community.

More than a Hallmark holiday

For all the commercialism, the day remains an opportunity to honour those who gave us life, nurtured us, and sacrificed quietly and consistently.

Mothers model something the Bible speaks of with great tenderness. In Isaiah 66, God's love is compared to a mother comforting her child. In Matthew 23:37, Jesus longs to gather Jerusalem "as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings."

This is the Gospel in miniature – a love that is not earned, not conditional, and never deterred by rebellion or ingratitude. A mother's love, at its best, reflects God's character: patient, sacrificial, and present even in the dark hours. Yet every mother, however devoted, is finite and fallen, pointing beyond herself to a love that never tires or fails, and never ends.

This Mother's Day, bring the flowers, write the card, make the call – but also take a moment to trace that love back to its source: the God who loved us before we could love Him, and who, like the best of mothers, has never once let go.

FILM, FINS, AND FAITH

South African surf photo-journalist Alan van Gysen tells *The Surfer's Bible* about how he got into surf photography and the incredible turn his life took when he was just a teenager:

Film photography was the culmination of the marriage of two big passions I had in my younger years – sport, which I loved, and music, art, and drama which my family instilled in me.

In high school, around grade 10, I picked up a camera and I went down to Kalk Bay Reef, which was my local bodyboarding spot, and I started taking photographs of school friends, and I just fell in love with the art form.

As much as I loved bodyboarding and getting barrelled, I realised quickly how much stoke and happiness it brought others when I took pictures of them and their surfing was immortalised on film. I would then process those rolls of film on weekends and then on a Monday morning, I'd take the process pictures in the album and I'd sell them to the kids at school.

And there I quickly realised that there was a bit of money to be made there. It wasn't easy for people to get a picture of themselves surfing, especially in those days before digital photography.

My big break

Without a doubt, my first inter-

national big break was when I met John Callahan on the beach at J-Bay. A lot of the old surf photographers would come to J-Bay every year originally to shoot the Country Feeling Classic and then eventually the Billabong Pro.

John was specifically a land photographer and he had dabbled in the water a little bit, but I think having seen the water work that I was doing

in Cape Town in the cold water with sharks, and getting these beautiful fisheye shots, he invited me to a job the following year with Vans Europe in the Mentawais. I would do just fisheye, and he would do everything else, the lifestyles, the portraits, the land, the boat.

For a young man of 18 years old, to get invited to Indo to shoot with somebody like John Callahan and Vans was unbelievable for me. That was my first big break – getting to shoot perfect waves, having my work published in Europe, that international exposure.

A life-changing relationship

I was brought up in a Roman Catholic family.

My grandmother was Roman Catholic, from an old Dutch family,

and my dad was practicing enough that he would take us to church every Sunday in Lansdowne.

I went to Sunday School and learnt about who God was and what the Bible was, but I never really felt the Spirit or the Presence. It was more of a theoretical kind of education, but I never had any personal relationship with Him.

Let me take a step back. One of the things that really affected us all was that my father had multiple sclerosis.

He was diagnosed when he was 21 and it was a primary progressive disease. From the onset of the disease, you get exponentially worse until you die one day.

He died very young, in his mid-50s. But from the onset until then it was a deep struggle – our family life was very broken and there was a lot of trauma. He walked his own path, and I think because of that I grew up very quickly. As the oldest sibling with three younger sisters, I kind of assumed a parental role in our family.

During the course of high school, I felt quite alone. While my dad was struggling, and my parents had split, I was pretty much on my own.

Even as a teenage boy, you're already going through your own emotions, your own hormones, and with all these pressures and the struggles therein, I went through a phase of about three months praying very, very fervently to the Lord every single day for some kind of support and some help: "If You're real, I need You to help me here. I need You to step into my life. I need You."

I think it was the sense of surrender. He was probably always there, but I had been trying to do life on my own. And when you properly surrender everything to Him and you're on your knees physically, and emotionally and spiritually as well...

I was at the end of my road, so to speak, and I felt the Lord reach out to me one day when I was on my knees praying and I actually physically felt this hand on my shoulder. I had this incredible, unexplainable, and miraculous sense of relief of the pressure off me and my life.

“
I was completely free of this anxiety and depression.
”



Alan van Gysen attributes the incredible turn in his life to his faith.



Alan van Gysen on the water in his element.



Alan van Gysen

With this hand I felt on my shoulder all of that was banished and I was completely free of this anxiety and depression and all these other horrible things I was feeling. From that moment I didn't look back. From that moment He was as real as you could possibly imagine.

I committed my life to Him at that time, knowing that there was somebody physically and spiritually with me.

My life took an incredible turn, but it wasn't instant.

It's like the start of a journey, once that happens you start to grow and you start to become more and more connected and in relationship with the Lord.

It's like with a spouse or a best friend.

You meet them and it's powerful and it's incredible – and there are

all these new discoveries and butterflies, and the honeymoon phase.

But then the relationship matures and you walk this walk, and you get to know them in a deeper way and more richly, and the relationship becomes more and more meaningful to you as time goes by.

Making time for what matters

Life is relational and relationships with the Father and with each other are everything.

We come into this world with nothing and we leave with nothing, but one of the things we have an impact on is the relationships with others.

So commit to people and relationships, make time for people and engage others.

Scan the QR code to read Alan's story in its entirety.



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