

SPAG

Single Person Approved by God

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**Inspirational People:
Joseph Scriven and
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**Why Might We Be
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**Merry Christmas!
God, You're Here
With Us**

**How Married Christians
Can Embrace Singles
(Part 2)**

Good Grief!

**150 Years of the
Salvos**

Let's Talk About Sex ...

Regular Segments: Letters to Lou ❀ Up Close and Personal
Happiness Habits ❀ Words of Wisdom ❀ Tantalising Trivia

CONTENTS

- 1 Information and Contacts
- 2 Editor's Letter
- Letters to Lou

Articles:

- 4 Good Grief
- 10 The True Cost of Our Clothing
- 12 Let's Talk About Sex: Purity (Or the World is Not Enough)
- 17 Salvation Army: Celebrating 150 Years
- 28 How Married Christians Can Embrace Christian Singles (Part Two)
- 31 Ten Things Churches (and Their Leaders) Can Do to Make Single People Feel More Welcome at Church
- 32 A Deadly Purple
- 33 Why Might We Be Resisting God's Gift of Singleness?

Regular Items:

- 6 Happiness Habit: Difficult Decisions
- 8 Inspirational People: Misfortune and Mission - Joseph Scriven and Horatio Spafford
- 9 & 36 Words of Wisdom
- 11 Tantalising Trivia
- 22 Rest Ministries: Merry Christmas! God, You're Here With Us
- 23 Creation Ministries International: Should Genesis be Taken Literally?
- 37 Recipes for One or Two
- 38 A-Musings: Bad Habits
Kooky Corner
- 39 Puzzle Page
- 40 Up Close and Personal with Aussie Wildlife

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SPAG (Single Person Approved by God) is a quarterly, electronic magazine for single Christians across Australia. It is an inter-denominational magazine aimed at encouraging, challenging and inspiring solo Christians and hopefully providing Church leaders with some insight into the problems and needs of singles.

SUBMISSIONS AND ADVERTISING:

Please feel free to write to SPAG via our email: spagmag@yahoo.com.au.

Ensure you title your email with the relevant section of SPAG or address it to the Editor. You may feel compelled to respond to an article, or you may like to submit an article of your own for consideration. Perhaps you have a question for SPAG's Counsellor, Lou. Any item for publication must be your original work and not copied from elsewhere.^[1]

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Singles can often feel invisible and unwanted in the Christian community. Be assured that your needs, concerns and problems are real. You are not alone, but in fact are precisely where God wants you to be. The articles here are written to encourage, challenge and inspire you.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to the third edition of SPAG!

Along with lots of terrific articles and our regular segments in this first summer issue, we have a couple of new segments! Creation Ministries International (www.creation.com) has agreed to join with SPAG Magazine and there'll be a special article from them in every issue.

Christian Today (www.christiantoday.com.au) is an online Christian magazine with lots of relevant articles and current news, and they've kindly agreed to allow us to use some of their articles in SPAG Magazine. In this issue we have some terrific items by Sam Rillstone and Thomas Devenish.

In addition, Reverend Fun (www.reverendfun.com) has come on board for a year, and we'll be sharing one of their Christian-based cartoons in each of the next four issues.

So there's lots to celebrate, and great stuff to read and challenge you.

If you enjoy cooking and exploring new recipes, we're looking for someone to take on the role of 'Celebrity Chef' for our recipe page. You'll need to rewrite recipes (because of copyright laws) unless of course you come up with your own. Additionally, you'll require a reasonable quality camera, and be willing to focus on easy, low-carb recipes. Does that sound like you or someone you know? I hope so, because frankly I'm not much of a cook and I'm the one who looks after the recipes at the moment – unfortunately I've been having more disasters than successes! Please email us for more information.

Speaking of contributions, I'd like to send a thank you to Wendy Kilburn who has kindly contributed the photo for this issue's back cover. If you have a great photo of an Aussie destination or somewhere or something typically Aussie, then please submit them to us for consideration. The photo should be in portrait format, ie taller than it is wider.

I've been hard at work preparing for upcoming issues and we'll be doing a very special article in March about modern day slavery and sexual exploitation, and what we can do to make a difference. It promises to be quite an eye-opener.

Meantime, why don't you sit back, relax and enjoy the latest issue of SPAG Magazine.

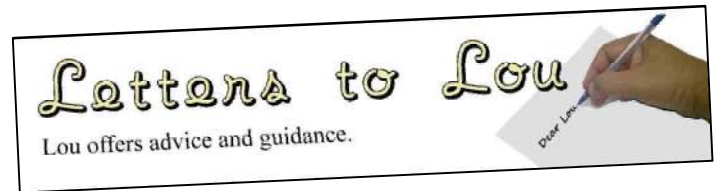
Please accept my best wishes to you for Christmas and the New Year.

Warm regards

**Vicki Nunn,
SPAG Editor**



**Have a God-
filled Christmas**



Letter 1 – I Panic When I Get Too Close

Dear Lou

Every time I even begin to get close to a woman, I start panicking. After that, I can't even bear to be friends with them anymore. I've developed a bit of a bad reputation in my church and very few of the single women will speak to me at all now.

My father used to beat my mother and us when I was young, and I'm so afraid that I'll turn into him. I've never even had a serious girlfriend. There's a part of me that wants to find someone to love, but there's another part of me that's afraid that I'll just muck it all up.

I feel lost. Even though I go to a Counsellor, I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere. Should I just give up trying?

Craig

Dear Craig,

You raise a couple of different issues in your letter. These are a matter of how you see yourself and then being the victim of growing up in a dysfunctional home.

Looking at yourself. You have a strong desire for a meaningful connections with a woman, but are afraid of messing it up.

My suggestion to you is to stop looking for a life partner and to make a meaningful friendship. I speak at Singles camps and always encourage people to work at building friendship, friendship, friendship. Don't go into a friendship looking for a relationship but for a worthwhile friend. If you do this you could build a number of great friendships without the fear of moving towards relationship.

I think most people long for meaningful friendships, and these will succeed when you don't push them toward a personal relationship.

Should you find a friendship moving toward a relationship, I have a set of guidelines to use in this process.

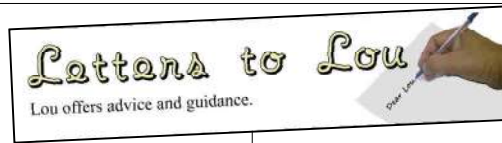
I encourage you to look to build solid friendships in your life.

In regard to your background as a child in an abusive family, this has a massive impact on who you are. I would suggest it is having an impact on your life today, and is the elephant in the room in relation to your building friendships.

When you talk with your counsellor, I would suggest you talk about you as an individual and not about building relationships.

Regards

Lou



Letter 2 – How Do I Tell People to Back Off?

Dear Lou

I was married when I was really young and stupid, and we divorced after a couple of years. I'm now in my late thirties and have no interest in getting married again.

I have friends from Church and relatives who still try to set me up with some 'good Christian man' they know. They don't seem to understand that I'm happy on my own.

I get so tired of having to explain myself to people. How do I tell them once and for all, to back off from setting me up, without offending them? How do I explain so they believe me when I tell them that I have no interest in getting married?

Jillian

Dear Jillian,

Your letter is an interesting one as it opens up a couple of questions for me.

The first is in regard to what other people think or suggest. It is your life and you need to live it how you choose. You will always have people with good intentions who think they know what is best for you. You are responsible to make decisions regarding your life.

The second thought is about yourself. You mentioned twice in your letter that you have no interest in getting married again. Is this because of a bad experience with your first marriage, or because you feel safer being on your own?

It could be helpful to spend time with a Christian Counsellor, to go through your process of moving from a broken marriage to only wanting to be on your own. I think this is more important than worrying about what other people are wanting to do.

Regards

Lou

Letter 3 – Are Online Dating Sites OK?

Dear Lou

I haven't had much luck with girlfriends, and since I can't find anyone in my church, I decided to join an online dating site for Christians.

Some of my friends make fun of me and tell me I'm desperate if I go onto the internet to find love. They think it's a big joke.

I've found a couple of really nice girls on the website and they sound interesting. I've hesitated about contacting them in case my friends embarrass the girls if they come to visit. What should I do? Do I trust the internet? Should I tell my friends?

Thomas

Dear Thomas,

Like a lot of things in life there are those which are able to be used for good and those which are used for evil.

The key to every choice we make in life is discernment. I constantly tell people to make sure they have peace with every decision they make.

When it comes to dating on the internet. Keep your brains in gear, and hasten cautiously. Don't give out too much personal detail but talk often and build trust. Get to know the person. This applies to people you meet in daily life as well as on the internet.

I have taken the wedding of couples who have met on the internet, and they have established great marriages.

It is your choice. There will always be a level of risk, but that is the reality of every decision we make in life. If you are at peace with making contact through a dating site, then give it a try.

Regards

Lou



Good Grief

by Vicki Nunn

Is there such a thing as good grief? When it comes to the loss of a loved one we often think we want to avoid grief, but it's the *pain* of the loss we usually want to avoid. Grief is the process by which we come to terms with that loss. Eventually grief brings us comfort, so the answer to the question is yes - grief itself is good for us because it helps to bring healing and helps us to accept our loss, although we usually never stop missing the person who has died. We may never completely come to terms with serious loss.

Grief and loss are a natural part of our journey as human beings, but it can be one of the most difficult things to deal with. Everyone's reactions and experiences are different, and only those who have experienced the same loss can truly begin to understand another person's feelings. The pain we feel over the loss of a child is different to the pain we experience after the death of a parent, a partner, a close friend or a pet, the loss of a job or the loss of physical freedoms.

We should never presume to understand another person's experience nor diminish their loss simply because of circumstances. A person who loses an unborn baby can experience the same level of loss and pain as a parent who loses a child, and a person who loses a beloved pet can also experience intense levels of pain and grief.

Even the loss of a job or our physical freedom and abilities due to illness or accident can lead to grief. This latter grief is rarely recognised as a grieving process, let alone discussed, so people can go through sorrow for this loss and not understand why their experiencing those feelings, nor how to cope with them.

What is the Difference Between Grief and Mourning

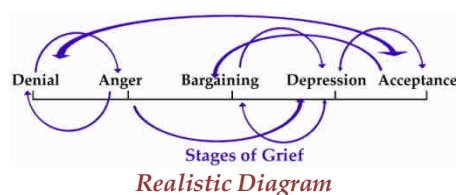
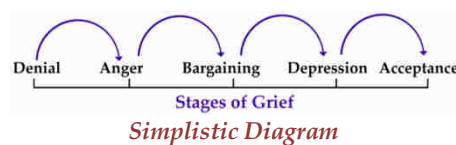
Grief is how we cope with our loss internally, while mourning is the outward way that we show our grief.

Are There Really Five Stages of Grief?

While the concept of the five stages of grief has been around for a number of decades now, the stages may not be as clear-cut as people believe. There is a suggestion that there are actually six stages of grief. What is known is that while five basic stages have been identified, not everyone goes through all of the different stages, and they may experience them in a different order. Additionally we should recognise that as no person experiences grief in the same way, so the stages are not as simple or as clearly defined as the words might have us believe.

Generally the accepted five stages of grief are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. A sixth stage has been suggested which is 'meaning,' and it comes after acceptance.

Grief is not as straight-forward as some may think. One person may not experience anger, while another won't go through denial. Generally people flick backwards and forwards between the different stages, and can sometimes go through earlier stages again later.



Everybody experiences grief differently and there's no right or wrong way to experience it. Some people may feel the need to talk it through, while others may prefer not to communicate much at all.

The person who talked it through in the beginning may feel the need to be less communicative later.

The Five Stages of Grief

1. Denial

When loss occurs, the world and life stops making sense to us because we are in a state of shock. We can feel numb and don't know how we're going to manage to go on or wonder if it's even worth bothering.

The reason we experience denial is because through denial, we allow only enough to get through to us which we can manage. It is a coping mechanism through which we *begin* the process of grief and start to cope with the loss.

Through this period, little by little we start accepting the loss as a reality, and eventually we start questioning the situation. As we grow stronger, denial starts to ebb away and we eventually confront the feelings we had been suppressing.

2. Anger

While many societies discourage people from expressing anger, we need to understand that it is an important part of grief and healing. When someone is displaying anger while grieving, it can be difficult for those around them to understand why, or know how to cope with the situation. We need to let the person grieving know that it's ok.

We experience anger because it's one of the few things over which we have control during this horrible time. Sometimes feeling angry is better than feeling nothing at all, and it can connect us to what is going on around us or to people associated with the loss. Sometimes we can feel overwhelming anger towards someone who doesn't deserve it, or over trivial matters. Our anger may even confuse us.

We can feel angry towards the doctors, family, friends and towards the person we lost, and also towards God. The anger in this stage can seem quite intense, but it shows the incredible love we had for the person we lost.

When we are grieving the loss of a job or our freedom due to physical disability, we can direct our anger towards those who caused the situation and at faceless organisations that seemed to have contributed to the loss.

As we start gaining control of emotions which at first had been numbed, our anger can begin to dissipate.

3. Bargaining

During this stage of grief we can experience guilt and become lost in the "if onlys" as we try to bargain our way back to normality. "If only we'd found the cancer sooner." "If I devote my life to doing good, can I wake up as if it's all been a terrible nightmare?" "I should have made him/her go to the doctor sooner."

"My child died. I don't need advice. All I need is for you to gently close your mouth, open wide your heart and walk with me until I can see in colour again."

Angela Miller

Through this period we toss around all of the possibilities of the "if onlys" and the bargaining is a way of trying not to feel the pain of the loss. Through it we begin to recognise the truth of the loss even while our minds are still refusing to fully accept it, because to accept it would be to have to fully face the pain.

4. Depression

This stage of grief is when the loss begins to impact us deeply and the pain feels so terribly intense and unbearable, as if it will never end. It may feel like we're living in the shadows as we ponder how and why we should go on. During this period, people can withdraw from normal living patterns and struggle to take care of themselves, because it all seems so pointless and because their normal routines are no longer in place.

It is perfectly normal for people to experience depression because the loss is very real and very painful.

5. Acceptance

Acceptance doesn't mean that a person who is grieving has accepted the situation

and that everything is fine, because we will not ever really believe that everything is ok. It is more about accepting that the loss has occurred and now our life has changed and yet we have to go on.

Through this time, we come to understand how the loss will impact our life and in what way things need to change. Slowly as the bad days pass, we start experiencing improvement until eventually we have more good days than bad.

We begin to live again into a life which has readjusted to the loss. While things will never ever be the same, we come to understand that there are still good things in life including relationships, and we can find meaning in life again. The fog has lifted, although there will still be days when the pain returns anew, when it's difficult to face the world.

6. Meaning?

It has been suggested that there may be a sixth stage of grief during which we find meaning arising out of our loss. It may occur some considerable time later, and in a way it may seem like a way to make the loss seem worthwhile to us.

When Does Grief End?

There is a mistaken belief that grief comes to an end. The reality is that it never really does, as its impact remains with us for life. Grief comes and goes, and while there may come a time when we can remember without pain, our lives are permanently affected.

How to Help Someone Going Through Grief

It's part of human nature to want to fix things for others, especially when they're in pain, but we must remain mindful that there is nothing we can do to fix the situation, the pain or the person. The best way to help a person experiencing grief is to support them.

Oftentimes, someone going through grief is unlikely to be able to identify, let alone say what their needs are, so friends and relatives should try and anticipate what the grieving person needs. They can then offer to help them:

- Organise the funeral and the wake;
- Help with chores around the home such as cleaning and gardening;
- Take the person to appointments;
- Rearrange their normal activities or postpone them;
- Provide meals;
- Pay bills;
- Take out the rubbish;
- Organise for kids to be picked up from school etc;

Put aside time to sit with the person and allow them to talk if they wish to, but don't force conversation on them.

What Can We Say to Someone Grieving?

- I'm sorry for your loss;
- I don't have the right words to say, but just know that I care;
- I can't imagine how you're feeling, but I'd like to help if I can;
- You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers;
- I'm just a phone-call away;
- I'm available at any time to help – nothing is too difficult. I want to help.
- My favourite memory of your loved one is...

We don't even have to say anything: we can simply hug the person or sit with them.

The Worst Thing We Can We Say to Someone Grieving

- They lived a good/long life;
- They're in a better place;
- There is a reason for everything;
- You must be feeling better by now;
- Thankfully you can have another child / you can marry again;
- It was time for them to go;
- God took them home to be with Him;
- Be strong.

Conclusion

Grief is not easy for anyone, and it's probably the most painful emotional experience anyone will ever encounter. In the next issue of SPAG Magazine, we'll explore more about it and the grief of losing a child. [END]

Bibliography:

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief-loss/supporting-a-grieving-person.htm>, helpguide.org. Authors: Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. September 2015.



Happiness Habits



Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean that happiness comes automatically as part of the package.

Society tells us that happiness comes from being successful, famous, young, slim and/or attractive, but it's an illusion. Those things don't buy happiness. In fact, happiness is not a destination, ie you don't reach a state of happiness and stay there forever. Rather, happiness is a choice. It comes from regularly practicing mental, emotional and physical habits which you maintain for a lifetime.

There are various happiness habits that mental health professionals suggest you undertake regularly. A different one will be provided in each issue of SPAG.

"Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect. It means you've decided to look beyond the imperfections." Anon

=====

Difficult Decisions

By Vicki Nunn

One of the challenges of adulthood is decision making, and living with the consequences of our choices. For those of us who struggle with low self-esteem, larger decisions can be particularly challenging for us and impact on our ability to find happiness:

- We juggle all of the possible options and may doubt our ability to make the right choice;

- We may worry that we've missed something obvious that we believe will backfire on us later;
- We may phone friends repeatedly in the hope of gaining some clarity or reassurance, but may still remain confused about whether we've done the right thing;
- Once the decision is made, we may then go into a spiral of worry about the consequences of our decision. This can haunt us for weeks or even years;
- If our decision does result in something unfavourable, it only confirms to us that we're poor decision makers and increases our self-doubt;
- Even if the decision results in something positive, it seems almost anti-climactic because we were expecting the worst, and we may tell ourselves it was just a fluke and start worrying again that our next decision will be wrong, or that something else will go wrong.
- We impulsively make a decision because we aren't thinking clearly or because it's just so difficult to make a choice;
- Or we don't end up making any decision out of confusion and fear that it will be wrong, and then we have to live with the consequences of our hesitation.

While the above points may seem like extreme examples, if any one of these even faintly rings a bell, then we need to start making deliberate changes in our personal decision-making processes.

First, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- Do I delay making decisions?
- Do I dither about what is the correct

choice?

- Do I feel stupid when having to make big decisions?
- Do I wish I had a partner so they could make these choices for me?
- Does it feel like there's a huge weight hanging over me at these times?
- Do I often find myself making impulsive decisions that I regret later?
- Do I sometimes avoid making any decision in the hope that it will work out or just go away on its own?

If we responded "yes," to any of the above, we should consider that decision-making is difficult for us, and that we need to work on this area.

One of the main reasons that decision-making can be so hard is that we've allowed it to become a much bigger challenge than it needs to be. It's like the old phrase, 'to make a mountain out of a mole-hill.' We've gotten into the habit of seeing all decisions as insurmountable mountains of difficulty, rather than seeing them as they really are: a normal part of life, ie just small bumps along the way.

If decision-making is difficult for us, it can certainly impact on our happiness, so we need to start healthy habits when it comes to our choices.

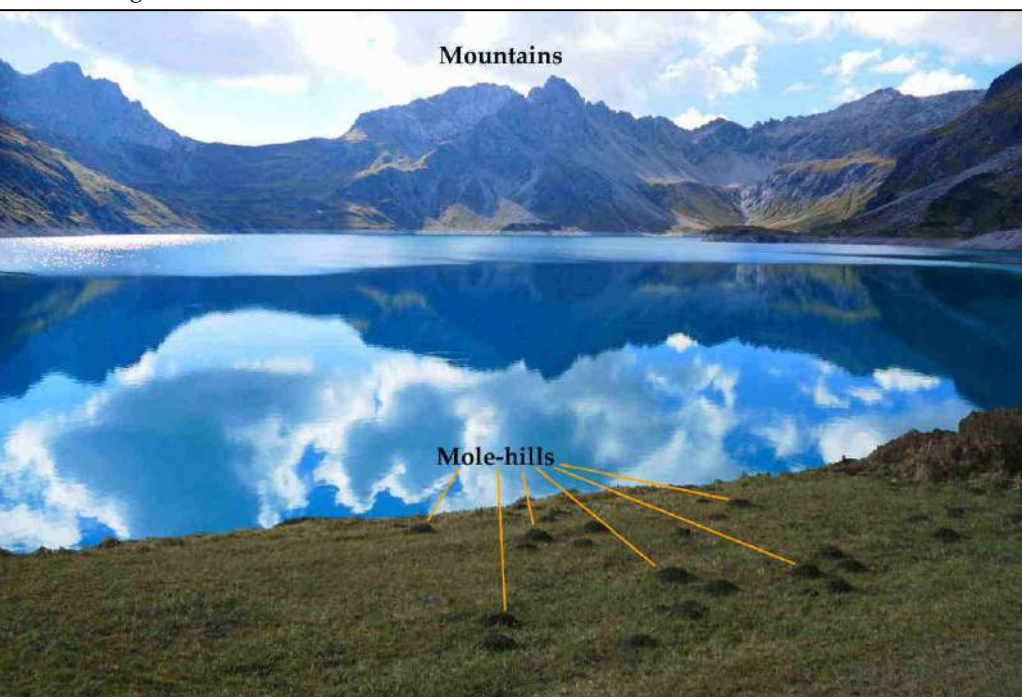
Be Well-Prepared in Advance

As much as possible, we should plan ahead for the larger decisions so that when they arise, we don't feel overwhelmed and are well prepared to make our choice.

If we leave decisions to the last possible moment, it will add to our stress levels, increase our confusion, cause us to doubt our decision-making abilities and make us feel quite horrible.

In the table on the following page is an example of how we can prepare ahead of time, in this instance for the purchase of a vehicle. We can make the same kind of table for any major decision, including looking for a new job.

Once we've made the decision, if we find doubt starting to creep into our minds, we should remind ourselves that we made the best decision after careful consideration. We should determine in our minds that we can live with our choice, whatever happens. We should do some positive self-talk such as, "No, I refuse to let this worry me. My choice was well thought out. I did a good job of preparing for this decision."



Decision Making Process: Purchasing a Motor Vehicle:

Preparation	How/What
Get out a notebook – start the process at least three months ahead of time.	Create a table - write down the steps in the process
Consider if we have any outstanding debts such as credit cards and work at reducing that , especially if it's over \$1,000.	Should we first pay off our credit card debt?
Consider how much we have to spend and carefully look at whether we can manage the costs. Seriously consider cutting up our credit cards.	Bank websites have calculators to determine loan repayments
Work out insurance costs. Include those payments in all of our calculations, along with registration and maintenance.	Insurance websites often have calculators. If you're unsure, ask a friend about maintenance costs.
Decide the basic requirements for our vehicle.	Auto/manual, sedan/hatchback/sports, second-hand or new, fuel-efficiency etc
Research options on the internet and talk to friends and relatives.	Research, then discuss with friends/family
Make note of the five best choices, then narrow it down to our three favourites, ensuring that they each provide our basic requirements.	
Look carefully at the favourites. Ask the question, "Did I choose these based on appearance rather than if it meets my basic requirements?" Reconsider the loan and other costs and confirm if we can afford it.	Choose not to be rushed into a decision based on its appearance
Do further research and read feedback about the vehicles online.	Read real feedback from buyers
Consider resale value – will this vehicle hold its value more than the others in five years time?	Check out resale values on vehicle-resale websites
Narrow our choice to our two favourites and then make a decision.	Make the decision! It's time.
Go to our bank for a loan, taking along bank statements, six weeks pay slips and information on other debts we have.	Note: banks generally don't like too much debt.

Seeking Advice

Seeking advice from others can be both good and bad for us. It can be good in that more knowledgeable people can provide insight which may be beneficial. On the other hand, if we rely on others too much for advice, we can become too scared or too lazy to tackle the important decisions for ourselves. We should be aware of our tendencies in this area and be courageous enough to stand on our own two feet, and not be pushed into making a choice based on someone else's preferences.

Keep God in the Loop

Are our major decisions part of our regular discussions with God? We certainly should be keeping Him in the loop and asking for His clarity and guidance.

I remember many years ago, seeking God's help when I was considering purchasing a second-hand car. He sent me three messages from different sources about a particular model of a car, including a reference in an email which just happened to mention the best-selling

car of all time. He went one step further by connecting me with one of the women from my workplace whose mother-in-law was considering selling the exact same car that had been mentioned in the email for the exact amount of money that I'd saved up!

Keeping a Clear Head

If we want to ensure that we make a dumb decision that we're sure to regret, we should make decisions when we don't have a clear head. Let's consider:

- stress - if we're stressed out with something else, it's good to put off making major decisions until things settle down.
- impulsivity – buying on impulse can lead us into making poor choices and getting into debt, and if this is one of our tendencies, we may have to call on someone who is more clear-headed to help us;
- emotional mess – our emotions can impact hugely on our decisions because they affect our ability to think clearly; and
- tiredness – if we're doing too much or not getting enough sleep, it can affect our decision-making ability as well

Smaller Decisions

Not all of our choices need the preparation that our bigger decisions require. We must be clear in our own minds about what decisions need

preparation and which ones don't. Obviously what we want for our pizza topping is different to the choices we need to make when buying a house or changing jobs.

Conclusion

As with anything, the more practice we have with making decisions, the easier they tend to be the next time. We should learn to embrace our mistakes because they happen to everybody. I've never met anybody who hasn't made some dumb choice at some point in their lives; sometimes repeatedly!

People who can shrug off mistakes have learned that beating themselves up about their choices, doesn't help them. We can determine to let it go and not to hold onto our feelings of shame and recriminations. This is an important 'happiness habit' we need to put into practice in our lives. As suggested earlier, we should get into the habit of positive self-talk such as:

"No, I refuse to let this worry me. I've made my decision and whatever the consequences are, I will survive it. If I've made the wrong choice, I can learn from this experience, but it doesn't mean that I'm a failure. All it means is that I made a wrong decision, and next time I will do better." [END]

Biography:

<http://www.danhardie.com/this-mistake-will-guarantee-you-make-bad-decisions>



INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE

Misfortune and Mission:

Joseph Scriven and Horatio Spafford

Joseph Scriven was born to wealthy parents in Ireland around 1820, and later graduated from Trinity College.

Scriven suffered three major tragedies in his life, and yet he never wavered from his passion to both preach the good news about Jesus, and to help others, which he did right up until his death in 1886.

The first of these tragedies occurred when he was 25. The night before his wedding, Joseph's fiancée accidentally drowned. Driven by grief and by a strong religious urge, he moved to Canada.

While he was there he met another young woman and became engaged to be married. Part of their strong religious beliefs included a full immersion baptism before marriage. Unfortunately, his second fiancée was still recuperating from TB when they were baptised in the icy river waters. This brought about a sudden decline in the young woman's health, and she developed pneumonia and died before they were married.

The grief must have been almost unbearable, but with Jesus' strength, Joseph somehow made it through.

Later, as he continued his ministry in Canada he heard that his mother was gravely ill back in Ireland, but couldn't return home to be with her. Instead, Scriven wrote her a poem to encourage and uplift her. This poem was later discovered by one

of Joseph Scriven's friends and published in a book of poems. The words were much later rediscovered and became the basis for one of the most loved Christian hymns of all time - *'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.'*

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear,
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer.
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry,
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer,
In His arms He'll take and shield thee;
Thou wilt find a solace there.

Horatio Spafford was a well-to-do American lawyer and



Presbyterian Elder. Married to Anna, the couple had four daughters. During the 1860s and 1870s, Horatio invested very heavily in the Chicago area in the USA, but unfortunately the great Chicago fire of 1871 almost completely ruined the family financially although Horatio still maintained some smaller business interests.

After the fire and other ongoing financial stressors, the family decided to take a vacation in Europe and England and meet up with their family friend DL Moody. A last-minute change of plan caused Horatio to stay behind while he sent his family off ahead of him by ship and it was planned that they meet up later.

Several days after his family left, Horatio received a shocking telegram which explained that the ship carrying his family had struck another vessel and sunk. Tragically, his beloved wife and four daughters had all drowned.

Understandably, Horatio Spafford was devastated by the loss, but there was some incredible relief a few days later when he received another telegram which contained just two words: 'Saved alone,' written by his wife.

Horatio jumped onto the first available ship to meet up with Anna, and on his trip there, he travelled over the same part of the ocean where his four daughters had perished. It was on this sea voyage that he wrote the following famous words:



Anna Spafford

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mrs_Anna_Spafford.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Mrs_Anna_Spafford.jpg

"When peace, like a river,
Attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows
roll;
Whatever my lot,
Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul..

Refrain:

It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul
Though Satan should buffet,
Though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded
My helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for
my soul.

Refrain:

My sin, oh, the bliss of this
glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross,
And I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O
my soul!

When he wrote 'When sorrows like
sea billows roll' Spafford was
specifically referring to the ocean
waves that took his family from
him.

The story doesn't end with the
reunion of Horatio Spafford and his
wife Anna: the couple went on to
have three more children including
their only son Horatio junior.
Tragedy struck again when Horatio

Jr died of scarlet fever, when he was
just four years of age.

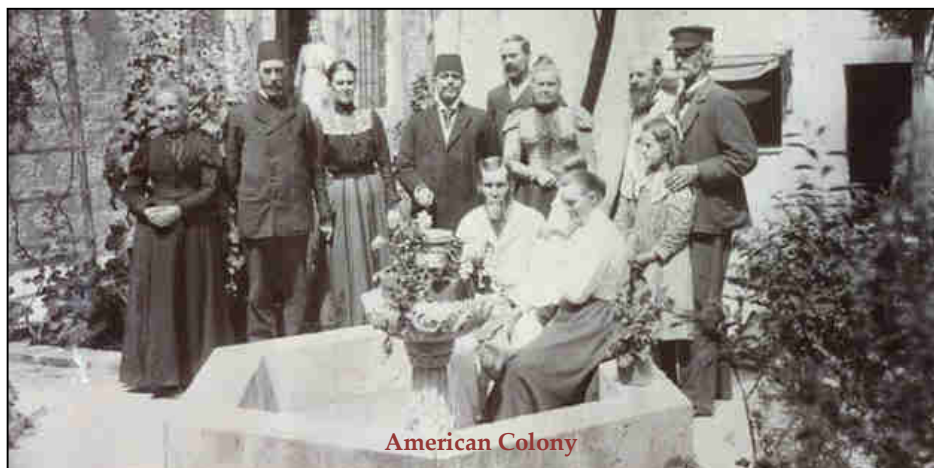
Instead of comforting them, the
Spafford's own church blamed them
for the tragedies, claiming it was
divine punishment.

It is through the couple's
experiences, that we can see
similarities between their mis-
fortunes and those of the Biblical
Job: loss of fortune and family;
restoration; judgement from trusted
friends; and later rejoicing.

While Horatio and Anna were
likely very upset and angry at the
unfair judgement of people who
were supposed to be their trusted
church family, it spurred the
Spaffords onto greater things for
God: they established the 'American
Colony' in Israel.

The group's mission was to serve
the poor, no matter their religion,
and not to preach the gospel, but
simply to serve. With this as their
basis, they gained the trust of the
local Muslim, Jewish, and Christian
communities in Israel.

During World War I the American
Colony was able to support those
suffering in Israel by operating
hospitals, orphanages, soup
kitchens and other charities. The
group became the subject of a Nobel
prize winning book called
"Jerusalem" by the Swedish novelist
Selma Lagerlöf. [END]



Words of Wisdom

"Sixty years ago I knew
everything. Now I know nothing.
Education is a progressive
discovery of our own ignorance."

by Will Durant

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The True Cost of Our Clothing

by Sam Rillstone

'Christian Today'

"I don't want anyone wearing anything which is produced by our blood," – garment worker in Bangladesh.



It's been more than two years since the fatal Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh, where 1,100 people were tragically killed and the lives of loved ones dramatically changed forever. This event has been recorded as the second worst industrial accident of all time. It has also been recognised as an event that could have been avoided. It could have been avoided by governments, investors, retailers and consumers – consumers like you and me.

While this horrific event may have sparked our collective conscience to know more about the people producing our clothes, there is still a lack of commitment from Christians to ensure they are not directly buying into the exploitation of the poor.

The Issue

Second only to China, Bangladesh is the largest producer of clothing in the world. The workers are being paid less than \$2 an hour with almost no health, wage or safety standards. The garment factory collapse disaster in Bangladesh

is not uncommon. Despite this, the year following the disaster was the industry's most profitable of all time. The global fashion industry is now an almost three trillion dollar industry.

While these are promising signs for the fashion industry, the problems remain significant. Overall the industry is still categorised by poverty level wages. In Baptist World Aid's groundbreaking research, a mere 12% of companies could demonstrate any action towards paying wages above the legal minimum, and even then, only for part of their supply chain.

Investors and retailers justify their actions by arguing that they are providing jobs for people who would be worse off otherwise. They assert that the workers know no better, and that they are helping to improve the economies of developing countries such as Bangladesh. Yet the wider impact our fast fashion consumption has on people's lives, leaves no doubt that the fashion industry is defined by the exploitation of our poor.

Aside from labour exploitation, our increasing demand for cheap clothing has a significant effect on the environment, endangering the health of entire villages subject to harmful chemical waste.

Moreover, workers who harvest cotton face life-threatening health issues from overexposure to pesticides used

on the seeds which have been intentionally genetically modified to require such chemical spraying. The negative impacts are endless, generational burdens for those who are most vulnerable and have no other options.

The Jesus Way

The Christian life, according to Jesus, is clearly marked by social justice. If we are not engaging in building God's Kingdom on the earth as it is in heaven, we are simply not living the Jesus way.

It is always the most unlikely, unholy, and unrighteous person that Jesus has mercy on. This is because our God's heart beats for the weak and helpless. He extends His grace to those in the darkest and damning places, and opposes those who are high and lofty. One cannot read through the Bible and not understand that God has favour on the broken, the marginalised, and the desperate.

It is no coincidence that two of the clearest teachings from Jesus on the topic of eternal life, are directly linked to our care for the poor. The parable of the Good Samaritan is Christ's answer to the Pharisees' question of who will inherit eternal life. He reiterates our greatest command of loving our neighbour, who is depicted as a man that was robbed and in need of help. Jesus asks us to be like the Good Samaritan who showed mercy on the



man in need.

The parable of the Sheep and the Goats has a similar context. Jesus is clear and firm in the importance of obeying the two greatest commandments, illustrating that in fact they are one and the same:

'Then they themselves also will answer, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?" Then He will answer them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me."' (Matthew chapter 25 verses 44-45)

Love Thy Neighbour

So what does it mean to 'love your neighbour' in the context of our consumption? Can the nature of a God of justice, love and freedom ever be reflected in a market system driven by self-interest, greed and exploitation?

Will we continue to search for happiness in the consumption of things? Will we be satisfied by a system that makes us feel rich, while leaving our world so desperately poor? Will we continue to turn a blind eye to the lives of those behind our clothes?

Or...

...will this be the a turning point, as we listen to Christ's cry for His kingdom on earth, where together we begin to make a real change as we remember that everything we wear was touched by human hands. In the midst

of all the challenges facing us today, all the problems that feel bigger than us and beyond our control, maybe we could start here, with clothing.

We CAN make a difference

Investigate where your clothes are coming from:

<http://www.baptistworldaid.org.au/assets/Be-Fair-Section/FashionReport.pdf>

Choose to buy ethical and fair trade clothing (and food): <http://www.the-stockroom.co.nz/ethical-clothing-companies/> If we can't afford ethical clothing, we can try buying fewer items every year, or source the rest of our wardrobe from second-hand stores and opp shops!

Take a stand for justice, both internationally and locally: educate ourselves on migrant exploitation in New Zealand and Australia and be challenged to live the Jesus way by advocating for these people.

We should encourage our churches to discuss this issue and promote ethical consumption by partnering with businesses that empower workers rather than exploiting them. [END]

Sam is currently living in Auckland, New Zealand working as a carpenter while starting up his own social enterprise to assist refugees into employment.

<http://www.christiantoday.com.au/article/the.true.cost.of.our.clothing/20146.htm>



Tantalising Trivia

Beeswax, salt and oil were used to preserve Egyptian mummies and the actual procedure could take up to seventy days. The body was wrapped in bandages and covered with wax to make it waterproof.

But where did the word 'mummy' actually come from? It was derived from 'mum', the Persian word for the wax used in the preservation and the medieval Arab word 'mumiya.' So it had nothing whatsoever to do with them being a parent! [END]



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Let's Talk About Sex: Purity (or The World is Not Enough)

by Vicki Nunn

Introduction

When I was about nineteen in the very early 1980s, the Scottish singer Sheena Easton hit the charts in Australia for the first time with her song 'Morning Train.' She followed that with the hit song 'Modern Girl.' I remember thinking that the character in the second song sounded sad and even a little lonely, in spite of the appeal of her freedom. The lyrics seemed to suggest to me that despite all of the hype about being a modern woman, it didn't bring her any kind of long-term satisfaction.

Beginning with the song's main character waking in the morning next to a man in her bed, it soon became evident that she wished he would hurry up and leave. Her sexual promiscuity appeared to be a regular routine in her life.

Despite her protestations that she was free to do as she pleased, her independence and sexual freedom did not make her happy. In fact, she preferred an evening at home watching TV by herself, rather than finding another sexual encounter.

I felt a kinship with the character when in my early twenties, not because I was promiscuous, but because all of the world's promises weren't bringing me any kind of fulfilment or contentment either. Certainly short-term pleasure could be found, but it was without value.

One night, at a crowded nightclub, I recall looking around at the throngs of people, desperately trying to have fun. For the first time I was able to put my concerns into words, "If trying to have fun is all there is, then it's not enough."

A couple of years after that, I became a Christian.

I've met many people in the intervening years, frantically pursuing the world's promise of happiness through sex, drunkenness, wealth, drugs, having fun etc. Some of these people had reached their sixties and seventies and still hadn't achieved the happiness that the pursuits had promised. I figure that if they hadn't found it by that age, then it's unlikely the world was ever going to fulfil them. This fruitless pursuit of happiness has left many people unsatisfied, incomplete, hardened and sometimes even broken in spirit.

The world still dangles the promise of happiness in front of people, like a glittering bauble to a child. It's so enticing that every new generation is likely to be succumbed by its allure and few seem able to resist it, including Christians.

Our Sinful Nature

The call of the world is strong and entices our innate sinful nature to yield to its call, and there are several Biblical passages that speak about this. In Romans chapter seven, Paul spoke about his continual battle with his own sinful nature:

"And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it."

I have discovered this principle of life - that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." [NLT]

Paul later continued on with this subject in his letter to the church in Ephesus, and provided examples of the way we should live as 'Children of the Light:'

"Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity."

But that isn't what you learned about Christ. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy."

...And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption."

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behaviour. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4: 17b-32 [NLT]

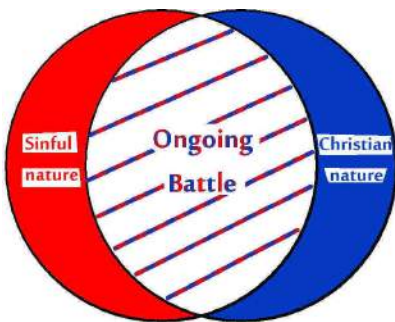
Paul stated that the world deceives us, and what better way to do this than with our sexuality! The world is rife with sexual imagery and enticements.

There seem to be few cultures today where we are not surrounded by sexualised imagery, and while the world would have us believe that sex is not a sin (which is correct), there is a vast difference between what God says is good for us and what the world says is good for us when it comes to our sexuality.

What Does This Mean for Christians?

The world would tell us that there's something wrong with us if we don't indulge; that it's harmful to our bodies and our minds if we are not sexually active or that we are missing out on something good.

Since we are still influenced by our own sinful nature, does that mean we might as well give up and give in? To answer this, we must refer back to our source of the truth. As mentioned earlier, the Bible is clear about our sinful nature (Romans chapter seven):



"Live no longer as the Gentiles do..."
"And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live." [NLT]

The Bible is quite clear that the normal sexual relationship between a husband and wife (as illustrated by Adam and Eve,) is not a sin but that we should seriously consider anything **outside** of that relationship, including indulging in sexual thoughts, as not part of God's plan for us.

The Bible often puts together the two words 'immorality' and 'sexual,' in reference to our sinful nature. In the table on the right are just a few examples from the New Testament:

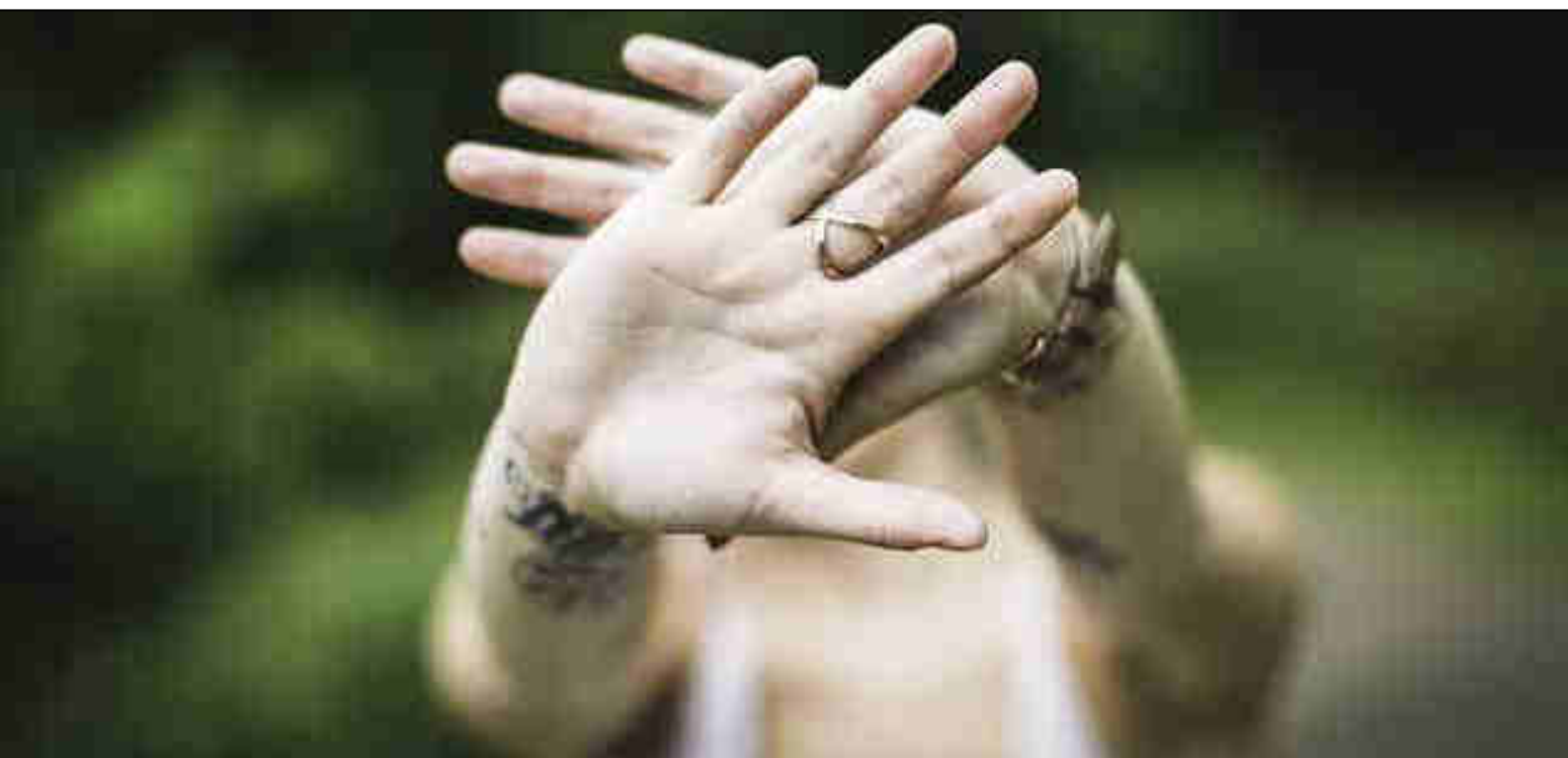
1 Corinthians 6:12-18 is very clear about sexual immorality and our bodies:

"You say, "I am allowed to do anything" – but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." (This is true, though some day God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the

<i>"For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander." [NLT]</i>	Matt 15:19
<i>"For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder..." [NLT]</i>	Mark 7:21
<i>"Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarrelling and jealousy." [NLT]</i>	Rom 13:13
<i>"I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you." [NLT]</i>	Cor 5:1
<i>"When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols." [NLT]</i>	1 Cor 5:9-10
<i>"I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin..." [NLT]</i>	1 Cor 5:11
<i>"Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery..." [NLT]</i>	1 Cor 6:9

Scriptures say, *"The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.*



Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honour God with your body." [NLT]

And Galatians 5:19-21:

"When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God." [NLT]

Can we honestly read either of these two passages and still claim that God says that anything sexual outside of the marriage relationship, as acceptable? Why do you think that our world has become so focussed on sex? It's because it's one of the toughest ones to overcome and Satan knows it!

If we go back to Genesis, we can see that right from the beginning Satan twisted God's words, and this trend has continued to the present time. Satan encourages mankind to live only for ourselves and our own pleasure, and the sad reality is that many people have never even heard God's words because they've been drowned out by Satan's deafening cries to give into our own selfish desires.

Let's compare what God wants for us, and how Satan has twisted those words:

God	The World/Satan
You are both a physical and spiritual being	You are only a physical, sexual being
You have the responsibility to love as God wishes.	You have the right to live as you wish and to please yourself.
You should listen to God first.	You should listen to yourself first.

God	The World/Satan
You should resist giving into your sinful nature.	It is good to satisfy your own natural desires.
You can only find fulfilment and contentment in God.	The world has countless pleasures to satisfy you.
Your time here is short, so make the best of your opportunity to do God's will.	Your time here is short, so take every opportunity to have fun and find happiness.

The difference is that as Christians, God has changed our hearts and lives through Christ (as Paul discussed) and while we have an ongoing battle with our own sinful nature, those who live in the world have little willpower or the desire to overcome it.

Personally I have struggled in various areas with my own sinful nature, ever since I became a Christian in 1986. For many years, certain passages in the Bible condemned me with words that told me that since I was a new creation, I should no longer have been subject to my sinful nature. They reminded me that our old selves were crucified and we should no longer be a slave to sin. Why then did my own thoughts and sometimes my own actions fail me? Why did I give in so easily to sin?

Untruths Regarding Sexual Sin

There are some fallacies when it comes to sexual sin. Consider the following:

- *We believe that even though we are a Christian, sinning proves there is something wrong with us and our walk:*

There would be some Christians who would suggest that we're still immature if we're still failing, and yet we have an amazing example in the Bible of a mature Christian who clearly talked about his own ongoing struggle with his sinful nature. We can almost hear the agony in Paul's voice as he spoke about his personal struggle, *"Oh, what a miserable person I am!"* [NLT]

- *We believe that our sexuality should be easy to switch off, at least until we're married:*

We are sexual beings – that is part of the human journey. Our sexuality is not a bad thing, because God made us that way for a purpose. Temptation itself is not a sin, but giving into our sexual desires through masturbation, sexual intercourse, indulging in sexual fantasies, and watching pornography is the sin.

While some people do find it easier to 'switch off' this part of themselves, for many people, it



remains an ongoing battle to resist.

- *We believe that it's the physical act of sex which is the sin:*

First comes the temptation, then comes the physical, sexual act right? Nope. In between is a very important step: allowing our *minds* to dwell on sexual thoughts – this is where sin begins. It is in our mind where the temptation is allowed to flourish into something more; it is in the mind where the battle to deal with temptation takes place; it is in our mind where we must be prepared to do battle first.

- *We believe that God condemns us because of our sexual sin:*

While God does hate sin, He does not hate us. While on the one hand, God would certainly prefer that we don't sin, He also understands that we will sometimes sin and fail Him because we have sinful bodies and minds, and live in a sinful world, full of temptation. On the other hand, He also expects us to try to resist it, and provides strength through His Holy Spirit.

- *We believe that we are the only one struggling so badly with sexual sin:*

Satan takes great delight in making us believe that we're on our own when it comes to battling sexual temptation, as if we are failures or more weak than other Christians. If we believe this lie, then we will certainly feel alone and weak and like a failure, and we'll be more prone to give into temptation.

- *We believe that this is the worst possible sin, and other Christians would criticise and reject us if they knew about this ongoing problem:*

There is only *one* sin which Jesus

says is unforgivable: blaspheming of the Holy Spirit.

This sin is mentioned in reference to a miracle Jesus performed after which the religious leaders claimed that the power Jesus used to heal a blind, mute man, came from Satan.

This unforgivable sin is when a person deliberately insults the work of the Holy Spirit, such as claiming it is from Satan, even though the person is likely aware that what they're saying isn't true. It's a response to a deliberate hardening of a person's heart.

Sexual intercourse or masturbation is therefore, not an unforgivable sin.

Some of God's best people sinned, and yet God not only loved them, He forgave them and they still continued doing His work:

- Noah got drunk;
- Jacob was a liar;
- Moses was a murderer;
- Rahab was a lying prostitute; and
- David who was highly beloved by God, had an affair with a married woman and arranged it so that her husband would be killed in battle!

You should be aware that many other Christians have battles with sexual temptations. In fact, other Christians have battles with many forms of temptation, and anyone who says otherwise is a liar. While some Christians find it easier to resist sexual temptation than others, the fact is, we all battle temptation.

You are not alone. You are no less worthy of being called a son/daughter of God than any other Christian. We are all forgiven equally, no matter our sin.

- *We believe that it's unfair that God would allow us to be tempted in such a way:*

I am a diabetic. I could allow myself to feel angry and upset by all the

temptations around me to eat sweets or other foods that send my blood-sugar high. Instead, I have come to accept that this health issue is part of my struggle as a human being. I work hard at trying to restrict my diet to things that won't adversely affect my blood-sugars, and I try to avoid places or situations where I will be strongly tempted.

I'm not particularly strong-willed when it comes to resisting lollies and chocolates and junk-food, so I try to make sure I'm not hungry when I go to the supermarket and I also try to avoid the lolly aisle. I find ways to overcome my sweet-tooth by finding an alternative to take its place, such as home-made desserts made without sugar that won't impact on my blood-sugar levels.

Sexual temptation is similar – there are always going to be temptations around, so we should avoid putting ourselves in situations or places when we are likely to be even more tempted than usual. That includes avoiding sexually suggestive music, books, TV or movies, or being too physically intimate with someone, all of which are likely to stimulate our sexual desires.

When we are dating, we should have clearly defined boundaries about what is acceptable and what will put us in danger of yielding to sexual temptation. For some, kissing is enough to make them sexually aroused! So what are ways that we can ensure we are not tempted to go too far? In fact, have we clearly defined in our own mind, what is 'too far?' Have we set clear boundaries for ourselves?

Even when we are married, we should avoid unhealthy sexual imagery and ideas that the world tries to tell us are ok. God wants us to endeavour to maintain healthy, sexual thoughts because He knows how easily these can be perverted by what the world tries to force upon us under the guise that they are normal, healthy and natural.





Unfortunately, once we see and know certain sexual images and ideas, it is impossible to 'unsee' them and to close the door on those images in our mind. How much better it would have been for us to not put ourselves in that situation in the first place.

How Do We Overcome This Temptation?

While we may still believe that we fail as Christians, especially when it comes to our sexuality, we should understand that as new creations in Christ, our sinful nature is not supposed to be a part of our true selves in Him. We can find joy in the promise that God is growing us into someone better and stronger, day by day.

We should never be content with our walk and mistakenly believe that we have ever overcome any sin. We must be ready and willing to do battle *each day* with our sinful nature – we can't become complacent. We should stay away from people, places and situations that may tempt us to sin.

Perhaps the verses about putting on our armour can be used as a reminder about this ongoing battle (Ephesians 6:10-18.) It reminds us twice that we need to put on *all* of our armour, so it's clear that this is no half-hearted attempt at armour. Neither then should our battle with our sinful nature be half-hearted.

- if we speak only words without conviction;
- if we only occasionally pray or read the Bible;
- if we put ourselves in the way of temptation; and

- if we don't earnestly seek ways to grow in God;

then we are only putting on a portion of our armour. It is only when we wear the *full* armour of God, that we can become stronger and learn to overcome.

I like Steve Furtick's quote:

"We come to God not just to feel better about our symptoms. We come to break the cycles of thoughts, attitudes and actions that keep us trapped."

There are some further encouraging words in Ephesians 2:

"18. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

19: So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

20: Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself."[NLT]

In verse 18, we are reminded of the promise that we have access to our Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit because of Christ's sacrifice. We are *promised* audience with Him when we seek strength, help and encouragement. Every time we pray, we are speaking to the Great High God!

In verse 19 we are reminded that we aren't alone nor isolated. We are sharing this journey and these struggles together, in a family of fellow-sufferers. Ask God to help you find a compassionate, non-judgemental Christian mentor who you can phone or talk to whenever you are struggling with temptation. If you are serious about overcoming this problem, you need to find someone with whom you can be accountable; that you can meet with regularly. Pray for a helping-friend and talk to your Pastor.

Although we aren't strong on our own, and don't have the human strength to overcome sin, in verse 20 it reminds us about who forms the foundation of our strong tower: Jesus Christ and the apostles! Our fellow believers are part of God's church, so this reminds us that our brothers and

sisters can help and uplift us during times of difficulty. And it is through Christ and the Holy Spirit that we can have strength to resist.

God recognises that we are weak on our own – we *must* go to Him for strength. The moment that temptation crops up, we must instantly learn to recognise it, and stop the temptation from developing into sin with prayer – talk to God about it. Find ways to combat it! Distract ourselves, or phone a Christian friend. If we don't feel comfortable sharing the details of our temptation with a Christian friend, just talking to them can help to distract our thoughts.

Conclusion

We will never be perfect in this life, but God promises to continue working in us, and growing us, as long we are willing. While we can never completely conquer our sinful nature, as we mature in our Christian walk, we are also developing resistance to temptation. Just as a labourer develops calluses to protect his skin, we too can develop toughness in areas where we need it.

There is joy and promise in the fact that one day, we will be able to leave all of our failings and all of that temptation, far, far behind us. Thank goodness!

What a wonderful promise that is to cling to, especially when we are struggling.

In the next issue we'll look at the very confrontational subject of masturbation and celibacy, and we'll also be doing a separate article on the armour of God. [END]

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Salvation Army: Celebrating 150 Years

Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary
Things for God

by Faye Michelson

The Salvation Army's reputation for showing God's love by being 'Christianity with its sleeves rolled up' has been part of its ethos since William and Catherine Booth founded the movement in 1865.



William and Catherine Booth

The Salvos are There

The Salvos can be found in 126 countries, to help the homeless, the jobless, the women and children fleeing domestic violence and the people battling addictions. They are there to support those in courts and prisons and offer comfort and practical assistance to communities devastated by natural disasters. Most of all, though, the Salvos are there to tell the message of God's salvation and love.

This year The Salvation Army celebrates its 150th anniversary, culminating in Salvationists from around the world celebrating the event at a congress (conference) in July back where it all started - London.

William Booth (who came to be known simply as the General) and his wife Catherine, were ordinary people whose extraordinary vision to achieve great things for their God has impacted the lives of millions of people.

William understood the reality of desperate poverty early on: he was just fourteen years old when his father died and was already employed as a pawnbroker's apprentice to support the family.

He despised his trade and hated the suffering experienced by destitute people he saw every day in the pawnshop as they tried to scrape together a few coins to live on. This intensified into a passion to reach the forgotten and discarded in society, a passion that became a driving force in his life.

William became a Christian at fifteen and began attending the Wesleyan Chapel in Nottingham. His talent for preaching was evident even as a teenager, and that's what he wanted to do - preach God's word. His ever-deepening concern for the poor motivated him to take his message of hope to the streets.

William met Catherine Mumford when he was a visiting preacher at her church. They fell in love and, after a three year engagement, were married on 16 June, 1855. William was ordained as a minister in the Methodist New Connexion and was a sought-after preacher and evangelist.

They proved to be great team. William was charismatic and zealous; Catherine was clear-thinking and logical. Going against society's conventions, where females were regarded as voiceless, the educated Mrs Booth was convinced that women had an equal right to speak and was fully supported by her husband.

When he resigned from the Methodists, Catherine's popularity as a speaker helped to support their growing family while William followed his calling as a travelling evangelist. Their lives took an unexpected path on 2 July, 1865, however, when he came across an open-air religious meeting being conducted by a 'missioners' (evangelists) outside The Blind Beggar Pub, in the Mile End Waste, East London. They asked if anyone wanted to speak and William stepped forward and did what he did best - preach. The impressed missioners asked him to join

them. William went home and told his wife, 'Kate, I have found my destiny.'

And so The Christian Mission was established, with William and Catherine holding church services every evening to share the message of Jesus to the destitute living in the filthy, overcrowded London slums. The name 'The Salvation Army' was adopted in 1878 and since then the organisation's structure has been based along military lines.

More Than Preachers

The Booths were concerned for the physical as well as spiritual wellbeing of the poor and from its beginnings, the Army set up programs to feed, shelter, and clothe those in need, to care for 'fallen' girls', alcoholics and others spurned by society.

"In providing for the relief of temporal misery I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult, and possible where it is now all but impossible, for men and women to find their way to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ... it is primarily and mainly for the sake of saving the soul that I seek the salvation of the body," William said.

He was passionate about bringing lasting social change in the name of God and the Army's vision was bold and progressive. The Salvation Army campaigned on behalf of the girls sold into prostitution, forcing the House of Commons to raise the age of consent. They established labour exchanges and a missing persons' bureau.

They lobbied for safer working places and fair pay for workers.

They were determined to see the Army take the message of God's salvation to the world. Catherine told them, 'You are not here in the world for yourself. You have been sent here for others. The world is waiting for you!'

As the British Empire expanded under Queen Victoria's reign, so too did The Salvation Army, setting up churches and welfare programs abroad.

By the time William died in 1912, The Salvation Army was in 58 countries - and that was just the beginning.

THE SALVOS IN AUSTRALIA

The Salvation Army began in Australia in 1880, when a tradie and a railway worker began preaching and offering meals on the back of a cart in Adelaide's Botanic Garden. A year later, Captains Thomas and Adelaide Sutherland arrived from England to take command of The Salvation Army in Australia.

At the very forefront of early Salvation Army ministry was the evangelical work carried out by *local corps* (churches). Within days of arriving in Australia to take leadership of The Salvation Army in the South Pacific, on 17 February 1881, Captains Thomas and Adelaide Sutherland opened the first corps, known as "The Royal Blood-Washed".

The Salvation Army's unique pioneering style helped it to spread rapidly. In the most part, new Salvation Army Corps (churches) were started as open-air meetings by passionate Salvationists who, only afterwards, informed headquarters of the newest expression of Army worship!

In September 1882, Majors James and Alice Barker arrived in Melbourne from London to take over command and establish the Army headquarters. It was here where Barker commenced a court and prison ministry which later became a worldwide ministry through-out the Army.

In a nation born of convicts, the Army's larrikin nature endeared was a refreshing change to the "starchified" style of existing churches, as Australian founder John Gore described them. Noisy open-air meetings were held in parts of



The Salvation Army in Australia

cities where residents were more used to seeing pub-brawls than brass-bands. Opposition from 'skeleton armies' who used to throw eggs and shout taunts at Salvationists were seen as a help, rather than a hindrance, as it meant that The Salvation Army's movements became the 'talk-of-the-town'.

An Australian journalist described the rapid spread of The Salvation Army in its early days as 'like a bushfire'. It grew from a handful of people under a gum tree in Adelaide in 1880 to 31,100 members as reported in the 1901 census. This represented 0.82% of the population.

With new expressions of The Salvation Army springing up almost daily, the Army was in need of trained local officers. The first officer training college was opened in Punt Road, Richmond, Victoria in March 1888. Commandant Herbert Booth (son of the Founders William and Catherine Booth) took over as the Australasian Commander. Hebert, an

entrepreneur, was instrumental in The Salvation Army becoming totally enmeshed into the fabric of the Australian culture and society.

By 1900, sensing the mood for federation, Herbert Booth built a new Salvation Army Training College, called the *Federal Training College*, in Victoria Parade East Melbourne. In the following year The Salvation Army Limelight Department, Australia's largest corporate film production company at the time, filmed the inauguration of the new Commonwealth.

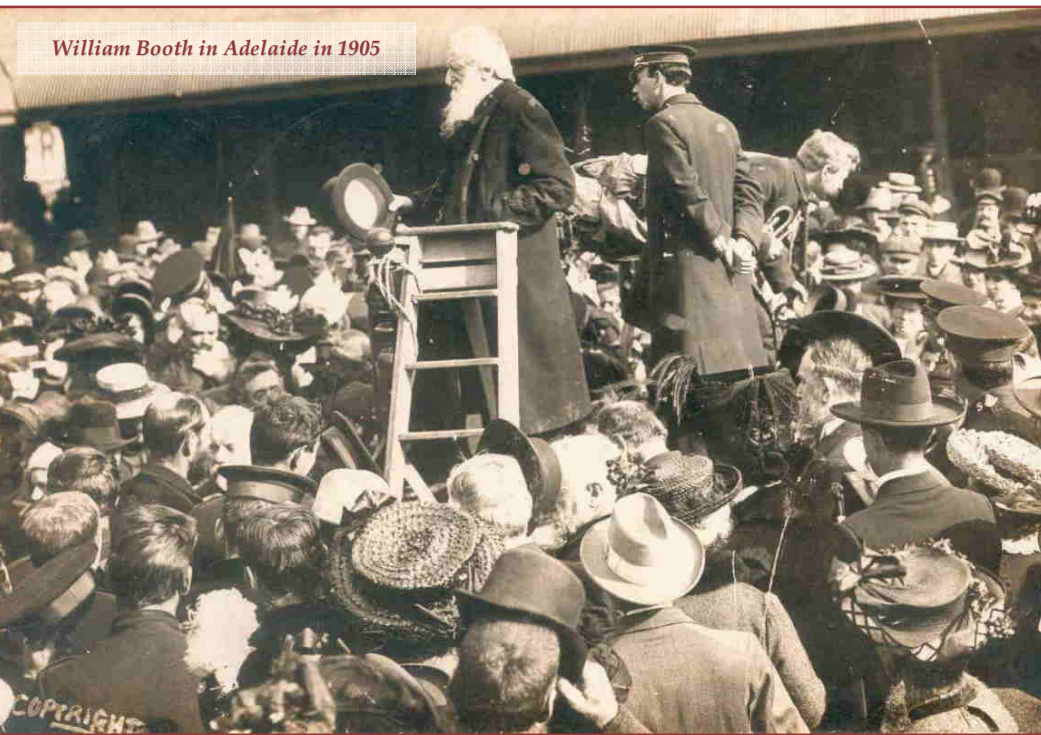
With the outbreak of World War I in 1914 The Salvation Army provided nurses, ambulances and chaplains to support the war effort with Brigadier William McKenzie, affectionately known as "Fighting Mac", landing with the ANZACs at Gallipoli.

January 1921 saw The Salvation Army in Australia divided into two territories; the Australia Eastern Territory and the Australia Southern Territory. By August 1939, with the clouds of war gathering again over the world, The Salvation Army High Council elected an Australian, George Lyndon Carpenter, as the 5th General of The Salvation Army.

When World War II broke out in 1939 The Salvation Army provided chaplains and Red Shield Defence units to the front line yet again. On 1 July 1942 the POW ship the *Montevideo Maru* was torpedoed. All lives were lost, including bandmen from the 2/22 battalion band, most of whom were Salvation Army bandmen.

The Salvation Army was diversifying its work across Australia. In October 1945 the Army commenced a flying padre

William Booth in Adelaide in 1905



ministry out of Darwin servicing remote areas of the Australian outback. With the construction of the Snowy Mountain Scheme almost complete, and production about to commence, The Salvation Army, in February 1954, dedicated a mobile unit to minister to the hundreds of workers in that community.

In 1964 The Salvation Army opened a rehabilitation program, known as the Bridge Program, in Sydney and in 1978 the Crossroads Youth Network commenced in Melbourne.

The Salvation Army's High Council, in April 1986, again elected another Australian. Eva Burrows was elected as the 13th General of The Salvation Army. General Burrows was the second Australian and the second woman to be elected as the Salvation Army's worldwide leader.

In 1995 The Salvation Army launched its ministry to the outback with dedicated rural chaplains being deployed to Australia's most isolated residents.

Our pioneering spirit has certainly not faded. The Salvation Army continues to be at the forefront of social service provision, designing services to meet human needs as they arise. In 2008 we opened Australia's first human trafficking safe house, and last year launched The Freedom Partnership, an initiative designed to end modern slavery.

In 2010, a unique Salvation Army legal centre, Salvos Legal, began. It provides quality commercial and property law advice on a paid basis. However all fees (less expenses) fund its "legal aid" sister firm, Salvos Legal Humanitarian, which is

a full service, fee-free law firm for the disadvantaged and marginalised.

Our Corps (churches) have also evolved to meet the needs of a changing Australia. Expressions of The Salvation Army are as varied as a coffee shop ministries, family-friendly church services with flourishing playgroups through-out the week, Streetlevel missions that provide community and belonging to the poor and marginalised and worship services catering to many different cultures and languages.

What started under a gum tree grew deep roots and now The Salvation Army now has 353 established corps (churches) across Australia that work hand-in-hand with our social services. In the midst of our growth and diversity, The Salvation Army in Australia has always been about people finding Freedom.

It's a pretty broad statement, but we're a pretty diverse bunch. Across the country we're engaged with every demographic and every age group. We're active in the big cities, the country towns and even outback cattle stations. You'll find us involved in national issues and you'll also find us one-on-one in your local cafe.

Regardless of where we are or what we're doing, one thing always remains true: we're about people finding freedom. Freedom from fear. Freedom from neglect. Freedom from poverty and addiction.

Freedom to dream. Freedom to love. Freedom to make a difference.

Freedom to live life to the full.

We believe in the power of community. People loving other people,

and people helping other people.

Those who 'have' sharing generously – sacrificially – with those who don't. People finding acceptance, encouragement, healing and support without discrimination. We believe no-one should have to 'go it alone'.

Our goal is to be community builders, not just service providers. We don't give up on people – not only responding to immediate needs but journeying with people for the long haul, helping them to find freedom and stay free as well.

We believe in freedom through action. We're not afraid to get our hands dirty to help secure freedom for others. If the environment is unpleasant, we'll still go. If the task seems impossible, we'll try anyway. We're convinced that freedom is for everybody. No exceptions.

We see ourselves as a movement rather than an institution – inspiring, equipping and inviting people from all walks of life to join the fight and be part of helping secure freedom for someone else.

We believe in freedom through faith. We believe that true freedom encompasses body, mind and spirit.

Our faith convinces us that hope, purpose and fulfilment can be everyone's story. Our freedom journey started with Jesus, and he continues to be the foundation, inspiration and driving force of everything we do. We believe Jesus was, is, and always will be about people finding freedom.

KEY EVENTS AND WORKS

1880 Salvation Army Begins in Australia

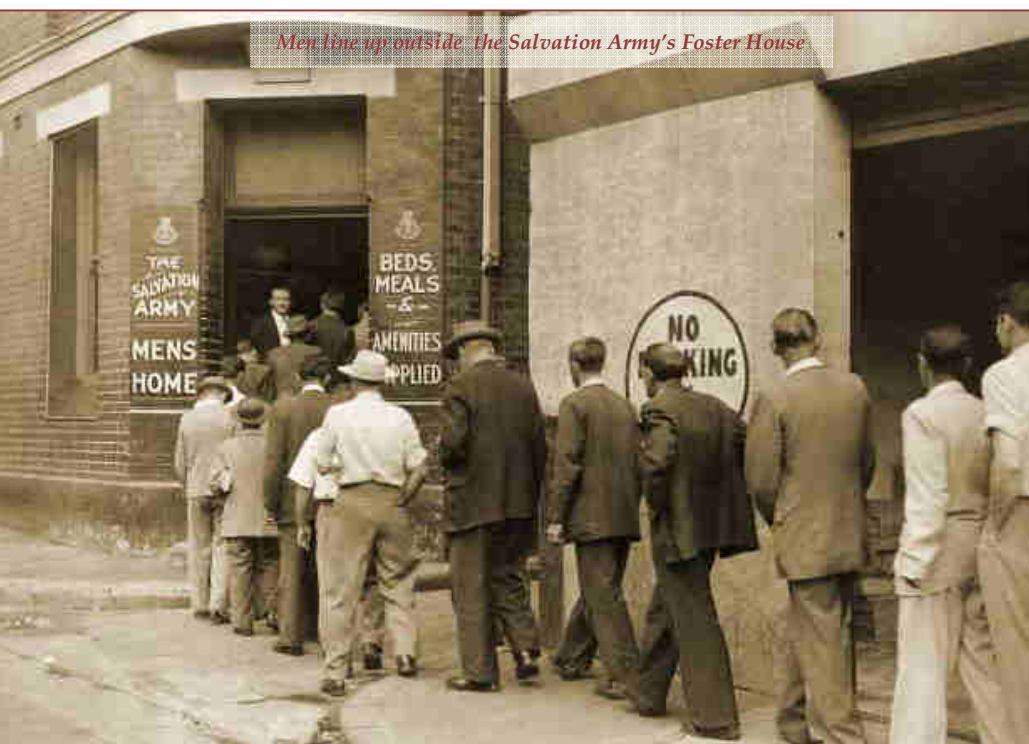
"If there's a man here who hasn't had a square meal today, let him come home to tea with me." With those words, The Salvation Army began its work in Australia on 5 September, 1880.

1883 Prison Ministry Established

The Salvation Army's world-wide prison ministry began during the 1880s when Major James Barker began conducting chapel services in the Melbourne gaol.

1885 Raised Age of Consent

The Salvation Army successfully campaigned to have the age of consent in the UK raised from 13 years of age to 16 years during 1885.



Men line up outside the Salvation Army's Foster House

1885 Missing Persons Work

Missing Persons work was one of the earliest Salvation Army social programs to develop. Established in London in 1885 as the Inquiry Department, the 'hallelujah detectives', as they were called, searched for missing persons with a view to reuniting families. They also helped young women who were pregnant and unmarried to track down reluctant fathers and encourage them to support their children.

1890 First Employment Bureau

In 1890, Australia experienced the worst depression in the nation's short history, with unemployment worsening each day. By winter 1890, the Army had opened a free labour bureau in Melbourne to help people find jobs, the first formally operating employment bureau in Australia.

1890s Pioneer for Safety Matches

Red-tipped safety matches were introduced by The Salvation Army in England during the 1890s at a time when matches were still produced using poisonous yellow phosphorus, which caused the fatal disease 'Phossy Jaw' in poor factory workers.

1900 World's First Feature Film

Operating from 1897 to 1910, The Salvation Army Limelight Department was Australia's first film production company. Among its many achievements, The Limelight Department is credited with producing the world's first multi-media presentation using the moving picture film technology of the day.

1914-1918 WWI Ministry

It was during the First World War that The Salvation Army became recognised for the ministry of its chaplains, tending to the physical and spiritual needs of diggers wherever they were.

1920s Children's Holiday Camps

Children living in the slums of Sydney during the 1920s rarely had the opportunity to experience life outside the

slums. The Salvation Army decided to offer these children the 'holiday of a lifetime' at the Army's Collaroy centre on Sydney's beautiful northern beaches. During the Depression, mothers were invited too.

The Salvation Army continues to run Red Shield holiday camps for disadvantaged children at The Collaroy Centre at least twice a year, as well as holidays for single mothers and their children twice a year.

1923 Foster House Opened in Sydney

During 1923 The Salvation Army opened Foster House in Sydney's Surry Hills to provide accommodation for homeless men.

1939-1945 WWII Ministry

As WWII commenced, The Salvation Army went to work, at home and on the battlefield offering home comforts, advice, support and spiritual assistance. Where an Australian soldier, sailor or airman served, The Salvation Army endeavoured to be there too.

1964 Addiction Treatment Programs

The Salvation Army has worked with those struggling with addiction since its beginning in the 1860s. By 1969, the program had developed into the long-term residential program it is today, featuring three main phases of rehabilitation including time spent at a rural farm or industrial centre. Today the Bridge Program includes 12 facilities in NSW and Qld.

1965 Outback Flying Service

In January 1965, The Salvation Army purchased a four-seater Auster Autocar aircraft to be based in Longreach and used for outreach over the vast Queensland outback. Today the service covers around two million square kilometres of central and north Queensland and supports more than 130 families on remote properties. Australia is the only country in The Salvation Army world that operates flying padre services.

first to fly into Darwin on Boxing Day, 1974. The disaster called for an emergency relief program on a scale seldom seen anywhere in the world. The Salvation Army moved in hundreds of volunteers and provided food, clothing and comfort to the thousands in need.

1977 Granville Rail Disaster

When a crowded, peak-hour train was derailed at Granville, NSW, in January 1977, The Salvation Army arrived even before ambulances or emergency services.

1992 Oasis Youth Support Network

In June 1992, The Salvation Army opened Sydney's first 24-hour crisis centre for homeless youth, the Oasis Youth Care Centre in Surry Hills. It was a joint project between the Advertising Federation of Australia and The Salvation Army. Since that time thousands of homeless young people have been helped to rebuild their shattered lives.

1994 Moneycare Financial Counselling Service

In order to more effectively address the underlying factors contributing to financial hardship, The Salvation Army introduced its Moneycare financial counselling service in 1994. The service now operates in 12 locations throughout NSW, ACT and Qld and assists more than 5,000 people each year.

1995 Rural Chaplaincy Created

The Salvation Army's involvement in the Farm Hand appeal of 1994 highlighted the need for ongoing pastoral care in rural Australia. The chaplains travel thousands of kilometres across vast areas each year, bringing spiritual care, practical assistance and friendship to farmers and their families.

1996 Port Arthur Shooting Tragedy

The Port Arthur shooting tragedy of 1996 shocked the nation. A Salvation Army trauma management team, travelled to Tasmania in response, providing counselling and ongoing support to the deeply traumatised victims.

1997 Thredbo Landslide

When a landslide claimed 17 lives in the NSW ski village of Thredbo during 1997, The Salvation Army was there to assist in the rescue effort and to help rescue-workers, volunteers and families of victims by providing a basic catering service, counselling, and chaplaincy support.

1974 Cyclone Tracy Relief Effort

When Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin, The Salvation Army was among the



2002 Bali

Salvation Army chaplains helped at hospitals and airports around Australia following the terrorist attacks in Bali which affected hundreds of Australians during 2002. Chaplains provided comfort and counsel to victims and their families, traumatised tourists, airport/airline staff and emergency services personnel.

2003 Canberra Bushfires

During 18th–22nd January 2003 severe bushfires in Canberra, the Salvation Army was on hand to assist at 4 evacuation centres, cooking and serving meals to thousands, providing emotional support and helping to assess needs. In the week preceding the fires Salvation Army personnel were on hand to serve the needs of firefighters in the Snowy Mountains and Brindabella Ranges.

2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, South-East Asia

The South Asia tsunami disaster presented The Salvation Army internationally with the biggest-ever program of relief and reconstruction in its 135-year history, involving 5,000 Salvation Army personnel on the ground.

Because The Salvation Army had existing churches and programs in affected areas, local Salvationists were able to respond immediately after the disaster with relief and support. Reconstruction work and the rebuilding of lives will continue for years to come.

2005 Salvos Legal Launched

In 2005 Salvos Legal was birthed by pioneer Luke Geary. In Sydney's Auburn Geary set up the free service for clients who would otherwise be unable to afford legal assistance. Over the next five years Luke and a small team provided free advice in over 750 cases. In 2010 the service was expanded to cover New South Wales and Queensland, with national telephone counselling free of charge.

2008 Hope for Life Launched

On 3rd September 2008 The Salvation Army launched 'Hope for Life', an Australia-wide suicide prevention & bereavement support service.

2009 Salvation Army Responds to Black Saturday Bushfires

The Black Saturday Bushfires in Victoria, of February 7 2009, will remain on record as the worst ever Bushfires in Australia. The Salvation Army launched

its Victorian Bushfire Appeal immediately following Black Saturday and Australians responded immediately with generous donations, raising \$23 million nationally. During the initial crisis, The Salvation Army were on site providing more than 50,000 meals, providing counselling, coordinating material aid and offering over \$2.5 million in immediate financial assistance. The Salvation Army is 'Still Standing' with fire affected communities, working with them through the difficult recovery process.

2010-2011 Queensland Floods and Cyclone Yasi

When floodwaters inundated towns and cities of central and south Queensland in late December 2010 and into January 2011, The Salvation Army was on hand immediately to offer assistance.

Salvation Army Emergency Services teams served more than 200,000 meals and refreshments at 25 different disaster zones across the state. It seemed that just as one crisis was easing, another began. When Cyclone Yasi crossed land in central-north Queensland, The Salvation Army's Emergency Services team from Innisfail was the first at the scene in devastated Tully. Salvation Army personnel served about 1,000 people a day during the crisis. As well as serving meals to stranded residents, tourists and emergency services personnel, The Salvation Army distributed new and donated goods to those affected by the disasters. Clothing and personal hygiene supplies were handed out and Salvation Army workers offered emotional support and referrals to other support services.

2013 NSW Bushfires

From the early days The Salvation Army was ready and resourced to deliver a comprehensive, long-term recovery operation. Within four hours, the Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES) teams had set up across 10 sites in fire zones in the NSW Southern Highlands, Western Sydney, Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Hawkesbury, the Central Coast and Hunter Valley. In the following weeks, our teams worked around the clock in 24 locations, from community centres and local parks to farmers' paddocks 70 kilometres from the nearest town.

During this crisis, The Salvation Army served 10,536 meals, 5,763 additional

refreshments as well as over \$11.3 million of welfare including gift cards, welfare payments and future grants.

Final Fascinating Fact: Strawberry Fields

"The Beatles song "Strawberry Fields Forever" was named after a Salvation Army children's home where John Lennon used to play as a child. According to The Telegraph in London (14 January, 2005), Lennon lived around the corner from The Salvation Army's Strawberry Field children's home in Menlove Avenue, Woolton.

As a child growing up in the 1950s, he used to squeeze through the home's tall, wrought iron gates and play in the grounds with some of the orphans who lived there. He is believed to have felt a kinship with them after he was abandoned by his father and sent by his mother, Julia, to live with his Aunt.

Strawberry Field opened in 1936 and helped generations of children towards adulthood. Lennon recalled his fond childhood memories in his song Strawberry Fields Forever, released as a double A-side with Penny Lane in February 1967. According to The Telegraph, Lennon even left money to the home in his will, and in 1984 his widow, Yoko Ono, gave more than £50,000 towards its upkeep." [END]

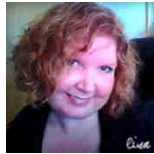




*Ministering to those
with Chronic Illness*

Merry Christmas! God, You're Here With Us

by Lisa Copen



Despite everything, God is forever with us.

In Matthew 1:23 we read *"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')"*

Merry Christmas! Happy Christmas. Comfortable, cosy, assuring, renewing Christmas.

This season can be filled with what seems to be more tragedy than usual for friends and family that I care for: loss of loved ones, accidents with life-changing outcomes, loss of pets, and of course, illnesses. We can be tempted to ask, "Where is God?"

~ He is here ~

Perhaps you are reading this as you prepare for friends to come over for dinner. Maybe you are alone today and seeking comfort through this article or magazine. Maybe you have plans ... but you have no idea how you will be able to fulfil them,

I wish I could wave a heaven-sent wand over all our lives and make

them comfortable, rather than simply tell you that heaven will be tear, fatigue and pain-free. I wish I could fix it for all of us, right now.

And so does God.

And that's why He sent His son to the earth.

Jesus wasn't sitting up in heaven bored. He didn't become a baby out of curiosity about what it might be like to become human. God's purpose in sending Jesus was to become accessible in a way He had not been before.

Jesus' birth and death, gave us the gift of being able to speak to God when we are sitting up in pain at 3am.

God is here. Our Immanuel is with us. Regardless of what your day holds, this is worth celebrating! Because of this baby sent to live among us, God is with us in a way He had not been previously.

Never let go of the hope you can find in Jesus and the knowledge that He loves us unconditionally.

How does it change your perspective on the chaos or loneliness of today when you remember that the purpose of Christmas was to send God and Jesus to us - to be with us forever?

May He bless your day with the knowledge that He hears your thoughts, and your laments, and He catches your tears.

Many hugs.

Song:

[<https://youtu.be/MHKJ1aWt1J4>]:

This song is "You're Here" with Francesca Battistelli, and reminds us of God's presence. [END]

About the Author:

Lisa Copen began Rest Ministries in 1996, a non-profit, Christian organisation for those who live with chronic illness. Their daily devotionals send out encouragement to people around the world. She has written a number of books on living with chronic illness, the most recent is "Refresh Me, Lord." It is a book of prayers on topics related to the everyday struggles of having a chronic illness, while praying the scriptures.

Lisa has lived with rheumatoid arthritis for over 22 years and resides in San Diego, California, USA with her husband and 12-year-old son.

Links:

<http://RestMinistries.com>

<http://illnessbooks.com>

<http://LisaOnTwitter.com>

<http://facebook.com/restministries>

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Organisation Promotion



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Should Genesis be Taken Literally?

by Russell Grigg

Creation Ministries International

Creationists are often accused of believing that the whole Bible should be taken literally. This is not so! Rather, the key to a correct understanding of any part of the Bible is to ascertain the intention of the author of the portion or book under discussion. This is not as difficult as it may seem, as the Bible obviously contains:

- Poetry—as in the Psalms, where the repetition or parallelism of ideas is in accordance with Hebrew ideas of poetry, without the rhyme (parallelism of sound) and metre (parallelism of time) that are important parts of traditional English poetry. This, by the way, is the reason why the Psalms can be translated into other languages and still retain most of their literary appeal and poetic piquancy, while the elements of rhyme and metre are usually lost when traditional Western poetry is translated into other languages.
- Parables—as in many of the sayings of Jesus, such as the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3–23), which Jesus Himself clearly states to be a parable and about which He gives meanings for the various items, such as the seed and the soil.
- Prophecy—as in the books of the last section of the Old Testament (Isaiah to Malachi).
- Letters—as in the New Testament epistles written by Paul, Peter, John, and others.
- Biography—as in the Gospels.
- Autobiography/testimony—as in the book of Acts where the author, Luke, after narrating the Apostle Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus as a historical fact (Acts 9:1–19), then describes two further occasions when Paul included this conversion exper-

ience as part of his own personal testimony (Acts 22:1–21; 26:1–22).

- Authentic historical facts—as in the books of 1 and 2 Kings, etc.

So the author's intention with respect to any book of the Bible is usually quite clear from the style and the content. Who then was the author of Genesis, and what intention is revealed by his style and the content of what he wrote?

The Author

The Lord Jesus Himself and the Gospel writers said that the Law was given by Moses (Mark 10:3; Luke 24:27; John 1:17), and the uniform tradition of the Jewish scribes and early Christian fathers, and the conclusion of conservative scholars to the present day, is that Genesis was written by Moses. This does not preclude the possibility that Moses had access to patriarchal records, preserved by being written on clay tablets and handed down from father to son via the line of Adam–Seth–Noah–Shem–Abraham–Isaac–Jacob, etc., as there are 11 verses in Genesis which read, 'These are the generations [Hebrew: *toledoth* = 'origins' or by extension 'record of the origins'] of ...'.¹ As these statements all come after the events they describe, and the events recorded in each division all took place before rather than after the death of the individuals so named, they may very well be subscripts or closing signatures, i.e. colophons, rather than superscripts or headings. If this is so, the most likely explanation of them is that Adam, Noah, Shem, and the others each wrote down an account of the events which occurred in his lifetime, and Moses, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, selected and compiled these, along with his own comments, into the book we now know as Genesis² (see also Did Moses really write Genesis?).

Chapters 12–50 of Genesis were very clearly written as authentic history, as they describe the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his 12 sons who were the ancestral heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Jewish people, from earliest biblical times to the present day, have always regarded this portion of Genesis as the true record of their nation's history.

So what about the first 11 chapters of Genesis, which are our main concern, as these are the ones that have incurred the most criticism from modern scholars, scientists, and sceptics?

Genesis 1–11

Are Any of These Chapters Poetry?

To answer this question we need to examine in a little more depth just what is involved in the parallelism of ideas that constitutes Hebrew poetry.

Let us consider Psalm 1:1, which reads as follows: "Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers." [ESV] Here we see triple parallelism in the nouns and verbs used (reading downwards in the following scheme):

walks	counsel	wicked
stands	way	sinners
sits	seat	scoffers



A Babylonian tablet fragment found at Nippur, an ancient Babylonian site in the same general location that Abraham came from. The area outlined in black is a record about the Flood. There are more than 300 known records of the Flood world-wide, with about 30 of them in writing. Some are remarkably close in their details to the original—the biblical account. Photo by Clifford Wilson.

As well as this overt parallelism, there is also a covert or subtle progression of meaning. In the first column, 'walks' suggests short-term acquaintance, 'stands' implies readiness to discuss, and 'sits' speaks of long-term involvement. In the second column, 'counsel' betokens general advice, 'way' indicates a chosen course of action, and 'seat' signifies a set condition of mind. In the third column, 'wicked' describes the ungodly, 'sinner' characterizes the actively wicked, and 'scoffers' portrays the contemptuously wicked.

Other types of Hebrew poetry include contrastive parallelism, as in Proverbs 27:6, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful', and completive parallelism, as in Psalm 46:1, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of need.'³

Are any of the first 11 chapters of Genesis poetry?

Answer: No, because these chapters do not contain information or invocation in any of the forms of Hebrew poetry, in either overt or covert form.

And so we return to our question. Are any of the first 11 chapters of Genesis poetry?

Answer: No, because these chapters do not contain information or invocation in any of the forms of Hebrew poetry, in either overt or covert form, and because Hebrew scholars of substance are agreed that this is so (see below).

Note: There certainly is repetition in Genesis chapter 1, e.g. 'And God said ...' occurs 10 times; 'and God saw that it was good/very good' seven times; 'after his/their kind' 10 times; 'And the evening and the morning were the ... day' six times. However, these repetitions have none of the poetic forms discussed above; rather they are statements of fact and thus a record of what happened, and possibly for emphasis—to indicate the importance of the words repeated.

Are Any of These Chapters Parables?

No, because when Jesus told a parable He either said it was a parable, or He introduced it with a simile, so making it plain to the hearers that it was a parable, as on the many occasions when He said, 'The kingdom of heaven is like ...' No such claim is made or style used by the author of Genesis 1–11.

Are Any of These Chapters Prophecy?

Not in their full context, although two promises of God are prophetic in the sense that their fulfilment would be seen in the future. One of these is Genesis 3:15, which was the pronouncement by God to the serpent (Satan) in metaphorical form: 'And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.' (NASB). Many have interpreted the 'seed' in this verse as the Messiah, including most evangelicals and even the Jewish Targums⁴ hence the Talmudic expression 'heels of the Messiah'⁵. The Messiah would suffer wounds to His feet (on the Cross), but would completely destroy Satan's power. This verse also hints at the virginal conception, as the Messiah is called the seed of the woman, contrary to the normal biblical practice of naming the father rather than the mother of a child (cf. Genesis chapters 5 and 11, 1 Chronicles chapters 1–9, Matthew chapter 1, Luke 3:23–38).

The other is Genesis 8:21–22 and 9:11–17,

'And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake ... and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.'

Are Any of These Chapters Letters, Biography, or Autobiography/Personal Testimony?

This is where we need to consider some of the subscripts mentioned above.

If Adam knew the events of Creation Days 1–6, they must have been revealed to him by God, as Adam was not made until Day 6, and so he could have known them only if God had told him. This view is reinforced by the words, 'These are the generations of [NIV: 'This is the account of'] the heavens and of the earth when they were created ...' in Genesis 2:4a. The details of Day 7, the rest day, are included before this in Genesis 2:2–3, thereby completing (as we might expect) the record of a full seven-day week, before this subscript or closing signature appears.

Then follow the events of Genesis 2:4b–5:1a. This section tells us about Adam, his wife Eve, and their sons, and reads very much like a personal account of what Adam knew, saw, and experienced concerning the Garden of



A creation tablet found at Ebla in Syria and dating to the third millennium BC. It ascribes the great works of creation to one great being, 'Lugal', literally 'the Great One'. It shows that both the creation story and the art of writing were well known to man up to 1,000 years before the time of Moses. It further shows that the liberal idea that the early chapters of Genesis were first put into writing hundreds of years after the time of Solomon is clearly fallacious.

Photo by Clifford Wilson.

Eden, and the creation of Eve (chapter 2), their rebellion against God (chapter 3), and the deeds of their descendants (chapter 4 to 5:1), albeit written in the third person⁶. This section ends with the words, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam.'

Is it feasible that Adam could have written Genesis 1:1–2:4a as the result of his pre-Fall conversation with God, and Genesis 2:4b–5:1 as the record of his own experiences? There is no problem concerning his ability to have done so. Adam was created a mature man, endowed with all the DNA, knowledge and skill he needed to perform all the tasks assigned him by God. No cave-man he! Adam knew enough horticulture 'to dress and to keep' the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15), and ample intelligence to recognize and name the distinct kinds of animals (Genesis 2:19). He (and Eve) could converse with God without ever having learned an alphabet, and there is no reason to suppose that he was not fully skilled in writing also⁷.

Supposed Contradictions

What about the supposed contradictions between the order of events in Genesis chapter 2 and the order given in chapter 1?

There are none! (See also Genesis contradictions on the Creation.com website.)

If, with the NIV, we read 'Now the

LORD God had planted a garden in the east ...' (Genesis 2:8) and, 'Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field ...' (Genesis 2:19 with emphasis added), it is clearly seen that chapter 2 states that the plants and animals were formed before Adam. When Adam named the animals (Genesis 2:20), they obviously were already in existence. There is no contradictory significance in the order of animals listed in Genesis 2:20; it is probably the order in which Adam met the animals, while the order of their creation is given in Genesis 1:20–25. Dr Henry Morris comments:

'It was only the animals in closest proximity and most likely as theoretical candidates for companionship to man that were actually brought to him. These included the birds of the air, the cattle (verse 20—probably the domesticated animals), and the beasts of the field, which were evidently the smaller wild animals that would live near human habitations. Those not included were the fish of the sea, the creeping things, and the beasts of the earth mentioned in Genesis 1:24, which presumably were those wild animals living at considerable distance from man and his cultivated fields.'⁸

Concerning the names of geographical sites, we have no idea what the configuration of the land or the rivers was before the Flood, because the pre-Flood world was completely destroyed. The

land areas and rivers named before the Flood do not correspond to similarly named features after the Flood.

God created Adam to be a person whom He could address, and who could respond to and interact with Himself. Here, as in many other places, the plain statements of the Bible confront and contradict the notion of human evolution.

The purpose of Genesis 2:18–25 is not to give another account of creation but to show that there was no kinship whatsoever between Adam and the animals. None was like him, and so none could provide fellowship or companionship for him. Why not? Because Adam had not evolved from them, but was 'a living soul' whom God had created 'in His own image' (Genesis 2:7 and 1:27). This means (among other things) that God created Adam to be a person whom He could address, and who could respond to and interact with Himself. Here, as in many other places, the plain statements of the Bible confront and contradict the notion of human evolution.

There is therefore enough evidence for us to conclude that Adam most probably was the author of Genesis 2:4b–5:1, and that this is his record of his own experiences with respect to events in the Garden of Eden, the creation of Eve, the Fall, and in the lives of Cain, Abel, and Seth.

The next section is from 5:1b to 6:9a, and deals with the line from Adam to Noah, ending with, 'These are the generations [or origins] of Noah.'

The next section is from 6:9b to 10:1a, and deals mainly with the Ark and the Flood, ending with, 'Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.' The wording of this subscript suggests that this portion was written by one of Noah's sons, probably Shem, as Moses was descended from Shem. These chapters read very much like an eye-witness account because of the intimacy of detail which they contain. Consider Genesis 8:6–12 and note how this contains that ring of authenticity which is characteristic of an eye-witness account. It may even have been Shem's diary!

Genesis 8:6–12:

- 6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made:
- 7 And sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.
- 8 Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.
- 9 But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the

"...there was no kinship whatsoever between Adam and the animals. None was like him, and so none could provide fellowship or companionship for him."

face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.

10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.

11 And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.

12 Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore. (ESV).

Such meticulous details are the stuff of authentic eye-witness testimony. They have the ring of truth.

There is thus a substantial body of evidence that these portions of Genesis delineated by subscripts were written by the persons named therein, for the purpose of making and passing on a permanent record.

So then, were these first 11 chapters written as a record of authentic historical facts?

Answer: Yes, for several reasons.

Internal Evidence of the Book of Genesis

1 There is the internal evidence of the book of Genesis itself. As already mentioned, chapters 12–50 have always been regarded by the Jewish people as being the record of their own true history, and the style of writing contained in chapters 1–11 is not strikingly different from that in chapters 12–50.

2 Hebrew scholars of standing have always regarded this to be the case. Thus, Professor James Barr, Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford, has written:

‘Probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that: (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story (c) Noah’s flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all



human and animal life except for those in the ark. Or, to put it negatively, the apologetic arguments which suppose the "days" of creation to be long eras of time, the figures of years not to be chronological, and the flood to be a merely local Mesopotamian flood, are not taken seriously by any such professors, as far as I know.⁹

3 One of the main themes of Genesis is the Sovereignty of God. This is seen in God’s actions in respect of four outstanding events in Genesis 1–11 (Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Babel dispersion), and His relationship to four outstanding people in Genesis 12–50 (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph). There is thus a unifying theme to the whole of the book of Genesis, which falls to the ground if any part is mythical and not true history; on the other hand, each portion reinforces the historical authenticity of the other.¹⁰

Evidence From the Rest of the Bible

4 The principal people mentioned in Genesis chapters 1–11 are referred to as real—historical, not mythical—people in the rest of the Bible, often many times. For example, Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and Noah are referred to in 15 other books of the Bible.

5 The Lord Jesus Christ referred to the Creation of Adam and Eve as a real historical event, by quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in His teaching about

divorce (Matthew 19:3–6; Mark 10:2–9), and by referring to Noah as a real historical person and the Flood as a real historical event, in His teaching about the ‘coming of the Son of man’ (Matthew 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27).

The historical truth of Genesis 1–11 shows that all mankind has come under the righteous anger of God and needs salvation from the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

6 Unless the first 11 chapters of Genesis are authentic historical events, the rest of the Bible is incomplete and incomprehensible as to its full meaning. The theme of the Bible is Redemption, and may be outlined thus:

- i God’s redeeming purpose is revealed in Genesis 1–11,
- ii God’s redeeming purpose progresses from Genesis 12 to Jude 25, and
- iii God’s redeeming purpose is consummated in Revelation 1–22.

But why does mankind need to be redeemed? What is it that he needs to be redeemed from? The answer is given in Genesis 1–11, namely, from the ruin brought about by sin. Unless we know that the entrance of sin to the human race was a true historical fact, God’s purpose in providing a substitutionary atonement is a

mystery. Conversely, the historical truth of Genesis 1–11 shows that all mankind has come under the righteous anger of God and needs salvation from the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

- 7 Unless the events of the first chapters of Genesis are true history, the Apostle Paul's explanation of the Gospel in Romans chapter 5 and of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 has no meaning. Paul writes: 'For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Jesus] shall many be made righteous' (Romans 5:19). And, 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ... And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit' (1 Corinthians 15:21–22; 45). The historical truth of the record concerning the first Adam is a guarantee that what God says in His Word about the last Adam [Jesus] is also true. Likewise, the historical, literal truth of the record concerning Jesus is a guarantee that what God says about the first Adam is also historically and literally true.

Conclusion

We return to the question which forms the title of this article. Should Genesis be taken literally?

Answer: If we apply the normal principles of biblical exegesis (ignoring pressure to make the text conform to the evolutionary prejudices of our age), it is overwhelmingly obvious that Genesis was meant to be taken in a straightforward, obvious sense as an authentic, literal, historical record of what actually happened. [END]

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1. See Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2.
2. The seminal author on the colophon concepts was P.J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days*, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, 1948, pp. 45–53. For an excellent evaluation of this by an evangelical linguist see *The Oldest Science Book in the World*, by Dr Charles V.

Taylor, Assembly Press, Queensland, 1984, pp. 21–23, 73, 121.

3. This discussion of Hebrew poetry was adapted from J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, Vol. 1, pp. 13–16.
4. Aramaic paraphrases of the OT originating in the last few centuries BC, and committed to writing about AD 500. See F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., Rev. Ed. 1963), p. 133.
5. A.G. Fruchtenbaum, *Apologia* 2(3):54–58, 1993.
6. The use of the third person is no problem. Moses wrote the long account of his own life in Exodus to Deuteronomy in the third person, and many classical authors like Julius Caesar also wrote in the third person.

7. Adam and Eve knew how to sew fig-leaf 'aprons' for themselves (Genesis 3:7). Within a few generations, Adam's descendants founded a city (Genesis 4:17), were tent-makers, cattle farmers, musicians with the ability to make both stringed and wind instruments, and metallurgists with the ability to smelt the ores of copper, tin and iron and then to forge all kinds of bronze and iron tools (Genesis 4:20–24). Dr Henry M. Morris comments in *The Genesis Record* (Baker Book house, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, pp. 146–147):

'It is significant to note that the elements which anthropologists identify as the attributes of the emergence of evolving men from the stone age into true civilization—urbanization, agriculture, animal domestication, and metallurgy—were all accomplished quickly by the early descendants of Adam and did not take hundreds of thousands of years.'

8. Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, p. 97.

9. Letter from Professor James Barr to David C.C. Watson of the UK, dated 23 April 1984. Copy held by the author. Note that Prof. Barr does not claim to believe that Genesis is historically true; he is just telling us what, in his opinion, the language was meant to convey.

10. Adapted from J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, Vol. 1, pp. 27–29.

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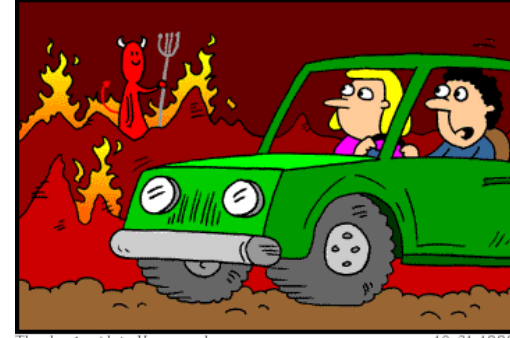
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How Married Christians Can Embrace Christian Singles (Part Two)



By Christena Cleveland

In the previous issue of SPAG Magazine, Christena shared with us how churches and their leaders have a poor track record when it comes to honouring single people. She suggested ways that they should approach the singles in their midst.

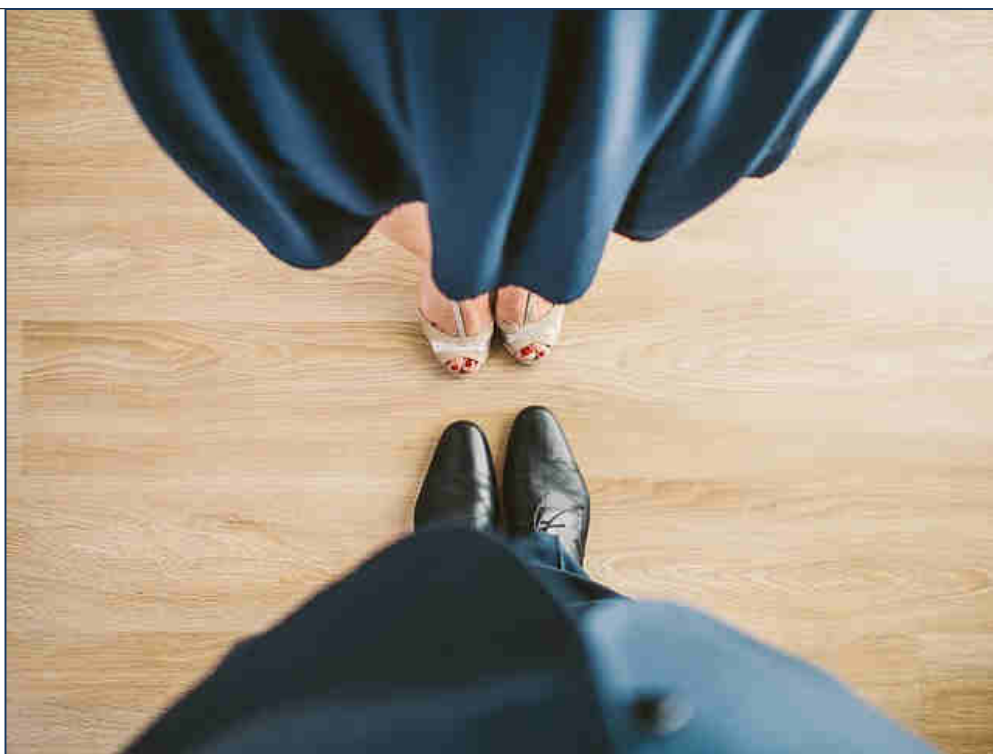
In this issue, Christena continues with some further suggestions for churches and their leaders.

1. Stop telling people that they will find a spouse one day

People (usually married) who interact with singles and observe their frustration at not being married often react by assuring them that they are sure they will find someone one day. This is very well-meant and intended to comfort and encourage. However, I believe it is misguided.

No one has the ability to predict or promise that anyone will find a spouse. It's a very human reaction to want to respond to someone's suffering by offering hope. But it has the effect of denying the person's struggle in the here and now, and it's something God hasn't guaranteed. It also overlooks the fact that some percentage of singles are so by desire or calling. Instead of whitewashing someone's struggle by making unfounded promises, how about walking with them through it? How about learning what it might be like for them to live in the wait, and how you can support and love them?

As Christians, we have faith in God. We believe he does miracles, and that he provides for his children. But we also know that we live in a



fallen world where suffering and sin are all-too-present realities. Let's mourn with those who mourn and realistically acknowledge the brokenness of this world and how it affects us (not just singleness). Let's grant one another the gift to be real about hard things without offering magical, brush-it-away answers. Let's be honest about the fact that following Jesus involves real cost, and may well involve the cost of singleness.

2. Don't assume you know why someone is single, or how they feel about it

There are a myriad of reasons why someone might be single and a myriad of reactions, from chosen singleness to people who are desperate for a spouse and children. As with any other life circumstance, singles and their reasons for being so and their feelings about it are many-faceted.

Some "hidden" reasons people may be single are mental illness, the fallout of past abuse, or same-sex attraction. Some may be single after an unwanted divorce. Some suffer the pain of unfulfilled longings for parenthood, whereas for others this is not a factor at all. Some singles are parents. To love and minister well to

singles, get to know them. Look past superficiality and seek to understand the underlying realities.

3. Don't offer "helpful" advice about how not to be single

I've heard as much bad advice about how to find someone in the church as I have outside of it, and unfortunately, these answers are often exactly the same in the church as outside (with some added God-dust). I once had someone tell me that when you stop looking, you find someone. This was a person who decided to stop dating when he was about 20 years old, and the same day literally had his future wife turn up on his doorstep. At the time he told me this, they'd been married for about 10 years. I was 30 and single and had never looked for someone.

The wrong thinking behind this is that there is a fixed order to the universe such that if you put the right results in, you get the right results out. If you are getting the wrong results, there must be something you can do to fix it. As Christians, we should know better. See the book of Job.

Your situation, how God worked in your life, someone else's situation, received wisdom you've heard: none

of this is a magic formula for finding a spouse. And it's extremely discouraging for someone who has tried the things you suggest and remains single. As with not assuming you know why someone is single or how they feel about it, don't assume you can offer them advice about dating, even if it worked for you.

If you have a foundation of real relationship with this person and they ask for advice, then tactfully offer suggestions. Please do not present it as the God-ordained way they will find a spouse. You can say "this worked for me" or "this worked for friends of mine", but do not present it as a guaranteed formula. I'm looking at you, internet dating.

Present your story as just that, a story. Everyone's prone to thinking that their experience is somehow normative. Your story is what happened to you. It is not a life guide for every single person who wants to be married.

4. Churches: stop treating singles only as not-yet-married people

A huge amount of advice I hear or read on singleness, especially from married people, assumes that all singles want to be married and will be married one day. Thus, it speaks to them as potential married people and treats heavily on topics like dating, abstaining from sex, preparing yourself emotionally for marriage, healing from past wounds so you can be a better spouse.

All of it is focused on the goal of

someday-marriage, assuming that for all singles that is a reality.

Stop. Please.

As singles, we are so much more than potential married people, who are "on hold" before we get to real life. Also, some of us don't want to get married, have chosen to remain single, or simply won't get married despite our desire. Stop assuming that you know what all singles want, and that it is marriage. Stop aiming all advice to singles at finding or preparing for a spouse, as if that was all that was on our minds.

Married pastors, if you are going to preach or write to singles, how about talking to a wide variety of them, from all ages and stages of life, to find out what their needs and perspectives are? It is very different to be single at 30-something than 20-something. It is yet different again in the 40s and 50s and beyond.

And please: acknowledge that it is a valid calling for many Christians to remain single. There is not necessarily something "wrong" with someone who doesn't want or seek marriage.

5. Do relationships and life together better

I believe the answer to singleness is relationship within the body of Christ. I believe the church is meant to function as a family, which knows each other, loves each other, spends time together, does life together, prays together, holds each other accountable, ministers together, has fun together.

This is about so much more than

Sunday morning meetings and Wednesday night bible studies. This is about a culture of relationship which values depth and honesty. This is NOT about groups or social events for singles, although that could be part of it. I've been in churches where there was lots of social activity but little real relationship.

Relationship involves a willingness for things to be messy and vulnerable and broken. It means knowing what's really going on in one another's lives. Allowing others to be their real selves, and being our real selves in return. An understanding of the gospel that acknowledges the presence of sin, the power of grace, and the cleansing of confession. A church culture that is not about keeping up appearances, but which is committed to knowing and loving one another exactly where we are. Confessing sin to one another, praying for one another, counselling one another, holding one another accountable, speaking about what we've learned from God's word, doing life together. Our church friends should be people who matter to us during the week. When these things are in place, real community happens, and most of the loneliness of singleness is mitigated.

I believe that this culture of community is why singleness was such a valid possibility in the early church. Nowadays we expect one relationship, marriage, to meet all or most of our relational needs. This is a relatively modern construct. Earlier societies, including that of the New Testament church, and many non-Western societies today, recognize the value of an interconnected web of relationships that are just as valuable as marriage. The church can and should be that family to those who don't have a biological one.

Hospitality is a huge part of this. There are many encouragements to hospitality in the New Testament and opening your home can be a



great blessing to those who don't have families. Everyone is looking for a place to belong, a place to be comfortable, a place to connect with people who care about them. If you are married or single, and you have a home you can offer, please extend this gift to others. You will be blessed more than you will be inconvenienced by the broken vase or the dirty dishes.

6. Restore singleness to the honoured place it has in the New Testament and the early church; develop a theology of singleness that honours this life position as much as marriage

I'm not sure where the switch happened, but although the NT exalts the value of singleness, we've gone completely the opposite way and exalted marriage to the highest place in the church. It is viewed as the norm and the apex of the Christian life. Singles are viewed as not-yet-arrived, second-class citizens, married-people-in-waiting, not fully capable of maturity, wisdom, leadership, or authority. It's assumed you'll get married, unless there's something wrong with you. This, despite the Founder of our faith (Jesus) and the most influential apostle (Paul) being single.

1 Corinthians 7 actually indicates that Paul views singleness as desirable and to be maintained if you can handle it, as it offers unique benefits for wholeheartedly serving the Lord. Marriage is a concession to our humanity and the reality of sexual desire. I believe the reason Paul, and the early church, had this attitude is that they were far more keenly aware of eternity and spiritual reality than we are.

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the

world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (1 Cor 7:29-31)

In light of the kingdom of God, the shortness of life, and eternity, marriage and other earthly realities do not hold the importance that we place on them. As a single person, my singleness is only for this life, as is a married person's marriage. The supreme reality of my life, as a follower of Jesus, is my relationship with him and an eternity where marriage won't exist. The supreme question of my life will not be whether or not I was married. It will be whether I made the best use of what he entrusted to me and if I faithfully and lovingly followed him.

It's time we restored this focus to the church. The biological family, as important and precious as it is, should not be our main focus. Instead, the new family that Jesus created when he died and rose again and put his Spirit within believers will become our focus. In that family, there is no such thing as superiority or inferiority based on marital status or any other factor. There are only equally valuable people following Jesus in different life situations.

Single people are whole in Christ; we are not half-people waiting for a spouse. Many of us have much wisdom, maturity, insight, and godliness to offer. Many of us are gifted in areas of leadership, teaching, and evangelism. Instead of relegating us to singles' groups (something I see as completely unbiblical), why not seek out what we have to offer and put us in positions of ministry in the church? And I don't just mean "singles-appropriate" ministry.

No church would state that they value singles less than they value married people. However, the real value you place on people can be estimated by the extent to which you include them and entrust them with responsibility. If you are excluding



singles (or any other group) from leadership, decision-making, social events, and the "inner circle" of the church, you are stating loud and clear that you do not value them as you do married people.

Relationship and purpose: these are what everyone craves, and finding these in the church is what enables Christian singles to live full and satisfying lives, and avoid the temptation to compromise by meeting these needs in other ways. If we did these things well, much of the burden of singleness that many carry would be lifted. [END]

About the author:

Christena Cleveland is a social psychologist with a passion for reconciling across cultural divisions. She's the first Associate Professor of the Practice of Reconciliation at Duke University's Divinity School where she's also the faculty director of Duke's Centre for Reconciliation. Christena earned a B.A. from Dartmouth College and a Ph.D. from the University of California.

A fifth generation minister, Christena comes from a long tradition of leadership in the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination, ranging from bishops to pastors to laypeople. She currently ministers in various ecumenical settings.

Christena lives in Durham, North Carolina and holds a quality cup of tea in high regard.

Bibliography:

<http://www.christenacleveland.com/2013/12/singled-out/> "Singled Out: How Churches Can Embrace Unmarried Adults" Author: Christena Cleveland, 02/12/2013

We continue with the topic about acceptance of Christian singles. Here Australian Pastor and Director of Club Solo Ministries, Rev Steve Mitchell focuses specifically on what churches and their leaders can do to make singles feel more welcome.

Ten Things Churches (and Their Leaders) Can Do to Make Single People Feel More Welcome at Church

by Rev Steve
Mitchell
(Club Solo
Ministries)



This article was written as a small blueprint of what Churches and their leaders can do to help singles in their church feel more wanted and loved. It has come from my experiences as a married, divorced and remarried man, as well as my 28 year involvement with Club Solo. I truly do hope that a church pastor will take some or all on board and realise the full potential of the singles in their church and the potential of the blessing that their church will get also).

1. Realise that singles are whole even though they aren't married. Don't patronise them by 'feeling sorry' for them because they don't have a

partner. They may be very content to be single. Having watched some of the best families in churches divorce, and have bad splits, being single isn't too bad after all. Jesus was single and He was the perfect person.

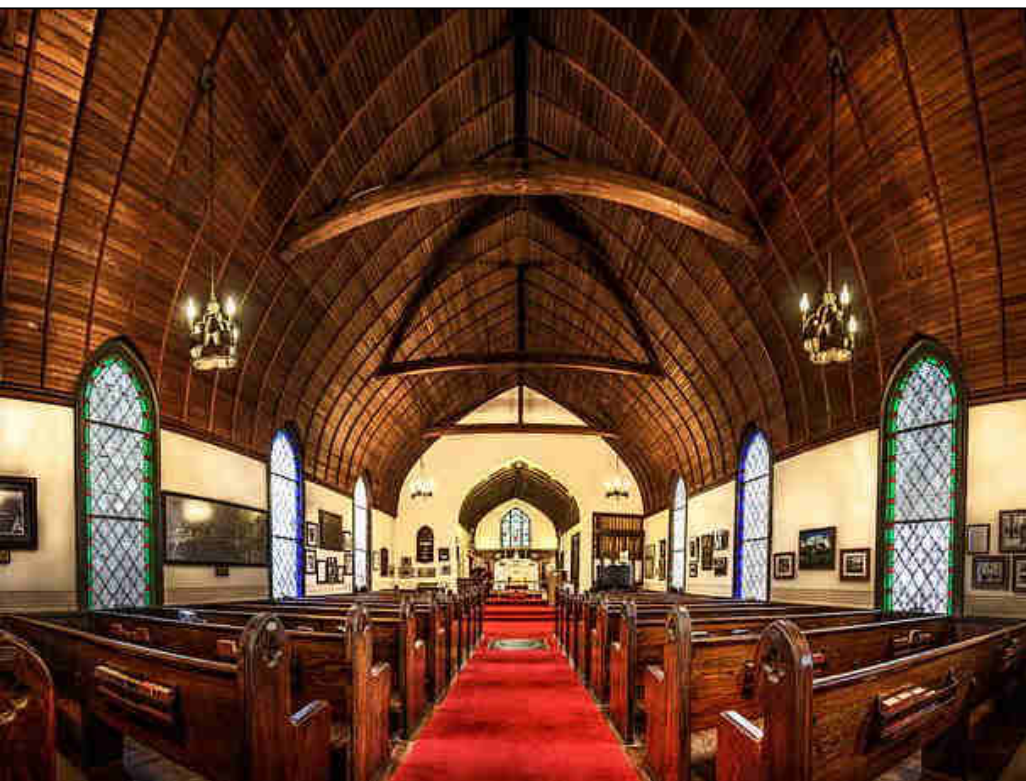
2. Invite them to your house for lunch after church. It will be a blessing to both parties! It was a blessing to me when I was a single man, and I came away with a better view of the couple/family and they came away with a better view of me.
3. Don't treat them as if they have a disease. Singleness, divorce or widowhood will not rub off on you. It is not 'catching'. Nurture is what they require not rejection.
4. Don't look on them with suspicion with your spouse. If you see them talking to your partner, keep in mind that they are simply being friendly and are not trying to run off with them. Singles need married friends to talk to as well. If you have a problem in this area then you need to look at your own marriage and how sound and secure it is.
5. Divorce is NOT the unforgiveable sin. They are forgiven if they seek God's forgiveness. You must too! After all God Himself has been through divorce?! Yes In Jeremiah 3:6-10 we read about God giving Israel a letter of divorce because of their adultery with other countries

god's. How can God not forgive it if He Himself has been through it?

6. Invite them into your Bible study or small group. They need to feel part of the church family and this is a great way of getting to know each other. A family includes ALL members of it!
7. Don't try and match-make: some singles are not interested in getting married and are happy to remain on their own. They don't require someone trying to match them up out of pity. In fact, that response can be very degrading and soul-destroying to some.
8. If the pastor or leadership of the church can see past their prejudices they will see a person who may have the time to give to the church in a number of capacities. Remember the Holy Spirit has given them a spiritual gift or two that you might just need in the church. Being single is not a hindrance to fulfilling their potential. Believe me when I tell you that both your congregation and the single will be blessed if you do.
9. In connection to the last suggestion, unless there are some other reasons they can't, a lot of singles who have never married, or do not have kids living at home, have money to tithe to the church. How about some Biblical messages on tithing from the pulpit to encourage the single to give more?
10. This last one may seem redundant, but it is still true: treat them with the same kind of respect and love with which you'd like to be treated if the situation was reversed. Many singles including those who are now divorced or widowed need your help, not your condemnation! Remember that there but for the Grace of God you may go! [END]

For more information about the Club Solo Ministry, go to:

www.clubsolo.org.au



A Deadly Purple

by Thomas Devenish
'Christian Today'

A field covered in purple flowers can be a pretty sight, especially when the afternoon breeze wafts through, stirring up little waves of lively dances. But it can also fill the heart with dread.

An Attractive Pest

Growing up in Western Australia on the edge of the wheat-belt we had several paddocks that were inundated with Paterson's Curse, a prolific herb that makes itself a pest by producing some 5000 seeds per plant per year. Yes, that is one crazy big number! And while the purple flowers in bloom are pretty, their effect on the livestock is not so palatable. Horses can die within weeks of grazing on the toxic weed. Sheep and cattle are a little more resilient, but the effects are still harmful if not fatal.

So every now and again on a bright summers afternoon we would head out to the paddocks to tackle the encroaching weed. Needless to say, that wasn't my idea of fun! Three feet past the gate and I would be thinking to myself, "Why can't we decide to



stop calling this stuff a weed and just accept it as something beautiful?" To my childish eyes these plants looked akin to the daisies in the front garden, the only difference being someone had labelled it a weed.

Behind the Facade

I've since come to learn that there are lots of things in life that use a large purple flower as a façade for the insidious workings underneath. Seemingly good things can be our undoing.

For an obvious example take a look at money: it is the ticket to innumerable pleasures, the key to dreams coming true. With enough of it, we can change the world. We can buy the boat, that trip to Europe and the fancy house. But its silky leaves have sharp points that like to prick. The more we have, the more we want. It never satisfies. Happiness it certainly cannot buy.

And even happiness is itself another example, howbeit far less obvious. Everyone wants to be happy, right? But a pursuit of happiness is so often a race towards selfishness, leaving anything but happiness in its wake. "If it makes you happy," people say, as if happiness alone justifies a deed. But happiness can be a fickle thing, there one moment, gone

the next. Just ask someone going through a bitter divorce after a steamy affair. It felt so right! But it ended in torn hearts, a broken home and a shattered legacy.

Be on Guard

Jesus told a story about someone sowing seed in a field, with seeds falling on rocky ground, among thorns, on the pathway and in the good soil. Each place the seed fell had a different meaning, which Jesus explained to his disciples. About the thorns he said:

"The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity," Luke 8:14. [NLT]

In this I see Jesus warning to be on guard against chasing seemingly good things that actually lead away from the path of righteousness. Life's worries, riches and pleasures are the things foremost on my mind most of the time. I want to be rich, I want to be happy. But the purple fields of pleasure hide a deadly poison.

I have heard the good news of the gospel, and I have accepted it. But it commands more than a verbal acquiescence to its truth; it requires my life and obedience. It requires a faith that is alive, and living involves growing. The riches and pleasures of this world stunt growth. They choke it like a thousand weeds propagating in a sunburnt paddock. A thousand weeds covered in purple flowers.

[END]

Thomas Devenish lives in Hobart, Tasmania. He works as a motion designer and enjoys the diverse experiences life has to offer, from wake-boarding to curling up with a good book on a rainy day.

<http://www.christiantoday.com.au/article/a.deadly.purple/20136.htm>



Paterson's Curse

Why Might We Be Resisting God's Gift of Singleness?

by Vicki Nunn

In the previous two issues of SPAG Magazine we explored the 'Gift of Singleness,' and who is given this gift. We concluded that the gift of singleness is given to every Christian who is currently without a partner, no matter if they're dating or even engaged. We determined that God has a purpose for us while we are in this state of singleness, which is why He gives it to us.

We shared that the gift of singleness is different to spiritual gifts, and is like one side of a coin with the 'Gift of Marriage' on the reverse. That doesn't mean that it is the opposite of marriage, but that it's merely one of the two gifts that God gives to Christians.

The Gift of Singleness means that a Christian single is more easily able to make themselves available to God for His purposes. Married persons tend to have less free time, especially once children enter the picture (although for single parents, this is also an issue.)

We explored the possibility that God will at some point provide us with a partner, if it's part of His plan. While we are waiting (patiently) we can be busy doing His work. We don't have to keep a watchful eye out for potential partners because if we keep close to God, His Holy Spirit will prompt us when that possible partner comes into our sphere.

Some Christians prefer to remain single for various reasons, but for others it is a concept with which we struggle, even though Paul clearly stated that this gift is given to some. Some Christians are so resistant to the idea of remaining single, that they deliberately ignore the idea that singleness is from God, and may even rush out and jump into relationships so they won't be on their own.



So let's explore some reasons why we may still be resisting the gift of singleness.

1. Bitterness

We think it's unfair that God has kept us from a loving relationship, and we've allowed bitterness to grow in our heart. It can almost seem as if God is punishing us, which of course He isn't. While God's aims for our life aren't always clear, Biblical evidence (and personal experiences of millions of Christians over the centuries) would certainly indicate that what God does for us is out of love.

Ultimately we must recognise that our bitterness will impact badly on our relationship with God and with others: our desperation and/or bitterness is likely to attract the worst quality partners, and certain to chase away anyone decent!

If one of our aims in life is to be miserable, then if we continue holding onto resentment, we'll quickly achieve that goal!

2. We've Made the Goal of Marriage Our Idol Rather than God

If marriage is our major aim in life, then perhaps we've made it an idol, with God a close second. How can we tell if it's become our idol? First we ask ourselves this question:

"Am I saying that God is not enough?"

After thoughtfully considering that answer, we should then follow that up with this one:

"If God asked me to give up on the idea of marriage altogether, could I do that?"

That's a pretty scary question if we've never seriously considered it before. God sometimes calls on us to give up things that may hinder our walk with Him, or that distract us from His goals for our life. If we do remain unmarried, do we understand that God wouldn't be doing that purposely to hurt us or to make us miserable?

If we can come to terms with the concept that God may have called us to singleness, then as I shared in the previous articles on this subject, compensations come with it. God will send us joys and a sense of contentment in ways that we hadn't expected or experienced before.

If at this point we still feel ourselves resisting God's gift of singleness, then perhaps we should consider that we are focussing on our own desires rather than God's purposes for us. Are we putting ourselves and our needs as the number one priority in our life? If so, then alarm bells should be going off at this point! We need to get our priorities sorted out promptly.

3. We Believe that We'll Get Closer to God if We Find a Good Christian Partner

While it's true that a good Christian partner may encourage us in our walk with God, we are deluding ourselves if we believe that it will improve our relationship or bring us closer to God. The fact is, the only door by which we

have closer access to God is through Jesus.

If we are desiring a closer relationship with God, no-one else is going to be able to do that for us. **WE** are the only ones who can improve our relationship with God, and finding a partner will not alter that for us.

If there's a problem with intimacy with God to begin with, then intimacy with a human partner is likely to take our thoughts and our heart further away from God, rather than closer.

4. We Believe that Finding Someone to Love Us Will Prove We are Worthy of Love or That We Are Attractive

Does God really need to prove His love for us, **more** than giving His son Jesus to die on the cross for us? Do we think that human love will prove to us that we are a more worthwhile person than God already knows we are?

The world likes to deceive us with this lie, or the idea that to be a valuable human being, we must be physically attractive. Ultimately, while finding human love is nice, or being good-looking and enjoying the attention that brings can make us feel good, neither of these things can ever complete or satisfy us.

If we are determined to find a partner because we have a need to prove we're worthy of love, then consider that perhaps we need to look at our own upbringing/background. Did we have a tough or unloved upbringing? Did someone that we trusted from our past say horrible or negative things about us that made us

doubt our value?

If this is an issue for us, we need to be aware that we're likely to get involved with people that are not healthy for us. This usually results in a negative way on our self-esteem and those self-doubts grow even stronger.

To have any chance of a healthy relationship, we need **first** to love ourselves through Christ. It took me a number of years to accept and believe that I am worthy of love; to heal of my past hurts and doubts, and I eventually came to accept that I am as worthy of love as anyone else. We must also accept that no human being will ever be able to complete us.

5. We're Slack in Our Christian Walk

If we are slack in our walk with God, why would He want to distract us with a partner that will take us further from Him? I'm not saying that if we are close to God that He'll automatically send us a partner as if it's some kind of reward for good work! If God was waving His hands in front of our face right now, whistling or shouting madly, we've become too focussed on looking around at all the possible human partners in our view, to even notice Him.

Let's seriously look at how much effort we're putting into our relationship with God:

- Do our daily habits include spending time in prayer and reading His word?
- Other than church, is there a group with which we meet, where we can gain a deeper understanding of God?
- Do we put aside some time each

week to do our work for Him?

When was the last time we seriously asked God, "What is it that you want from me?" rather than "This is what I want."

6. We Hate Being Labelled 'Single' or Being Associated With Those Other Weirdos

Let's face it – there are a lot of weirdos out there! When we look at certain people's behaviours, it can be obvious to us why they're still single. Some people are socially awkward, mentally slow, have a terrible sense of humour or none at all! Why would we want to be associated with **them**!

Other people are ugly, fat or too skinny or have the wrong colour skin. Some people laugh too loud, have physical disabilities, have poor-paying jobs or no ambition, or never went to university. Some people have too many freckles, frizzy hair, a big nose or are just strangely shaped.

Ouch!

While some of this may seem a little extreme, in my twenty years in the singles ministry, I've come across single people who've rejected others for some of the dumbest reasons: "If you're fat, you're probably not worthwhile talking to!" (*What? Seriously true – I had someone say something along those lines to me on the phone one time.*)

We may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable with the idea that others think that we're losers just because we're still single, which may be why we resist the idea of remaining single. I struggled with this concept when I was in my twenties: that people would judge me because I was single, and make assumptions about why I was still on my own. Thankfully, God helped me to get over my ego, and eventually I was able to work through it.

Honestly, who cares what other people think? Aren't we supposed to leave this childish thinking behind us at some point? There are many, **many** reasons why people are single that have nothing whatsoever to do with them being strange! One of the simplest is the mere fact that there are more available



Christian women then there are available Christian men. Statistically, it's therefore more difficult for a single woman to find a Christian partner than it is for a man.

If anyone has an issue with us being a single person, then the problem is theirs, not ours! We've got to let go of our need to please others and focus instead on working at pleasing God.

Additionally, we also need to be conscious about how we treat other singles – so what if they're a little slow, or odd-looking or socially awkward? So what if they're not marriage material? I've developed some great friendships over the years with incredibly diverse people, and many have been a wonderful source of encouragement to me. C'mon! Let's all give those weirdos a go – we never know what terrific friendships may develop as a result.

Whether we like it or not, there's likely to be someone out there who thinks we're one of the weirdos too and that's ok. Really, it is ok! I've learned to embrace my own 'inner quirk,' and nowadays enjoy being a little on the weird and quirky side.

7. We're Engaged or Have a Serious Boyfriend/Girlfriend So We're No Longer Single

Congratulations! And how are we doing in our relationship with God? Have we put Him on the back-burner in favour of our partner?

We must be honest with ourselves and ask that question again: have we gotten slack with our relationship with God? Have we been concentrating on our partner? Has God been given the appropriate status and attention He

deserves in our life? Is there any squirming going on right now because this article is hitting a little too close to home?

If we've been focussing on our partner, we need to re-centre our life on God. If it's out of balance now, we must recognise that marriage is only going to skew it further in the wrong direction. Seriously! Do we honestly think God is contented with our half-hearted relationship with Him? Doesn't He deserves so much more?

Many years ago, a good friend of mine suddenly disappeared off my radar. She topped returning my calls, and after a few weeks, her phone was disconnected. Then I found out that she'd moved house. Following about ten months of complete silence, I suddenly received an envelope in the mail from her – it was an invitation to her wedding! I was very hurt and angry. That's not the way we should behave towards a friend: we shouldn't drop them the instant we find a partner, and treat them like they're no longer important!

How much more true is this with God! We're talking creator of the universe, Almighty God, King of Kings here! And yet some Christians react the same, selfish way toward God, and treat Him as if He's of secondary importance.

Surely, we've got to get things right with God BEFORE we get married – God after all, is going to be the foundation of our marriage, isn't He? Or perhaps the easiest things to do would be to just close our eyes right now, stick our fingers in our ears and sing loudly "La, la, la, la, la!"

Sorry about that, but we've got to

face the fact that if this is what's happening right now, we've got to fix it – pronto!

8. I'm Divorced or Widowed So I'm No Longer Single

It can be much more difficult for divorced or widowed people to come to terms with our singleness, especially if we've had a wonderful, loving marriage. Children (and grandchildren) can be a constant reminder of our partner and what we've lost and our aloneness.

For many going through divorce after an unhappy marriage, we can feel like failures and the hurt that results can remain with us for life.

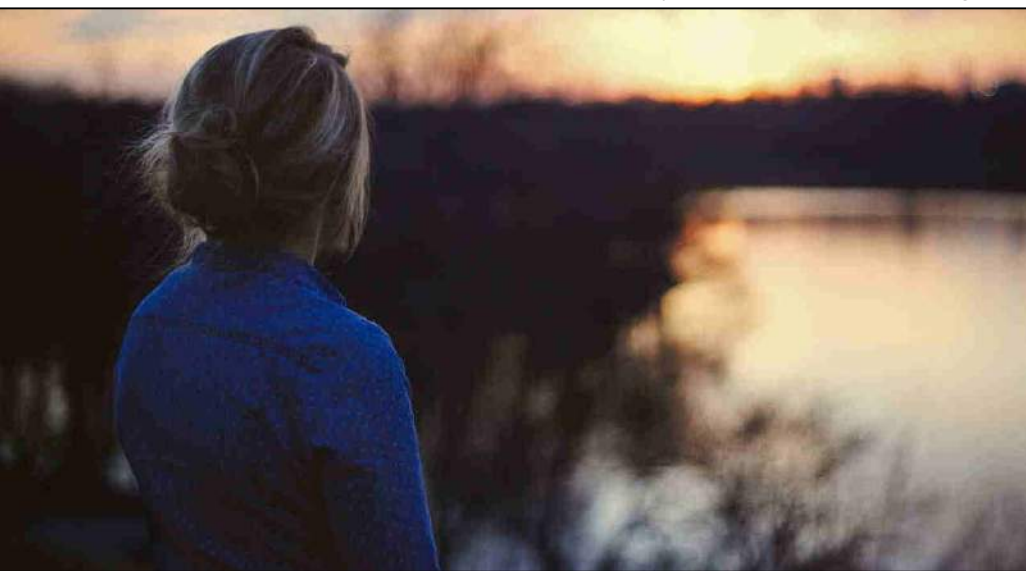
In this situation, singleness may seem either like a curse or a blessing, and for those suffering loneliness, this difficult time on our own may seem like it's only temporary while we look for another partner. For others having gone through a painful divorce, we can be confused in our emotional state: on the one hand we assumed that we'd be delighted to be single and free of the earlier unhappiness; but on the other hand, we're struggling with being alone and having to make all the decisions on our own, and perhaps taking all the responsibility for children.

If there's a moment when our minds and hearts are clearer, we need to have a conversation with God: "Help me to come to terms with this new stage in my life. Help me to accept that I've been given the gift of singleness and what that means for me. What is that you want for me?"

We can choose to resist the very alien idea that we're now single, or we can come to terms with the reality that God has given us the gift of singleness.

9. I Never Asked For Singleness So God Shouldn't Force it On Me

One of the things I've come to understand is that most people have at least one burden they have to deal with as part of their Christian walk. Many have several challenges: from a difficult upbringing to health issues and physical restrictions, mental illness to children with disabilities, financial strife



to horrible workplaces, difficult marriages to being alone. None of us is going to find life easy, so being alone may well be part of our journey.

I could focus on my health issues and feel upset that God has forced them on me, but I have come to accept that these are just part of my burdens. When I was younger, I couldn't understand why God allowed me to born a little crooked and to develop a bad back, hip and knee problems and now live with constant pain. Additionally these health issues impacted on me, until I could no longer continue with my earlier ministries, and this lead to some confusion for me: why would God give me the gifts for these ministries and then take them from me?

As I've matured I've come to understand that through these experiences, I now have compassion for others with health problems, and can relate to their struggles. It has also lead to a change in my ministry focus, and while I sometimes miss working with children, I have a new joy in my current ministry: SPAG Magazine.

While there may not always be a clearly understand reason why God allows us to have particular burdens, we can choose to hold onto resentment and feel angry with God, or we can choose to accept that this is part of the 'package deal,' and just get on with it.

Conclusion

While for some, the gift of singleness may seem more like a curse. Paul made it clear that when God gives us this gift, He has a purpose in mind for us that

may require that we give up the idea of finding a partner, or at least putting our desires on hold while we focus on Him.

In time as we release our feelings, desires, resentment, confusion and longings to God, He will begin to free our hearts and our minds and ease our pain. While at first it may be difficult for us to understand this burden while we are still struggling with our loneliness and aloneness, but as we share our lives with God and make ourselves available to Him, in time He'll bring joys, contentment and compensations.

If you've managed to make it all the way through this article and still don't believe that as a single person, you've been given the 'gift of singleness,' then probably nothing that anyone will say will convince you otherwise.

Finally though, I do encourage you to earnestly seek God's guidance and clarity. It is because He loves you that He has given this gift to you. Crazy though that may sound, it is part of His plan for you and you've just got to be willing to let go of your own desires and say, "Here I am God – let's see where the next part of our journey together takes us." [END]

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Words of Wisdom

"Don't feel bad if people remember you only when they need you; feel privileged that you are like a candle that comes to their mind when there is darkness."

Bryce Adams

Christ Is Our High Priest

"Since we have a great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God who has passed through the heavens from death into new life with God, let us hold tightly to our faith."

For Jesus is not some high priest who has no sympathy for our weaknesses and flaws. He has already been tested in every way that we are tested; but He emerged victorious, without failing God.

So let us step boldly to the throne of grace, where we can find mercy and grace to help when we need it most." [VOICE]

Hebrews 4:14-16

[VOICE] Scripture taken from The Voice™. Copyright © 2008 by Ecclesia Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



RECIPES FOR ONE OR TWO

Don't you loath those supposedly everyday recipes which list exotic-sounding ingredients like rappini or edamame that when you finally track them down, discover will cost \$84/kg? Fear not! Here at SPAG Magazine you'll find easyish recipes for one or two people, with simple and easy to find ingredients. These have all been tested and tried right in the SPAG Magazine kitchen!

MAIN COURSE:

Salmon Bake (serves 2)

Ingredients:

- 210g can of salmon (or tuna), drained
- 1/3 finely chopped onion
- 2 tbs cream cheese (or low carb Greek yoghurt if you prefer)
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 1/3 can asparagus pieces, drained
- 1/4 cup almond meal/flour
- 1 tsp unsalted butter
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup grated tasty cheese

Instructions:

While your oven is heating to 190°C, put your eggs into a pot to boil. Then mix together the salmon, cream cheese, pepper and onion. On the bottom of your casserole dish, place a layer of the sliced egg and then spoon the salmon mixture over the top of that, pressing it down till it's level.

If you're not keen on eggs, consider instead using wheat-free, low carb noodles such as ones made from konjac and after thoroughly rinsing them in water, add them straight into the salmon mixture itself.

Spoon a layer of asparagus on top of that, then sprinkle the almond meal/flour and the pepper over the asparagus. Finally sprinkle your cheese over the almond meal and then dot small pieces of butter on top of the cheese.

Place in the oven for 25-30 minutes until the top is lightly browned and serve immediately.



Low-Carb Recipes!

DESSERT:

Strawberry Cheesecake Bombs (serves 2)

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup (150g) cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup (60g) butter or coconut oil, softened
- 1/2 cup strawberries, fresh or frozen
- Powdered or liquid stevia or other sweetener equivalent to up to 2 tbsp of sugar (adjust to your preference)
- 1/2 tablespoon vanilla extract

Instructions:

Cut the butter into small pieces and place with the cream cheese in a bowl and leave to soften for about an hour, otherwise it will be too difficult to mix.

Wash the berries and cut off the stalks. Mash them together in a bowl, or blend for a smoother mix.

Add the vanilla extract and the sweetener to the berries. Whisk/blend the cream cheese and butter together and then thoroughly mix/blend in the berry mixture.

Spoon the mixture into small silicon moulds and freeze for around two hours, or until set. Pop out and enjoy as a small treat on their own or serve 2 or 3 in a small bowl.

They taste a little like mini frozen strawberry yoghurts.



* Positions Vacant: Celebrity Chef *



How are your cooking and photography skills? Would you be willing to give low-carb cooking a try? Do you like to dabble with new recipes or come up with your own?

How would you like to be a regular volunteer contributor to our cooking page? We're looking for someone to become our CELEBRITY CHEF!

If you're interested, please email us for more information: spagmag@yahoo.com.au, or please pass this information onto someone you think would be interested.

A-Musings

~ Bad Habits ~

by Vicki Nunn

Whether we'd like to admit it or not, every one of us has at least one odd habit or behaviour. Some of us have so many, we could probably write a thesis about it or star in our own reality television show.

I recall reading about a teenager who communicated with the world, only through farting. Yes, that's correct – by passing wind. He was so disgusted with people that he showed his contempt through this special communication technique. A psychiatrist was able to work with the youngster until eventually he began communicating normally.

In the world of odd behaviours, that one is definitely on the extreme side. So for this article, let's stick closer to more normal behaviours, and begin with a list of interesting ideas and behaviours from various people, which I thought might make you feel better about your own quirky behaviours. People have said:

- The smell of water makes me happy;
- I feel safe when I lie on the ground;
- I think that sunshine smells like fresh bread;
- I classify numbers/letters as male or female. (Male: numbers: 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10; letters: b, d, e, g, o, p, q, r, s, w, x, z; female: numbers: 2, 4, 7, 8; letters: a, c, f, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, t, u, v, y);
- To get rid of hiccups, I hold my breath and take tiny sips of water while counting, but I must stop on a prime number;
- I organise my wardrobe by shirt type and then by colour and all t-shirts must be ordered by rainbow colours;
- I suffer from leporiphobia which is a fear of rabbits, and I can't go out at Easter-time;
- I like to act out little plays with my fingers;
- I talk to animals in a way I'd expect them to sound if they spoke English;
- I eat food on a plate counter-clockwise; and

- I eat lollies in a specific order of colour. Yellow and green must always be first, and red must be last.

There also seem to be a few odd habits relating to food. A poll taken in the UK on the bad habits of diners included some interesting examples of people who shared their odd reactions with their waiter. These included:

- A woman who complained that her starter and main course were the same colour;
- A diner who insisted that their budgerigar be allowed to dine with them – because the bird became anxious when it was left alone; and
- A diner who complained that the cows seen nearby were an objectionable colour.

To a degree we all need a certain amount of OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) to keep functioning, eg a place for everything and everything in its place, but our aim should be to keep the OCD from getting out of control.



had to have matching coloured pegs, just in case the neighbours saw it.

One of my own personal habits is in response to being treated like a moron. If a manufacturer insists on providing precise instructions for opening the simplest of objects, such as an envelope or sticking plaster, I go out of my way to open it in any way EXCEPT the way they tell me, as a kind of mini-rebellion.

Somehow I feel that by giving in I am somehow encouraging manufacturers to continue treating all of us like idiots. [END]

Kooky Corner



by Miss Terry Woman

Advertising Promotion

- Miss Terry Woman -

From classic to quirky, you can find a huge variety of products with **graphic designs** created by Australian Christian artist Vicki Nunn.

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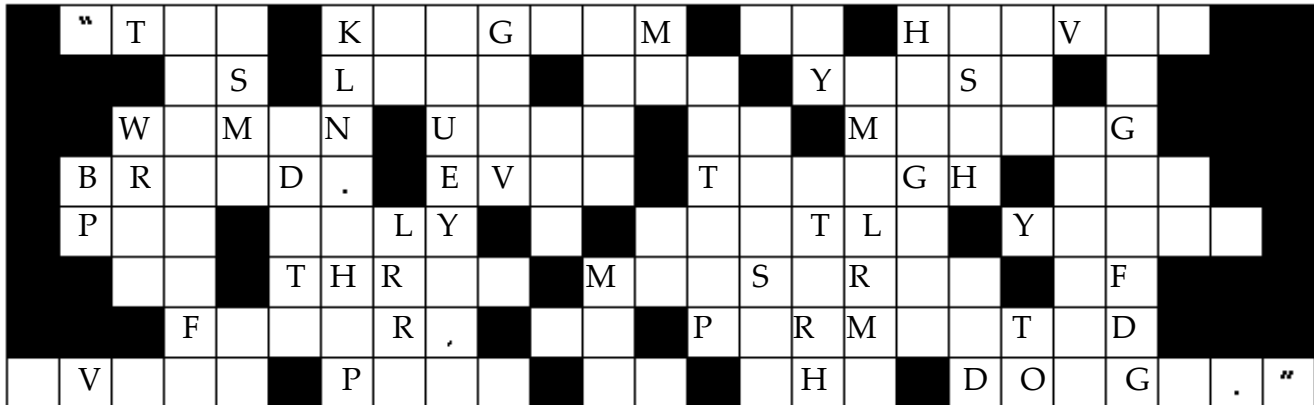
www.missterrywoman.com



PUZZLE PAGE

Fallen Phrase: A Portion of a Parable from the book of Matthew

Can you work out the following parable portion found in Matthew? As you determine a word, cross out the matching letters in the list below, and hopefully you should be able to figure out the rest.



E R A S E L K N A N I T R I E O H E S L O E F
I T O N O S E A I E H A E I E H E Y E O E T T
N E T O K A E D U O N U A U E I N U F S T E O
A H I E T A E A E E A N I T H A D E E U

A: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough." Math 13:33

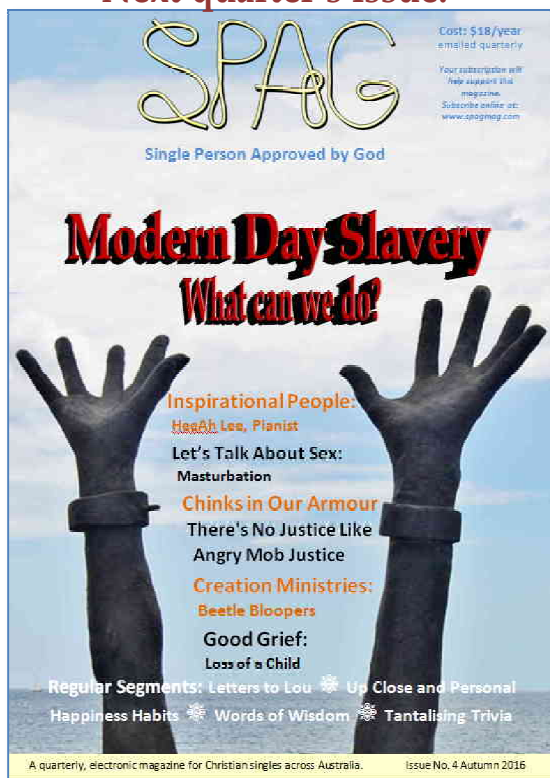
Word Search: Parables of Jesus

S	F	O	D	S	D	S	R	T	A	L	E	I	K	G	F	I	O	G	F
H	S	O	A	O	D	E	B	R	E	A	D	I	N	I	I	N	E	T	A
E	N	P	O	R	U	Z	B	L	L	Q	N	I	E	A	S	B	G	G	R
P	R	R	I	T	G	G	V	T	Z	G	V	L	M	T	H	U	N	F	M
H	O	B	A	B	P	C	H	N	O	I	D	Q	R	O	E	I	N	E	E
E	H	Y	N	E	V	A	E	H	G	R	R	E	P	S	D	Y	F	A	R
R	T	O	L	I	V	E	T	R	E	E	A	E	T	D	B	G	M	S	J
D	R	U	O	L	F	A	O	H	T	S	T	S	E	P	S	S	N	T	H
Y	P	M	G	R	E	F	V	Z	U	N	S	W	Z	N	E	D	T	I	U
R	G	F	X	H	N	X	T	R	O	B	U	W	O	R	K	E	R	S	K
G	X	Z	W	U	P	Y	E	A	S	T	M	S	I	X	U	E	H	D	H
D	R	A	Y	E	N	I	V	T	S	O	L	S	H	W	J	W	Q	S	I

Words:

Birds	Bread	Debtor	Dough	Farmer	Feast
Field	Fish	Flour	Footpath	Guests	Heaven
King	Kingdom	Lost	Mustard	Net	Olive Tree
Sheep	shepherd	Sons	Thorns	Treasure	Unforgiving
Vineyard	Wedding	Weeds	Wheat	Workers	Yeast

Next quarter's issue:



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This common brown cicada measures up to 55mm in length. The males form large groups on the trunks of tall eucalyptus trees such as spotted gums and begin their distinct drone in the early evenings. They are usually seen or heard from December to January, though can appear earlier. They are found from as far north as Gladstone in Central Queensland to Narooma in Southern New South Wales and as far east as Toowoomba, Inverell, Capertee Valley and Tamworth.

Up Close and Personal

Razor Grinder Cicada (*Henicopsaltria eydouxii*)



Anna Bay, NSW

(Photo contributed by Wendy Kilburn)