

# SPAG

Single Person Approved by God

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Is Christianity Sexist?

How Long Were the Days  
of Genesis 1?

Holy Days are Here  
Again

Pride and Humility

Competition – Win  
Two books!

# Last Year I Was Unmarried - Now I'm Single

Regular Segments: Happiness Habits ❁ Words of Wisdom ❁

❁ Letters to Lou ❁ Tantalising Trivia ❁ Creation Ministries International ❁

❁ Christie's Kitchen ❁ Puzzle Page ❁ Up Close and Personal ❁

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SPAG (Single Person Approved by God) is a quarterly, electronic magazine for Christians, with a focus on singles. While it is based in Australia, it is an international, inter-denominational magazine aimed at encouraging, challenging and inspiring believers. Another of our aims to provide Church leaders with some insight into the problems and needs of the singles in their congregation who can sometimes feel overlooked or even unwanted in their church.

## SUBMISSIONS:

Please feel free to write to SPAG via our email: [spagmag@yahoo.com.au](mailto: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 Lou, SPAG's Counsellor.

Any item you'd like us to consider for publication must be your original work and not copied from elsewhere, including photos.<sup>1</sup>

## ADVERTISING:

If you would like to promote your business or major Christian activity in SPAG Magazine, please contact the Editor Vicki Nunn on email: [spagmag@yahoo.com.au](mailto:spagmag@yahoo.com.au) or phone 042 44 33 772. You can find more information about advertising costs on the website: [www.spagmag.com](http://www.spagmag.com).

Community or non-profit groups are advertised free, though we cannot guarantee that we will have sufficient space.

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**Singles:** we understand that you may feel invisible, overlooked or even unwanted in the church. Be assured that your needs, concerns and problems are real. You are not alone, but are part of a community of solo Christians, and God sees you and your struggles: He knows you and He loves you. The articles here are written to encourage, challenge and inspire you. Please feel free to share SPAG with other singles.



## EDITOR'S LETTER

### Welcome to the sixth issue of SPAG!

If you've been following SPAG Magazine since our beginnings eighteen months ago, you'll have noticed that we've continued to develop and grow, providing articles that we hope challenge, inspire and help you mature as a Christian, and particularly as a single. You'll have noticed that we're not afraid to tackle issues that some Christian leaders don't know have to approach such as sexuality and masturbation and the challenges of being a single Christian. We hope that the topics have encouraged you to pray about specific issues or to discuss them with friends and groups with which you may be involved.

Please let us know if there is something you would like to learn more about. If you're only a newbie to SPAG, our older issues are available to purchase from our website for a small fee, which is a way that you can support this important ministry.

I'd like to take this opportunity to send out a big **thank you** to 'Reverend Fun' who allowed us to use their cartoons free of charge for one year - the final cartoon is in this issue.

It's also competition time! You have the opportunity to go into the draw to win our prize pack of two books (see page 28 for details). All you have to do is comment or send us feedback about SPAG Magazine. How easy is that?

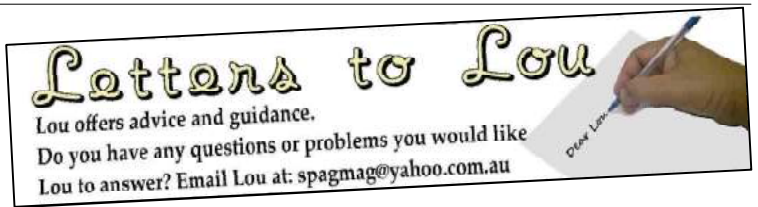
If you're a keen photographer and have some great photos of wonderful Australian scenery, perhaps we can feature your best quality photo on our back page. Email us at [spagmag@yahoo.com.au](mailto:spagmag@yahoo.com.au).

As usual, we have some fantastic articles which have been contributed by excellent writers including Thomas A. Tarrants, III who shares about the topic of pride and humility. There's another article which challenges the procrastinator in all of us! "How to Prevent Your Life From Falling Apart" is a topic that Lisa Copen covers. Ron Ross shares "Holy Days Are Here Again," while Kurt Mahlborg wrote our feature article titled "Last Year I Was Unmarried - Now I'm Single." As the annual 'Invisible Awareness Week' approaches, Megan Schartner talks about ways to support someone with a chronic or invisible illness. Then there's the question many of us may ask, "Why Pray if God Already Knows What We're Going to Say?" and lots more.

As this issue goes out, I'm busy unpacking as I sold my house since the last edition, and have moved to my new home 500km away! Talk about crazy-busy and yes, just a little stressed, and tired!

I was reminded recently that it's been 30 years this year (September) since I became a Christian. What a privilege it is that I can share this magazine with you, and that God has enabled me to be involved with this helpful ministry.

Warm regards  
Vicki Nunn,  
SPAG Editor



### Letter 1 – Bad or Better Boyfriend?

Dear Lou

*I've been dating my boyfriend for almost eleven months and I love him a lot, but the more I know him, the more I realise how little we have in common, eg I like romance movies and quiet nights at home, but he likes science-fiction and action movies and going to the local pub for live music. I hate science-fiction and when we're in big, noisy crowds, I just can't wait to get out of there.*

*We fight about a lot of things and he has an opinion about everything and it's like he's trying to convert me to his way of thinking, as if his opinion is the only right one - which I hate!*

*I'm 22 and my friends say I'm crazy to stick with him and that I should find another boyfriend. They say we're too different, and I'm starting to wonder about that now. Am I being too picky to want to have more things in common? If we're going to get married one day, isn't this just going to cause us a lot of problems? I hate the fighting, but I love him, and there's a part of me that can't bear to let him go.*

Jessica

Dear Jessica,

I could give you a very quick answer to your question, but I will try to flesh it out a little though I'll still give you the same response.

Your question towards the end of your letter really gives you the best clue as to why your relationship won't work.

I have always been amazed at how opposites attract when a permanent relationship is built. The question is how the couple can build a sound basis on which to build mutual respect. You're twenty-two, and should be giving yourself time to build many healthy relationships.

In talking with couples, I usually mention that in the days when you are courting, this is often as good as it gets, because you can simply enjoy the building of your relationship without a host of other added responsibilities thrown into the mix.

I believe your friends are correct in the advice they are giving you on this relationship, Jessica. Your second paragraph gives you another clue, in that you comment that he wants to control you, and your life. That is never conducive to a healthy relationship.

From your letter, I would conclude that you need to move out of this relationship. Don't settle for second best for your life.

Regards  
Lou

## Letters to Lou

Lou offers advice and guidance.

Do you have any questions or problems you would like Lou to answer? Email Lou at: [spagmag@yahoo.com.au](mailto:spagmag@yahoo.com.au)



### Letter 2 – Is She Just Not Interested?

Dear Lou

*There's a woman at church that I like a lot. I can't help but see how much we have in common and we're always having a bit of a joke with each other, but we only chat after church or Bible Study. I'd like to take this further.*

*She's divorced, and though I have asked her out for a coffee a couple of times, she's made up some excuse not to go. Should I just accept that she's not interested in me?*

Turner

Hi Turner

Your letter is raising a number of questions for me.

Your first comment about having much in common through your church family tells me that this is a safe place for interactions between you both. At best this is the first level of relationship building, and is one you might need to pursue for some time. For some it is a big step to go from a safe group environment to a one-on-one situation. It might be safer to have at least four people go out for coffee. This would provide a new atmosphere for a friendship to develop.

The fact that you mentioned this lady is divorced leaves me with two questions for you to consider:

1. Is building a friendship with a person who is divorced an issue for you? and
2. Have you considered that this person might be still in recovery from a broken marriage?

The second question is very important to consider, as my experience is that time needs to be given for a person to regroup and heal in their life before they would ever contemplate a new relationship.

The more you talk with this person the more you will understand where she is in her life journey. Listen very carefully to what she says, and listen to clues she will give you as to why she is not ready. Be very sensitive, and if she is the person you would like to have in your life, then give her the space she needs to heal and grow.

In the meantime look for ways to be a genuine friend, spend time chatting with her, and don't push too hard to establish a deeper relationship.

Friendships take time to build and relationships require even more time to become established. I think you have more work to do at growing the friendship.

Regards  
Lou

### Letter 3 –Grandchildren Eating Too Much Junk-food

Dear Lou

*My daughter always seems to be feeding her kids junk-food. The oldest is 12 and I've noticed in the past few years that the kids have started getting fat.*

*I know my daughter and her husband both work and are probably tired, but shouldn't they be concerned about their kid's health? Whenever the kids stay at my place they won't eat the vegies that I serve them and they always ask for takeaway or junk-food.*

*I'm worried for my grandchildren. Should I say something to my daughter and son-in-law?*

Maureen.

Dear Maureen,

You ask a question that has been asked many times before, and there is no simple answer.

Being a grandparent myself, I can assure you that there are things I would like to see done differently for my grandchildren: issues ranging from food, behaviour and discipline.

The reality is, I raised my children, and now it is the responsibility of my children to raise their family. When asked, I am free to give advice or make suggestions, but I need to make sure that I don't meddle in what they are doing.

Hopefully the training you instilled in your children will be part of their parenting pattern. Your son-in-law could have been raised with a very different set of values to your daughter. It is their responsibility to develop their parenting skills.

Love your grandchildren and make sure you have a good relationship with them. This way you remove any pressure on yourself, to raising your grandchildren the way you would like them to be raised.

Simply make sure that you love your family and continue to be a good model for them to follow.



Regards  
Lou



## How Long Were the Days of Genesis 1?

by Russell Grigg

### What did God intend us to understand from the words He used?

Were the days of Creation Week of 24 hours duration or were they long periods of time? This article will discuss the Hebrew 'time' words which the author had available to him and what meaning he intended to convey by his choice of the specific words he used.<sup>1</sup>

#### Meaning of yôm

When Moses, under the inspiration of God, compiled the account of creation in Genesis 1, he used the Hebrew word yôm for 'day'. He combined yôm with numbers ('first day', 'second day', 'third day', etc.) and with the words 'evening and morning', and the first time he employed it he carefully defined the meaning of yôm (used in this way) as being one night/day cycle (Genesis 1:5). Thereafter, throughout the Bible, yôm used in this way always refers to a normal 24-hour day.<sup>2,3</sup> There is thus a prima facie case that, when God used the word yôm in this way, He intended to convey that the days of creation were 24 hours long.

Let us now consider what other

words God could have used, if He had wanted to convey a much longer period of time than 24 hours.

#### Some Hebrew 'time' words

There are several Hebrew words which refer to a long period of time.<sup>4</sup> These include qedem which is the main one-word term for 'ancient' and is sometimes translated 'of old'; olam means 'everlasting' or 'eternity' and is translated 'perpetual', 'of old' or 'for ever'; dor means 'a revolution of time' or 'an age' and is sometimes translated 'generations'; tamid means 'continually' or 'for ever'; ad means 'unlimited time' or 'for ever'; orek when used with yôm is translated 'length of days'; shanah means 'a year' or 'a revolution of time' (from the change of seasons); netsach means 'for ever'. Words for a shorter time span include eth (a general term for time); and moed, meaning 'seasons' or 'festivals'. Let us consider how some of these could have been used.

#### 1. Event of long ago

If God had wanted to tell us that the creation events took place a long time in the past, there were several ways He could have said it:

- yamim (plural of yôm) alone or with 'evening and morning', would have meant 'and it was

days of evening and morning'. This would have been the simplest way, and could have signified many days and so the possibility of a vast age.

- qedem by itself or with 'days' would have meant 'and it was from days of old'.
- olam with 'days' would also have meant 'and it was from days of old'.

So if God had intended to communicate an ancient creation to us, there were at least three constructions He could have used to tell us this. However, God chose not to use any of these.

#### 2. A continuing event from long ago

If God had wanted to tell us that creation started in the past but continued into the future, meaning that creation took place by some sort of theistic evolution, there were several ways He could have said it:

- dor used either alone or with 'days', 'days' and 'nights', or 'evening and morning', could have signified 'and it was generations of days and nights'. This would have been the best word to indicate evolution's alleged aeons, if this had been meant.
- olam with the preposition le, plus



'days' or 'evening and morning' could have signified 'perpetual'; another construction *le olam va-ed* means 'to the age and onward' and is translated 'for ever and ever' in Exodus 15:18.

- *tamid* with 'days', 'days' and 'nights', or 'evening' and 'morning', could have signified 'and it was the continuation of days'.
- *ad* used either alone or with *olam* could have signified 'and it was for ever'.
- *shanah* (year) could have been used figuratively for 'a long time', especially in the plural.
- *yôm rab* literally means 'a long day' (cf. 'long season' in Joshua 24:7, or 'long time' in the New American Standard Bible). This construction could well have been used by God if He had meant us to understand that the 'days' were long periods of time.

Thus, if God had wanted us to believe that he used a long-drawn-out creative process, there were several words He could have used to tell us this. However, God chose not to use any of these.

### 3. Ambiguous time

If God had wanted to say that creation took place in the past, while giving no real indication of how long the process took, there were ways He could have done it:

- *yôm* combined with 'light' and 'darkness', would have signified 'and it was a day of light and darkness'. This could be ambiguous because of the symbolic use of 'light' and 'darkness' elsewhere in the Old Testament. However, *yôm* with 'evening and morning', especially with a number preceding it, can never be ambiguous.
- *eth* ('time') combined with 'day' and 'night' as in Jeremiah 33:20 and Zechariah 14:7 could have been ambiguous. Likewise *eth* combined with 'light' and

'darkness' (a theoretical construction). If any of these forms had been used, the length of the 'days' of creation would have been widely open for debate. However, God chose not to use any of these.

### Author's Intention

The following considerations show us what God intended us to understand:

The meaning of any part of the Bible must be decided in terms of the intention of the author.

1. The meaning of any part of the Bible must be decided in terms of the intention of the author. In the case of Genesis, the intention of its author clearly was to write a historical account. This is shown by the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul regarded Genesis - that is, they quoted it as being truth, not symbolic myth or parable.<sup>5,6</sup> It was plainly not the author's intention to convey allegorical poetry, fantasy, or myth. And so what God, through Moses, said about creation in Genesis should not be interpreted in these terms.

Moses did, in fact, use some of the above 'long-time' words (italicized in the examples below, with root Hebrew words in square brackets), although not with reference to the days of creation. For example, in Genesis 1:14, he wrote, 'Let there be lights ... for seasons [*moed*]'; in Genesis 6:3, 'My spirit shall not always [*olam*] strive with man'; in Genesis 9:12 'for perpetual generations [*olam*

*dor*']; in Leviticus 24:2, 'to burn continually [*tamid*]'; in Numbers 24:20 'that he perish for ever [*ad*]'; in Deuteronomy 30:20, 'He is thy light and the length of thy days [*yôm orek*]'; in Deuteronomy 32:7, 'Remember the days of old [*yôm olam*]'; and so on.

Why did God not use any of these words with reference to the creation days, seeing that He used them to describe other things? Clearly it was His intention that the creation days should be regarded as being normal earth-rotation days, and it was not His intention that any longer time-frames should be inferred.

Professor James Barr, professor of Hebrew at Oxford University agrees that the words used in Genesis 1 refer to 'a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience', and he says that he knows of no professor of Hebrew at any leading university who would say otherwise.<sup>7</sup>

2. Children have no problem in understanding the meaning of Genesis. The only reason why other ideas are entertained is because people apply concepts from outside the Bible, principally from evolutionary/atheistic sources, to interpret the Bible.
3. The Bible is God's message to mankind and as such it makes authoritative statements about reality. If one removes any portion of the Bible from the realm of reality, God may still be



communicating truth to us, but the reader can never be sure that he understands it as the author intended. Furthermore, if God's communication to us is outside our realm of reality, then we cannot know whether any account in the Bible means what the words actually say or whether it means something entirely different, beyond our understanding. For example, if we apply this criterion to the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, perhaps the words could mean that Jesus did not rise from the dead physically, but in a way beyond our comprehension. When these sorts of word-games are played with the Bible, the Bible loses its authority, we lose the divine perspective on reality, and Christianity loses its life-changing power.<sup>8</sup>

4. If the 'days' really weren't ordinary days, then God could be open to the charge of having seriously misled His people for thousands of years. Commentators universally understood Genesis in a straightforward way, until attempts were made to harmonize the account with long ages and then evolution.

### Conclusion

In Genesis<sup>1</sup>, God, through the 'pen' of Moses, is going out of His way to tell us that the 'days' of creation were literal earth-rotation days. To do this, He used the Hebrew word *yôm*, combined with a number and the words 'evening and morning'. If God had wanted to tell us it was an ancient creation, then there were several good ways He could have done this. If theistic evolution had been intended, then there were several constructions He could have used. If the time factor had been meant to be ambiguous, then the Hebrew language had ways of saying this. However, God chose not to use any construction which would have communicated a meaning other than a literal solar day.

The only meaning which is possible from the Hebrew words used is that the 'days' of creation were 24-hour days. God could not have communicated this meaning more clearly than He did in Genesis 1. The divine confirmation of this, if any is needed, is Exodus 20:9-11, where the same word 'days' is used throughout:

'Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.' [END]

Article's web address: <http://creation.com/how-long-were-the-days-of-genesis-1>

#### References and Notes:

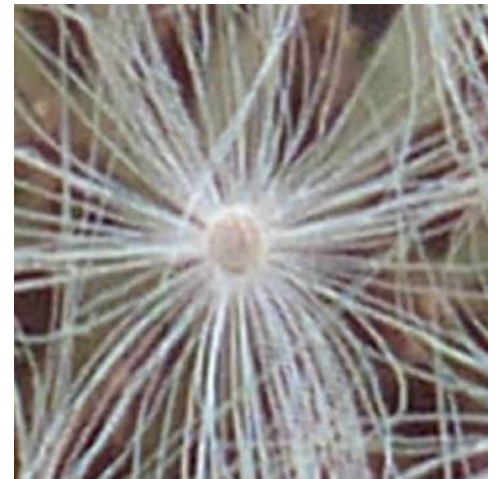
1. The author is indebted to James Stambaugh, *The Days of Creation: A Semantic Approach*, J. Creation 5(1):70-78, 1991; [creation.com/semantic](http://creation.com/semantic), for much of the material in this article, and to linguist Dr Charles Taylor of Gosford, NSW, Australia for his advice and help regarding the Hebrew. When we say 'days of 24 hours duration' we merely indicate that they were ordinary earth-rotation days, not that they were necessarily precisely 24 hours in length (the earth's rotation rate is gradually slowing down).
2. M. Saebo, in his *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 6:22, says that *yôm* is: 'the fundamental word for the division of time according to the fixed natural alternation of day and night, on which are based all the other units of time (as well as the calendar).' Cited from Ref. 1, p. 72.
3. For a further discussion of the meaning of *yôm*, see Charles Taylor, *The first 100 words*, The Good Book Co, Gosford, NSW, Australia, p. 21, 1996.
4. The Hebrew words, anglicized spellings, and biblical references are cited from Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible.
5. See Mark 10:6; 13:19, for example.
6. See Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 45; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:13-4:1.
7. Source: letter from Prof. James Barr to David C.C. Watson, dated 23 April 1984. Note that Prof. Barr does not say that he believes that Genesis is historically true; he is just telling us what, in the unanimous opinion of the world's leading Hebrew-language professors (including himself), the Hebrew words used were intended to convey.
8. Adapted from Ref. 1, p. 76.



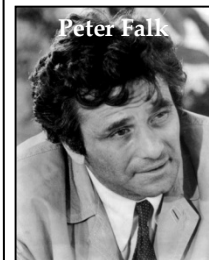
## What is it?

*\* New Segment \**

Can you identify the item in this photo close up?  
(Answer on page 53)



## Tantalising Trivia



Peter Falk

I remember as I was growing up, watching the TV series *Columbo* with Peter Falk as the lead actor.

To most people, it was fairly evident that he had a glass eye, but there have been other actors over the years with physical imperfections of which we may not be aware:

- Rex Harrison was also blind in one eye;
- Humphrey Bogart had a scarred lip which was damaged while he was onboard a troopship that was shelled by the Germans;
- Dudley Moore had a club foot; and
- Clint Eastwood was once fired by Universal Studios because they thought his Adam's apple stuck out too far!



# Pride and Humility



by Thomas A.  
Tarrants, III,  
D.Min.  
Vice President of  
Ministry, C.S. Lewis

Institute

Courtesy of the C.S. Lewis Institute, *Knowing & Doing*, Winter 2011. For more information, please go to [www.cslewisinstitute.org](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org).

*“Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.”*

So said the late John R.W. Stott, a remarkably humble man of great abilities and accomplishments who is often said to have made the greatest impact for Christ of anyone in the twentieth century. His succinct statement about pride and humility goes straight to the heart of what the Bible teaches about the deadly root of our sins and sorrows.

How many recent sermons have you heard on pride or humility? Probably not many. One hears surprisingly little from church or parachurch leaders about either of these subjects.

In fact, what throughout history has been recognised as the deadliest of vices is now almost celebrated as a virtue in our culture. Pride and arrogance are conspicuous among the rich, the powerful, the successful, the famous, and celebrities of all sorts, and even some religious leaders. And it is also alive and well in ordinary people, including each of us. Yet few of us realise how dangerous it is to our souls and how greatly it hinders our intimacy with God and love for others.

Humility, on the other hand, is often seen as weakness, and few of us know much about it or pursue it. For the good of our souls, then, we need

to gain a clearer understanding of pride and humility and of how to forsake the one and embrace the other.

## Pride

C.S. Lewis, another top contender for having had the greatest impact for Christ in the twentieth century, called pride ‘the great sin.’ Every believer should read his chapter by that title in “Mere Christianity.” There Lewis said:

*“According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind... it is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.”<sup>1</sup>*

If this sounds like exaggeration, it will help us to know that Lewis is not simply giving us his private opinion but summarising the thinking of great saints through the ages. Augustine and Aquinas both taught that pride was the root of sin.<sup>2</sup> Likewise Calvin, Luther, and many others. Make no mistake about it: pride is the great sin. It is the devil’s most effective and destructive tool.

Why do the great spiritual leaders, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant alike, unite around this conviction? Because it is so clearly and solidly taught in Scripture.

Pride first appears in the Bible in Genesis<sup>3</sup>, where we see the devil, that ‘proud spirit’ as John Donne described him, using pride as the

avenue by which to seduce our first parents.

Taking the form of a serpent, his approach was simple yet deadly. First, he arrogantly contradicted what God had said to Eve about eating the forbidden fruit and charged God with lying. This shocking rejection of God’s word introduced Eve to the hitherto unknown possibility of unbelief and was intended to arouse doubt in her mind about the truthfulness and reliability of God.

In the next breath, the devil drew her into deeper deception by contending that God’s reason for lying was to keep her from enjoying all the possibilities inherent in being Godlike.

This clever ploy was aimed at undermining her confidence in the goodness and love of God and arousing the desire to become as God.

The desire to lift up and exalt ourselves beyond our place as God’s creature lies at the heart of pride. As Eve in her now confused and deceived state of mind considered the possibilities, her desire to become Godlike grew stronger. She began to look at the forbidden fruit in a new light, as something attractive to the eyes and pleasant to the touch. Desire increased, giving rise to rationalisation and a corresponding erosion of the will to resist and say no.

Finally, weakened by unbelief, enticed by pride, and ensnared by self-deception, she opted for autonomy and disobeyed God’s command.

In just a few deft moves, the devil was able to use pride to bring about Eve’s downfall and plunge the human race into spiritual ruin. This ancient

*Make no mistake about it: pride is the great sin. It is the devil’s most effective and destructive tool.*



but all-too-familiar process con-fronts each of us daily:

*"Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*  
(James 1:14-15 [ESV])

From this point on in the Bible, we see the outworking of pride and unbelief in the affairs of individuals, families, nations, and cultures. As people lose or suppress the knowledge of God, spiritual darkness grows and a psychological inversion occurs: in their thinking God becomes smaller and they become larger.

The centre of gravity in their mental lives shifts from God to themselves. They become the centre of their world, and God is conveniently moved to the periphery, either through denial of his existence or distortion of his character.

Self-importance and godless self-confidence grow stronger. The cycle that follows is familiar: people exalt themselves against God and over others. Pride increases, arrogant and/or abusive behaviour ensues, and people suffer.

**On a national level**, this is writ large in the history of Israel and surrounding nations, especially in the indictments delivered by the prophets of the eighth and sixth centuries BC.

Blinded by power and the unprecedented affluence of the eighth century, prideful leaders in Israel embraced a corrupted view of God, trusted in their own wisdom and power, oppressed their people, ignored his call to repent, and thereby invited his judgment, which fell with disastrous results.

There are also many biblical examples of pride and its consequences in the lives of individuals, and they offer valuable lessons for our own lives.

Often their stories are self-contained in one chapter and make

for easy reading. One of the more notable examples from the Old Testament is that of Uzziah, who was a believer. When he became king of Judah at age sixteen, he set his heart to seek God and put himself under the spiritual mentorship of Zechariah. And "as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." (2 Chronicles 26:5 [ESV]) As a result, he acquired wealth and also became politically and militarily powerful.

Then things changed. "His fame spread far, for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction." (2 Chronicles 26:15-16 [ESV])

What happened? There are hints in the text that at some point on the road to the top, he stopped seeking the Lord and the spiritual mentoring of Zechariah. This suggests a lessening dependence on God and a growing reliance upon himself and his own strength and wisdom.

History shows at every point how easy it is for pride to increase as we become stronger, more successful, more prosperous, and more recognised in our endeavours. In fact, anything, real or imagined, that elevates us above others can be a platform for pride. Ironically, this is true even when these things come as a

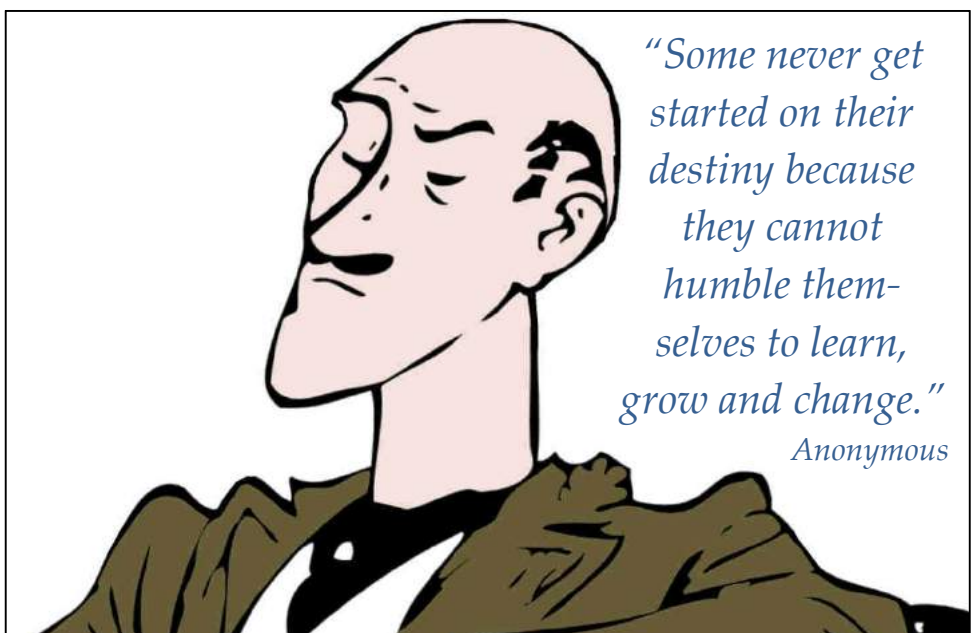
result of God's blessings.

As a result of all his blessings, Uzziah, rather than humbling himself in thanksgiving to God, began to think more highly of himself than he should have and developed an exaggerated sense of his own importance and abilities.

This pride of heart led to presumption before God and brought very serious consequences upon him, illustrating the biblical warnings that pride leads to disgrace (Proverbs 11:2) and that *"pride goes before destruction."* (Proverbs 16:18 [ESV])

I encourage you to read and meditate on Uzziah's full story in 2 Chronicles 26. The stories of Haman (Esther 3-7) and Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) also offer valuable insights into pride and are well worth reading.

**This is evident** today in the dangerous pride in some political and business leaders in the West. We have only to look around us at the current state of political life in America to see examples. Pride and arrogance are obvious in many political leaders, whether liberal or conservative, making matters much worse than they need to be. Or consider the business and financial catastrophes we have experienced in recent years. A thoughtful article in the Wall Street Journal after the WorldCom and



Enron debacles attributed them to “pride, greed and lack of accountability.” The recent financial crisis in America is yet another example of the same thing. Clearly pride is very dangerous and can produce widespread suffering in society when people in leadership and power are corrupted by it.

**Pride also** affects religious people. Few people today seem to be aware of the danger of spiritual pride, but spiritual leaders throughout the history of the church have always seen it as a great plague and tool of the devil. Even in times of revival, it is a danger. Commenting on the revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1737, Jonathan Edwards said:

*“The first and worst cause of errors that abound in our day and age is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken the mind and mislead the judgment.”*

*Pride is the main handle by which he has hold of Christian persons and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder a work of God. Spiritual pride is the main spring or at least the main support of all other errors. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal all other diseases.<sup>3</sup>”*

An instructive lesson on religious pride from the New Testament is found in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14). It is aimed at those “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt. [ESV]” It addresses spiritual pride, an especially subtle and dangerous

temptation of religious people and leaders, which has been very much in evidence in recent years.

The well-known story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector can help us recognise our own spiritual pride. It tells of a much-despised tax collector and a self-righteous Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray.

The Pharisee proceeds to commend himself to God because of his careful observance of the law and to look down with scornful contempt on the sinful tax collector.

*“God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get. [ESV]”*

Notice in his prayer that his focus is not really on God at all but on how good he is and how bad others are. Here is pride wrapped in the cloak of religion and giving it a bad name.

The tax collector is so painfully aware of his sins and unworthiness before God that he cannot even lift his eyes as he stands in the back of the temple, far from the altar. Pounding his breast in sorrowful contrition over his sins, he can manage only the

desperate plea, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner. [ESV]” In the Greek text, it actually reads “the sinner.”

His focus is very much on his own sins, not the sins of others, and especially on his need for God’s mercy. In a surprising reversal of expectation, Jesus says that God answered the tax collector’s prayer, not the Pharisee’s. Then he concludes with his main point:

*“...everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. [ESV]”*

**Another lesson** on religious pride strikes even closer to home for true believers. If we are inclined to say to ourselves, “Lord, I thank you that I am not like that proud Pharisee,” we should bear in mind that the apostles themselves were infected with pride and disputed with one another about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24-27). Sadly self-promotion, in pursuit of reputation, influence, and ‘success,’ is evident in some ministry leaders even today. But if the apostles had to struggle with it, who are we to think ourselves exempt?

It would be easy to conclude that pride is the special problem of those who are rich, powerful, successful, famous, or self-righteous. But that is wrong. It takes many shapes and forms and affects all of us to some degree.

The widespread, chronic preoccupation with self in American culture, for example, is rooted in pride and can give rise to or intensify our emotional problems. As a famous Harvard psychologist observed,

*“Any neurotic is living a life which in some respects is extreme in its self-centredness... the region of his misery represents a complete preoccupation with himself. The very nature of the neurotic disorder is tied to pride.”*

*If the sufferer is hypersensitive, resentful, captious, he may be indicating a fear that he will not appear to advantage in competitive situations where he wants to show his worth. If he is chronically indecisive, he is showing fear that he may do the wrong thing and be discredited. If he is over-scrupulous and self-critical, he may be endeavouring to show how praiseworthy he really is. Thus, most neuroses, are, from the point of view of religion, mixed with the sin of pride.<sup>4</sup>”*





**Much more** could be said about pride, but space fails us. Let's sum up the biblical perspective and move on.

Pride can be summarised as an attitude of self-sufficiency, self-importance, and self-exaltation in relation to God. Toward others, it is an attitude of contempt and indifference. As C.S. Lewis observed:

*"Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense."<sup>5</sup>*

The depth of pride can vary from one person to the next and can be obvious or concealed. In the Old and New Testaments it is a truism that God will not suffer the creature to exalt itself against the Creator. Pride provokes God's displeasure, and he has committed himself to oppose it.

If your pride causes you to exalt yourself, you are painting a target on your back and inviting God to open fire. And he will. For he has declared his determination to bring it low wherever he finds it, whether among angels or humans, believers or unbelievers.

It was pride that caused Lucifer to be cast out of heaven and Adam and Eve to be cast out of Eden. And it is

pride that will be our undoing if we tolerate it in our lives. The danger of pride is a sobering reality that each of us needs to ponder. Truly, it is our greatest enemy.

However, chances are good that most of us do not see pride in our lives. For while it is easy to see pride in others, it is very difficult to see it in ourselves. C.S. Lewis observed that:

*"there is no fault which makes a man more unpopular and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it in ourselves, the more we dislike it in others."<sup>6</sup>*

But he does suggest a couple of ways to detect its presence. First, Lewis quoted William Law from chapter fifteen of "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life;"

*"there can be no surer proof of a confirmed pride than a belief that one is sufficiently humble."*

Also:

*"if you want to find out how proud you are the easiest way is to ask yourself, 'How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronise me, or show off?'"*

**Because it is so tricky** to recognise, we are perhaps best off to earnestly seek God in prayer and ask him to reveal to us any sinful pride in our lives so we can repent and forsake it.

Another step we might take is to ask those who live or work with us if they see significant expressions of sinful pride or arrogance in our life.

There is, of course, a good type of pride.

Paul, for example, was proud of the churches he had established. But this was not arrogant or self-exalting

pride. He made clear that his accomplishments were the fruit of God's grace to him and through him (Romans 15:17-19).

Occasionally Paul mentions boasting, but this is a matter of highlighting what God has done by his grace, either through Paul or in those in the churches. It is never self-exalting.

These days most of us will say that we are proud of our children or our favourite sports team or perhaps something we have accomplished. In cases like this, we are (one hopes) saying that we are really pleased about something good and are not engaging in the sinful type of pride and arrogance the Bible condemns.

## Humility

Pride is a universal human problem. Everyone suffers from it to some degree. When we have exalted ourselves in pride, God does not want to punish us and bring us low but rather to forgive and restore us. He says again and again in Scripture, humble yourselves, and I will exalt you. This gives us hope and encouragement.

God takes pleasure in our efforts to humble ourselves, and he loves to bless and exalt the humble. For just as pride is the root of all sin, so "humility is the root, mother, nurse, foundation, and bond of all virtue," as John Chrysostom once remarked.

Admittedly, humility and the humbling of oneself is out of fashion in today's world and seems unappealing to most of us. However, as Jonathan Edwards said:

*"We must view humility as one of the most essential things that characterises true Christianity."*

Our perspective on humility can be radically changed if we will ponder and meditate on the greatest

*God takes pleasure in our efforts to humble ourselves, and He loves to bless and exalt the humble.*



example of humility in history: Jesus Christ.

By the very act of leaving heaven, coming to earth, and taking the form of man, he demonstrated an unfathomable humbling of himself. Throughout his life on earth, Jesus demonstrated a spirit of profound humility, saying that he came “not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28) [ESV]

On his last night with the disciples, he took a towel and basin and washed their dirty feet (John 13:1-11), instructing them to follow his example of servanthood with one another (John 13:12-17). Andrew Murray captures it well:

*“Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself in the garb of meekness and gentleness, to win and serve and save us.”<sup>8</sup>*

The apostle Paul may well have been thinking of this very scene in the

Upper Room when he urged the believers in Philippi:

*“Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* (Philippians 2:5-8) [ESV]

Paul is here encouraging ordinary believers in a local church, who apparently have some measure of sinful pride in their hearts and relationships, to reflect on and adopt the attitude and actions of Jesus their Lord and follow his example of humility.

The consequences of such an attitude may give us pause. Humbling ourselves could be costly in the workplace, in the community, or in other ways. However, that is a

short-sighted, worldly perspective. For the passage continues:

*“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:9-11) [ESV]

In Jesus we have the ‘example of all examples’: those who humble themselves will be exalted! And this is meant to guide our lives in this world. If we will take care of humbling ourselves, we can trust God to take care of exalting us.

**How do we gain** the mind of Christ and humble ourselves? To put on the mind of Christ, we will need to make a firm decision to ponder, understand, and adopt Jesus’ way of thinking; his values and attitudes must become ours. His strong emphasis on humility and meekness and his example of it must take hold of our thinking, our desires and our conduct.

We must admire his humility and want it for ourselves. For this to happen, we need to earnestly and regularly pray for the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, for it is impossible to do it in our own strength.

We will also need to understand what Jesus meant when he called men and women to humble themselves. We discover that from the Greek word Jesus and the apostles used, *tapeinos*, which conveys the idea of having a right view of ourselves before God and others.<sup>9</sup>

If pride is an exalted sense of who we are in relation to God and others, humility is having a realistic sense of who we are before God and others. We must not think too highly (or too lowly) of ourselves. Rather, we must be honest and realistic about who and what we are.

This lies behind Paul’s thinking when he tells the Romans:



*"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment." (Romans 12:3) [ESV]*

He then proceeds to instruct the believers in how to use the spiritual gifts God has imparted to them to serve one another (Romans 12:4-8). In other words, humility is having a right view of ourselves in relation to God and others and acting accordingly.

**What is a right view** of ourselves? Specifics will vary from person to person, but certain things are common to us all. We are God's creatures: small, finite, dependent, limited in intelligence and ability, prone to sin, and soon to die and face God's judgment (Hebrews 9:27). But we are also God's children: created, loved, and redeemed by God's grace alone, not by anything in or of ourselves; and gifted by God with certain unique gifts, abilities, resources, and advantages, which are to be used for his glory.

*As Paul reminds the Corinthians: "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) [ESV]*

Frequently reminding ourselves of these things is important.

Having a right view of God and ourselves has a profound effect on our relationships with others. As Paul goes on to say in Romans:

*"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly." (Romans 12:16) [ESV]*

And as he said to the Philippians:

*"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others*

*more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4) [ESV]*

As we refuse to be preoccupied with ourselves and our own importance and seek to love and serve others, it will reorient us from self-centredness to other-centredness - to serving and caring for others just as Jesus did for us. In the narcissistic culture of contemporary America, this is a particularly powerful counter-cultural witness of Christ's presence and lordship in our lives.

Truly, humility is our greatest friend. It increases our hunger for God's word and opens our hearts to his Spirit. It leads to intimacy with God, who knows the proud from afar, but dwells with him:

*"who is of a contrite and lowly spirit." (Isaiah 57:15) [ESV]*

It imparts the aroma of Christ to all whom we encounter. It is a sign of greatness in the kingdom of God

(Luke 22:24-27).

**Developing** the identity, attitude, and conduct of a humble servant does not happen overnight. It is rather like peeling an onion: you cut away one layer only to find another beneath it. But it does happen.

As we forsake pride and seek to humble ourselves by daily deliberate choices in dependence on the Holy Spirit, humility grows in our souls. Fenelon said it well:

*"Humility is not a grace that can be acquired in a few months: it is the work of a lifetime."*

And it is a grace that is precious in the sight of God, who in due course will exalt all who embrace it. [END]

## Biography:

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Prior to coming to the Institute, he served as co-pastor of Christ Our Shepherd Church and Director of The School for Urban Mission, both based in Washington, D.C.

He is the author of two books and is a consultant for Church Discipleship Services, developing discipleship programs and materials to strengthen the local church. Tom earned a Master of Divinity Degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary. He is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Church Alliance.

## Notes:

1. C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: Simon & Schuster Touchstone edition, 1996), 109, 111.
  2. See Augustine, The City of God 14.13; Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, ques. 84.
  3. Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 1:398-404.
  4. Gordon Allport, quoted in Solomon Schimmel, The Seven Deadly Sins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28.
  5. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 112.
  6. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 109.
  7. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 110.
  8. Andrew Murray, Humility (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, nd), 17.
  9. Colin Brown, The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 2:259.
- [ESV] The Holy Bible, English Standard Version  
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## Words of Wisdom

*"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."*

C.S. Lewis

## Join the Ranks



by Thomas  
Devenish  
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Columnist

I'm a big fan of asking questions, and adhere to the old Chinese proverb that "He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; he who does not ask a question is a fool forever." But the right questions can do more than build up mere factual knowledge, they can be a powerful catalyst for introspection, bringing about insight and change in our lives.

I was once asked such a question in the midst of an everyday conversation, and would like to share it with you. It had started with what appeared to be a fairly standard question, merely to start conversation:

"Who do you admire?"

I answered rather broadly, naming some of my favourite Christian heroes: Charles Spurgeon, Gladys Aylward, and Paul Washer...

But the question that followed it up was flame to powder. Read it slowly:

"What would you need to change in your life today to become more like that person?"

When I heard that, a light clicked on: these people that I admire were in a sense just like me. They weren't born with great powers, on a higher plane to us mere mortals; they were men and women who breathed the same air I now breath, had the same physical needs, the same desires.

A different century perhaps, but still no more or less human than I am today.

I'm reminded of the old story about some tourists visiting a quaint village in the heart of Europe. They asked one of the locals, "Have any great men had been born in this town?"

He shook his head and replied, "No, Only babies!"

The Bible declares that "God has no favourites" (Romans chapter 2, verse 11). The people that I admire weren't born great Christians; they made daily choices across the course of their lives to follow Christ, choices that I also can make.

They went through trials, they fought battles, and won, but not without getting scratched. And maybe that's why I haven't emulated them completely, because I see that they paid a price, a heavy cost, to live the lives that they did. They sacrificed their

comforts and pleasures for the greatest cause of all, knowing and being known by God.

But one thing is clear; the only thing stopping me from being like them is me. Am I willing to make the necessary changes in my life to become like the people I admire? Or am I happy with my status quo, my comfort zone, my little version of living a Christian life?

Am I just going to read the books about the great heroes of the faith, observing their lives from afar? Or am I going to dive in and join their ranks, marching to the same beat of the heavenly drums they followed? [END]

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*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.*

*Thomas Devenish's previous articles may be viewed at [www.pressserviceinternational.org/thomas-devenish.html](http://www.pressserviceinternational.org/thomas-devenish.html)*





# How to Help Your Persecuted Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Open Doors®

by Vicki Nunn

## Introduction

The world today seems like a much scarier place than it did when I was a child. Personally I've been struggling to know how we as Christians are supposed to love those who are hurting and murdering others for power or in the name of their religion.

In Australia we've been quite fortunate in that we've never known real terrorism on a large scale like other people around the world. It's impossible for many of us to imagine having to live with that enormous stress and fear, day in and day out, of having our homes destroyed and loved ones maimed and killed, though recent events have brought this reality closer than ever before.

For those without God as the foundation of their lives, life must seem to have little meaning or purpose or even hope.

## We Have a Hope

As Christians, we have a hope and strength in Christ. While the terrible events can sometimes encourage us to feel helpless, afraid, and fearful for the future, we can either allow ourselves to feel overwhelmed and powerless or we can choose to use one of the most powerful weapons at our disposal: **PRAYER**.

We should not choose to turn a blind eye to the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should open our eyes to what is happening and find ways to help.

God reminds us that we should pray for our brothers and sisters in

Christ who are being persecuted for their faith, and to help them if possible:

*"Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable."* Proverbs 31:8 [CEB]

*"Remember those imprisoned for their beliefs as if you were their cellmate; and care for any who suffer harsh treatment, as you are all one body."* Hebrews 13:3 [VOICE]

The statistics are startling: over 200 million Christians around the world suffer some form of persecution.

There are a number of organisations who help the persecuted in a variety of ways.

## Persecution.org and Open Doors

### Advocacy

These organisations advocate for the persecuted by working towards changing legal legislation. We can ask our own government leaders to do the same, or bring these needs to their attention and ask them to help.

### Awareness

They bring awareness of what is happening around the world and how it impacts our brothers and sisters. We can do the same by encouraging our family and friends to pray and to let them know about it. We can encourage our Pastors to provide information to our congregation.

### Assistance

They seek to strengthen the church by giving financial assistance to the persecuted sometimes including micro loans and business development. Education is provided to the poor and they are assisted to step out and help support their own churches.

They may provide safe houses and give food and medical aid. Care is provided to those who have lost a spouse or family member.

They give support to Pastors and Bibles and Christian literature to Christians who wouldn't otherwise have access to it. They train Pastors in various ways such as how to run literacy courses.

They help to rebuild communities when possible. Importantly, they try to provide legal assistance to Christians who have been imprisoned for their faith, or to stop people and authorities that try to shut down their churches.

## How We Can Make a Difference

**Pray ... pray ... pray!** What a wonderful power we have in prayer! We can give our email address to these organisations and receive regular newsletters and suggestions for specific prayers.

SPAG Magazine has a page set aside with prayer requests, which is regularly updated. While many stories are heart-breaking, I personally find that it's very helpful in my prayer time to focus on the needs of my brothers and sisters, and it provides me with a real perspective to my own, small problems.

We can donate to this very worthwhile cause or fundraise. Additionally we can become volunteers, or perhaps write to a fellow believer and offer them encouragement! Can you imagine how much a few loving, caring words to a suffering Christian might feel when in the midst of terrible trials?

Will you consider how you can help? Will you consider including regular prayers for your brothers and sisters? In God's eyes they are as highly loved and valued as me and you. [END]

## Websites:

<http://www.persecution.org>

<https://www.opendoors.org.au>





# Happiness Habits: Putting Off Procrastination

*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 good 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.

*"Procrastination is opportunity's assassin."* Victor Kiam

## Introduction

Are you the Prince or Princess of Procrastination or perhaps the Lord or Lady of Laziness? Come join the human race, because we can all be prone to bouts of both of these not-so-healthy traits.

Occasional procrastination is fine, but when it starts to control our behaviours and our life, rather than us being in control, then we need to seriously look at how it is impacting us. We also need to understand that laziness and procrastination can have a hugely negative impact on our happiness.

## Laziness vs Procrastination

What is the difference between laziness and procrastination? While these two behaviours do overlap, there are some differences. Here are the two definitions from the online Oxford Dictionary:

**Laziness:** *noun* - the quality of being unwilling to work or use energy; idleness.

**Procrastination:** *noun* - the action of delaying or postponing something.

The difference between the two is the willingness to undertake a task. Laziness is an active choice of will to NOT do something, whereas procrastination means we choose to delay a task while believing that at some point we will still have to do it.

Although we may occasionally be a little lazy, in general most people are more guilty of procrastination than laziness, so we'll focus more on the concept of procrastination.

## In What Ways Do We Procrastinate?

We can find ourselves giving in to procrastination in several areas:

- *at home:* two things that are high on most people's procrastination list include housework and particularly clutter;
- *health:* getting exercise, eating more healthily, taking medication or going to the doctor;
- *our education:* we may delay study or courses because it takes up so much time and we understand that it will require a commitment and effort of will;

- *careers:* being willing to try new tasks, learning new things or completing courses may seem a little scary or sounds like it's just too hard;
- *relationships:* we can put off trying to resolve broken relationships, particularly those with family members and people that are difficult to get along with; and
- *as Christians:* we may also be guilty of procrastinating putting more effort into our relationship with God, reading the Bible, prayer time or getting involved with our church, and we may even put off consciously listening to God's leading or teaching in our lives.

## How Can Procrastination Cause Us Unhappiness?

Initially when we procrastinate, we may feel glad that we postponed that dreaded chore. The problem with resisting tasks which we find boring or bothersome or that seem too large to tackle, is that they won't get done on their own. There is no magic fairy on standby, ready to do our work, so the task sits there unresolved, reminding us constantly that it still needs to be done, particularly if it's something like housework – and we can only turn a blind eye to mess and dirtiness for so long.







If we allow time to pass or other tasks to pile up undone, the pressure in our mind increases. Eventually the pile of tasks can become so huge that it's difficult to know how to tackle it, which can lead to more procrastination and add to our stress.

This can be particularly true of aims such as looking after our health or improving our education. We may suddenly find that years have passed and that the resolution we made to improve ourselves when we were young remains unresolved and regret can take up residence in our minds and hearts, and contribute to our unhappiness.

Living in a pig-sty or having a large list of incomplete tasks to undertake can make us grumpy and even depressed because we can't ignore it, and in our mind it can take on gigantic dimensions that make us believe it will be too huge or even impossible to do on our own, or even that it's too late to try and resolve it.

Research of a group of more than 10,000 people indicated that 94% of those who procrastinate believe it impacts negatively on their happiness, with around 19% claiming that it's enormously negative.<sup>1</sup>

It can impact our relationships by causing us to put off things until the last minute and make us late for appointments with friends and loved ones, and in the workplace we'll soon develop a reputation for tardiness or slackness.

Procrastination can become such a chronic condition that it impacts hugely on relationships and our career. I knew a man in his 60s who we'll call Bob, who had left his marriage and his children when he was a young man, after he discovered that his wife had been unfaithful.

Angry, confused and hurt, Bob stayed away until he realised one day that years had passed. He'd procrastinated reuniting with his children for so long that he would no longer consider even trying to find them. He believed his children would hate him and blame him for abandoning them and so he procrastinated for longer and longer.

Bob was not a happy man because in his own mind he was a failure and he couldn't bear the thought of the condemnation in his children's eyes if ever they were to meet. When the thought of his children rose in his mind, he would push it away and try to ignore it, but it hovered there in the background of his mind, nagging at him and reminding him of his failure as a father and perhaps even as a human being.

Bob's procrastination impacted on other areas in his life as a consequence: he never had a successful career and simply flitted from one short-term, dead-end job to another and he rarely stayed in one place for more than a few years at a time. Though he was desperate to find someone to love, he struggled to maintain healthy relationships. It was if he believed he didn't deserve happiness or perhaps even that he deserved to be punished for his failure.

### How Do We Overcome Procrastination?

One of the biggest reasons that we resist tackling our procrastination is

that we've let things go for so long, that it's grown from a molehill to a mountain! We may baulk at the size of the task or dread that it's going to be boring.

Perhaps we fear failure or if it's in the workplace, some people may fear that they'll be so good at the task that they'll be given more difficult jobs that are beyond their capability and then perhaps people will think they're failures. On the other side of the coin are the perfectionists who won't begin a new task until they've completed the one they're currently working on - perfectly.

### Tackling Procrastination

Let's look at some ways that we can tackle our problem with procrastination:

1. *Be honest about it.* We often fail to recognise that procrastination is a personal choice. We must be honest with ourselves and look at all of the areas of our life where our procrastination is having an impact:
  - work?
  - relationships?
  - household chores?
  - health?
2. *Take small bites.* Rather than allowing ourselves to feel overwhelmed by how much there is to do or how much we need to change. We should remind ourselves that we can tackle this issue one small step at a time.

We can set ourselves a goal of attempting just the one task and try to complete as much as we can in a set period such as 20 minutes. Some people may find that setting an alarm may even help. Once the period has elapsed, take a five minute break and remind ourselves of how far we have come, rather than focus on what there is yet to do.

3. *Try to make it interesting.* What can we do to make the task a little more fun? When I'm at home, I find that playing music helps to

pass the time and I sing along, or perhaps we can throw in some dance moves! If we lack imagination on how to make it more interesting, perhaps we could ask a friend for suggestions.

4. *Be aware of distractions.* What are the things that distract us from completing our tasks? Do we put computer games, phone calls or social media ahead of our tasks? We can switch that around – we can compensate ourselves with these as a reward once the task is complete, and allow ourselves just a short time of five minutes to enjoy it.

5. *Focus on one thing at a time.* While I may be able to watch TV and knit at the same time, I know that I can't give my full attention to both. Most individual tasks require our undivided attention so we should just focus on one thing at a time.

If we're feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the tasks, we can tackle the easier jobs to begin, eg washing the dishes. Once it's completed, we should allow ourselves a moment or two to feel good about it, and to enjoy how clean and tidy it is. I know that when my bed is made and my room is tidy, it makes me feel good when I step into my bedroom because it looks so nice. Go ahead and feel proud of your achievement!

6. *Set ourselves a goal.* Once we begin to tackle this problem, we can begin to set ourselves achievable goals, such as washing our clothes once a week. In fact, some people put aside a set day and a time to complete a particular chore, eg Saturday mornings may be the time to wash our clothes. We should aim to do all of our clothes, and not just what we think we're going to need for the next few days.

I love that sense of freedom I feel when I've completed my washing and then later have put it

away, because I know that I won't have to think about it for another week, and I'll have plenty of clean clothes to last me for seven days, including my favourite shirts.

There are a couple of monthly chores that I always aim to complete on the first day of the month, otherwise it's far too easy for me to forget to do them.

As I recognise that I have a shocking memory for some things, I've added reminders into my phone to tackle certain chores.

7. *Time it.* One of the lies we use to convince ourselves to procrastinate is that a particular job will take too long or that we have more important things to do.

The fact is, that it often takes far less time than we think to do the task, particularly those everyday household chores that most procrastinators hate, eg making the bed, washing the dishes or tidying up.

When I recognised I was lying to myself about those annoying little tasks, I started timing how long it actually took to complete them. I now know that making my bed takes me less than one minute and whenever I want to make an excuse **not** to do it, I cannot justify NOT doing it. Thirty-seven seconds to make my bed? Of course I can manage that! In fact, sometimes I try to set a new record just to make it a little more

interesting for myself.

8. *Do it as we go:* some tasks do take more effort than others, but we can make it easier on ourselves by doing what we can along the way. This concept can help in the workplace too, and it's something that I do while I'm working on SPAG Magazine. An example of this is completing the details of web-pages that I access. This is a particularly tiresome chore that I don't enjoy at all, but if I write it into the bibliography page, after I finish with research on the one website, it doesn't seem such an enormous and horribly tedious job. If I leave it till the end, after the magazine is almost ready, I really, really hate it. I'm usually feeling quite stressed by that stage anyway and the last thing I want to face is that dreary task.

Another example is washing up at home – I thoroughly rinse the dishes and utensils etc with hot water after I finish using them. Then when it's time to wash them properly, there's no crusty, horrible bits stuck to the items, and then it doesn't take as much effort to clean them.

9. *Declutter the clutter.* Research suggests that we can waste up to thirty minutes a day looking for lost items. When we can't find something we're looking for, it can encourage us to procrastinate.

One way that we can help to





eliminate clutter and the frustration that goes with looking for lost keys and other items, is to become more organised.

As I have a terrible short-term memory, I will rarely remember where I put things and so I've trained myself to place items in a particular place. It made no sense to me to spend valuable time looking for lost items - valuable time that I could be spending doing things that I enjoy.

I encourage you to put the effort into learning how to declutter - there are various websites that can help you with suggestions on how to do this.

From my own personal experience, I can tell you how much simpler and less stressful it has made my life to be clutter-free, but it took me several years to fine-tune my home and to train myself.

10. *Planning our schedule.* Along with my bad short-term memory is the inability to remember birthdays and appointments. (Strangely I have a remarkable memory for numbers such as bank accounts, tax numbers, medical numbers etc.)

If we are disorganised with our time and miss appointments, it can encourage us to procrastinate in the future. I'm so grateful for modern technology and the fact that I can easily add my appointments, birthdays and other important reminders into my

phone. I know of other people who prefer using an old-fashioned pocket calendar. Whatever way you prefer, don't delay in beginning this very helpful habit.

When I first began using a pocket diary many years ago, it took me three years to train myself to use it faithfully and to check it regularly, but it has been an absolute godsend.

### Conclusion

The wonderful thing about overcoming our natural inclination to procrastinate is that it usually results in us having a more pleasurable leisure time, because we aren't thinking about what needs to be done, or having to walk around the mess in the corner, or forgetting to attend that appointment or engagement.

### Conclusion

*Do it:* now that you've gotten this far into the article, is there are a little chore that you can complete right now? Did you say no? Dare I suggest that you may be lying to yourself about your answer?

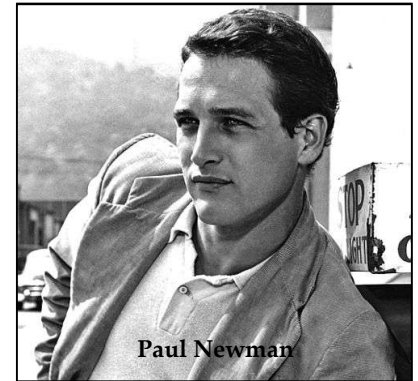
In fact, I'm going to finish the article so that you can get up and go and do it RIGHT NOW ... oh, and don't forget to time it - you may be surprised how little effort it actually takes! [END]

1. Procrastination Research Group, website:  
<http://http-server.carleton.ca/~tpychyl/>



## Tantalising Trivia

### - Before They Were Famous -



Did you know that the actor Anthony Quinn once used to shine shoes out the front of a church?

Paul Newman collected and cleaned golf balls and actor Robert Redford used to create art on pavements in Paris.

Alan Alda of MASH fame, was once a taxi driver, a doorman and a clown before he became famous.

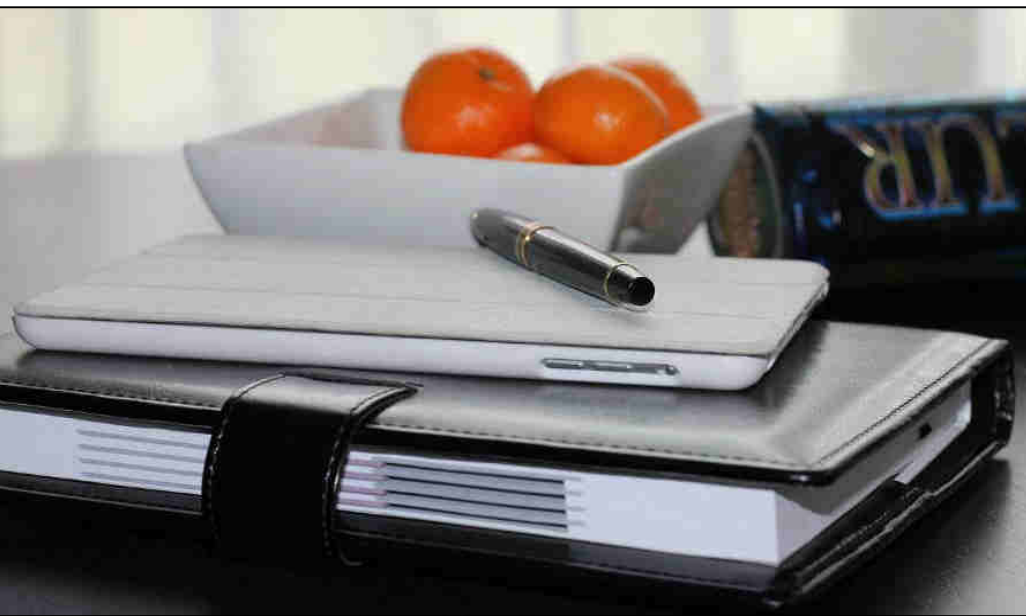
Jack Nicholson started out sorting mail for cartoon characters Tom and Jerry, and Sylvester Stallone was once a trainee beautician.

Then there was Warren Beatty who held a job as a rat-catcher and Michael Caine who was a meat carrier.

Bond actor Roger Moore once worked as a model for knitting patterns and Lee Marvin cleaned out septic tanks.

Ronald Reagan, the former actor and US President held a position as a lifeguard and Walter Matthau worked as a filing clerk.

The classic actor Cary Grant once worked as a sandwich man, with signs on his back and front and he walked around on stilts, and lastly, Sean Connery had a job as a French polisher for a coffin maker.





# How to Prevent Your Life From Falling Apart

Those of us who know Jesus are not immune to the temptations of the sands. We must have discernment to recognise what is a tool (like a medication perhaps) and what is a temptation (like a pain clinic that insist you use the New Age techniques).

Sand will always swirl around—and that is to be expected. We must draw close to God to gain wisdom so we can recognise which sands to use and which ones to flee from. But regardless of how appropriate a sand may be, we should never build our life on it.

Our heart must always place God as the King of all. Things which offer us relief from pain will always compete for an idol position in our life. When they stop working, we can go into depression, lash out at those we love, and even be at risk of losing our faith in God - because He didn't answer our prayer the way we expected.

When God is on the throne, our life is built on rock. Sands will swirl, but our life will stand firm.

**Prayer:** God, I try to keep my focus in You, but I consistently must ask You to search my soul to make sure I am not being distracted by that which the world offers. Help me know when You have provided a tool to ease my pain and which sands I should avoid. Amen.

Following is a website address for the song "Solid Rock" by the group 4Him. This group no longer exists but their music has beautiful harmony and I had their tapes way back when.

I hope it blesses you today. (Song website address: <https://youtu.be/kC-UyIgoaLU>)

## 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.

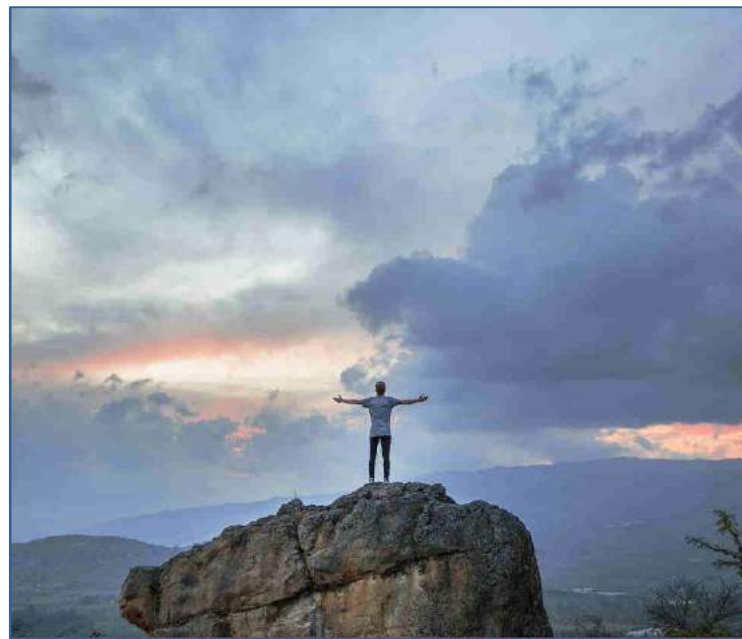
Lisa has lived with rheumatoid arthritis for over 22 years and resides in San Diego, California, USA with her husband and teenage son.

## Links:

<http://RestMinistries.com>  
<http://illnessbooks.com>  
<http://LisaOnTwitter.com>  
<http://facebook.com/restministries>  
<http://pinterest.com/restministries>

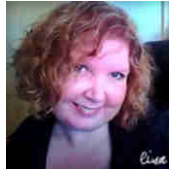
## Bibliography:

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Ministering to those  
with Chronic Illness

by Lisa Copen



What simple choice can you make to ensure that your life doesn't fall apart when something goes wrong?

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock... But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7:24, 26,27). [NIV]*

On what are you building your life-rock or sand? Each year as Rest Ministries sponsors National Invisible Illness Awareness Week, I hear hundreds of illness stories - especially the emotional pain.

As an outreach to a community of sufferers - most of whom do not know the Lord - it is heart-wrenching because most stories don't end with hope. Suffering is extra painful when you do not have the presence of Jesus.

There is no shortage of "sand" for people to build their lives on. Medications, research and science, support organisations, herbal treatments, the next New Age practice. We are bombarded with "answers" to ease our suffering. And yet, with one shift of the sands, they all tumble away.

But what of those who have heard God's words of where to put our faith and hope? *"... everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man..."*

# Holy Days are Here Again



by Ron Ross

"Every day for more than a millennium, since the time of Moses, the priests had offered sacrifices for the sins of God's people at the third hour and the ninth hour – at dawn and at three in the afternoon."

"And each year since the time of Moses, Israel had celebrated Passover, and the priests had offered the daily sacrifice at three in the afternoon before Shabbat and the Feast of Unleavened Bread."

"Now all those offerings came to one great, final conclusion as God's Lamb, presented to the people He rode into Jerusalem on lamb-selection day, was offered at the exact hour of the last sacrifice of Passover." (Echoes of His Presence, Ray Vander Laan, Focus

on the Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado)

Quite a few years ago, those words by Ray Vander Laan touched me deeply. I pictured Jesus riding on the donkey, into Jerusalem, on lamb-selection day and that fact, brought me to my knees, overwhelmed. God is amazing and His covenant is specific and provable. He has never detoured from His plan to bring us into His Kingdom.

*"The spiritual does not come first, but the physical and then the spiritual."* 1 Corinthians 15:46 [GW].

Your body, the natural, was formed, then came life, the spiritual. This same formula is applied to the link between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter. Understanding the principles of Passover uncovers the riches of Easter.

## Passover

Passover is the most ancient of Jewish festivals. For seven days in Israel Passover celebrates the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:13). They were slaves before Pharaoh let them go.

Easter proclaims the freedom found when Jesus rescues the sinner from the bondage of sin.

"My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee,"

Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn, 'And can it be I should Gain.' (Am I showing my age with that illustration?)

Jesus made salvation available by the shedding of His blood, a gesture directly linked to ancient traditions. The word 'blood' appears 346 times in the Old Testament (KJV translation), and 101 times in the New Testament, according to research published by Angelfall.com.

It helps to understand the season of Passover is closely identified with the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread held in spring to symbolize the beginning of new life.

Every year Jews remember they were redeemed from Egyptian slavery by slaughtering an unblemished lamb. Jesus is called our Passover. The Apostle Paul who studied under the great Jewish sage Rabbi Gamaliel, wrote:

*"For our Pesach (Passover) lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed."* 1 Corinthians 5:7 [CJB]

John the Baptist referred to Jesus as

*"...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* John 1:29b [CEV]

He died in Jerusalem at Passover time.

When Jews celebrate Passover they share in the Seder (meaning 'order' or 'arrangement' in Hebrew). They recall Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the suffering in Egypt of their people. The miracle of their redemption by the parting of the Sea of Reeds is joyfully acknowledged.

Until recently, reclining was preferred during the Seder.



Jesus entering Jerusalem in time for Passover





The last supper

Resting on the left side, gave freedom for the right hand to handle food and drink. Reclining was regarded as a form of freedom and equality. No one sat at the head of the table. It was a communal affair.

### Wine is a Symbol

Wine is a symbol of joy and happiness and four cups of wine are served.

Why four cups? "The accepted explanation is that these four cups symbolize the four expressions of redemption that are found in the Book of Exodus:

"I will bring you out...I will deliver you...I will redeem you...I will take you to me for a

people." (Passover, Keter Books, Jerusalem)

Right at the end of the Seder, comes an incredible event. It involves the 'afikomen' a Greek word meaning dessert. The afikomen is matzah, a bread made with flour, water and salt. It can be round, square or rectangular but it is flat and quite crisp. Three pieces of the afikomen are covered by a cloth. The host takes the middle piece, breaks it in half, replaces one piece under the cloth but hides the second portion earlier.

Within Ashkenazi groups, children at the Seder are invited to find the hidden piece. the winner is rewarded. Maybe this game was designed to keep the youngsters awake!

Consider the matzah, striped and pierced, even to this day. He was pierced and striped for our sins. (Isaiah 53:5) Even the Afikomen, which was hidden for a moment, reminds us of the Lord who made Himself known to us, and brought us to the Father and brought us eternal freedom, a reward to be treasured

### His Word is Life

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

*They said to him', "Sir, give us this bread always." 'Jesus said to them', "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." [ESV]*

John 6:32-35 [END]

**About the author:** Ron Ross is a Middle East consultant for United Christian Broadcasters (Vision FM). Previously he was radio news editor for Bridges for Peace in Jerusalem, Israel. His career started at WINTV Ron Ross' previous articles may be viewed at:

<http://www.pressserviceinternational.org/ron-ross.html>

Email: [ronandyvonne@mac.com](mailto:ronandyvonne@mac.com)

### Bibliography:

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[ESV] English Standard Version - the Holy Bible, English Standard Version Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

[CJB] Complete Jewish Bible. Copyright © 1998 by David H. Stern. All rights reserved.





# Last Year I Was Unmarried - Now I'm Single



by Kurt  
Mahlburg

When my older sister happily married at 21, I was going to be just as happy and just as married by the time I was 21. So I thought.

This year I turned 31, and I am very much single. The strangest thing about this isn't my persisting life stage, but that it took me over a decade for my life stage to actually dawn on me.

Shouldn't the fact that I'm single have been more obvious?

Well up until a few short months ago, I'd spent over a decade considering myself not yet married. But there's a world of difference between not yet married and single.

Not yet married means lack, yearning, incompleteness, discon-

tentment. I'd had a decade of it, and finally called enough, enough. Now I'm single. The great thing about single is that it actually just means single.

## New Beginnings, New Furniture

An odd set of circumstances lead me to being single.\* Mid last year I was about to move house, but three months would pass before my new tenancy began. I looked around my place and realised that, through the generosity of friends and strangers; the frugality of my student years; and the help of a score of ex-housemates who'd

married and moved out, I was now the sole owner of a large collection of horrific looking furniture.

To store this junk for three months would cost time, effort, and money better wasted elsewhere. The only sensible option was to give it away.

As one smiling, thankful Gumtree customer after another collected their free chairs, tables and random dust-collecting oddments, the weight began to lift from my shoulders. I imagined what it would be like to purchase furniture for my new rental that didn't make me cringe, and that I actually enjoyed using.

Three months later, I did just that - along with new linen, plants, furnishings, and a veggie patch. This is an embarrassingly mundane paragraph for me to write. Except that these changes

embodied a defining paradigm shift that brought with it unforeseen contentment. My life was no longer on hold for some future, imagined event. In fact, even the word contentment - implying toleration - fails to capture it. I'm now not merely content being single. I'm satisfied.

If I marry and have children, it will be a blessing from God and a dream fulfilled. I think marriage and family are incredible, and I love and support my many friends who are enjoying that life stage.

But for me, marriage is no longer ultimate. I don't lack, I'm not yearning, incomplete or discontent. I'm not unmarried. I'm single. See the difference?

## The Shrine to Romance

You can't go through an experience like this and not have it affect the way you think about other spheres of life. For me, as a pastor, this has made me question some of Christian culture's fundamental values.

Rightly, church communities place a high value on marriage, children and family. God does: so should we.

Parallel to this, the world would have us believe that romance is everything - that the companionship, sex and fulfilment found in an intimate relationship is the summit of a lifelong search, the fullest expression of what it means to be human.

Could it be that the Christian culture I grew up in confused those two messages? In the paragraph above, have we simply replaced the word romance with

*There's a world of difference between not yet married and single.*



marriage? Have we gone beyond marriage is good to marriage is ultimate? Has family become a synonym for fulfilment?

### **We Celebrate What We Value**

That message may not be preached, but from the vantage point of a single, it seems widely implied. Scripture esteems singleness as perhaps even preferable to marriage in the freedom it affords us to serve the Lord without distraction. But where is singleness celebrated in the church?

Church-wide events are shaped predominantly with the family unit in mind. Unlike engaged couples, singles who decide to remain as they are instead of settling for a poor choice in life partner aren't applauded. Community matriarchs are more likely to enquire with young people about a rumoured relationship than the joys and struggles of ministry as a single

person. Singles aren't honoured with glorious ceremonies, lavish banquets and generous gift-giving for consecrating themselves to single-minded service to God.

I don't think singleness needs to be lauded with all the pageantry of marriage. But I am trying to identify a sanctified idolatry, widespread in Christian culture: if you're married, you've made it. If you're single, don't worry, you'll get there eventually.

With this message we do a great injustice to singles. The words second class citizen spring to mind.

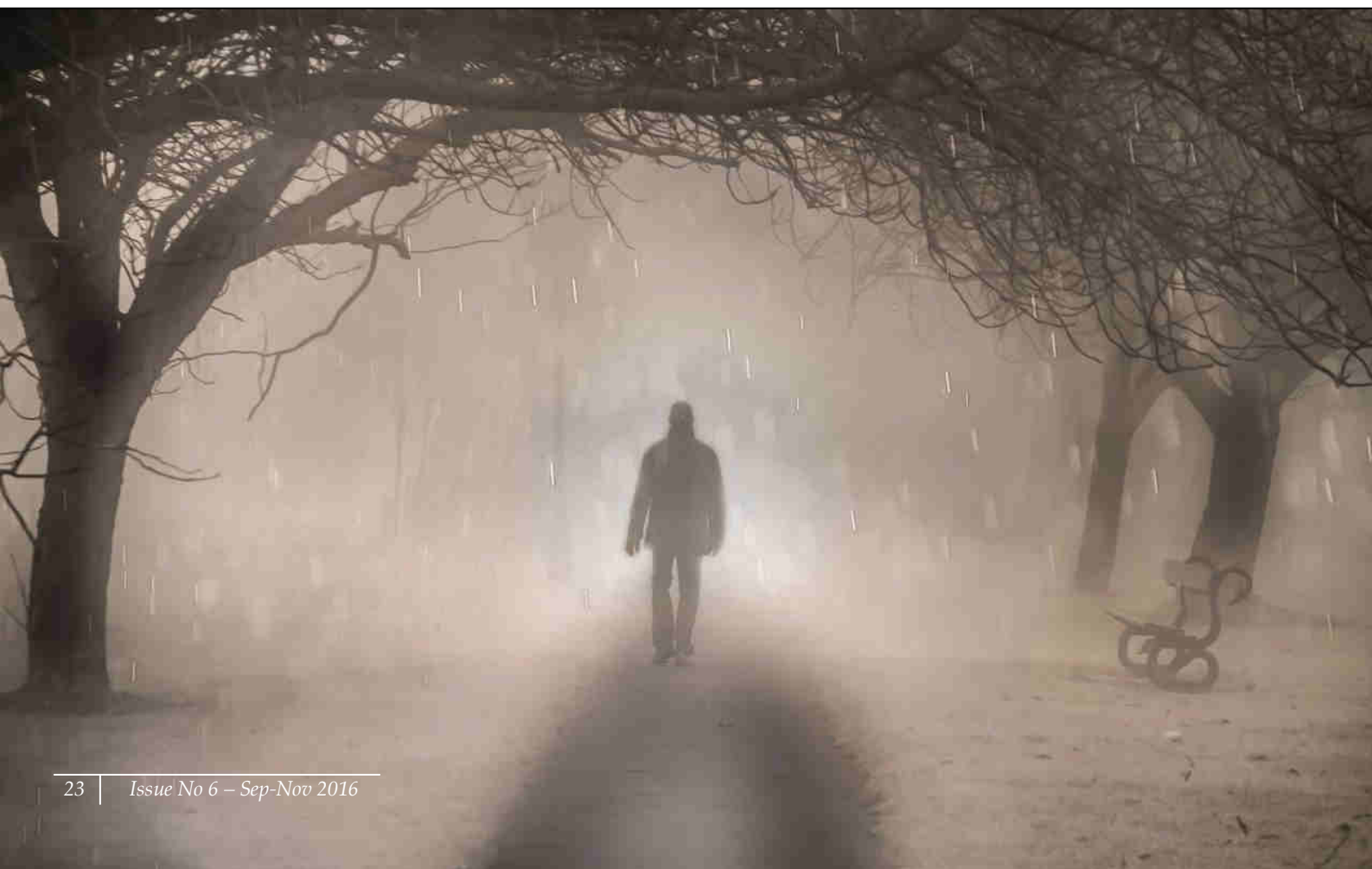
We do a great injustice to those in our midst struggling with same-sex attraction. If even after much prayer that attraction remains for

a lifetime and they choose to walk the narrow way of Jesus, our message to them is that even with such selfless sacrifice, they'll never make it.

*In the church, have  
we gone beyond  
marriage is good  
to marriage is  
ultimate?*

We also do a great injustice to the many young people who, and I'm quoting now, "just had to get married because I couldn't be alone". Isn't God supposed to fulfil of that depth of longing? This injustice is multiplied when the one they married doesn't walk with Jesus. They have the love they were told was the end-game, but now ministry is a lonely road, or far worse, an abandoned one.

Singleness isn't better than marriage. But it's certainly not worse. According to Scripture, singleness is just as "Christian" as marriage. What we celebrate as a community makes it clear what



we value as a community. So I'll just leave this question here: how can singles be celebrated in church life?

### Singleness Can't Be Done Alone

Like marriage, singleness has its pros and cons. I admire my older sister and my brother-in-law who with incredible patience and skill are raising three adorably mischievous boys I get to call my nephews. And I breathe a sigh of relief when we tuck the boys into bed after Monday night dinners and I wonder at how they survive each day.

I'm thankful for uninterrupted sleep, the freedom of a dawn surf whenever my calendar allows, quiet times that are in fact quiet, and the ability to work a 60 hour week at church when I need to, without any of my relationships paying the price. Paul was for real when he wrote about the undivided priorities of the single life.

But I'm also thankful to people who understand its difficulties - like my older sister and her family

(and other friends - you know who you are) who don't "host" me for "events" but consider me a member of the family, welcome anytime. Singles don't have families of their own, so they love being made part of one.

I'm thankful to those who understand that I'm a verbal processor and, without a partner to debrief the day with, know to ask, "how was your day?"

I'm thankful for the many people in my church who recognise that though I don't have a family to go home to, and though my time is therefore flexible, I still need boundaries and time out and opportunities to just be me, not a pastor.

### Right Where God Has Me

Last year when I was still unmarried, puzzled, my senior pastor asked me why I'd been taking so few holidays. I was aware that this was the case, but likewise couldn't work out why. I love time off. And then it occurred to me: married couples have guaranteed company when they holiday, but for me, four weeks of time away alone would only remind me of how desperately lonely and unmarried I was.

Now I'm single. As I write this, I also happen to be on holidays, on a beach on the NSW coast. I'm away camping with my younger, also single sister. Tomorrow I'm hiking for four days with a mate

who's married but knew I had holidays and invited me along. I'm thankful for people like this too. Singleness has its challenges, and it takes some creativity - and the considered help of others - to do it well. But it can be done well.

Life hasn't turned out quite the way I expected. I'll never be married at 21. I won't be a young dad like I once hoped. I've had to grieve over that. I've loved and lost, more than once. It hurt, more than I naively imagined it could. I'm single - not for want of trying, but because it seems this is where God wants me. Like marriage, it's not ultimate. But it is good, and I am thankful. [END]

### About the author:

*Out of high school Karl studied architecture, lived on a remote island in Indonesia for two life-changing years, became a primary school teacher, and since the start of 2014 has been the Associate Pastor (Youth and Young Adults) at Aldgate Baptist in the Adelaide Hills, Australia.*

*Among the things he can't get enough of is hot summers, surfing adventures, time in the outdoors, and communicating the unchanging truths of Jesus with people in a way that makes sense of life and compels them to lifelong joyful discipleship.*

\* (The other odd circumstance was being hosted, along with a bunch of Pastors, by Kimberly Smith, where she gave us a copy of her book "What We Cannot Be Alone: Understanding Singleness in God's Family." Thanks Kim for giving me language to express these thoughts. If you're single, and especially if you're married (for the sake of singles) please buy it and read it.)





# Five Key Ways to Support a Friend (or Stranger) With a Chronic or Invisible Illness



by **Megan  
Schartner**

## Introduction

When someone gets sick or injured, those around them tend to rally to support them. They send their well wishes, help out with food and household tasks that the person might be struggling with, and make an effort to check in on them. However, society also expects people to get better and recover from their illness or injury.

In fact, about half the population lives with an illness that is chronic, that is they will not get better quickly, and about 96% of those don't have any visible signs of their illness. These people find that their quality of life can be impacted significantly by their conditions, and quite often they feel misunderstood by those around them.

There is a stigma surrounding many of these chronic illnesses. For example, mental illnesses are often misunderstood and discriminated against, and people

INVISIBLE ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

MY INVISIBLE  
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#invisiblefight

suffering from chronic pain conditions are often told it's all in their heads or that the pain can't be as bad as they say it is. In fact, one in five people live with an invisible illness that causes chronic pain and fatigue.

Within the chronic illness community, people are working hard to remove the stigma surrounding invisible illnesses



and to increase understanding and acceptance by others who don't live with these conditions. There are many chronic illness advocates out there and each has found their own way to make a difference; we blog, publish books, create documentaries, and speak at events whenever we can.

### Invisible Illness Awareness Week

Invisible Illness Awareness Week is an annual event started in 2002 by Lisa Copen, and is on from 26 September to 2 October this year.

Around the world, people use this week as a tool to raise awareness of the daily struggles and achievements of life with an invisible illness. Invisible Illness Awareness Week provides an opportunity to share our own stories with a wider audience through mainstream media and community groups.

Having read this article so far, you're probably sitting there thinking this is all well and good but what has this got to do with me?

Well, given that one in five people live with chronic pain and one in two people live with a

chronic illness, chances are that you know someone who does. You may not be aware of it, as many people don't talk about their illnesses for fear that they might not be understood or because they just want to feel 'normal' for once, but there are people with invisible illnesses everywhere.

### What Can We Do To Help?

Now that you know this, what can you do to help?

#### 1. *Don't turn a blind eye or make assumptions about people.*

It's important to recognise that not all conditions are immediately visible, and some are not visible at all.

That young lady who parked in the disabled park, got out of her car and walked into the shopping centre? That's me, and yes I need to use that spot. Just because I'm walking doesn't mean I'm not in pain or that I've actually got the energy to be there. Some days even a single step is agony or feels like I'm walking through mud. I have several chronic conditions, including Fibromyalgia and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome).

I look like a healthy woman in

her 30's, but on my worst days I can feel like an elderly woman in her 90's. Let me tell you, I wouldn't choose to use the disabled parking space unless I absolutely had to.

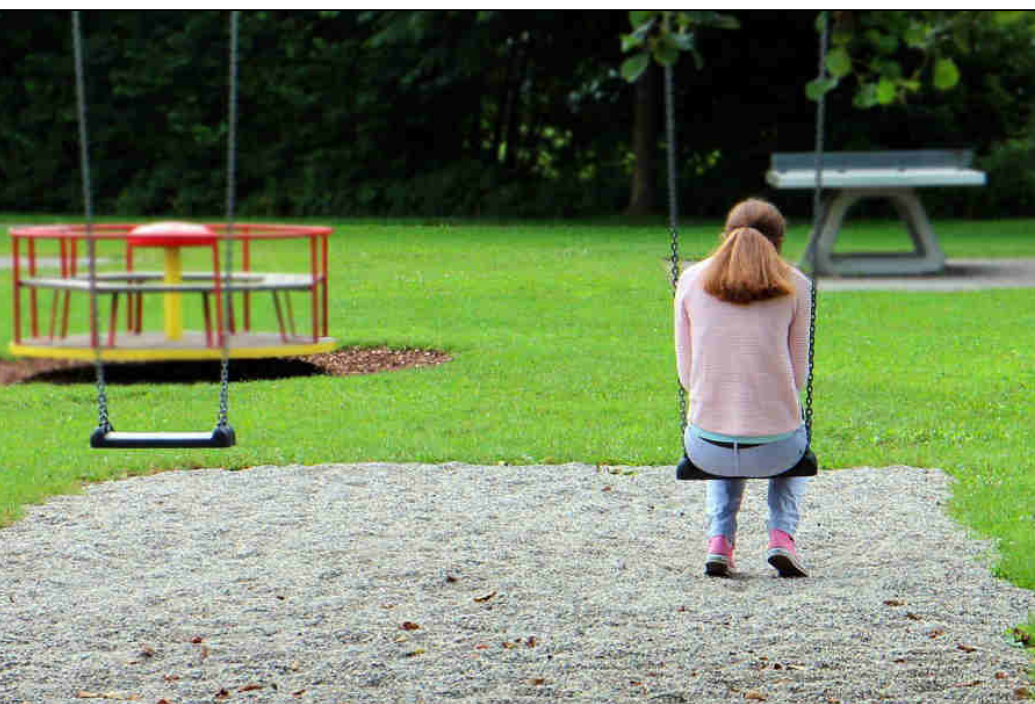
We may also turn down invitations to parties and outings. Being around a lot of people can be difficult for some, especially if they live with anxiety or depression. For others, like me, physical ability limits what activities we can do. Please don't assume that we don't like you or that we're just being rude or antisocial. We all try our best and if we can make it, we do.

In saying that, we are still human beings with a need and desire to feel included and supported, so please do invite us out. Although we might turn down your invite ninety-five percent of the time, we appreciate the thought.

#### 2. *Acknowledge their illness and their struggle.*

A lot of the time, people with an invisible illness feel misunderstood and isolated. Simply acknowledging that you recognise what they're going through can make a big difference in a person's day.

Even if you don't know if someone has an invisible illness, it's possible to acknowledge it. You may notice someone that is struggling with a particular task or activity. For example, I have days where I have trouble focusing on conversations or I'll walk into a room and forget what I was going to do there. Even if you didn't know that I suffered from an invisible illness, it's possible to empathise with me and acknowledge the struggle I'm





going through without making me feel like I'm an idiot.

Instead of getting angry or frustrated at people when they drift in and out of a conversation, or ask multiple times how to do a simple task, take a moment to recognise that they're struggling. A simple comment like "I see you're struggling today" or a gentle touch on the shoulder followed by an "Are you OK?" can make a big difference in these situations.

If you do know about their illness, it's possible to be more specific you're your acknowledgement. When I have friends over, or I'm at their house, they often check in with me a few times to make sure that I'm not overdoing it. If we're making plans they'll tend to make them for during the day or early evening and we tend to meet up at people's houses or at a quiet venue, so that I can participate without pushing myself too hard. Usually there's a place I can go if I need to have a break and rest.

### 3. Take time to learn about their illness.

If you do know someone with a particular illness, take the time to learn about it. There are many blogs online that you can read to find out more information about specific conditions and there are more and more books being published that can also help you understand.

Personally, I like to learn by reading personal accounts from individuals with similar conditions, or journal articles that look at the science behind the conditions, as well as children's literature that is aimed at explaining conditions. I've

included children's literature because I often find that the simple language used is easier for anyone to understand.

When I first became ill with Fibromyalgia and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, I struggled to understand what the illnesses meant for my life. At the time there weren't any children's books available that explained what it meant.

Over the last few years a few books have been published that help explain specific aspects of these conditions, including "Why Does Mommy Hurt?" by Elizabeth Christy, which includes tips for children about how they can support an ill parent, and "How Many Marbles Do YOU Have?" by Melinda Malott. These books focus on explaining a parent's chronic illness to their children, but the concepts they are discussing can be applied to adults as well.

### 4. Help them separate themselves from their illness.

An individual with an invisible illness should not be defined by their illness.

If you've taken the time to learn about their illness, and found ways to acknowledge it and their suffering, you have already taken the first steps to ensuring that you're not defining the individual by their illness. However, sometimes they need help to do this themselves.

One separation technique that I've found useful is to personify my symptoms and to use these characters when discussing why I can't do particular activities at any specific time. Because my illness is mainly defined by chronic pain and fatigue, the characters I've

created are Foggy Frog and the Pain Gang. Each member of the Gang is responsible for a particular type of pain. If you, or someone you know, also lives with a chronic pain condition, you may find the Gang a useful tool to help with separating the illness from the individual.

By incorporating mindfulness, and discussions around, how their illness impacts their lives it's possible for people to separate themselves from their illness and find a way to live a simple, sustainable and meaningful life despite their symptoms.

### 5. Check in on them.

As I said right at the beginning, when an individual is sick or has an injury, friends and family tend to check in on them. Those with chronic illnesses tend to get ignored or forgotten over time because they learn to hide their symptoms and make an effort to do normal activities despite them.

Even if they're homebound and you're busy, you can check in on them by giving them a call or sending them a message every now and then just letting them know that you're thinking of them. This simple act can really help minimise the impact of isolation on those of us with invisible illnesses.

### 6. Offer help

Ok I know I said five key ways in the article header but this one needed to be added as well!

Many of us with invisible illnesses struggle with feelings of guilt about the level of help we need, even with the simplest of tasks, and we may not feel confident enough to ask for help



when we really do need it.

We all need to interact with others, and even if we don't have the energy to do much, it's nice to have the company. Offer to drop around for a cup of tea or coffee and just sit and talk, or watch a movie or TV show. If they're struggling, make the drinks yourself and allow them to just sit back and rest while you're there.

When you're visiting a friend with an invisible illness, take a look around and see if there is any obvious areas that they're struggling with. Maybe the dishes or the washing are piling up, maybe there's no food in the cupboard. Just ask them if they need help or offer to do a particular task.

## Conclusion

Over half of the world's population lives with a chronic illness. These illnesses are often invisible to those around them. Invisible Illness Awareness Week provides us all with an opportunity to open our eyes to what is going on, and to become aware of how we can support those around us.

It reminds us that it's important not to judge others based on their appearance and what we think they can do, because we never know what they're dealing with underneath the external facade.

We can help those around us by acknowledging their struggles, taking time to learn about their illnesses and help them to separate themselves from their conditions, and checking in with them and offering to help in whatever way we're able to. Invisible illnesses create a daily struggle and sense of isolation. By working together, we can make a difference. [END]

## Biography:

Megan Schartner aims to live a simple, sustainable and meaningful life with chronic illness.

After being diagnosed with Fibromyalgia and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis in 2013, Megan has dedicated her time to raising awareness of invisible illnesses and helping others to achieve a simple, sustainable and meaningful life.

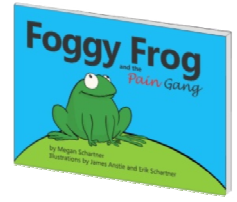
She is the creator of the Foggy Frog and the Pain Gang Campaign, and is launching the campaign with the associated picture book as part of Invisible Illness Awareness Week 2016.

You can find out more about her at Liveken.com or search for her on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram with @MegLiveKen.



## Invisible Illness Awareness Week 26 Sep – 2 Oct 2016

## \*Competition\*



In conjunction with the annual Invisible Illness Awareness Week, SPAG Magazine has one prize-pack of two terrific books to give away.

1. *"Beyond Casseroles: 505 Ways to Encourage a Chronically Ill Friend"*  
by Lisa Copen, Founder of Rest Ministries
2. *"Foggy Frog and the Pain Gang"*  
by Megan Schartner

1. We all want to help people but we often don't know where to start. Lisa Copen's book provides creative ideas which will enable you to be an approachable and helpful friend, while still showing respect to the ill person, and giving them hope and encouragement.

2. Help your friends and family understand the symptoms of your chronic illness with Foggy Frog and the Pain Gang, written by Megan Schartner.

## How to enter:

Send us an email with the title "SPAG IIAW Competition" and simply provide us with feedback or comments about SPAG Magazine or one of our articles, to go into the draw. While more than one comment is welcomed, note that only one entry per person will be added to the draw.

**Ensure that you include your full name and address (including your country and postcode) as well as a valid email.**

All entries must be received by no later than midnight (Australian Eastern Standard Time) on 31 October 2016.

**Email:** [spagmag@yahoo.com.au](mailto:spagmag@yahoo.com.au)

A winner will be drawn randomly from all valid entries.

[www.invisibleillnessweek.com](http://www.invisibleillnessweek.com)  
[www.restministries.com](http://www.restministries.com)  
[www.liveken.com](http://www.liveken.com)



# Encouragement: The Ultimate 'How to' Guide



by Jeremy  
Dover

Press Service  
International  
Columnist

I met Dave the night before he was about to do his first ever triathlon, a 226km Ironman. He told me he would likely be the last finisher, in around fifteen hours.

It was race day, and after 221km and fourteen long hours, Dave found himself reduced to a walk. It was now dark and he still had 5km to go.

He was in last place and was struggling physically and mentally with the reality of another hour of walking and running to get to the finish line. His only companion was the Police Officer, toasty warm in his squad car, following him as the tail vehicle.

Dave couldn't go any further. He stopped, turned and signaled the Police car. "I can't make it," Dave gasped. "I am pulling out. I need you to give me a lift back."

The Police Officer, speaking through a small gap in his window to keep the warmth in,

said "If you get in my car I am arresting you for jay walking and you are spending the night in the lockup! You have come this far. Turn around, get going and finish this race!"

That's encouragement!

## Encouragement Inspires

Do you agree that someone in our culture could go through their adult lives without any encouragement? It is something we don't often receive or give, yet, when it is given well, it can transform lives and situations.

Think of teachers who inspired you in a subject or career. Or think of a loved one who encourages you to make a difference in your life. Encouragement keeps us focused on what matters. Encouragement inspires us to keep going.

## The Bible Gives the Ultimate Guide to Encouragement

The ultimate book of encouragement is the Bible. The New Testament has six different words in the original Greek that we translate as 'encouragement'. This large number illustrates the breadth of meaning: from a gentle 'you are doing well'

encouragement, right through to a stern 'take this very, very seriously! Get going!' encouragement.

## The Purpose of Biblical Encouragement

Encouragement in the Bible is used to build people up; to 'spur' one another on towards love and good deeds. In Romans chapter 15, verses 4 and 5 it explains that the Bible encourages us towards the certain hope Jesus has promised. This theme of encouragement and endurance is seen in Hebrews chapter 3, verses 12 to 14:

*"See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today" so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."* [CEB]

Hebrews chapter 10 says:

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* [N



## 'Intentional' Encouragement

Jesus' return is the finish line and it is coming soon (described here in Hebrews as the 'Day'). We need to be focused on the task of love and good deeds with this motivation in mind. We need to encourage.

The task, by implication, is hard and needs encouragement. This means our job is to 'intentionally' encourage. That is, attending church services, encouraging others in our Connect Groups/Bible studies, building up our families etc. Encouragement has a clear purpose to help others in their endurance towards a Christ-focused life (sanctification) and faith in His promises (justification).

A living relationship with God is hard. Like Dave in the Ironman there are struggles and pain along the way to the finish line. The encouragement (pun intended) for you is to have an encouragement focus.

Be on the lookout for ways to encourage the people Jesus brings before you. This could be reading the Bible with family or friends, regular participation in church, giving a Scripture verse as an affirmation for someone's day, mentoring a younger Christian in their understanding of Jesus, involvement in a prayer group, or praying for your church pastor and leadership team.

Read Hebrews chapter 12 for an ultimate encouragement guide. Generations had faith in God's

future rescuer, Jesus (chapter 11). These heroes of the faith are now the crowd at the finish line, cheering us on and calling your name! Like Dave we keep putting one foot in front of another, looking to Jesus as our focus and the Shepherd of our faith.

## Finish

Back to my mate, Dave. Guess what happened? He kept going. As Dave was running towards town he could see the bright floodlights of the finish line in the distance. The Police Officer had radioed ahead to let them know he was coming.

In Ironman tradition the crowd always waits for the final finisher, and they were there chanting his name: "Dave! Dave! Dave!" How do you think he felt as he sprinted down the finishing straight?!

I spoke to Dave the next day and he had just been down to the Police Station to thank the officer for his 'encouragement'. This true story highlights the importance of different types of encouragement.

The Bible gives both a reason and a method for encouragement. We need to receive it on our life journey. And we need to give it to others because it is a rare commodity in our society and churches. [END]

## Biography:

*Jeremy Dover is a former sports scientist and Pastor.*

*Jeremy Dover's previous articles may be viewed at [www.pressserviceinternational.org/jeremy-dover.htm](http://www.pressserviceinternational.org/jeremy-dover.htm)*

## Kooky Connor



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# Sexism in the Bible: is Christianity Sexist?



by Rich  
Deem

Courtesy of the  
'Evidence for  
God' website

## INTRODUCTION

### Subjugation of Women?

Many churches treat women as second-class citizens, with few, if any women allowed to hold positions of authority. Does Christianity officially support the subjugation of women? What does the Bible say about these issues?

The claim is often made that the Bible is sexist and that Christianity demeans women and makes them into second class citizens. While I do agree that sexism exists in Christian churches and that portions of scripture have been used to perpetuate sexism, the Bible does not condone discrimination in any manner. Men have cited verses about submission of women to keep believing women 'in their place.' Get out your Bibles and let's see what the Bible really says about women, submission, and equality.

### Created in the Image of God

Most people know that the Bible says God created man in His own image. However, many do not know that 'man' includes both males and females. Both males and females are created in the image of God:

*"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*  
[NASB] Genesis 1:27<sup>1</sup>

This verse implies that the 'image of God' encompasses traits found in both males and females and that the physical sexual differences between the sexes are not important characteristics in terms of how mankind was created in God's image.

### Women as Just Helpers?

The story of women in the Bible begins in Genesis 2, where God says that it is not good that man should be alone.<sup>2</sup> So God made a woman as a 'helper suitable for him.' Some would say that making woman as a "helper" is sexist. The Hebrew word translated 'helper' is ezer, which occurs twenty-one times in the Old Testament. In two instances in Genesis, ezer refers to the woman Eve. In sixteen of the other nineteen instances the word is used to describe God Himself!<sup>3</sup> Obviously, the term cannot be said to represent some sort of subservient role.

An interesting sidelight to the phrase 'helper suitable for him' is that the translation 'suitable' is not the most common translation for the Hebrew word. In fact, the most common translation is 'opposite.' Anyone who is married knows that their spouse is often completely opposite from themselves.

### Women in the Bible - not Just Mummies

The women described in the Bible are not always homemakers and mothers. Obviously, the biological function of women is to produce and care for children. However, Deborah was both a judge and leader of Israel.<sup>4</sup> Other women were involved in ridding Israel of her enemies.<sup>5</sup> Quite a number of women are described as being prophetesses.<sup>6</sup> Other women in the Bible were involved in teaching the Word of God<sup>7</sup> or serving as deaconesses in the early Christian church.<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of other very strong women of faith described in the Bible. In fact, two books of the Bible are specifically about women, as indicated by their titles, 'Ruth' and 'Esther.'

Ruth is the story of the compassion and redemption of the

gentile woman, Ruth. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, fell into the unfortunate circumstances of losing both her husband and her two sons, one of whom was Ruth's husband.

With nobody to provide for her and Naomi being 'too old' to be remarried, she chose to go to Israel, where the laws and traditions required the Israelites to take care of widows, even if they were strangers.

One of Naomi's daughter-in-laws chose to stay in the land in order to find another husband. But Ruth chose to go with her mother-in-law, even though this meant that she would probably never be married. However, Ruth was 'redeemed' by Boaz, who married her despite the fact that she was a gentile. The line of Ruth and Boaz led directly to King David, and, of course, eventually to the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

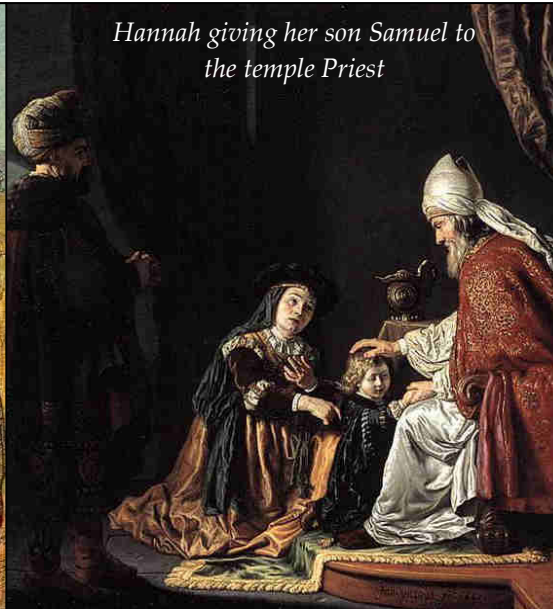
The book of Esther is the story of the rise of a young Jewish woman who found favour<sup>9</sup> in the eyes of the Persian king, Ahasuerus (Xerxes), and became the queen of Persia.

The former queen, Vashti, had refused to appear before the court

*Eve was more than just Adam's helper*





*Ruth chooses to stay with Naomi**Hannah giving her son Samuel to the temple Priest**Mary on the way to Jesus' crucifixion*

when called by the king, and had been removed from the royal position. The king's prime minister, Haman hated the Jews and sought to destroy all of them through a plot of getting the king to unsuspectingly sign a decree calling for their execution.

However, through the actions of the righteous Jew Mordecai, and the bravery of Esther in confronting the king, the decree was revoked and the conspirator, Haman, hanged. The Bible says that Esther had 'come to royal position for such a time as this'<sup>10</sup> - destined by God to save the Jews.

Other strong women of the Bible included Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who was preserved by the Lord despite the cowardly actions of Abraham in saying that she was his sister,<sup>11</sup> and thus allowing her to enter into the courts of two kings (as a potential wife).

Hannah is another example of a woman who had a strong spiritual walk.<sup>12</sup> She was a woman of prayer and faith. Although she was childless for years, she had faith in God and her prayers were answered in giving birth to her son Samuel. She promised to give him back to the Lord, which she did by taking him to the priest as soon as he was weaned.

Probably the strongest woman in the New Testament was Mary, the mother of Jesus. When the angel Gabriel told her she was to give birth

to a son although a virgin, her response was, "May it be to me as you have said." A famous prayer of praise from Mary is recorded in the book of Luke.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Ideal Biblical Wife**

The book of Proverbs (which records the wisdom of Solomon) describes the ideal wife in its last chapter.<sup>14</sup> She is, by no means, a weak woman who grovels at the feet of her husband. Instead, she takes charge over the care and needs of her family, and, in addition, the needs of the poor. She also manages her servants.

In addition, she maintains her own business and from her own earnings buys land and plants vineyards. She is described as being wise, strong, and dignified, yet able to laugh. She is praised by her husband and children, who appreciate her hard work and commitment.

### **How Jesus Treated Women**

When we look at how Jesus treated women, we discover the difference between the way God wants men to treat women and the way they were (and still are) treated by men in societies.

The woman at the well is a prime example. When Jesus asked her for a drink, her first reaction was disbelief that he would even talk to her.<sup>15</sup> When Jesus' disciples came back, they were surprised that He was talking to a woman.<sup>16</sup>

Jewish customs had become so legalistic that men (and especially rabbis) did not associate with women who were not their wives. Even now, orthodox Jewish men and women are prohibited from touching members of the opposite sex.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Jesus touched many women and allowed them to touch Him as He healed them.<sup>18</sup>

Although this was in direct opposition to the customs of the time, it reveals the nature of the personal God who directly touches people's lives.

Jesus was compassionate to sinners and ministered to prostitutes and adulteresses. In a well-known example, some of the religious leaders brought a woman to Jesus who was 'caught in the act of adultery.' Obviously, the man involved in the adultery would have been there also, but they didn't bring him. As Jesus alluded to their own sins, the woman's accusers left. Jesus did not condemn the woman, but admonished her to leave her life of sin.<sup>19</sup>

Although all of Jesus' twelve disciples were men (there is good reason for this<sup>20</sup>), there were a number of women who were loyal followers and who ministered to Him and His disciples.<sup>21</sup>



*Angels appeared to the women at Jesus' tomb to tell them He had risen.*



The gospels record that the women were the first to hear the news of Jesus' resurrection from the angels<sup>22</sup> and the first to see Him,<sup>23</sup> since the men had gone into hiding or back to their original jobs after Jesus was crucified.

In contrast to the gentleness and kindness with which Jesus treated women, He reserved His more scathing comments for the arrogant male religious leaders of His time. These He labeled as 'serpents,' 'brood of vipers,' and 'whitewashed tombs.'<sup>24</sup>

### **That "S" Word - Biblical Submission**

Many women don't like what the Bible says because it calls wives to 'submit to their husbands.'<sup>25</sup> However, submission is not limited to wives submitting to their husbands. We are told to submit to God,<sup>26</sup> governmental authorities,<sup>27</sup> our boss,<sup>28</sup> and leaders in the church.<sup>29</sup> We are also told to submit to one another, which includes men submitting women and vice versa.<sup>30</sup>

God is a God of order. In a sinful world, submission to those in authority is the only way to maintain order.

What form does this submission to authority take? In every instance where submission is called for wives, it is conditioned with the phrase 'as to the Lord' or some other reference to Jesus Christ. The submission takes on the form of being in the will of God. If the husband asks the wife to do something outside the will of Christ, she is under no obligation to follow him.

Accompanying each command for wives to submit to their husbands is the command for the husband to love his wife.<sup>31</sup> In the book of Ephesians, this love is to be 'just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.' Such a love is not one that dominates and subjugates another person, but a self-sacrificing love that will give up its own life for another.

### **The Christian Church is Female!**

This is going to come to a shock to most non-Christians (and maybe even some Christians), but God's people are referred to as female, not male. In the Old Testament, God's people are the 'daughters of Zion.'<sup>32</sup> The Church or body of Christ (including us men) is referred to as the 'bride' of Christ<sup>33</sup> and God is said to be our 'husband.'<sup>34</sup>

Whenever referred to by sex, the Church is described as 'she' or 'her.'<sup>35</sup> In addition, the Greek word for church is a feminine noun.<sup>36</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The essence of biblical equality can be summed up in Paul's letter to the Galatians:

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* Galatians 3:28<sup>37</sup> [NASB]

Even though the world does not treat humans as equals, as members of the body of Christ, all are equal spiritually in the eyes of Jesus. In fact, those who exalt themselves (which includes many men) will be humbled and those who serve others (which characterise many women I know) will be exalted to a higher status in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>38</sup> It seems likely that heaven will be a place that will be run by caring mothers and women who will have served others while living on earth.

### **Objections:**

- *On 'headship':*

This was probably more of a concession to culture than anything else. In first century Israel, women didn't have many rights or much opportunity for independence, so the husband was a sort of 'covering' for her.

Since he was legally and morally responsible for pretty much everything his wife did (Numbers 30:6-16), it made sense that she would defer to him in domestic matters. Besides, submission doesn't mean becoming a doormat - it means voluntarily laying aside one's own rights for the sake of the other, and husbands are instructed to love their wives sacrificially as well:

*"...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."* (Ephesians 5:25)<sup>31</sup> [NASB]

- *On 'keeping silent in church':*

Women are more verbal than men, and when they get together, they tend to move from subject to subject. In the synagogues, the women were segregated from the men. If they had any questions on the worship or the teachings, they would have had to shout them over to the men, or discuss them among themselves,

which would have resulted in an inability to maintain order.

In addition, Paul emphasises that his rules for church are given so that everything would be *"done in a fitting and orderly way."* 1 Corinthians 14:40<sup>39</sup> [NASB]. Disorderly communication, such as uninterrupted speaking in tongues, was also prohibited.<sup>40</sup>

- On *"not being permitted to teach"*

Some interpret this passage to mean that women should never teach in the assembled church. However, commentators point out that Paul did not forbid women from ever teaching. Paul's commended co-worker, Priscilla, taught Apollos, the great preacher (Acts 18:24-26).<sup>41</sup>

In addition, Paul frequently mentioned other women who held positions of authority in the church: Phoebe worked in the church (Romans 16:1).<sup>8</sup> Mary, Tryphena, and

Tryphosa were the Lord's workers (Romans 16:6, 12).<sup>8</sup>

Paul was very likely prohibiting the Ephesian women, not all women, from teaching. To understand these verses (Ephesians 2:9-15), we must understand the situation in which Paul and Timothy worked.

In first-century Jewish culture, women were not allowed to study. When Paul said that women should learn in quietness and full submission, he was offering them an amazing new opportunity. Paul did not want the Ephesian women to teach because they didn't yet have enough knowledge or experience.

The Ephesian church had a particular problem with false teachers. Evidently, the women were especially susceptible to the false teachings (2 Timothy 3:1-9), because they did not yet have enough Biblical knowledge to discern the truth.

In addition, some women were apparently flaunting their new-found Christian freedom by wearing inappropriate clothing (1 Timothy 2:9).

Paul was telling Timothy not to put anyone (in this case, women) into a position of leadership who was not yet mature in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6). The same principle applies to churches today. [END]

#### About the Author:

Richard Deem earned his bachelor of science degree in biological sciences at the University of Southern California. He received his master of science degree in microbiology from California State University, and has worked in basic science research since 1976. He has authored and co-authored a number of studies... In addition, he has presented his work at a number of national and international scientific meetings.

Rich is married to Carole, a retired elementary school teacher and free-lance writer and they have three sons. In his spare time he likes to play classical piano, do cross stitch, and hike in the mountains. He also enjoys teaching Sunday School. In addition, Mr Deem is active in the prolife community.

#### References:

1. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)
2. The LORD God said, "It is **not good** for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)
3. and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my **helper**; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh." (Exodus 18:4) And this he said about Judah: "Hear, O LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his **help** against his foes!" (Deuteronomy 33:7) "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to **help** you and on the clouds in his majesty. (Deuteronomy 33:26) Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and **helper** and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cover before you, and you will trample down their high places." (Deuteronomy 33:29) May He send you **help** from the sanctuary, And support you from Zion! (Psalm 20:2) Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our **help** and our shield. (Psalm 33:20) Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my **help** and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay. (Psalm 70:5) Once Thou didst speak in vision to Thy godly ones, And didst say, "I have given **help** to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. (Psalm 89:19) O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their **help** and their shield. (Psalm 115:9) O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their **help** and their shield. (Psalm 115:10) You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their **help** and their shield. (Psalm 115:11) (A Song of Ascents.) I Will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From whence shall my **help** come? My **help** comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2) Our **help** is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:8) How blessed is he whose **help** is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God; (Psalm 146:5) It is your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your **help**. (Hosea 13:9)
4. Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. (Judges 4:4)
5. But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him [Sisera] while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died. (Judges 4:21) Abimelech went to the tower and stormed it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull. (Judges 9:52-53)
6. Then Miriam the **prophetess**, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. (Exodus 15:20) Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achob, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the **prophetess** Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. (2 Kings 22:14) There was also a **prophetess**, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, (Luke 2:36) Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who **prophesied**. (Acts 21:8-9)
7. He [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (Acts 18:26)
8. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. (Romans 16:1) Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. (Romans 16:6) Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. (Romans 16:12) Some deaconesses were tortured and martyred for their faith. Below is a letter from Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan: "They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god... Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.... Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished." Pliny. Letters 10:96-97.





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(See Genesis 6-8) 09-26-2002

THE ANGELS HAD BEEN KEEPING THEIR DISTANCE EVER SINCE THE FLOOD BECAUSE THEY KNEW THIS WAS COMING...THE WATER BILL

## Words of Wisdom

Heroism consists of hanging  
on one minute longer.

Norwegian Proverb

### Organisation Promotion



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9. Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. (Esther 2:15)
10. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14)
11. Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go! (Genesis 12:19) and then Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her. (Genesis 20:2)
12. See 1 Samuel chapter 1.
13. And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." (Luke 1:46-55)
14. A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate. (Proverbs 31:10-31)
15. The Samaritan woman said to Him [Jesus], "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) (John 4:9)
16. Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" (John 4:27)
17. My immediate boss is an orthodox Jewish woman. One day, when her 18 year old daughter came to work, I offered to shake her hand in greeting and was surprised to find that she refused. My boss later explained that Orthodox Jews who are members of the opposite sex do not touch at all, even for handshakes unless they are married.
18. He [Jesus] touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. (Matthew 8:15)
- Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. (Matthew 9:20) When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, (Mark 5:27) And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. (Mark 6:56) People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. (Mark 10:13) When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." (Luke 7:39)
19. and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"... At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither

do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:4-5, 9-11)

20. My guess is that women were not included as disciples because they would have been put in a "war-time" situation. All the original apostles were persecuted (Acts 8:1, 11:19, 13:50, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 2 Corinthians 12:10, 2 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Timothy 3:11-12), beaten (Acts 16:22, 37, 21:32, 2 Corinthians 6:5), stoned (Acts 14:5, 19, 2 Corinthians 11:25), and eventually martyred (Acts 7:59, 12:2, Foxe's Book of Martyrs) (except John, who was exiled to the island of Patmos). Even so, Pliny describes torturing female deaconesses in the early 2nd century ("...Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses.") Pliny, Letters 10.96-97.
21. And many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, among whom was Mary Magdalene, along with Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. (Matthew 27:55-56) And there were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem. (Mark 15:40-41) And it came about soon afterwards, that He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means. (Luke 8:1-3)
22. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. (Matthew 28:5-6) As they [the women] entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. (Mark 16:5-6) In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: (Luke 24:5-6)
23. Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. (John 20:18) When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. (Mark 16:9)
24. "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? (Matthew 23:33) "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. (Matthew 12:34) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (Matthew 23:27)
25. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:22) Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:24) Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18)
26. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! (Hebrews 12:9) Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)
27. Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. (Romans 13:1) Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. (Romans 13:5) Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, (1 Peter 2:13)
28. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. (1 Peter 2:18)
29. You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. (1 Corinthians 16:15-16) Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

# A-Musings

## Troubling Toilets

by Vicki Nunn

I think I'm under a curse: the curse of the toilet seat!

It could have started the time I discovered that you can't see a cockroach on a black toilet seat. From that moment on, toilet seats everywhere banned together and swore to have their revenge on me for half-squashing a cockroach on one of their brothers!

Toilet seats around the world I'm sure, feel much maligned in their profession, especially being the **butt** of so many jokes (*sorry - couldn't help myself*) and have now formed a union to avenge themselves on those human they deem to have committed the **cheekiest** crimes against them. (*Sorry again.*)

So what kind of revenge can a toilet seat possibly execute? I can tell you from personal experience that:

- The hinge snapped on one side so that the seat portion became skewed as I sat down on it and I almost went flying off;

- On a heavy duty toilet seat, the hefty lid crashed down on top of my fingers; and
- The hinge seized up so I couldn't lift the lid at all, which occurred at a time I was a little desperate, which is a bit of a **bummer** (*sorry for that*).

In a two year period our household went through a total of seven toilets seats. From cheap and flimsy to expensive and heavy duty: one after another failed us. One costly decorative one even developed a **crack** (*no pun intended.*)

After sending a letter of sincere apology to the TSU (Toilet Seat Union), I decided that I would no longer bother purchasing expensive toilet seats, but stick to the cheap ones from the **bottom end** of the market (*I won't even attempt to apologise for that one!*)

They had their revenge on me last year though. I rushed into the bathroom after I heard a bizarre sound and copped a lovely shower from the geyser erupting from my toilet bowl, as the local council was doing work on a nearby sewage line. The stinkers! [END]



30. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (*Ephesians 5:21*)
31. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (*Ephesians 5:25*)  
Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (*Colossians 3:19*)
32. Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes; Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him." (*Isaiah 62:11*) "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. (*Zechariah 2:10*) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (*Zechariah 9:9*)
33. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. (*Revelation 19:7*) And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (*Revelation 19:9*) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (*Revelation 22:17*)
34. For your Maker is your husband-- the LORD Almighty is His name-- the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. (*Isaiah 54:5*)
35. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (*Ephesians 5:25*) that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (*Ephesians 5:27*)
36. *Thayer Greek Definitions*  
ekklesia εκκλησία (Strong's #G1577)  
1. a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly  
a. an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating  
b. the assembly of the Israelites  
c. any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously  
d. in a Christian sense  
2. an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting  
3. a company of Christians, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order's sake  
4. those who anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body  
5. the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth  
6. the assembly of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven  
Part of Speech: noun feminine. A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564 Citing in TDNT: 3:501, 394
37. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. *There is no difference.* (*Romans 3:22*)
38. "And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. (*Matthew 23:12*) "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew 18:4*) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, (*1 Peter 5:6*) And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." (*Mark 9:35*)
39. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two--or at the most three--should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. (*1 Corinthians 14:27-28*)
40. Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. (*1 Corinthians 14:39-40*) Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (*Acts 18:24-26*)

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# Why Pray if God Already Knows What We're Going to Say?

by Vicki Nunn

## Introduction

Let me begin with a provocative statement: if you have to ask the question in the title of this article, then perhaps you don't really understand the purpose of prayer.

That may sound confusing or even condescending, but it's not meant to be. I understand what you are asking when you put forward that question, because it's a question that I have asked.

The fact is that prayer is not a simple thing. Before the article's question can be answered, we should look into the purpose of prayer.

### 1. IT'S PART OF THE WAY WE SERVE GOD.

Luke 2:36-38 speaks about Anna, an old Jewish prophetess who had devoted herself to God after she became a young widow. Anna saw Joseph and Mary in the temple when they brought in baby Jesus.

*"At that very moment, an elderly woman named Anna stepped forward. Anna was a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for seven years before her husband died and a widow to her current age of 84 years. She*

*was deeply devoted to the Lord, constantly in the temple, fasting and praying. When she approached Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, she began speaking out thanks to God, and she continued spreading the word about Jesus to all those who shared her hope for the rescue of Jerusalem."* [VOICE]

In her commitment to God, prayer was an essential part of her service to Him. I wonder what she prayed? She likely prayed for people that she knew, for her people the Jews, for problems that she saw in her society, for neighbouring nations, and for the Jewish and Roman leaders. Perhaps she prayed for the promised Messiah, and I'm certain that she would have spent time in praise and worship.

### 2. IT'S A WAY TO OBTAIN GOD'S HELP

(a) Strength to resist temptation: Matthew 26:41 *"Now maybe you're learning: the spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Watch and pray and take care that you are not pulled down during a time of testing."* [VOICE]

(b) Wisdom in making important decisions: Luke 6:12-13 *"Around this time, Jesus went outside the city to a nearby mountain, along with a large crowd of His disciples.*

*He prayed through the night to God. The next morning, He chose twelve of them and gave each a new title of 'emissary.'" [VOICE]*

(c) To spiritually strengthen others: Ephesians 6:18-19 *"Pray always. Pray in the Spirit. Pray about everything in every way you know how! And keeping all this in mind, pray on behalf of God's people. Keep on praying feverishly, and be on the lookout until evil has been stayed. And please pray for me. Pray that truth will be with me before I even open my mouth. Ask the Spirit to guide me while I boldly defend the mystery that is the good news..." [VOICE]*

(d) To obtain more Christian workers: Luke 10:2 *"There's a great harvest waiting in the fields, but there aren't many good workers to harvest it. Pray that the Harvest Master will send out good workers to the fields."* [VOICE]

(e) To overcome demons: Matthew 17:14-21 *"...Later, when they were away from the crowds, the disciples asked Jesus why they hadn't been able to drive out the demon themselves. Jesus: Because you have so little faith. I tell you this: if you had even a faint spark of faith, even faith as tiny as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to*

**What Can We Learn About Prayer From the Bible... continued**

there," and because of your faith, the mountain would move. If you had just a sliver of faith, you would find nothing impossible. But this kind [demon] is not realized except through much prayer and fasting." [voice]

**3. GOD SAYS THAT WE SHOULD PRAY:**

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 it says: "Celebrate always, pray constantly, and give thanks to God no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. (This is God's will for all of you in Jesus the Anointed.)" [VOICE]

In Matthew 6:5-13 it Jesus said: "Likewise, when you pray, do not be as hypocrites who love to pray loudly at synagogue or on street corners - their concern is to be seen by men. They have already earned their reward. When you pray, go into a private room, close the door, and pray unseen to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not go on and on, excessively and strangely like the outsiders; they think their verbosity will let them be heard by their deities. Do not be like them. Your prayers need not be laboured or lengthy or grandiose - for your Father knows what you need before you ever ask Him.

Your prayers, rather, should be

simple, like this: *Our Father in heaven, let Your name remain holy. Bring about Your kingdom. Manifest Your will here on earth, as it is manifest in heaven. Give us each day that day's bread - no more, no less - and forgive us our debts as we forgive those who owe us something. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [But let Your kingdom be, and let it be powerful and glorious forever. Amen.]* [VOICE]

**4. WE SHOULD PRAY BECAUSE JESUS PRAYED:**

Luke 19:16-17 "Then Jesus takes the five loaves and two fish, and He looks up to heaven. He praises God for the food, takes each item, and breaks it into fragments. Then He gives fragments to the twelve disciples and tells them to distribute the food to the crowd. Everyone eats. Everyone is satisfied. Nobody goes away hungry. In fact, when the disciples recover the leftovers, they have 12 baskets full of broken pieces."

Matthew 26:36-42 "Jesus: I am going over there to pray. You sit here while I'm at prayer... [42] Father, if there is no other way for this cup to pass without My drinking it—then not My will, but Yours be done." [VOICE]

**5. IT'S A WAY THAT WE DRAW CLOSER TO GOD:**

Psalms 19:14 "May the words that come out of my mouth and the musings of my heart, meet with Your gracious approval, O Eternal, my Rock, O Eternal, my Redeemer." [VOICE]

In all of our relationships, communication is vital and this is especially true in our relationship

with God. Because prayer is multi-faceted we can honour and praise God through it, we can pray for others and for ourselves, we can seek to draw closer to God spiritually, we can gain wisdom and insight through prayer, we can come to understand who God is, and we stay spiritually linked to God when we make prayer a regular part of our daily routine.

**6. IT'S A WAY TO STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH:**

As shared earlier in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Celebrate always, pray constantly, and give thanks to God no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. (This is God's will for all of you in Jesus the Anointed.)" [VOICE]

When we connect with God through prayer and make it a regular part of our routine, we grow in wisdom, and we grow closer to God which strengthens our faith in Him. When we give thanks to God, we learn to appreciate how God blesses us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. As we mature too, we can reflect back and thank God for His guidance, love and power on our lives.

**7. GOD WILL ALWAYS HEAR OUR PRAYER:**

Psalms 5:3 "In the morning, O Eternal One, listen for my voice; in the day's first light, I will offer my prayer to You and watch expectantly for Your answer."

Psalms 145:18 "The Eternal stays close to those who call on Him, those who pray sincerely."

Jeremiah 29:12 "At that time, you will call out for Me, and I will hear. You will pray, and I will listen."







Hebrews 4:16 *"So let us step boldly to the throne of grace, where we can find mercy and grace to help when we need it most."*

1 John 5:14 *"We live in the bold confidence that God hears our voices when we ask for things that fit His plan."* [VOICE]

### Why Pray if God Already Knows What We're Going to Say?

We should understand who God is before we answer this question. From the Bible we know:

#### 1. GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING AND UNDERSTANDS US COMPLETELY

Psalms 44: 21 says that He understands our hearts, even those parts we try to hide from Him: *"Would not the True God have known it? For He can see the hidden places of our hearts."* [VOICE]

Matthew 6:8 says that He knows what we need before we ask it: *"Do not be like them. Your prayers need not be laboured or lengthy or grandiose - for your Father knows what you need before you ever ask Him."* [VOICE]

1 John 3:20 says that God knows everything: *"There is a sure way for us to know that we belong to the truth. Even though our inner thoughts may condemn us with storms of guilt and constant reminders of our failures, we can know in our hearts that in His presence God Himself is greater than any accusation. He knows all things."* [VOICE]

So there is nothing that we can say to God that He doesn't already know.

#### 2. GOD IS ALL POWERFUL.

Job 42:2 says: *"Job: I know You can do everything; nothing You do can be foiled or frustrated."* [VOICE]

Since God is all powerful, our prayer doesn't provide Him with extra strength, wisdom or guidance. That means that our prayer doesn't increase God's power or make any kind of difference to His power or His wisdom.

#### 3. GOD IS IN CONTROL.

In Hebrews 1:3a we know that God is in control of the universe and everything that happens

within the universe, so therefore God's purpose is already happening according to His plan. So how then can our prayer have any kind of an impact on the plan He already has in place?

*"This is the One who - imprinted with God's image, shimmering with His glory - sustains all that exists through the power of His word."* [VOICE]

**4. GOD IS LOVE.** 1 John 4 verses 8 and verse 16 shows us that God is love and that His love is unchanging. Our prayers cannot improve or increase His love for us: *"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love... We have experienced and we have entrusted our lives to the love of God in us. God is love. Anyone who lives faithfully in love also lives faithfully in God, and God lives in him."* [VOICE]

These passages would suggest that since God knows it all, has planned and prepared it all, that He knows our hearts and our minds, that He is in fact the embodiment of love, then our prayers surely would have no impact on Him and his overarching purpose for the world and its people?

### Does God Change His Mind Because We Pray?

This is a kind of slippery question: because if we can change God's mind through prayer, then, since He already knew that we were going to ask Him to change His mind and because He'd already intended to change his mind anyway, therefore, we didn't really need to ask Him to change His mind if He already intended to do so, did we?

I understand that we still need to ask in prayer, and God needs to see the earnestness and intention

of our heart and mind and to determine the purpose of our request before He makes a final decision. While He may know ahead of time that we are going to ask it, we still *need* to ask it. Additionally, in our own minds, we still need to know why a prayer needs to be answered and to ask it with the right heart.

I've seen relationships and marriages where one person expects their partner to read their minds. As a result, their partner's decision and choices must be based around the first person's unspoken preferences. What a crazy way to run a relationship! Forget the mind-reading! The first person should be clear about what they want and why, and ask nicely. Even if their partner may be able to guess what they want (after many years of living with them), the first person shows respect to their partner by asking, rather than *expecting* them to know or guess what they want. Isn't this the same with God? By *expecting* God to know what we want without us asking, it would be disrespectful to Him.

While God knows what we need and provides for us, there are still going to be many times in our life when we need to discuss things with Him and to pray for answers or direction. To do otherwise would be arrogant – it would be an assumption that we are so important, that God will simply roll over like an obedient dog and just give us whatever we need, without us even talking to Him about it.

Perhaps the question here should be “*will* God change His mind through prayer,” rather than



“*does* God change His mind through prayer.”

God *does* change His mind sometimes when we pray, but not always. Sometimes what we ask isn't part of His plan, or is not good for us or our request may be the result of our own selfish desire or sin.

One of the earliest Biblical examples of someone trying to change God's mind can be found in Genesis when Abraham learned that God was going to wipe out the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Fearing that God might take the lives of innocent people in those cities, in Genesis 18:23-25 Abraham asked: *“God, would You really sweep away the people who do what is right along with those who are wicked? What if there were 50 upright people within the city? Would You still wipe the place out and not spare it on behalf of the 50 upright people who live there? Surely it can't be Your nature to do something like that - to kill the right-living along with those who act wickedly, to consign the innocent to the same fate as the guilty. It is inconceivable to me that You, my God, would do anything like that! Will not the ‘Merciful and Loving*

*Judge” of all the earth do what is just?”* [VOICE]

Abraham went further several times, appealing to God's sense of justice and mercy until he'd narrowed down the possible number of good people to ten, in Genesis 18:32: *“Please don't be angry, Lord, at my boldness. Let me ask this just once more: suppose only 10 are found?”* [VOICE]

God had been willing to change His mind. He listened to Abraham and agreed upon Abraham's conditions several times. If God had found even ten innocent people in the cities, I believe He would have changed His mind and allowed the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to live. So great was the sin of the people of these cities though, that not even ten good people could be found amongst the thousands living there.

Did God know that Abraham was going to ask him for mercy for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Yes, of course He knew, but Abraham had to ask first. Abraham never assumed that God would know what was on his heart and mind, nor did he expect Him just to do it without



specifically asking for God's justice for the innocent people.

There are Biblical examples of where God does honour people's prayer requests that formed part of His overall plan. One example is Elijah where he prayed for it to stop raining as a way to demonstrate God's almighty power. Then later God answered Elijah's prayer when he asked for it to rain again.

God had foreknown that Elijah was going to ask and had incorporated it into His overall plan. But if Elijah hadn't prayed, then God would not have been able to answer his prayer would He?

### Is Prayer Laying Hold of God's Utmost Willingness?

I remember hearing someone say this phrase in response to a similar question as this article, though I could never really quite agree with it. To me it suggests that God is sometimes unwilling to consider our requests, even when they are put to Him with a good and obedient heart.

Just as a good parent is always, willing to hear his child's requests,

so God is willing to hear us, although we may not receive the response we think we would like.

### Conclusion

If God literally knows everything; has control over the universe and has a plan under which everything is working; and He knows what we're going to ask; then how does our prayer make any kind of difference?

It makes a difference because God wants a relationship with us. God has placed our requirements and prayers into the purposes and individual portions of His overall plan for us and for mankind. Although He foreknows what we are going to ask before we do, He has already taken our request into consideration, but we still need to pray about it and give our petitions and requests to Him.

Praying to God shows Him respect and it also means we are regularly communicating with Him and making Him a part of our everyday lives. Prayer is about



keeping our relationship with God alive and growing.

Our prayers also make us open and vulnerable to God's communication. The more we pray, the more we know Him and the more intimate our relationship with Him can become.

So does prayer make a difference if God knows what we're going to say? Yes it does, because prayer is so much more than just asking our heavenly father for something – it's about growing a relationship and improving our communication and to syncing our own willingness and our own lives with God's good purposes. [END]



## Up Close and Personal with Aussie Wildlife

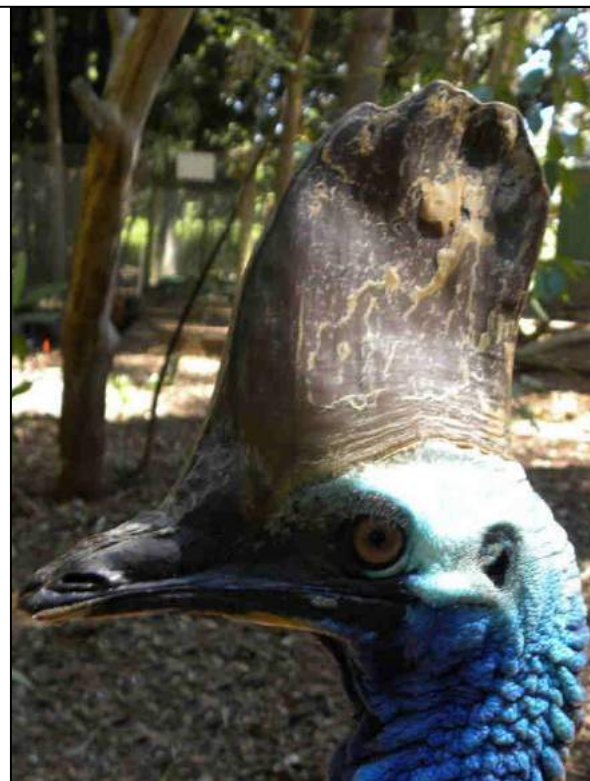
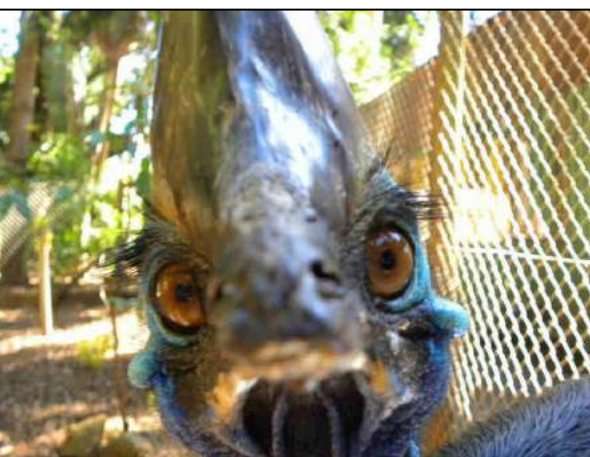
### Southern Cassowary (Casuarius Casuarius)

The second largest bird in the world, the cassowary can be found in Australia, New Guinea and Indonesia. The Southern Cassowary is the species found in Australia, and can weight to 70kg (though even to 85kg in some cases). It's related to the kiwi!

It eats fruit which have dropped to the forest floor as well as fungi, insects and small vertebrates.

While normally a solitary bird, it pairs up in breeding season when the male will build 1m wide nests of plant material. The male incubates the eggs on his own and raises the young.

If provoked the cassowary can kill a human being with its claws!



# Inspirational People: Saviour of the Brooklyn Bridge – Emily Warren Roebling

by Vicki Nunn

One of the most well-known bridges in the world is the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, and it owes its existence to the tenacity of one woman: Emily Warren Roebling.

Born the second youngest of twelve children in 1843, Emily Warren met her future husband during the American Civil War when in 1864 she visited her brother who commanded the Fifth Army Corps. While she was there, Emily met Washington Roebling whose father, John A. Roebling,

was serving with the Corps as a Civil Engineer.

Emily and Washington were married the following year. They had their only child John in 1867.

It was Washington Roebling's father, John A. Roebling who designed the Brooklyn Bridge and as he began work on it, the couple went on their honeymoon and in Europe they took the opportunity to research the use of caissons for construction of the bridge.

It was decided to employ caissons in the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge which use air-pressure to keep out water and mud. Caissons are water-tight structures used to build strong piers for bridges and other constructions. This would enable them to dig down through the soft silt on the bottom of the river until they found a more solid, natural foundation on which to construct the piers.

Shortly after their return, John A. Roebling died and so Emily's husband Washington became chief engineer of the construction in 1869. He further improved the design and worked out better ways to enhance its construction.

What wasn't known at the time was that workers inside of the caissons could develop something akin to decompression sickness.

Working in increased air-pressure underwater, and then quickly emerging into normal air pressure causes air bubbles to form in the body and move around, lodging in large joints, the skin, brain, spine, lungs, ears or even across the entire body and can cause permanent debilitating illness and even death. Nowadays, people are slowly depressurised so that the bubbles don't form, but at that time it wasn't understood and doctors were unsure of the cause.

Washington went into the caissons with the workers for hours at a time and quickly developed what came to be called 'Caisson's Disease' during construction of the bridge. He became so ill as a result that he was bedridden and was never able to return to the site, though he did oversee the project until its completion in 1883. The effects of the disease remained with him for life and he never returned to full health.

Realising that her husband could not return to the worksite, Emily fought with those in charge, assuring them that with her husband's assistance, the construction could continue. She took over most of Washington's duties as Chief Engineer, and in addition to nursing her husband, and working on the bridge, she



Emily Warren Roebling





spent time studying bridge construction.

The bridge was a remarkably difficult design, and together the couple planned the bridge's construction. Washington taught his wife much about construction, and she gained knowledge of stress analysis and strength of materials, along with cable construction and much more. Her knowledge was quite extensive.

At a time when women were discouraged from completing anything more than a basic education, when society saw women as inferior and lacking intelligence, Emily ignored normal conventions of the day and had to battle with politicians, sexism, workers and other competing engineers so that she and Washington could see the bridge through to its completion over the next fourteen years.

Brooklyn Bridge was finally finished in 1883, ahead of schedule and Emily Warren Roebling was the first person to cross over the span of the bridge by carriage, before its official opening. As a sign of victory, she carried with her a pet rooster!

At the official opening, Abram Stevens Hewitt the Member of the

US House of Representatives from New York's 10th district (who later would become the Mayor of New York) honoured Emily, acknowledging her enormous contribution. Hewitt said that the bridge was, "...an everlasting monument to the sacrificing devotion of a woman and of her capacity for that higher education from which she has been too long disbarred."

Not willing to live the life of a domestic wife, after the Brooklyn Bridge was completed, Emily became involved with organisations that provided relief during the Spanish-American war, and continued to travel. Later she graduated from New York University with a law degree but for the remainder of her life, she was never content unless she kept active both mentally and socially.

Although few may know her name today, if you visit the Brooklyn Bridge you can find a plaque on the bridge which is dedicated to her father-in-law John A. Roebling, her husband Washington as well as tenacious Emily Warren Roebling. [END]



## Tantalising Trivia



Lucille Ball

You've probably heard of actors having unusual clauses written into their contracts, but did you know that Lucille Ball had

a requirement written into hers so that she could always be twenty pounds overweight!

Shirley Temple was required to have 56 tiny curls in her hair when on film.

Buster Keaton's contract did not allow him to smile on film – ever!

Comedians Bud Abbott and Lou Costello had an insurance policy clause written into their contract that they would not be liable should anyone die laughing during one of their movies.



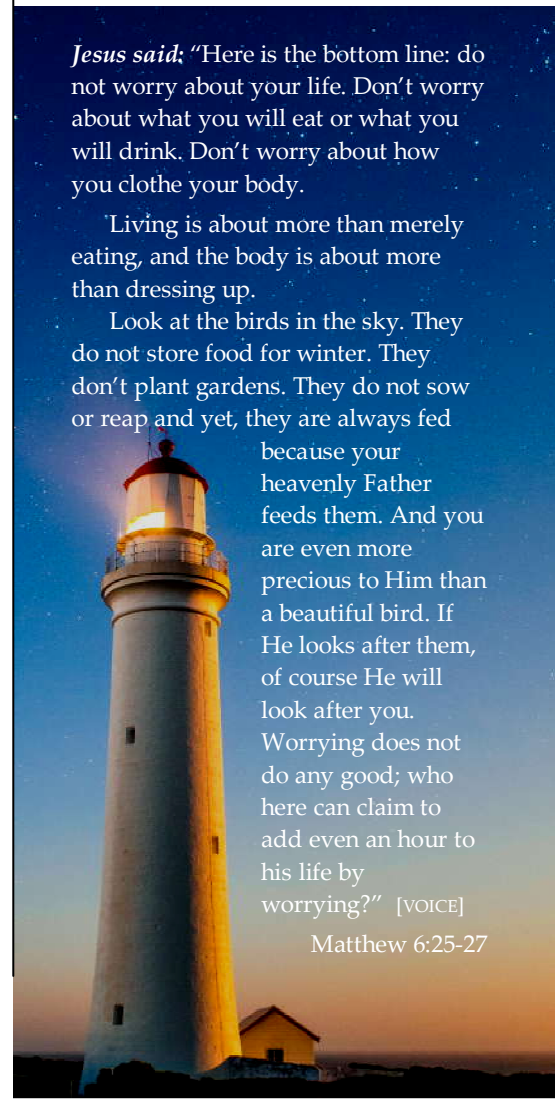
*Jesus said:* "Here is the bottom line: do not worry about your life. Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will drink. Don't worry about how you clothe your body.

Living is about more than merely eating, and the body is about more than dressing up.

Look at the birds in the sky. They do not store food for winter. They don't plant gardens. They do not sow or reap and yet, they are always fed

because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are even more precious to Him than a beautiful bird. If He looks after them, of course He will look after you. Worrying does not do any good; who here can claim to add even an hour to his life by worrying?" [VOICE]

Matthew 6:25-27



# Good Grief: Job Loss and Unemployment Stress

## Coping with the Stress of Losing a Job

by: Melinda Smith, M.A.,  
Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.,  
Lawrence Robinson, and  
Robert Segal, M.A.

(Courtesy of [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org))

Losing a job is one of the most stressful life experiences, so it's normal to feel angry, hurt, depressed, scared, grief at all that you've lost, or anxious about what the future holds. Job loss and unemployment involves a lot of change all at once which can rock your sense of purpose and self-esteem. While the stress can seem overwhelming, there are many things you can do to take control of the situation, maintain your spirits, and come out of this difficult period stronger and more resilient.

### Understanding the Stress of Job Loss

Our jobs are much more than just the way we make a living. They influence how we see ourselves, as well as the way others see us. They give us structure, purpose, and meaning. That's why job loss and unemployment can be so stressful.

Beyond the loss of income, losing a job also comes with other major losses, some of which may be even more difficult to face:

- Loss of your professional identity
- Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Loss of your daily routine



- Loss of purposeful activity
- Loss of your work-based social network
- Loss of your sense of security

### Grief is Normal After Job Loss

Grief is a natural response to loss, and that includes the loss of a job. Losing your job forces you to make rapid changes, which can leave you feeling upset, depressed, or out of balance. Try to accept your feelings and go easy on yourself. While everyone grieves differently, the following coping tips for job loss stress can also help you deal with the grieving process in a healthy way.

And remember: most successful people have experienced major setbacks in their careers but have turned things around by picking themselves up, learning from the experience, and trying again. You can do the same.

### COPING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS TIP 1:

#### - Reach Out to Stay Strong

Your natural reaction at this

difficult time may be to withdraw from friends and family out of shame or embarrassment. But don't underestimate the importance of other people when you're faced with the stress of job loss and unemployment. Social contact is nature's antidote to stress. Since the face and heart are wired together in the brain, nothing works better at calming your nervous system than talking face to face with a good listener.

The person you talk to doesn't have to be able to offer solutions; they just have to be a good listener, someone who'll listen attentively without being distracted or judging you.

As well as making a huge difference to how you feel, reaching out to others can help you feel more in control of your situation—and you never know what opportunities will arise.

You may want to resist asking for support out of pride but opening up won't make you a burden to others. In fact, most people will be flattered

### Avoiding the Pitfalls of Job Loss

- Taking refuge in your "cave" may provide temporary comfort, but is little help if your time spent there is not constructive. Surrounding yourself with positive, supportive family and friends may better help your self-esteem.
- Venting your anger and frustrations may only make you feel worse if you find yourself in the middle of a "pity party." There are people who actually enjoy misery and the misfortune of others.
- Drinking is at best a temporary relief, and for some people, can lead to a crippling addiction.

Source: The University of Georgia



that you trust them enough to confide in them, and it will only strengthen your relationship.

#### - **Developing New Relationships After Job Loss**

It's never too late to expand your social network. It can be crucial in both helping you cope with the stress of job loss and unemployment—and in finding new work.

- **Build new friendships:** Meet new people with common interests by taking a class or joining a club such as a book group, dinner club, or sports team.
- **Join a Job Club:** Other job seekers can be invaluable sources of encouragement, support, and job leads. Being around others facing similar challenges can help energising and motivate you during your job search. See Resources section below for help finding a job club in your area.
- **Network for new employment:** The vast majority of job openings are never advertised; they're filled by networking. Networking may sound intimidating or difficult - especially when it comes to finding a job - but it doesn't have to be, even if you're an introvert or you feel like you don't know many people.
- **Volunteer:** While unemployment can wear on your self-esteem, volunteering helps you maintain a sense of value and purpose.

And helping others is an instantaneous mood booster. Volunteering can also provide career experience, social support, and networking opportunities.

#### **COPING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS TIP 2:**

##### - **Involve Your Family for Support**

Unemployment affects the whole family, so don't try to shoulder your problems alone. Keeping your job loss a secret will only make the situation worse. Your family's support can help you survive and thrive, even in this difficult time.

- **Open up to your family.** Whether it's to ease the stress or cope with the grief of job loss, now is the time to lean on the people who care about you, even if you take pride in being strong and self-sufficient. Keep them in the loop about your job search and tell them how they can support you.
- **Listen to their concerns:** Your family members are worried about you, as well as their own stability and future. Give them a chance to talk about their concerns and offer suggestions regarding your job loss employment search.
- **Make time for family fun:** Set aside regular family fun time where you can enjoy each other's company, let off steam, and forget about your job loss and unemployment troubles. This will help the whole family stay positive.

#### **COPING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS TIP 3:**

##### - **Get Moving to Relieve Stress**

If work commitments meant that you didn't have the time to exercise regularly before, it's important to make the time now. Exercise is a powerful antidote to stress. As well as relaxing tense muscles and relieving tension in the body, exercise releases powerful endorphins to improve your mood. Trimming your waistline and improving your physique may also give your self-confidence a boost.

- Aim to exercise for 30 minutes or more per day—or break that up into short, 10-minute bursts of activity. A 10-minute walk can raise your spirits for two hours.
- Rhythmic exercise - where you move both your arms and legs - is a hugely effective way to lift your mood, increase energy, sharpen focus, and relax both the mind and body. Try walking, running, weight training, swimming, martial arts, or even dancing.
- To maximise stress relief, instead of continuing to focus on your thoughts, focus on your body and how it feels as you move—the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, for example, or the wind on your skin.

#### **COPING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS TIP 4:**

##### - **Eat Well to Keep Your Focus**

Your diet may seem like the last

#### **Helping Children Cope With a Parent's Job Loss**

Children can be deeply affected by a parent's unemployment. It is important for them to know what has happened and how it will affect the family. However, try not to overburden them with too many emotional or financial details.

- Keep an open dialogue with your children. Children have a way of imagining the worst when they write their own "scripts," so the truth can actually be far less devastating than what they envision.
- Make sure your children know it's not anybody's fault. Children may not understand about job loss and immediately think that you did something wrong to cause it. Or, they may feel that somehow they are responsible or financially burdensome. They need reassurance in these matters, regardless of their age.
- Children need to feel they are helping. They want to help and having them do something like taking a cut in allowance, deferring expensive purchases, or getting an after-school job can make them feel as if they are part of the team.

thing you should concern yourself about when you're facing the stress of job loss and unemployment. But what you put in your body can have a huge effect on how much energy you have and how positive you feel.

- Minimise sugar and refined carbs. You may crave sugary snacks or comfort foods such as pasta, white bread, potatoes, or French fries, but these high-carbohydrate foods quickly lead to a crash in mood and energy.
- Reduce your intake of foods that can adversely affect your mood, such as caffeine, trans fats, and foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones.
- Eat more Omega-3 fatty acids to give your mood a boost. The best sources are fatty fish (salmon, herring, mackerel, anchovies, sardines), seaweed, flaxseed, and walnuts.
- Avoid nicotine. Smoking when you're feeling stressed may seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant, leading to higher, not lower, levels of anxiety.
- Drink alcohol in moderation. Alcohol temporarily reduces worry, but too much can cause even greater anxiety as it wears off.

#### COPING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS TIP 5:

##### - Take Care of Yourself

The stress of job loss and unemployment can take a toll on your health. Now more than ever, it's important to take care of yourself.

#### Tips for Managing Job Loss and Unemployment Stress

- **Maintain balance in your life:** Don't let your job search consume you. Make time for fun, rest, and relaxation - whatever revitalises you. Your job search



will be more effective if you are mentally, emotionally, and physically at your best.

- **Get plenty of sleep:** Sleep has a huge influence on your mood and productivity. Make sure you're getting between 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night. It will help you keep your stress levels under control and maintain your focus through-out your job search.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and yoga are a powerful antidote to stress. They also boost your feelings of serenity and joy and teach you how to stay calm and collected in challenging situations - including job interviews.

#### COPING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS TIP 6:

##### - Stay Positive to Keep Up Your Energy

If it's taking you longer than anticipated to find work, the following tips can help you stay focused and upbeat.

- **Keep a regular daily routine:** When you no longer have a job to report to every day, you can easily lose motivation. Treat your job search like a job, with a daily "start" and "end" time, with regular times for exercise and networking. Following a set

schedule will help you be more efficient and productive.

- **Create a job search plan:** Avoid getting overwhelmed by breaking big goals into small, manageable steps. Instead of trying to do everything at once, set priorities. If you're not having luck in your job search, take some time to rethink your goals.
- **List your positives:** Make a list of all the things you like about yourself, including skills, personality traits, accomplishments, and successes. Write down projects you're proud of, situations where you excelled, and things you're good at. Revisit this list often to remind yourself of your strengths.
- **Focus on the things you can control:** You can't control how quickly a potential employer calls you back or whether or not they decide to hire you. Rather than wasting your precious energy on things that are out of your hands, turn your attention to things you can control during your unemployment, such as learning new skills, writing a great cover letter and resume, and setting up meetings with your networking contacts. [END]

Web: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/job-loss-and-unemployment-stress.htm>



# Modern Missionaries: Madonna in PNG



by  
Madonna  
Yates

Missionary in PNG, New Ireland,  
working as a translator.

## Introduction

What do you think when someone tells you that they're a missionary? Do you immediately place them on a high pedestal, ranking them as being more 'spiritual' than the 'average' Christian? Do you think perhaps that they're a bit quirky, socially awkward, and a little out of touch with the modern world?

Well I am a missionary; a translator no less.

From the outset I didn't feel any more 'spiritual' than the 'average' Christian, nor that I was at all inspirational. I will agree though that I'm probably a little odd because I don't like any kind of notoriety, and nor do I seek the fame which seems to drive so many people in our modern age.

I don't have a social media page, and I dislike having my photo taken, and in fact, I've never even taken a selfie. (And may I ask, what's all this fuss about ©Pokemon Go!?)

## My Struggles

Before I share about my life as a missionary in Papua New Guinea, I want to explain that Madonna the missionary still has the same struggles as Madonna the teacher in her previous life back in Australia.

As a single person, 'wife and mother' don't form a part of my identity, so without realising it, I sought to find my identity in my work. I used to place a lot of worth

in what I did, and I used to worry about whether I was doing enough.

My verse for inspiration was Colossians 3:17:

*"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* [NIV]

This verse exhorted me to do my very best for Jesus, but somehow I had twisted it to mean that I had to do everything for Him, as though everything depended on me. As a result, there was a lot of 'doing,' but not a lot of giving thanks. Self-recrimination about my efforts plagued me, but I was also full of pride too, and that belief carried over into my missionary work.

Now though I feel an added pressure that I should be doing more to justify the financial support and trust that churches and individuals have invested in me. The idea of working for God, can become an idol and a poor substitute for serving Him.

Becoming a missionary doesn't change your faults; they come with you and can become even more pronounced in the stresses of missionary life.

It was God alone who was able to change my perspective, and He chose to use the diagnosis of breast cancer in 2010 to do just that. Through the experience I became completely helpless in order for Him to teach me about how foolish I was to think that anything depended on me. Most importantly, God showed me how

precious I was in his sight. God loves me not because of what I do, but loves me just for myself, for who I am.

Throughout my cancer treatment, I wasn't able to do anything at all; I was a couch potato. I had no energy and I was one of those patients who had to avoid people because of the risk of infection. All I could do was to endure it, and to keep trusting in God's goodness. God used this experience to show me that there was absolutely nothing I needed to do make Him love me any more than He already did.

Since then I've come to understand that doing everything for the name of Jesus, is to live as

*Becoming a missionary  
doesn't change your  
faults; they come with  
you and can become  
even more pronounced  
in the stresses of  
missionary life.*

His representative, and act as Jesus would. Jesus never fretted, but had complete trust that God his Father had everything under His command. I simply needed to follow Jesus' example, loving

and trusting God in all things and seeing God perform His miracles.

The challenge every Christian faces of dying to self every day, never goes away. Picture this: I'm back in the village and I'm in the middle of translating a difficult passage of the Bible, and I hear a knock at the door. It is the tenth knock that day. How am I going to react? Do I feel frustration because I know that the person most likely just wants me to buy another bunch of bananas and I have a heap already piled up on my kitchen counter? Have they come because they want the missionary to give them something for free? I have no



Literacy class



Graduating students from the literacy classes

illusions. People rarely come to the door to ask how to be saved. It's not that way in Australia, and nor is it in Papua New Guinea.

But the people do come, because they need me to help, and the needs here in the village are huge. The people have very little in the way of possessions. There's no running water and no electricity. They live just on the bare essentials and from what they can grow in their gardens. They come to the white missionary, that they think is very rich because she has a generator, and a computer, and lives in a house all by herself. They come with the hope of getting a few kina (PNG money) to buy some luxuries like soap, or salt, or noodles.

Some days, I'm able to die to self and I act graciously, and compassionately, and sometimes God has provided opportunities to speak about their need for Jesus, and how sin has separated them from Him. Then if the opportunity presents itself, I can share the Good News, that God's love for them is greater than their sin, and has made the way possible for them to be part of God's clan (being a part of a clan is more important than family ties).

Some days, I'm sad to say, I get grumpy. In my indignation at being

interrupted, I forget to die to self and place others first. I fail to see that God has brought them to me for a reason, even if only to show them love by buying yet again, another hand of bananas.

### The Battles

Dying to self, is a daily struggle for every person, and for the missionary, not to die to self, can ruin one's testimony. While I may be doing 'the Lord's work' in translating scriptures, if I fail to love, then any work I do is really meaningless (see 1 Corinthians 13).

Missionary life is full of many challenges, physically, spiritually and mentally. Living in the tropics is physically draining, and day to day living involves having to deal with water pumps and generators, and creatures that want to eat you out of house and home. Then the computer crashes and it takes six weeks to get it fixed, and all the while I'm worrying if I've lost all that precious translation work that I've been labouring on for the past three years.

In addition there is the battle raging in the heavenly realms for each precious soul here, and the fight becomes personal as people try to intimidate and frighten away those hearing the Word of God.

For me though, the greatest battle is the one that rages in my own mind: things that people say and do can play on my mind. Perhaps someone made a comment, and I took it the wrong way, and then before I knew it, I'd blown it all out of proportion, and so I need to keep a regular check on my mental health. If I sense that my thoughts are heading towards the negative, it's time for me to have a change of scenery and a chat with a trusted friend to get things in perspective.

As I get older, I realise God's work in forming Christ in my life still has some way to go, and I see all the more how huge God's love is and the grace that He extends to me.

I say all this, because I think oftentimes missionaries only talk about all the wonderful things that are happening, and how people's lives are being saved through their ministry.

Those of you who are back in our home countries, may start to feel that your lives are not achieving anything, or making any impact. I admire those of you back home who keep strong for Jesus in our secular society. At least there is a real openness to spirituality here in Papua New Guinea. I feel the barrage you are under whenever I





Bible Study class



Subul's baptism

come back to Australia: Christians are being attacked from every quarter, and I can imagine that this relentless assault can be very hurtful and distressing.

Never underestimate the effect that your godly living is having in our communities. Keep standing firm, for God is faithful and He promises to be always with you - you are making a difference.

### My 'Normal' Life Now

I've been living the village life now for eight years, and these strange surroundings have become normal to me.

I often forget how different life is here from our Western world. Recently, a group of young college-aged students came to visit the Patpatar church to see for themselves what is involved in teaching another people with a language and culture which is different to our own. Being with them, I felt afresh the strangeness of the lives and customs of the Patpatar people here in PNG.

I'm sure to these students it was almost like being dropped onto an alien planet. The inhabitants here have teeth stained red with buai, a mind narcotic, and they speak what sounds like an alien language.

The local people stop and stare at you as you walk past. Most of the

inhabitants are armed with long sharp knives, and you may wonder if they have any plans to use them on you. Their young ones shriek at the sight of the white-skinned intruders, and run to hide behind their mothers.

It can be very confusing at times, knowing how to act in another culture. One day I unintentionally shamed someone, and he became so angry that he wanted to use his knife on me. Thankfully the misunderstanding was sorted out, and today I am good friends with this man. Eventually you become accepted and are no longer the outsider, and they see you as one of them, to a certain extent. Things that were once strange have now become the new 'normal' to me.

### Christ in Me

Missionary life has many ups and downs. During the down times, it is easy to get discouraged, and there are many times I've asked God, "Why are you making my life more difficult that it already is?"

I understand that God wants me to look beyond my circumstances, and look to Him. As a missionary, it is easy to think that God is wanting to use us to transform other

people's lives, but usually God is not content until first He sees Christ formed perfectly in all of us.

Paul spoke of the pain he underwent, in order that the Galatians would become more Christlike (Galatians 4:19). I now know what that means. In weakness, God was able to use Paul's illness to proclaim more powerfully the Gospel of Christ. Paul expressed his concern that the Galatian Christians were trying to follow the Law and traditions, thinking that it was the way to please God. Paul reminded them of how they originally came to faith: it was through weakness that the power of God was displayed in the Gospel, and through his own weak vessel, God was somehow using him too.

Then Paul had to tell them some hard truths; things that they wouldn't have been be happy to hear which brought pain to his own heart.

God allows hardships in our lives to bring about changes so that we can place Christ front and centre as our focus.

He even uses these hardships to bear witness to God's faithfulness to others, so that when we are facing

*Things that were once  
strange have now become the  
new 'normal' to me.*

pain and impossible challenges, we have a choice: either our faith gets a workout and we are transformed more into the image of Christ, or we cave in and run away.

Sometimes someone will say to me, "You have sacrificed so much to be a missionary." I feel very uncomfortable hearing such praise. Yes, there is a cost that comes with any sort of service, but I cannot say that I have sacrificed anything at all. I am here because God wants me to serve the

people here; I count it a joy, not a sacrifice. I am where I am because God wants me to serve the people around me.

We can all find joy in knowing that we are where God wishes us to be, and wherever we live, we continue being faithful in living for him.

### Conclusion

I do feel honoured that God has placed me here amongst the Patpatar people of Papua New

Guinea, and to see first-hand the lives that are transformed by Jesus.

As the Word is translated and taught and then received by faith, what a joy it is to witness this new life begin shooting up in my tribal friends; to see them filled with hope and peace where there was once darkness and fear.

Ultimately it is all for God's glory, and in Christ, God graciously allows me to be a part of that. [END]

PNG Sunset

*"So, first and foremost, I urge God's people to pray. They should make their requests, petitions, and thanksgivings on behalf of all humanity.*

*Teach them to pray for kings (or anyone in high places for that matter) so that we can lead quiet, peaceful lives - reverent, godly, and holy - all of which is good and acceptable before the eyes of God our Saviour who desires for everyone to be saved and know the truth.*

*Because there is one God and one Mediator between God and us - the man Jesus, God's Anointed, who gave His life as a ransom for all so that we might have freedom."*

*1 Timothy 2:1-6*

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# CHRISTIE'S KITCHEN

## MAIN COURSE

### Zucchini Pizzas (serves 2)

#### Ingredients:

- 4 large zucchinis
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1/3 cup of marinara or pizza sauce
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup pepperoni slices

#### Instructions:

This is a very easy dish that you can serve as entrée or main course. At my workplace I feed up to 300 men a day and getting them to eat veggies everyday is hard, so this was a good substitute and went down very well with them.

#### Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Cut ends off the zucchini and then cut them into slices 2-3 cm thick but only 3/4 of the way through.
3. Place in the oven for 15-20 minutes and cook until tender.
4. Spread marinara sauce in each slice followed by a slice of pepperoni, then sprinkle with cheese, place back into the oven for 5 – 10 minutes until cheese is melted.



## LOW-CARB RECIPES

Easy recipes for one or two people, with regular supermarket ingredients. All recipes have been tried and tested right in Christie's Kitchen!

## DESSERT:

### Chia Seed Pudding (serves 2)

#### Ingredients:

- 300 ml coconut cream
- 100 ml of water
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1 kiwi fruit

Optional: stevia equivalent to 2 tbs of sugar (While the coconut cream does sweeten it a little, if you have a sweet tooth like me, then add the stevia)

#### Instructions:

Mix all of the ingredients together well (except the fruit), then place into serving cups and refrigerate overnight. When ready to serve, cut up the kiwi fruit and add a little to the top of each cup before serving.

#### Optional:

You can add a little vanilla or other flavours like strawberry or orange or sugar-free maple syrup for a taste change and add an appropriate fruit to go onto the top.

This recipe is also perfect for a breakfast treat.



## True or False - Bible Facts?



## Puzzle page

How well do you know

your Bible? Without looking these up, can you tell if the following Bible facts are true or false?

(Answers are on the following page)

- |  |       |   |       |
|--|-------|---|-------|
| 1. Samson's wife Delilah cut his hair.   | T / F | 2. Noah was a woman.  | T / F |
| 3. Adam and Eve ate an apple from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.              | T / F | 4. The wise men found Jesus as a baby in the manger.  | T / F |
| 5. The following quote is from the Bible: "God helps those who help themselves."           | T / F | 6. Though the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the desert, neither their clothes nor shoes wore out. | T / F |
| 7. After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul spent some time in Arabia.           | T / F | 8. When Moses threw his staff in front of Pharaoh, it turned into a snake.                              | T / F |
| 9. The kings in the East saw a new star in the sky when Jesus was born.                    | T / F | 10. The time between when Jesus was resurrected and went to heaven, was exactly 40 days.                | T / F |
| 11. King David's great-great grandmother was a prostitute.                                 | T / F | 12. In Joshua, God caused the sun to stand still in the sky for almost eighteen hours.                  | T / F |
| 13. Mary Magdalene was a prostitute.   | T / F | 14. Psalm 90 was written by Moses.  | T / F |
| 15. There were 50 years between the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament. | T / F | 16. Paul wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else.  | T / F |
| 17. Ezekiel wore a turban.   | T / F | 18. God told Isaiah to walk around naked.   | T / F |
| 19. A book burning is mentioned in Acts.   | T / F | 20. Jesus said just three words to King Herod.  | T / F |

## Joseph Puzzle

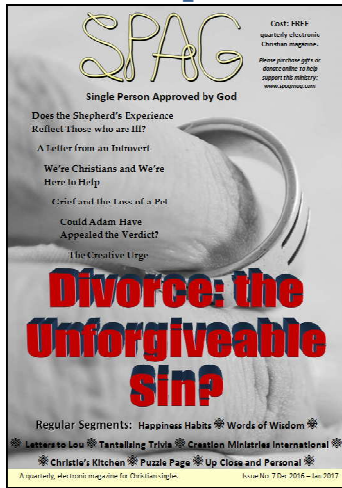
Can you link these Bible questions about the Old Testament Joseph with their correct answers?

1	What was the name of Joseph's father?	A	Thirty
2	Where had Joseph's family been living when the story begins?	B	Seventeen
3	Which of Joseph's brother suggested selling him as a slave instead of killing him?	C	Canaan
4	How many brothers did Joseph have?	D	Blessing
5	What was the name of Joseph's oldest brother?	E	Seven
6	What was the name of Joseph's youngest brother?	F	Goshen
7	What was the name of Joseph's first boss?	G	Judah
8	In jail, besides the cup-bearer, what other person spoke to Joseph about his dream?	H	Nile
9	In the first of his dreams, Pharaoh dreamed about which river?	I	God
10	During this time, who did Joseph say was the interpreter of dreams?	J	Shepherd
11	How old was Joseph when he entered Pharaoh's service?	K	Reuben
12	How many years did the famine last?	L	Ephraim
13	What was the name of the land where the Egyptians allowed Joseph's family to settle?	M	Potiphar
14	What was the occupation of Joseph's family?	N	Eleven
15	When Joseph's father met Pharaoh, what did he give him?	O	Machpelah
16	After arriving in Egypt, how many more years did Joseph's father live?	P	Baker
17	Joseph's two sons were Manasseh and who else?	Q	Israel
18	As he was dying, Joseph's father asked to be buried in the cave at which place?	R	Benjamin

Answers on next page.



## Next quarter's issue:



### Some of the Articles include:

- Divorce: the Unforgivable Sin?
- Does the Shepherd's Experience Reflect Those Who Are Ill?
- A Letter from an Introvert
- We're Christians and We're Here to Help
- Grief and the Loss of a Pet
- Could Adam have Appealed the Verdict?
- The creative Urge
- ... and many more

### \* THANK YOU \*

Please seriously consider supporting this important ministry. You may make a one-off donation, or add us as a regular recipient of your generosity through your bank. You can even purchase items from our online store, such as our gorgeous online e-book "Reflections" with over 120 pages of stunning scenery photos and inspirational quotes and Bible verses. Our webpage is:

[www.spagmag.com](http://www.spagmag.com).

All ongoing costs are presently born by our Editor, Vicki Nunn, and yet she currently receives no wages for the hundreds of hours she puts into this magazine. Consider also our urgent need to replace our ailing computer.

## PUZZLE ANSWERS

### What is it? (from p.6)

Answer: it was a close up of a dandelion (right→)

### True or False - Bible Facts

1. False – it was a servant or a man and not Delilah who shaved (not cut) Samson's hair (Judges 16:19);
2. True – Noah was also the name of one of the daughters of Zelophehad (Joshua 17:3);
3. False – the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not identified. (Genesis 3:6);
4. False – the Bible says that the wise men found the child in a house. This is likely because it had taken many months for them to travel to Bethlehem after they saw the new star in the sky;
5. False – the quote is from Benjamin Franklin, though possibly originating in Ancient Greece.
6. True (Deuteronomy 29:5);
7. True (Galatians 1:17)
8. False – it was Moses' brother Aaron who threw down his own staff (Exodus 7:8-12);
9. False – while the wise men of the east saw a new star in the sky, they were not identified as kings;



10. True (Acts 1:3);
11. True – Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho and was King David's ancestor (Joshua 2:1);
12. False – it was almost a whole day (Joshua 10:12-14);
13. False – the only thing we know for sure was that she'd once been possessed by seven demons – this falsehood may have come from the play "Jesus Christ, Superstar" or even earlier from a reference in the Jewish Talmud in which there was a note about the city of Magdala which had a reputation for its prostitutes ;
14. True (Psalm 90);
15. False – it was around 400 years;
16. False – While Paul wrote more books, Luke wrote a larger percentage of the New Testament;
17. True (Ezekiel 24:16-17);
18. True (Isaiah 20:1-4);
19. True – where it mentions burning books of magic - Acts 19:19-20;
20. False – Jesus said nothing at all (Luke 23:9)

### Joseph Puzzle

1 – Q; 2 – C; 3 – G; 4 – N; 5 – K; 6 – R; 7 – M; 8 – P; 9 – H; 10 – I; 11 – A; 12 – E; 13 – F; 14 – J; 15 – D; 16 – B; 17 – L; 18 – O

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*The iconic Ettamogah Pub was a bar in a famous cartoon series by Australian artist, Ken Maynard. In 1987, the first physical pub, with its sloping walls and unusual style was built in Albury, Victoria in Australia as a tourist attraction. Several other Ettamogah Pubs have since been built in other places in Australia.*