



ASTRONAUT'S DISCOVERY

ABOVE: Barry "Butch" Wilmore works outside the International Space Station (ISS) in 2015. (Photo by NASA via Getty Images)

RIGHT: Barry Wilmore (left) and Russia's cosmonauts Alexandr Samokutyaev and Elena Serova during a training session at the Gagarin Cosmonauts' Training Centre. AFP PHOTO/STRINGER (Photo by STRINGER / AFP) (Photo by STRINGER/AFP via Getty Images)



American astronaut Barry "Butch" Wilmore remembers the time he came face to face with the wonder of creation.

It was in 2014. The captain was on a six-month stint as the commander of the International Space Station, 400 kilometres above Earth.

He was outside doing some maintenance work when he caught sight of his reflection in a radiator. He saw himself floating in space. Then he looked down and through the infinite skies, saw Hawaii and the surrounding landscapes.

"I saw the beauty of the islands, the blue water and the clouds, the blackness of the sky and the silver space station," he says in a YouTube video.

"And wow, it was just a sensory overload, mesmerising, amazing. I looked back at my reflection and thought, 'How did you get here?'"

"The answer to me was very clear – I was there because the Lord in His planning purposes allowed me to be there and gave me that desire of my heart. My purpose in being there was to glorify Him."

Barry is one of the two astronauts currently stuck in space. He and Sunita Williams were sent to the International Space Station on June 5 and were supposed to be there for about eight days. When their spacecraft failed to meet NASA's standards for crewed flight, it returned to Earth without them.

Barry was born into a Christian family and attended church services, "Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night".

He accepted Christ as his personal Saviour when he was eight after a sermon convinced him about the reality of sin [breaking God's laws] and hell. "I knew immediately that sin separated me from God," he says. "That's where I started to understand the truth of Scripture but for the next two years I struggled to comprehend what salvation was."

He spent many nights "in tears because I felt the burden of my sin". When he was 10, his mother explained the good news about Jesus dying for his sins to him again and "from that point on I felt confident in my salvation."

He is very glad for that early foundation, saying "I needed that

constant input of righteousness... because I was mischievous and I had a wandering eye."

After he graduated from college, Barry joined the Navy. "I felt this patriotic tug to do my part for my country and in my mind's eye I thought one of the great ways to do that would be to fly airplanes."

While on deployment, he received a letter and a tape from a friend asking him about the parable of the sower and the seed (Matthew 13).

His friend asked him which of the characters in the story was a true Christian. Barry didn't know.

"Here I was, a Christian for 15-ish years and I couldn't answer that question."

He listened to the tape, which explained that the true Christian in the parable was the person who was fruitful.

"It was at that point that the Lord began to show me how little I knew of His Word and I became truly born again. I had received salvation but knew little of His Word. Up to then I didn't know that I didn't know the Bible."

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I feel like a new person

BY IRELAND DANIEL

As a result of her parent's divorce, Savannah Hernandez felt shame, had insecurities, depression, and had given up on believing in God.

"I hated God at this point of my life," says Savannah on YouTube. "I just felt like, man, there is no way that God is real. I'm going through so much stuff. How is God real? How did he make this Earth?"

Many fall away from God and don't come back, but Savannah is proof that restoration of faith is possible.

Savannah's parents got divorced when she was 11 years old. From there, she swirled downward emotionally.

"It was really hard on me just to face [the divorce] as a child and trying to figure out what was going on and just how to really just grow up to be a woman," she says.

Savannah had a strong dad who never left her or made her feel alone, but she still felt an emptiness inside.

She looked for masculine approval, which caused her to feel worse about herself and develop more insecurities.

"I did feel like I was alone... and I did run to guys and just love to try to find some type of love and temporary fix in those areas that I was hurting," Savannah says. "It just caused me to hurt, and it caused me just shame and feeling like I wasn't worthy and that was really hard for any girl to face."

After she graduated, Savannah tried smoking and became stubborn and prideful.

"I was doing all these things behind my dad's

back," she recounts. "I'm not doing anything to pursue any of my goals... I don't believe in a God."

Then her sister became a Christian. "I saw peace and joy in her. I saw happiness and love and grace and mercy."

How can I get that? How can I feel loved? How can I feel happiness? she wondered. She felt a growing hunger to know God and know who Jesus is, so she went to a church. Savannah went to a week-long series of meetings at the church. She cried her eyes out, calling out to God to reveal Himself to her, and on the first night, she felt the Holy Spirit speak into her life.

"I was like, Jesus you're real! I was so excited. I was like, there is a God," she says. "I felt like, who is this girl that I see in the mirror?" She had become a Christian

and as a result felt like a new person in Christ, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Savannah attends church in California and she continues to inspire others to push forward in faith by posting videos on YouTube.

"If it wasn't for that experience that I felt," Savannah says, "I don't know where I'd be today, I have no idea and I thank God for that."

This article first appeared on godreports.com and is used with kind permission.

Savannah Hernandez. Photo: Youtube/PragerU



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BACK PAGE

RISING STAR
CJ STROUD

Film producer's legacy lives on

Can you guess what the most watched movie of all time is?

James Cameron's *Titanic* has been watched 5.2 million times, which sounds like a lot! But the most watched film has been viewed more than eight 8 billion times by over four billion people!

It is *The Jesus Film*, which was produced by Paul Eshleman for Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru) in 1979.

So who was the man behind the movie? Paul, who died last year, was the son of a Christian minister, but instead of following in his father's footsteps, he was more interested in going into business as the head of an oil company or an auto manufacturer.

He studied business administration, marketing, and finance at university. He stopped going to church around then but joined Campus Crusade so he could tell his mother he was involved in a Christian fellowship group.

However, he had a wakeup call when a girl he was dating told him that he was "fooling around with Christ and Christianity" and that he needed to "get off the fence and pick a side."

Paul was angry and told her he'd given his time to the church and to God as a child, but that night her comments played on his mind.

"I couldn't read; I tried to watch television and I couldn't," Paul



The *Jesus Film* producer Paul Eshleman.

recalled in a Cru Legacy video on YouTube.

"Finally at about 3am a verse that I had heard as a kid went through my head: 'Pharaoh hardened his heart and so God hardened it' (Exodus 7-11).

"I began to be afraid because it had been a long time since I'd been soft enough [for God] to work in my life. That was a turning point.

"I'd always resisted giving my whole life to the Lord. I was involved in things that I knew were sin but that night finally at about 3.30am –

I'd been fighting all evening – it was just me and God in the room and I finally got down on my knees and said, 'Forgive me for my sins. If You're not in my life, I want You to be in my life and tonight I'm telling You, I'm giving You my whole life. I'll go wherever You want me to go. I'll do whatever You want me to do. I'll give away whatever You want me to give away. I'll say whatever You want me to say. I'm done running my life.'"

The next morning he called a Campus Crusade leader to say: "I'm on your side now. What do you want me to do?"

Paul learnt how to share the hope of Jesus through the Four Spiritual Laws (see image below) and was sent to share with students in the fraternities.

The second person he spoke to became a Christian and Paul realised this work was more important than running a business.

Paul's work with Cru included organising a massive youth rally in 1972 – "Explo" – which attracted 75,000 young people to learn how to share their faith at what was described as a Christian answer to Woodstock.

Then he helped produce *The Jesus Film*, despite never working in film before.

The film was released in 1980 and shown in about 300 theatres. Paul then worked with Cru staff to translate the film into 21 languages



Brian Deacon as Jesus in *The Jesus Film*.

in 18 months and distributed it to missionary groups around the world.

Some of the first screenings were in India and people walked more than three miles to see it.

Since then billions of people have seen the movie and nearly 500 million people indicated they made a decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour after seeing the film.

As well as founding and directing *The Jesus Film* Project for 25 years, Paul also served as a vice

president for Cru. He also wrote several books, including *The Explo Story: A Plan to Change the World* (1972), *The Touch of Jesus* (2002) and *I Just Saw Jesus: The JESUS Film* (2016).

Paul died in May 2023 at the age of 80 and is survived by his wife, Rena, two children and six grandchildren.

You can watch *The Jesus Film* in a variety of languages for free at www.jesusthefilm.org/watch.



The *Jesus Film* is shown to communities around the world in a variety of languages.

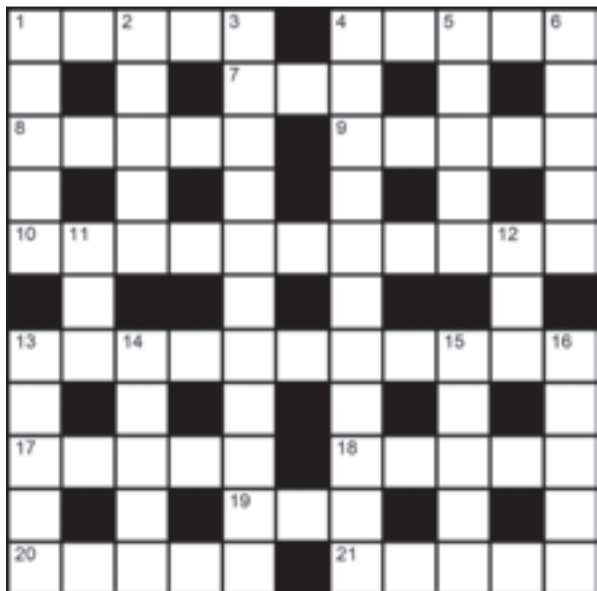
Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- Chocolate substitute
- Boise is its State capital
- Made a dash
- The "U" in UHF
- Space-novel genre
- Arcade game (4,7)
- Supreme religious leaders of the Israelites
- Totally lacking in competence
- Really displeased
- _____ and reel
- Big show stage
- Village leader

DOWN

- Junta takeovers
- Old-fashioned
- Major Asian river
- Bug-killing chemical
- Courtroom clearer!



- Rust, chemically speaking
- Hawaiian garland
- Fishing aid
- Israeli port
- Birds that fly in a "V"
- Cake platform
- Lasso target

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



"We kept your room the way you left it."

		6		1	3	7		
7					4			
	4		2			9		
5	9					8		
	6	1				3	7	
		4				5		9
		5			6		9	
			8					5
		2	7	9		6		



"I know the Resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, and then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible."

- Chuck Colson, former special legal counsel to former US president Richard Nixon. Chuck spent seven months in a federal prison camp for a Watergate-related crime. He became a Christian in 1973.

Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: SO WHAT IF JESUS SAID HE WAS GOD? IT DOESN'T MEAN HE WAS RIGHT.



YOU ARE RIGHT. Just because Jesus spoke of Himself as being God – through His words and actions it doesn't mean He was. Much like the people they used to lock away for believing they were Napoleon.

But the fact Jesus declared Himself to be God does create a trilemma – which is one step worse than a dilemma!

Because someone who says with confidence they are God can be only one of three things: 1) A fruitcake. 2) A fake. Or 3) Telling the truth.

So, which of the three was Jesus? Could Jesus be a lunatic?

How else could you describe someone who sincerely believes they are God, that they have the ability to forgive sins, and will one day give away seats in Heaven?

If Jesus had so lost touch with reality He can only be pitied. But does that sound like Jesus to you?

Weigh up the quality of His life and relationships, the skill and insights of His arguments, and the sheer wisdom that streamed from His lips. Measure the total richness of all He said and did—and its life-enhancing impact throughout history.

That just doesn't sound like someone who went through life completely deluded.

In which case... could Jesus simply be a liar... knowing it was not true that He was God but saying He was anyway?

Knowingly and willingly He told one of history's greatest porkies.

But think how much store Jesus

put on the need for people to tell the truth. He even said, "The truth shall set you free."

Which means He would be more than a liar. He would also be a hypocrite. And is it really possible for such insight, wisdom, compassion and love to come from the life of someone so knowingly deceitful?

Could the greatest and wisest moral teacher in history really be so immoral? It would be like discovering Greenpeace owned a nuclear power plant.

More than that, people only lie because it is in their best interest. But Jesus gained nothing from His 'lie' – in fact it was the reason for His death on a cross.

So if not a loony or a liar, what then? It can only be that Jesus was who He claimed to be—God, the Lord of all. And that what He said was true. It's the only conclusion that fits the data. There is no other.

And this is the incredible reality at the heart of the Christian faith. God stepped into first-century dust and dirt to make Himself known – to those then and to people like us for all time. Your dilemma is how you now respond.

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.

If you have a Y Question relating to issues of faith and God, Peter or Joseph will do their best to answer it. Send your question to: challenge@veritem.com Subject: Y Course. We hope to publish their responses in future editions.

Escape from torture

North Korean prison guards can be especially sadistic.

Hana Cho (not her real name) knows that from bitter experience.

For two weeks the guards at a political prison where she was imprisoned for a year made her stand at a 90-degree angle the whole day, every day. Humanitarian organisation Worldhelp reports she was not allowed to straighten up or rest. She had to eat, drink and use the bathroom standing against the wall in that position. It was agony.

That was just one item in the guards' repertoire of torture. During the country's harsh winter they made her stand naked in the open – for 10 hours every day. Mercifully, she was allowed back into her cell every night, where she spent the first few hours rolling her frigid body on the floor just to warm up.

Once, inmates were ordered to hold her upside down then drop her head first into the cold concrete floor. The impact broke her left arm and



STOCK PHOTO

two ribs. The cruelty was relentless. Back in her cell, she was ordered to lie face down so that her broken bones could cause her as much excruciating pain as possible. These atrocities were just the tip of the iceberg – Hana endured many more horrors.

Her crime? Being a Christian. In North Korea, religious activities are considered political crimes and Christians are persecuted.

Yet through it all, Hana stayed faithful to God and says the most unbearable pain of all was not being allowed to have her Bible or say God's name aloud. If a guard heard her even whisper it she would be tortured yet again.

Hana came to faith through her

courageous mother. After the Korean War, when religion was frowned upon and the local church was turned into a school, her mother continued to pray at home, reports *Sight Magazine*.

As reported in *The Gospel Herald*, Hana used to hear her mother praying "Hananim! Hananim!" which was Korean for "Lord! Lord! Help!"

"Life is trouble," her mother would tell her. "If there's trouble, you should pray. Because of my mum's prayers, I was never as indoctrinated by the *juche* [self-reliance] ideology as others," Hana says.

Life was dreadfully difficult for Hana in North Korea even before she went to prison. Two of her six children died young, her husband lost his job and she was forced to sell items on the black market.

"I would carry heavy, frozen meals up the mountain to sell," she told persecution watchdog Open Doors USA.

Conditions were so bad that she lost her finger and all her toenails. She permanently damaged her legs and spine when she jumped from a moving train.

The desperate family escaped to China – where they were brought to church by a relative and heard the Gospel (the good news that Jesus came to Earth to die for mankind's sins) for the first time.

"We had seen the faith in the life of my mother, but now we understood it," Hana said. "All of us accepted Jesus Christ that day."

"We felt peace in our hearts and unexplainable joy. It was so refreshing, as if the dirt in my eyes had been washed away and I could finally see God. Now I could follow Him like my mother had."

But the family's lives took a turn for the very worst when their faith was discovered and they were imprisoned.

Just like Hana, her husband refused to deny his God even under torture so brutal he came within an inch of death.

At one point, while being tortured, he yelled, "If believing in God is a sin, I'd rather die! Just kill me! It's my mission to live according to God's will!"

The guards would then beat him senseless, wait for him to regain consciousness then do it all over again.

Still they clung on to Jesus and prayed and miraculously, through the efforts of an international mission that supports persecuted Christians throughout the world, they received amnesty and were released.

"God answered our prayer," Hana says. "When we walked out the prison that night and were finally free and alone, we quietly sang a hymn."

Hana and her daughters fled again to the church in China but her husband died shortly after his release. Her son remains in North Korea and lives with a relative.

Hana herself re-located to South Korea and serves God there with two of her daughters, while a third daughter lives with her Chinese husband.

"It's my prayer and hope that I will be reunited in South Korea with my daughter and my son."

Her faith continues to anchor her and she often returns to the simple prayer her mother taught her. "I still pray it for my family and for my country: 'Hananim, Hananim!' Lord, Lord, please help!"



NASA astronaut and US Navy Capt. Barry Wilmore talks about his experiences as commander of the International Space Station at the Air National Guard Executive Safety Summit in 2015. (US Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. John E. Hillier/RELEASED)

ASTRONAUT'S DISCOVERY

● From page 1

"So in my mid-20s I began a long journey of study of God's Word in depth. The Scriptures started to come alive to me piece by piece, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book.

"It made such a complete and total difference in my life, in my walk, and my understanding and my closeness with my Lord.

"I'm still learning... the more I'm exposed to Biblical truth the more finite I see that I am and how great our mighty God is.

"I've been asked if I needed to have a spiritual experience when I went to space – I've been asked that several times. The answer's no, I didn't need to go to space to learn anything about my Lord.

"Everything I need to know about Him is in the pages of Scripture.

"I certainly am grateful for... that vantage point, but I didn't need to go there to know Him because Scripture is replete with all that I ever needed to know."

During his time as a Naval officer, he flew missions for Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield and won a string of awards. He retired from the Navy in 2000 and joined the NASA Astronaut Corps the same year.

Barry has also been teaching a Bible study at a local prison for 10 years. "Some of these gentlemen are in prison for life," he shares.

"I can't think of a worse way to live out your life and to not have any hope for anything outside the prison walls... but how much bleaker it is for those that don't know Jesus Christ as Saviour. They have no hope eternally.

"The thing that sets biblical Christianity apart from every other religion is that in every other religion, man has to do something. There's some act, some prayer, something that man's got to do to atone.

"But [in Christianity], there's nothing man can do as Christ has done it all. He paid the price.

"I now know that at the point of salvation you may not understand everything about obedience, you may not understand everything about repentance, you may not understand everything about the lordship of Christ, but everyone that is truly saved will strive to obey.

"True salvation brings repentance over sin. It's about turning from our sin and seeking Christ and His lordship and power in our lives.

"Revere Christ as Lord even if you don't understand it." ●

ON THE RIGHT TRACT

Kim Bolz began working as a waitress when she was 16. She recalls customers would regularly leave her tips inside gospel tracts (small pamphlets presenting the good news about Jesus).

"I just threw them away and took the tip out!" she admits in a YouTube video on the Bible Tracts Inc channel.

This continued for many years and Kim didn't give the tracts a second thought until she was married and raising her family.

"My fourth pregnancy was complicated. The doctor said that if I should nearly die giving birth, who should we save – me or the little one? And [my husband and I] agreed to save the baby. But I remember thinking, 'What happens if I died through all this?'"

That question was what made her start keeping the tracts that were left for her at work. She'd read them in the bathroom or on her way home.

"At that time I was a drinker and a smoker; so was my husband. I had bought a packet of cigarettes and started smoking one and I saw one of the tracts laying on my console in the car and I decided to read it one more time.

"When I read it, I said, 'Lord, if You are really real like You say You are in these tracts, forgive me of my sin and come into my life. Take this habit away from me and make me a new person. I promise if You do that I'll know You are real.'" The next morning Kim woke up, made a coffee and went to smoke a cigarette out of habit.

"[But] I instantly felt like I wasn't a smoker. I couldn't even stand the thought of smoking and right away God reminded me of what I did the night before and I remembered I had given my life to Him!"

"That began the change in my life. I began to grow as a Christian. And that made my husband very upset because I wouldn't go drinking with him anymore. He didn't want me raising the kids to go to church all the time and that's just the way it was for three months."

For three months, Kim prayed for her husband to join her in her newfound faith. Then a simple question caused him to leave.

"I asked my husband if I could home-school my children and he said, 'I've had enough of you,' and he left. He slammed the door and said, 'I'm not coming back, so you can do what you want with the kids.' I thought for sure he was going to stay gone, but I prayed, 'Lord if You don't save him today, our marriage is over.'"

That night she was shocked when her husband came home. He told her he had heard a preacher speaking about Jesus on the radio on his way to work.

"He asked me to share the Gospel one more time and explain it. Well he gave his life to Jesus that night and we decided we wanted to grow and serve the Lord, go to church and be faithful.

"In 2012 we went to Guyana, South America, and my husband started a church and we'd led many hundreds to the Lord.

"So one tract that I had received not only led me to the Lord, but I eventually led my husband to the Lord and then our children to the Lord!" ●



Kim Bolz

WORK FOR CHALLENGE!

Finance Officer

CHALLENGE NEWS is currently seeking a skilled Finance Officer/Bookkeeper to play a crucial role in supporting the ministry's accounting 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).

Applications extended to October 31, 2024.

PURPOSE BORNE FROM TRAGEDY

BY MARK ELLIS (ABRIDGED)

Christo Spies' father passed away when he was very young. Both his parents had been working for a gold mining company in South Africa.



Christo Spies

"At school, they called us mine children," he tells God Reports. "They told us more than once that we'll end up with nothing. There's nothing else we will do. So I formed a belief that I wouldn't amount to anything."

However, Christo excelled in one area. "Luckily, I could play sports. I could hit anything with a ball."

After high school, he began working in the mines and saved to buy himself a motorbike. Two weeks after he purchased the bike, he and his brother were involved in a crash. Initially, Christo thought he was okay.

"When I wanted to get up I couldn't because my leg was lying there next to me. It was completely off."

Doctors reattached his leg but it developed sepsis where they attached it and after six operations, Christo was told it would have to be amputated.

"When the doctors told me, I started swearing and throwing stuff

at them. No one could come into my room. When my mom came in, I just started to cry because the only thing I could do was sports and now that was gone, so I just cried and cried."

The night before the amputation, a mysterious woman entered his room.

"She said she wants to pray for me and she's going to pray to a loving God who raised people from the dead."

"God did not cause the accident," she told him. "But He will be with you every step of the way." When she put her hand on his shoulder and prayed, it felt like water flowing over him and brought an indescribable peace.

Later, he inquired about the woman but no one knew of any visitors that matched her description. Now, he believes she may have been an angel.

As a child, he attended church with his mother, because she believed it was the right thing to do. "We were very poor. We had two sets of neat

clothes that we had to wear in public, and we had to go to church so people wouldn't say Mom (as a widow) can't raise her children."

After his release from the hospital, Christo was fitted for a prosthetic leg. "I was fairly thin and I struggled with it," he says. He also began studying to become an accountant.

Surprisingly, he accepted an invitation one day to play cricket – without any running – as a designated hitter. "I believed I couldn't run, and I lived up to my belief."

But one day something surprising happened. Instead of sending the runner off in his place, he decided he would run himself. "And I did... suddenly I realised it was just a mind thing. I wanted to run desperately. I didn't get a new prosthetic – I just could run!"

Encouraged by his breakthrough, he eased his way into playing tennis, squash, and racquetball.

Then a friend invited him on a 620 mile (997 km) cycling tour raising money for a Christian cause. Attracted by the fact that there would

be 60 young single women – along with the men on the tour – he eagerly signed up.

"The first evening, they split us up into guy-girl prayer partners, and I got this beautiful girl as a prayer partner. She wanted to pray, and I said, 'I can't pray.' She started feeding me with the gospel (the good news that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die for our sins). And I saw all these people had something that I didn't have. I saw their joy. I saw the way they treated each other. It was not just about themselves."

Christo was amazed as he thought about one day on their tour when he was struggling, tired, and had stopped on the side of the road. One of the guys stopped to help him and poured water into his bottle. "I thought, why is this guy stopping? This is crazy."

"At the end of the tour, I gave my life to the Lord," he says. Christo surrendered his heart to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour and was born again (spiritually renewed).

After he began to follow Jesus, he stopped swearing and gave up drinking. Friends noticed the change, and inquired about it, which allowed him to share his faith with them.

Later, he received an offer from a school to become an accounting teacher and a cricket coach, while studying theology on the side. During his last two years of seminary, he attended full-time. He also met and married his wife.

After seminary, he accepted an offer to become a school chaplain and cricket coach. "I formed a system, and the basis of the system is hope. Romans 15 says God is the giver of hope: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).'"

Christo now runs a sports ministry in Cape Town called SCAS. "Life's greatest gift is Christ's love and life's greatest joy is sharing it. That's what we try to do."

This story was originally published by Godreports.com and it is used with kind permission.

Former terrorist surrenders

Born into a large Muslim family in Lebanon, Kamal Saleem learned from his mother what his calling in life was to be, when he was four years old. "You are to be a martyr for the sake of Allah, my son," she told him while they sat at the kitchen table. "If you kill a Jew the hosts of heaven will celebrate what you have done."

At seven, Kameel was recruited by the Muslim Brotherhood and ran bombs (strapped onto sheep) for terrorist Yasser Arafat.

His parents sent him to assault camps where he was trained to launch terror missions against Israel. By his teens, he was helping to run terrorist training camps in the Libyan Desert for Moammar Qaddafi.

In his book *The Blood of Lambs: A Former Terrorist's Memoir of Death and Redemption*, he recounts visits to Iraq where he rubbed shoulders with Saddam Hussein and worked with the mujahedeen and the CIA in the late 1970s.

He arrived in the United States in the early 1980s with the sole purpose of recruiting others to the cause of jihad and radical Islam, using the more subtle tool of what is called cultural jihad – influencing Western culture.

"In Islam, liberty, freedom and monarchy are all idols and must be brought down," he explains in an interview on YouTube with the Christian Broadcasting Network. "It is anti-Islam."

However, a horrific car accident changed everything.

"The car wreck was so severe I ejected out of my car and broke my neck in two places," he recalls.

"This man came running to me and he said, 'Don't worry, we're gonna take care of you and everything's gonna be alright.'"

"At the hospital the orthopedic surgeon looked at my chart and said, 'Son we are going to take care of you and everything's gonna be alright.' The next day the physical therapist examined me and he said the same thing word for word: 'We are going to take care of you.'"

Their words didn't make him feel any better – just the opposite, in fact.

"In terrorism if they say 'We're gonna take care of you,' you'd better run," he clarifies, smiling wryly.



Kamal Saleem

Photo: facebook.com/KoomeMinistries

Kamal had nobody to care for him after his surgery. His surgeon generously opened his own house to him. An amazed Kamal says he found himself in the best room in the house.

"They put me in the choicest room; I became like part of their family."

They even took up a collection to help him pay his hospital bills, Kamal says.

More was to come. Before Kamal left, the doctor not only gave him a spare key to the house but also the keys to a car.

"We just want to bless you," the doctor, a Christian, said.

A thoroughly conflicted Kamal went back to his apartment. "I was so confused," he recalls.

"These Christians were good people. There was nothing wrong with them. They don't want to kill us – they're not what I learned about them. They have a relationship with their God."

He fell to the floor and called out to his God. "Allah, I want to hear your voice. I want to hear you

say you love me. If you're real, speak to me." Nothing.

Having just questioned his faith, the honourable thing to do was to end his life. Taking his gun, he cocked it.

"The next thing I knew I heard a voice calling me by my name. 'Kamal, Kamal, call out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,'" he says.

"Immediately I fell to my knees and I said, 'Please speak to me if You are real' and He came and filled my room with His glory and He said, 'I am that I am. I have loved you before you were formed in your mother's womb.'"

Shaking from head to toe, Kamal told God he would die for Him, only to hear in return: "Do not die for me. I died for you that you may live."

That day, instead of taking his life, Kamal gave it to Jesus.

His mission ever since that day is to reach out to his Muslim brothers and sisters and tell them about the love of Christ.

It has been more than 20 years since Kamal left his Islamic faith. He has encountered threats of violence and death but continues to speak around the world about the love of God.

He has spoken in state capitols, at the United States Air Force Academy and at colleges and churches. He has also been a guest on Pat Robertson's 700 Club and has started his own non-profit organisation, called Koome, an Aramaic word meaning Arise.

"It is our hearts' cry to reach a lost and oppressed people through education, relationship, and prayer as to the truth and liberty in Christ Jesus," says Kamal on his website.

He and his wife believe the key is prayer and emphasise the importance of doing so in all their messages and teaching materials, using Jesus' direction in Luke 6: 27 to pray for our enemies – "But I say to you who hear; love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

all their messages and teaching materials, using Jesus' direction in Luke 6: 27 to pray for our enemies – "But I say to you who hear; love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

“My leg was lying there next to me.”

“I ejected out of my car and broke my neck in two places.”

BELIEF IS A JUDGEMENT CALL

Crime is Alberto Boetti's bread and butter.

As a criminal magistrate in the north-western Italian province of Cuneo, he metes out justice to lawbreakers big and small.

In an interview with *Creation Magazine's* Erin Hughes, he says he wasn't always interested in the law.

In high school, he says, he had such a boring teacher that he thought anyone who wanted to study law would have to be crazy.

But "then in my last year of high school, I had a new teacher. He was able to make the law so interesting to me that it totally changed my mind."

Being a legal professional has great relevance to Alberto's personal life as well; he became a Christian when he was 16 and contends that "Christianity is about Christ, who saves the world from sin, disorder, wrong, injustice, and oppression.

"The law is a God-ordained means to combat those evils in a fallen world."

Alberto was born into one of the few evangelical families in Italy at the time, but the church they attended was theologically liberal and spiritually cold, he tells *Creation Magazine*.

"I was open to other religions,

especially the Eastern ones. I was also interested in spiritualism because of an aunt who had many books written by famous mediums.

"I was very unhappy with my meaningless life and was impressed by the joy of a couple of evangelical friends.

"They insisted on a personal salvation experience. After their many prayers, my resistance was overcome and I gave my life to Jesus when I was 16."

The fall of mankind (Genesis 3), says Alberto, "sobers my vision of reality. It is the most convincing explanation of the sinfulness, the wrongdoing, that I see on display daily."

The need to defend biblical creation, he says, was essential in this climate of belief in evolution.

"I'm confident that the Bible isn't disproved by science," he asserts. "It simply isn't accepted by people holding incompatible philosophies. Evolution has historically justified racism, sexism, lack of compassion, the arrogance of a pseudoscientific caste, Nazi concentration camps, and abortion. At the same time, it abolishes the concept of sin, which is strictly related to personal respon-

sibility, replacing it with a watery idea of 'sickness', so the defendant is someone to 'cure'. In my view, the goal of evolutionary legal planning is a dystopia and the end of individual liberty."

Alberto is active in his local and neighbourhood churches, where he teaches and preaches. He observes that while the Catholic Church has a powerful influence in Italy, strong personal faith is rare.

He puts it down to the fact many feel they don't need a relationship like that with Christ.

"For many, that concept is strange as they suppose this is impossible without some sort of personal mediator between God and themselves such as Mary, a saint, or a priest. Of course, I can point them to what the Bible has to say about being able to directly approach God on the basis of what Christ has done for believers."

He shares that many attend mass believing it gives them a social advantage and that while churches are full during special events, most Italians prefer to sleep in or go shopping on Sundays. He is happy to report though, that the number of evangelical churches, though still a minority, is growing. ●

Alberto Boetti



Speech, music and Neandertals

BY CARL WIELAND, CMI

ONE gets used to reading of how much better certain animals are at various sensory tasks than we humans. For example, the exquisite sense of smell of animals that track their prey, or the amazingly sharp eyesight of a hawk. We don't feel any surprise, either, about the fact that there are frequencies that dogs hear that we don't.

So it's interesting to hear of recent research showing that there is one area, to do with hearing, in which humans excel above any mammal.¹

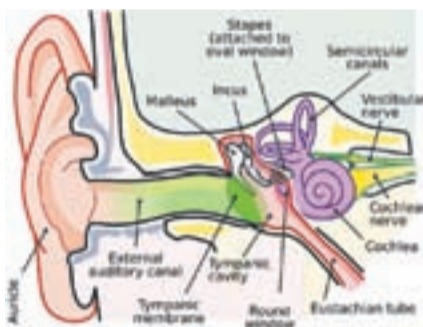
It's long been known that the human ear has an exquisite ability to discern small differences in audible sound frequencies, regardless of their pitch or distance from us. But even this pales into insignificance compared to the fine-tuning/discriminatory ability of single brain cells in the auditory cortex of humans. In fact, they are 30 times better at doing this than the auditory nerve that carries the signals to them.

The research was undertaken by implanting electrodes to directly stimulate the neurons. The results were astonishing.

"A single auditory neuron from humans showed an amazing ability to distinguish between very subtle frequency differences, down to a tenth of an octave. This, compared to a sensitivity of about one octave in the cat, about a third of an octave in rats and a half to a full octave in the macaque [monkey]."²

This raises an interesting question for evolutionists – why should this be so? The first suggestion that might spring to the mind of a casual reflector might be to do with speech, an ability unique to humans. So, evolutionists might claim, the same selective advantages that speech offers (group survival due to enhanced communication, etc.) ensured that the necessary frequency discrimination also arose by neo-Darwinian processes.

But this won't fly, for the simple reason that such a level of discrimination is not needed for speech discrimination. It is likely needed to appreciate music. But what possible survival advantage does music have? It has not to date been possible to apply any sort of evolutionary explanation to it. It makes much more sense to see it as one of those obvious gifts of the Creator/Designer to mankind – both for our pleasure and to be able to express worship and adoration to the One who provided the gift in the first place. No animal ever did, or ever will, come up with Bach's fugues.



The human auditory system is too 'overdesigned' for evolution to explain. Illustration: commons.wikimedia.org, Lars Chittka; Axel Brockmann.

Pondering music and fine differences in frequencies brings to mind the discovery, previously reported, of a fragment of a bone flute from a Neandertal site. The way the area around the finger hole was worn suggested that the musician had engaged in what jazz musicians call 'bending' notes – achieving subtle differences in frequencies by sliding the finger around the hole.³

Of course, this is no big deal for the creationist worldview, because in a Genesis history scenario, Neandertals are fully human, post-Babel descendants of Adam. Thus they would have had the capacity for

not only speech, but music.

To those who want to adopt an 'old-age' or 'progressive' creation view, because they want to accept the secular dates associated with the evolutionary framework, Neandertals can't be human. This is because they 'date' to hundreds of thousands of years ago, hence far too old for any biblical Adam. So they must be some sort of humanlike, spiritless animals, sort of 'experiments' prior to the creation of true humans. Thus, any evidence of speech or music in Neandertals (the bone flute, and a hyoid bone like that of humans, suggesting they could talk) is unwelcome in such circles.

One more piece of such evidence in recent times concerns the discovery, in a sequence of undoubted Neandertal DNA, that the individual had a gene (called FOXP2) that has been linked to speech and language.⁴ While some researchers (perhaps influenced by the ruling evolutionary paradigm that Neandertals were somehow sub-human, and a different species) are calling for a cautious 'wait and see', the reality is that the human version of this gene – the same as that of the Neandertal studied – is quite distinct from the chimp one, for example. And a mutation in this gene has been shown to affect a person's ability to speak. So the evidence is rather suggestive, reinforcing the idea that Neandertals could talk. At the very least, it is directly consistent with straightforward Genesis history. ●

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

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nudge

WITH KARL FAASE

The imprint of God

EVERYONE who is a parent knows the experience of looking at your children and working out which bits came from you. Is it your eyes or hair perhaps or even that nose? Our DNA is imprinted onto our children.

The same is true of God's imprint on us. The Bible tells us that we are created in God's image. So what does that mean? I believe it means that in some areas of our lives, we actually reflect the God who created us.

There are three specific areas where we can see this. First our love, second our creativity and third, morality. If you believe that life was an accident, these three qualities of humanity are hard to explain. But if we believe that we are created by God then the qualities of love, creativity and morality are the imprints of God on us.

Of course, each of these is broken – our imperfect lives taint God's image in us. But the knowledge that God created you ought to be a great encouragement for you to reach out to God and see his mark in your life. ●

"The God who created, names, and numbers the stars in the heavens also numbers the hairs of my head..He pays attention to very big things and to very small ones. What matters to me matters to Him, and that changes my life."
- Elisabeth Elliot

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YOUTH TRUTH

Being called a coward saved his life

Samuel Tshikedi was a cocky young lad. At 15 he knew everything. He was, in his own words, “such a smarty pants”.

Five years later with a failed business behind him, he was no longer that self-assured teen; he was instead a hopeless adult who planned to kill himself.

What happened in those five years was a rollercoaster ride of self-discovery.

Samuel’s father was a trained theologian. Samuel himself studied theology at school.

In his deeply religious home, he says, “church was ever-present. I heard about Jesus pretty much every day since I was born – morning, noon and night.”

For all his religious upbringing though, Samuel had no “personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” he tells the WhyJesus channel on YouTube.

Then when he was 15, he attended a crusade in his hometown in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The key speakers at this rally were seven-year-old twin brothers.

“These boys were considered to be really gifted by God,” says Samuel.

But being a sceptic, Samuel was sure it was a scam and that the two boys were being coached behind the scenes.

Then one of the boys took the microphone and said: “There is someone in that corner over there that God is calling to repent. Jesus was illiterate and uneducated yet He was the Son of God who came to save the world.”

Samuel’s scepticism came to a screeching stop.

“This was exactly what I was thinking – that Jesus was illiterate and uneducated! I was like, ‘Whoa, how did this boy know what I was thinking?’

“It cut me to the core. This was my first real interaction with Jesus – and because I realised God was real I gave my life to Him.”

Samuel walked home on a cloud that night.

“There were no street lights where I lived but it was like my entire world had become so bright, just because I had given my life to Jesus Christ.”

But two years later, Samuel walked away from God. Several things triggered his loss of faith.

“After my conversion experience I attended a church that was light on theology and heavy on Holy Spirit experience.

“They used to bash theologians too – I didn’t like that because my father was one.”

He also had some difficult questions about his own life.

“We were very poor,” he shares.

“I wanted to know why God let my parents serve Him, yet they remained so poor.

“Some days we would have no food. And I used to walk to school – 15kms each way.”



Samuel Tshikedi. Photo: Youtube.com/@whyJesus777

Samuel left the church and got into Japanese Shintoism and the Moonies but eventually left those cults and became a full-blown atheist.

“I was a very vocal atheist. I used to try to find Christians so that I could demonstrate to them that they were unintelligent to believe in such rubbish.

“I decided I didn’t need God, I’m gonna do my own thing, I’m gonna build my businesses.”

“His own thing” included smoking and drinking and fast living, much to the dismay of his father, who had hoped Samuel would become a church minister.

“Long story short, it didn’t work. I failed and I came to the end of myself and I decided to commit suicide,” Samuel says.

And then God spoke to him. He didn’t say anything nice. He said: “If you kill yourself you’re a coward. I’ve got so many things to do with you.”

Samuel arced up. “I replied to Him very loudly. I said, ‘How dare You call me a coward? My dad served You all those years. We had no food, I went to school with holes in my shorts and I got bullied. I couldn’t pay my school fees. How dare You call me a coward?’ I was up for a fight.”

Samuel says with a chuckle, “God knew exactly how to catch my attention. I’ve always liked a good

challenge.”

The outraged Samuel forgot about committing suicide, stormed out of his house – and promptly bumped into a friend he hadn’t seen since he was five.

That friend was now a pastor. He invited Samuel to an event that same night.

“So there I was again at another Christian event – and again God used the preacher to speak to me.

“He said, ‘There’s someone here who was about to take his own life. The Lord brought you here tonight because He’s got a lot to do with you, if you only give Him your heart.’”

Again Samuel responded. “I said, ‘Lord, You win. I’ll give You my life back, do with it whatever You want.’ And that started the journey to where I am now.”

He went to Bible College, participated in church planting around the world and became a missionary to Bendigo in Australia, where he lives today.

“Jesus saved me. I was depressed; I felt so worthless.

“From someone who wanted to take his own life, He picked me up and gave me a sense of direction and purpose.

“Jesus has given me a beautiful family. I’ve walked with Him for 23 years now and I can tell you this is real. He is real.”

“I was depressed; I felt so worthless.”



Gené Joubert

FREED FROM MY ANXIETY

Gené Joubert had heard about God her whole life. She attended church with her family and read the Bible but she viewed God as an angry God, waiting for her to slip up and do something bad.

“I knew of God but I never knew Him,” she recalls. “I only followed His rules and I didn’t see Him as loving. He was always distant, I only went to Him if I needed something.”

Gené describes herself at this time as, “really legalistic, following the Bible as a rule book, judging people and I didn’t fully understand the love of God.” Despite trying to keep God’s rules, she says she struggled a lot with sexual immorality, unforgiveness, pride and jealousy.

“I always knew I wanted a more intimate relationship with God,” she shares. Then in 2021, a friend of Gené’s invited her to a new church.

“[It] told me more about having intimacy with God, seeing Him as a Father who is loving and caring, not angry.”

It was then that Gené said she fully committed her life to God, received His forgiveness and understood Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross had washed her clean from sin.

“When I saw how it is in a real relationship with Him, He came and met me. He freed me from heavy anxiety and misery and He adopted me.

“The moment I realised I wanted to fully commit fully to the Lord was when I felt His presence in a tangible way. When the people at church prayed for me to be free from my anxiety I literally felt it release me and God was there holding me.”

Since committing her life to God, Gené says she now sees His blessings, love and grace (God’s unmerited favour) a lot more than before.

“I strive to please Him more because I know He saved me from the dark hole of misery I was stuck in and I believe that what He has for me is so much more than what I could ever imagine.

“I started to trust God more, knowing that He will handle the situation and that I shouldn’t try to figure things out on my own. He gave me community and people who love me. My perspective on how the world works has changed. I always believed you should follow the laid out plan society gives you but God has a unique path for everyone and it’s exciting.” Gené says the best thing about being a Christian is the feeling of security and hope, which carries her through everything.

“With the community God has provided me with, I am frequently reminded of how good He is and that we are not made for isolation – in every problem I face I am never alone,” she attests.

Her favourite Bible verses are John 1:5: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” and Psalm 25:5: “Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Saviour, and my hope is in You all day long.”

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lifestyle and entertainment

Singer finds a little bit of hope

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Lou Bega, the Berlin mamba singer whose catchy tune *Mambo No. 5 (A Little Bit Of...)* set the world dancing, has turned himself over to Christ after reading the Bible in a bungalow in the Maldives when unending rain wouldn't let him, his wife and daughter out for sun and snorkelling.

"In depression, I found a Bible and started to read. After a few pages, I started to realise this was the truth that I was always looking for," he says in *The Last Reformation* documentary. "I've looked into different sets of religions before, everything that was trendy and cool, like Buddhism and some New Age stuff.

"But I had passed over Jesus Christ for so many years, to my regret," he adds. "There He was calling me, giving me the opportunity. I started reading and I felt so convicted. I broke down, started crying. That was the Holy Spirit."

He then saw a street evangelist on YouTube and called him to baptise him in 2018. The evangelist baptised and prayed for Lou and his extended family.

"I felt like a baby," Lou, whose real name is David Lubega Balemezi says. "I felt like a newborn. That's why the term born-again is really fitting. You're fresh. Your transgressions, your iniquities are gone. I was so joyful and clean."

Lou hit No. 1 in many European cities with his 1999 remake of Pérez Prado's *Mambo No. 5*. For it, he earned a Grammy nomination. The pinnacle of his career pales compared to his simple encounter with Christ.

"Even in the days I was rebellious and didn't listen to You (Jesus), didn't obey You, You never dropped me, You gave me a family, You gave me love, You gave me everything I have," he says. "It's weird; you want to sing; you want to dance. It was the best moment of my life. It was way better than winning a Grammy nomination."

Lou grew up in Bavaria. His mother Nicole was Sicilian, and his father Charlese was a

Ugandan who moved to Germany to study biology at the Ludwig Maximilian University at Munich. As a youngster, he was drawn to rap, but when he lived in Miami, FL, he found his true love in Latin music. His trajectory was established, and he achieved triple platinum honors. But success in the world was ultimately unsatisfying. Living with God the Holy Spirit is now what motivates him, he says.

"The biggest difference in my life, in our household, is that the Holy Spirit sits with us," Lou told *The Christian Post*. "When we have breakfast, when we go to bed, He's here. We are in constant conversation with the Creator of the Universe, which is Jesus. This is a big change. There's the world and there's the Spirit and there's a hard separation sometimes but it's the greatest thing man can do." Almost immediately, Lou and his singer wife Jenieva produced *When Jesus Comes Around and Walk to the River*.

"We need to walk to the river," the latter song says. "We need to die in the water. And when we rise with the Lord, every sin will be washed away."

Lou Bega. Photo: Sven Mandel, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.



THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

BY DEAN SIMPSON

"FOR sale: baby shoes, never worn." This is regarded as the greatest shortest story ever written. It is attributed to American novelist Ernest Hemingway, who, it is said, once bet that he could write the world's shortest story.

Lounging in a hotel lobby in the 1920s, Hemingway supposedly bet several writing

colleagues that he could pen a 'tearjerker' in six words. His friends accepted the wager and watched as Hemingway scrawled something on the back of a napkin.

As the napkin was passed around, each of Hemingway's friends knew they had lost, and each silently handed over \$10.

No one actually knows whether this happened or not. And Hemingway's story didn't

even appear in print until 1991 when it was included in a book written by a relatively unknown literary agent.

Whatever the truth, Hemingway's story sparked a new style of literature dubbed 'flash fiction', where storylines are usually restricted to anything up to six words. The basic idea is to tell a poignant story in very few words.

Hemingway's story – For sale: baby shoes, never worn – is in the form of an advertisement and infers a larger narrative, perhaps a miscarriage, sudden infant death, or a child that has been abandoned.

I am a big fan of succinct writing and enjoy reading flash fiction from time to time. Some of my favourites include:

- Clown nose broken. It's not funny.
- Fun night. Only cost a kidney.
- 'Danger' sign simply not clear enough.
- Ever early. He died too soon.
- The fire did not burn him.
- Yesterday, I will do things differently.
- I've even had a go. Here are some of my offerings:
- The day dawned. Night had come.
- Red carpet evening. Bad blood spilt.
- Let's dance. Two step. Red cheek.

I know, I know. Pretty lame.

But I love the art of storytelling. Perhaps that's why I've been a journalist for 40 years. I love telling stories, but I love listening to and reading stories even more.

Sometimes, all it takes is the opening line.

I can rattle off some of my favourites from literary classics: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (*Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens). "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" (*The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien). "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen). "Call me Ishmael" (*Moby Dick* by Herman Melville). "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen" (1984 by George Orwell).

Perhaps the greatest story ever told is the story of God in the Bible. It is a story of God's love for humankind, and the opening could easily win the prize as the best opening line ever (and a classic example of 'six-word flash fiction' at its best): "In the beginning God created everything."

And the whole Bible in six words? I'll channel my best Hemingway and give it a go: "For free: eternal life, contact Jesus."

This story originally appeared in *Salvos Magazine* and is used with kind permission

Recipe of the month



BAKED APPLE PANCAKES

BASED on the famous Walker Brother's Original Pancake House recipe. This recipe doubles easily to make enough for a crowd.

Prep: 30 min
Cook: 1 hour
Total: 1 hour 30 min
Yields 1 amazing pancake, Serves 2 to 4

Ingredients

Base batter

4 eggs
 ½ cup milk
 2 tablespoons whipping cream
 ¾ cup bread flour
 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar
 1 ½ teaspoons wheat gluten (optional)
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Apples

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, cut into 1/4-inch slices
Cinnamon topping ingredients
 4 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 3 tablespoons superfine sugar
 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
 ½ teaspoon cornstarch
 3 tablespoons butter, melted

Method

Base batter

Preheat the oven to 150°C degrees. Beat eggs with an electric hand mixer on medium speed until foamy, about 2 minutes.

Add milk and cream, beating until well blended, about 1 minute. Set aside.

Sift flour, confectioners' sugar, gluten, salt and nutmeg together in a medium bowl. (The wheat gluten helps the pancakes rise more, but can easily be omitted.) Add one third of the flour mixture to the reserved egg mixture and beat on low speed to combine, about 2 minutes. Repeat with remaining flour.

Let the batter rest for 15 minutes. Continue with prep for apples and cinnamon topping.

Apples method

Melt butter in a 23cm non-stick oven-safe pan (cast iron preferably) over medium

heat. (If doubling the recipe, use a 30cm pan.)

Cook apple slices in the skillet, turning occasionally, until apples begin to soften and sweat, but not brown, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl. Reserve pan for assembly.

Cinnamon topping

Mix the brown sugar, superfine sugar, cinnamon, and cornstarch in a small bowl with a fork.

Slowly pour butter into the cinnamon-sugar mixture, stirring with a fork until completely mixed.

Assembly

Spread the cinnamon sugar mixture over the bottom of the now-empty pan with a spatula. Layer the apples evenly over the sugar mixture. They should completely cover the bottom of the pan. Pour the batter over the apples until the batter is 0.5cm below the rim or until you have used up all of the batter. Discard any excess batter.

Baking

Place the pan in the preheated oven. Reduce heat from 150°C to 120°C. Bake for 30 minutes to help the batter set and pancake form. (If doubling the recipe for a 30cm pan, bake at 120°C for 40 minutes.)

Remove from the oven. Cover with foil to keep warm. Increase the oven to 260°C.

When the oven reaches 260°C, remove foil and place the pan back in the oven. Immediately reduce the temperature to 230°C. Bake until the pancake puffs up and the top edges turn a deep brown, about 12-15 minutes. Watch carefully during the last few minutes to ensure that it does not overcook. (If doubling the recipe for a 30cm pan, bake for 15-20 minutes.)

Remove the pan from the oven and carefully invert the pancake onto a platter or plate. Serve immediately.

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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

HOW FULL IS YOUR BUCKET?

BY ROB FURLONG

“HOW full is your bucket?”
 A friend of mine asked this question at a seminar he was presenting on loving family or friends who are struggling with mental illness. His point was clear – we can only effectively love people who are struggling when we also ensure that our own emotional life is healthy. When our personal “emotional bucket” is full, then we can love people out of its overflow. It’s an important piece of advice to heed because there is much in life that drains us and inhibits our efforts to love others well.
 Israel’s ancient king, Solomon, knew well the capacity for life to drain us of satisfaction, meaning, and joy and he wrote about it in the book called Ecclesiastes. He explains that he set out to discover “what do people get for all their hard work under the sun?” but very early in his quest he declares: “Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. The wind blows

south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. Everything is wearisome beyond description.”
 In other words, what Solomon says is that there is an endless, relentless, monotony to life – things go on as they always have – and it’s like a vapour that hovers briefly over the surface of the water but then it’s gone – it’s all meaningless, sapping the vitality of life from you.
 I describe Solomon’s conclusion in this way – life is like a dishwasher! I love having a dishwasher – it’s one of the greatest inventions of mankind – but there is a downside to it. I have noticed that there is rarely a time when you can say the “dishwasher is empty.”
 As soon as you have emptied it, you turn to the sink and there is another set of cups, dishes and cutlery waiting to be loaded into the jaws of this ever-hungry cleaning machine. It’s relentless, and the dishwasher’s



STOCK PHOTO

appetite is never satisfied!
 This principle applies to other areas of our life too. We pay this month’s credit card bill, but next month’s looms large or September’s report is written, but October is coming!
 There is a relentless monotony to life “under the sun” that severely drains your emotional bucket and leaves you with nothing left to give to others, no matter how much you would like to.
 If that’s you right now, I want to direct your thoughts to “life above the sun” – to God – by praying the following prayer for you:
Lord, I pray for those today who are weary and worn down by the monotony of life. Their souls are longing for more. Please lead them to a place of quiet waters where their souls will be refreshed and restored by You. Direct their lives into right living – living for what really matters.

Some of them are travelling through dark places of grief, uncertainty, and fear. Please reassure them of Your Presence and give them Your comfort. Renew their hope in You, in life, and in the future. And help them to find rest in Your steadfast, loyal, and faithful love for them. And as they experience Your grace, peace and love in a fresh way, Please fill their ‘bucket’ and help them to turn and love others well. Allow God to refill your emotional bucket and receive refreshment from Him. If you have always lived your life purely “under the sun” then reach out to Him now, by simply praying back to Him the above prayer. Take the time to “fill your bucket.” (And join me next month when I explain why life is a lot like Star Wars!)

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though 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

Scan here to donate to the work of Challenge around the world.

Want to explore more?

Here are some free, helpful, Christian online resources

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

Was the tomb really empty?

BASED on overwhelming historical evidence, Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected bodily in real time and space by the supernatural power of God. The difficulties in belief may be great, but the problems inherent in disbelief are even greater.

Many people have advanced alternate theories to explain the Resurrection:

- **The wrong-tomb theory**
 Answer: If the wrong tomb was involved, the Jewish authorities would have lost no time in producing the body from the proper tomb and squashing any talk of a resurrection.
- **The hallucination theory**
 Answer: It is not credible to think that 500 people could have seen the same hallucination for 40 days.
- **The swoon theory (Jesus did not actually die on the cross)**
 Answer: Jesus was pierced on the side by a soldier to prove that He was dead before they took Him down from the cross. Even if He somehow survived that, it is impossible that someone half-dead, weak and ill could have rolled the heavy stone away, got past the Roman guards and then given the disciples the impression that He was a Conqueror over death and the grave.
- **The stolen-body theory**
 Answer: How did the depressed and cowardly disciples suddenly become so brave and daring as to face a detachment of select soldiers at the tomb to steal the body? And why would they do so? They didn’t even understand that Jesus was going to rise from the dead.
- **The moved-body theory**
 Answer: If the authorities moved the body, when the disciples started to talk about a resurrection, why didn’t they recover the corpse, display it on a cart and wheel it through the centre of Jerusalem?
- **The relocated-body theory**
 Answer: The Jews didn’t relocate the bones to an ossuary until the body had been buried for a year. Even if it were true, all it accounts for is the empty tomb, which is not what convinced the disciples Jesus had risen – it was His appearances to them.
- **The copycat theory (Christianity copies ancient myths)**
 Answer: Unlike the historical Jesus, there is no evidence for the reliability of any of the alleged parallel stories in the mystery religions. Jesus of Nazareth ate, slept, performed miracles, died, and returned to life. These accounts are supported by a reliable historical record. In contrast, the dying and rising gods of the mystery religions were timeless myths repeated annually with the changing seasons.

The greatest proof of Jesus’ bodily resurrection is the change that came over His followers. They were transformed from terrified doubters, to bold, charismatic preachers who were prepared to die for what they had witnessed. And who would die for something they knew to be a lie? If the resurrection had not happened, they would have known it.

These arguments are taken directly from *More than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell, chapter 10. For more in depth reasoning see, among others, *More than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell; *Who moved the Stone?* by Frank Morrison; or *Cold-Case Christianity* by J. Warner Wallace.

RISING STAR STAYS GROUNDED

Challenge
SPORT



Houston Texans quarterback CJ Stroud (7) during a game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Houston Texans on October 1, 2023. (Photo by Leslie Plaza Johnson/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images)

BY CASEY REDMOND

His parents divorced. Then his dad, a former pastor, got locked up for 38 years. Thrown on economic hard times, his family lived in a small apartment atop a storage facility and ate insect-infested cereal to get by.

Californian CJ Stroud aimed for the NFL to provide for his mom and three siblings. Now he's predicted to be named the Houston Texans' first league MVP for the 2024 season.

It hasn't been an easy road. Born October 3, 2001 in Rancho Cucamonga, California, Coleridge "CJ" Bernard Stroud IV was the youngest in the family. He learned football from his father, who was a pastor for 20 years after turning his back on a life of crime.

By age nine, CJ could throw a 50-yard pass, according to reports.

His dad was always at his games. But one day, Coleridge Bernard Stroud III didn't show up.

After divorcing CJ's mother in 2015, his dad broke into a woman's car, robbing and assaulting her. When the police tailed him, he crashed into a pole and jumped into the San Diego Bay from a bridge to escape police, according to reports.

Because he was a repeat offender, CJ's dad was sentenced to 38 years.

"My pops, he was my best friend. To have your best friend snatched like that, it was tough. I just look at the things my dad did that were positive, but for a while, it wasn't like that. I hated my pops for real. Like man, how could you just leave me like that?"

His coach at the time, Willy Munford, asked CJ where his dad was.

"CJ told me he didn't want to talk about it. I was going to leave that one alone," Willy said on a YouTube video.

"He played well that year. But he was different. You could tell. He wasn't playing as well as he was supposed to. He still had the arm. But he went quiet."

After his dad's incarceration, lack of money figured prominently in his daily life. CJ, his three siblings and their mother moved into a small apartment atop a storage facility Rancho Cucamonga, which she managed.

CJ ate cereal with bugs in it and didn't have money for cleats. He used hand-me-downs.

There was, of course, no way he could hire a personal coach to raise his ability to NFL level, as many aspiring quarterbacks do. So instead, he watched Drew Brees videos on YouTube. The NFL Hall-of-Famer who played for the New Orleans Saints explained proper throwing form and tactics.

When he was running low on contact lenses because of a lack of money, CJ played with one contact lens, using just one eye.

"My life has been like a roller coaster. It's been up and down. I've been through hell and back. I've been through so much in my life. I was young. I was a kid when this stuff happened. I had to grow up early. I had to grow up so fast," CJ said on an NFL interview.

"I'm doing this for my mom and my brothers and my sisters – my family at home. Just those things."

In his last two years of high school, CJ threw well enough to capture the attention of the University of Georgia, University of Michigan, University of Colorado and Ohio State University.

Representatives of those colleges came to visit his family – at the storage facility.

CJ committed to Ohio State and redshirted under Justin Fields (cur-

rent quarterback for the Chicago Bears). In his first season as a starter, CJ threw for over 4400 yards, with 44 touchdowns and 71 percent completion rate and only six interceptions. CJ placed fourth in the Heisman race in just his first season.

When CJ got to college he made an important discovery.

"I found Christ for myself," he tells Faith on the Field host Rob Maaddi. "It's definitely something that I'm still learning to this day. I'm definitely not perfect... It does keep me

grounded; it does keep me humble just because I know anything can be stripped away at any point."

Now describing himself as a "follower of Christ" on social media, CJ tells Fox News, "I don't deserve [God's] grace and His mercy but He still gives it to me and I love Him for that. It's not about me, it's about Him and His glory..."

"Football has a lot of ups and downs, it has a lot of twists and turns, but at the end of the day, it's all about your foundation. And something that's set my foundation is my faith."

After his second season with Ohio States, CJ decided to go straight to the NFL draft.

In his first 15 games of his first season with the Houston Texans (this season), CJ threw for 4100 yards (rookie record is 4300), with a 66 percent completion rate, 23 touchdowns and five interceptions. He became the youngest quarterback to win a playoff game against the Cleve-

land Browns. CJ tied a record with Baker Mayfield for best touchdown/interception rate in the playoffs with an astounding 3/0.

With the money he got for playing in the NFL, CJ was able to buy a new home for his family, ensuring they would never be financially needy again.

He's an advocate for prison reform, believing his father was harshly sentenced and should receive mercy because he acted out of grief from the divorce. His cleat says, "Free Pops."

"When I talk to him now, I don't hold any ill will. I told him I love him. He's made his mistakes. I've made mine. It's not about the bad. It's the nature of the beast. You accept the good with the bad. I thank God for a second chance at this game."

The original of this story can be found at godreports.com and it is used with kind permission.



CJ Stroud #7 of the Houston Texans before kickoff against the New Orleans Saints at NRG Stadium on October 15, 2023 in Houston, Texas. (Photo by Cooper Neill/Getty Images)

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