



SPAG

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Single Person Approved by God

Billy Graham: An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Calling

- Hate like Jesus
- Domestic violence and the church (II)
- God's gift of life: NO to euthanasia
- Road to Damascus
- From muslim sheikh to secret believer
- Josie and the gift of singleness
- Cuttlefish colour changes inspire new TV screen design
- Condemned to celibacy?

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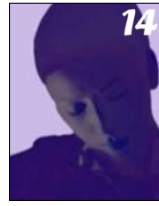


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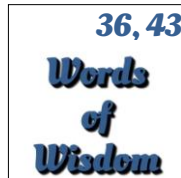
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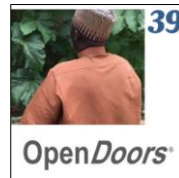
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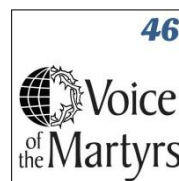
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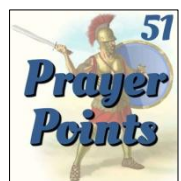
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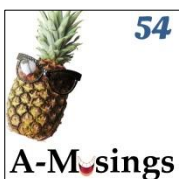
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Between 1771 and 1816, the first US Methodist Episcopal bishop, Francis Asbury preached to people anywhere he could find them including riverboats and bordellos. What was so incredible about Bishop Asbury, was that during his career as a preacher, he covered 434,523km of the frontier!

Editor's Letter



Welcome to the thirteenth issue of SPAG - it's our third birthday!

How exciting that SPAG Magazine is having its third birthday! To celebrate, we're offering a whopping 60% off the purchase price of all earlier issues of SPAG Magazine for three months (till the end of August - [link here.](#)) You can catch up on all of the terrific articles in our earlier issues, *and* your purchase will help to support this important ministry.

But wait, there's more! Until the end of July, anyone wishing to promote their product or business in SPAG Magazine, will receive 50% off advertising in our September/November 2018 issue ([find out more here.](#)) - another great way to support our ministry. As always, non-profit groups/businesses can advertise for free, dependent upon availability of space and suitability.

So what can you look forward to in this issue? Joseph Kolapudi wrote our feature article about Billy Graham (p10) and shares a little of Billy's history and his own personal connection to him.

With her permission, I'm sharing some correspondence I had with a young woman about the gift of singleness. I believe this information will be of great benefit to pastors, married couples as well as singles (p14.)

Ruth Lindsay continues with part 2 of her article on domestic violence and the church (p21) and she'll be back with more insight into this difficult and very timely subject in the final part of this series in our next issue.

Of course there are heaps of great articles in addition to our regular segments including our counsellor who responds to personal problems in "Letters to Lou" (p4), Creation Ministries shares a fascinating look into how a cuttlefish may help develop TVs in the future (p35), and Modern Missionaries where Liz shares more of her adventures in Papua New Guinea where she's been expanding her nursing skills into other areas (p37.)

So it's time for me to quit talking and let you dive right in and enjoy the latest issue of SPAG Magazine.

Warm regards

**Vicki Nunn,
SPAG Editor**

PS (I'm looking for a volunteer sub-editor who'll be willing to check through our issue prior to publication. Please email me if you have a good eye for picking up errors in electronic text. Email: spagmag@yahoo.com.au)

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SPAG (Single Person Approved by God) is a free quarterly, electronic magazine for adult Christians, with a focus on singles. While it is based in Australia, it is an international, inter-denominational publication aimed at encouraging, challenging and inspiring all believers, with articles suitable for all.

Another of our aims is to provide Church leaders and married couples 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. 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 article¹ or photo¹ of your own for consideration. Perhaps you have a question for Lou, SPAG's Counsellor.

Please note that any item or photo for publication must be your own original work and not copied from elsewhere.¹

ADVERTISING:

If you would like to promote your business or major Christian activity in SPAG, please contact the Editor, Vicki Nunn on email: spagmag@yahoo.com.au or phone (+61) 042 44 33 772. You can find more information about advertising costs on [SPAG's website \(link here.\)](#).

Community or non-profit groups are advertised free, though we cannot guarantee that there will always be 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 vast family of brothers and sisters. God sees you and your struggles: He knows you and He loves you. The articles here are written to encourage, challenge and inspire you, whether single or married.

~Please feel free to share this magazine with other Christians.~

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



Letter 1 – Some Churches are Just Too Much

Dear Lou

Some churches make me feel uncomfortable, especially those with loud music and guitars and clapping. It's like it's a show instead of time to worship God. There's a group singing and playing music on stage set up above everyone in the 'audience.' Sometimes it feels like the people on the stage, including the Pastor are almost becoming like idols to us. We worship their music and our leader, instead of or as well as worshipping God. Is this something we should be concerned about?

In some services, when people lift their arms and hands up in the air, especially during singing, it's like some are doing it to draw attention to themselves.

I've been to some churches where it seems that speaking in tongues is kind of 'expected.' From what I understand, speaking in tongues is the least of the gifts and I didn't think that every Christian got all of the gifts. To me it seemed as if people felt pressured to fake speaking in tongues to fit in. That just doesn't seem right to me.

I believe that many of these Christians are genuine, but sometimes I think some churches are set up to encourage the wrong thing, such as idolising the musicians and the Pastor, or trying to draw attention to themselves or being forced to fake it to fit in. Am I just being too old fashioned or do I have a legitimate right to be concerned sometimes?

Marcus

Dear Marcus

You ask a very important question, and one which has been raised with me on countless occasions.

You need to understand the type of church service which blends with the person you are.

As I talk with people I find there are three broad categories we confront. The first is the formal, liturgical style of worship, the second is the less formal and has a very strong emphasis upon the preaching of the Word, and the third is the charismatic worship with its focus on music and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The key for each of these styles of worship is that a good balance is kept in the ministry of the church.

In a very broad summary I see the Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Church most comfortable in Category one; with the Baptist, Church of Christ, and Wesleyan churches fitting into category two; and the Assembly of God, Christian Outreach and other

charismatic churches fitting into category three.

The key thing for you to identify with, is the style of worship you feel comfortable in your worshipping God and find yourself regularly in church. The key is to always be in a church which brings people to a relationship with Christ and develops a good discipleship ministry. This is the church which will send disciples out into the field to preach the Gospel.

Get this right and most of your other questions will be answered.

For further reading, I would encourage you to get hold of Natural Church Development material and study the information they present. A good starting point would be the book, "Natural Church Development" by Christian Schwarz.

Lou

Letter 2 – Confused about My Faith

Dear Lou

I've been a Christian since I was fifteen, and there have been many times in my life when God has answered my prayers, especially when I was struggling with money, or having trouble in other areas.

But, there have also been times when God hasn't answered my prayers, like when my wife had our first baby. Matthew was born with a hole in his heart and other health problems. We prayed and asked for healing, and our church prayed too. It was a horrible time, and Matthew had to stay in hospital.

We had months of stress, especially the times when he got really sick, and we were juggling work and other things, and my wife and I had little time to spend together.

Then just when it looked like Matthew was getting better, and the doctors said he was strong enough to have another operation to fix his heart, our son died.

My wife and I were both angry and hurt for a long time. We went to counselling and joined a group of other people who had lost their children, and that really helped us. But still it left me confused - I truly believe that God could have healed Matthew if He wanted to, but since He didn't, how do I know how to trust Him now?

I'm not sure I understand what faith or trust are now that this has happened. What about Mark 11:24 - what does that mean since God doesn't always answer our prayers?

Letters to Lou

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Lou to answer? Email Lou at: spagmag@yahoo.com.au



Now when I pray, I have doubts that God will answer my prayers. Someone said that the experience must have made our faith stronger, but honestly, I feel so much weaker now. My faith in God has been shaken. I'm confused about how I can continue to trust in God for answers to prayer.

Ryan

Dear Ryan

My heart aches for you as you continue to cope with the loss of your son. There are many things in this life which we don't understand, but simply come to a point where we must continue to trust God.

Sadly, there is a level of thinking within the church that God is like a benevolent grandfather who is at the beck and call of people, and He must deliver on the prayers we pray in the way in which we tell Him to answer.

When we pray, God always answers our prayers, but not always in accordance with our will. You have heard the statement that God answers prayer in three ways:

Yes, no, and wait.

Our problem is that we don't want to know about 'no' and 'wait.'

From your letter I would assume that Matthew was very young when he went to be with the Lord. That being the case, you know that you will unite again one day in heaven. I'm sure that Matthew would tell you he is doing fine in heaven, and would implore you to make your life count while you are here on earth.

Ryan, to you and your wife, it is time to realise that God is still on the throne, and He has a plan for you. Trust Him and continue to grow in your faith.

Only God can make sense out of nonsense. Years ago a close friend lost their little child at about 20 months of age. I remember the wife saying, "I don't understand, but I know God can use this experience." For years since that time, many a family who have lost a little child has been blessed by them. They can truly say "I know what you are feeling."

You mentioned that there have been many times where God has answered your prayers in the past. He is the same God in your life today and He has not changed. Start trusting Him afresh with your life and then see what a difference Christ can make in you again.

Let God use you for His glory.

Kind regards
Lou

Letter 3 – Courting or Dating?

Dear Lou

I'm single in my early 20s, and somebody asked me whether I'm courting a girl or whether I'm just dating? I don't understand. I thought they were the same thing?

If I'm looking for a partner, aren't you supposed to date to find if your compatible or something? Is there a difference and what does it matter anyway?

Kyle

Dear Kyle

Your letter caused me to start thinking about the difference in these two words. I think we tend to simply to use the word 'dating' as the catch-all for any relationship pre-marriage.

A lady named Talia Kennedy said this:

"Courtship' is a rather outdated word used to describe the activities that occur when a couple is past the dating stage and in a more serious stage of their relationship. It happens before the couple becomes engaged and is usually meant to describe when a man is attempting to woo a woman, with marriage as the end goal. Dating has a more informal connotation and implies that the couple is not necessarily exclusive."

Another person wrote:

"Men and women who choose to date often have no commitment to consider marrying the other person. Maturity and readiness for marriage are not considerations in the decision to date. Instead, couples usually date with the selfish goals of having fun and enjoying romantic attachments. In contrast, courtship is undertaken only when both parties are prepared to make a commitment to marriage."

I appreciate these thoughts and trust you can see the difference.

This question would be a good topic for a discussion group in your local singles group or other church group.

When it comes to building a significant relationship, every believer must do all in their power to build a God honouring relationship. God's standards are always the best standards.

Sincerely
Lou

Jesus Said What?!



by Jessica Currie

Press Service International

As a new mum I spend a fair chunk of time around other mums, reading mum blogs, and articles, scrolling through family forums. Whenever I'm around other parents, the topic of conversation is usually 'the kids.'

Something that I hear and read pretty frequently is 'my kids are my life.' It's the kind of sentiment you see in those mushy Facebook® posts that parents (and grandparents) share saying things like 'it doesn't matter how old my children are, they will always be my babies.'

A perfect example is a (terrifying) children's book that I won't name, which literally pictures an elderly mother sneaking into her grown sons room at night to take him out of bed and rock him on her lap. Yes that is an actual book for children.

The above example aside, the

idea that 'my kids are my life', seems good, it seems right. After all, I grew my daughter, I carried her for nine months, went through eighteen hours of painful labour to deliver her, and seven months on she is still completely dependent on me and my husband to meet her needs.

Hating My Family

I love my daughter. I love her with a fierce, overwhelming, irrational, unconditional love and I have done from the moment we saw her as a tiny little jellybean on a screen.

I also love Jesus, and He says that if I don't hate my father and mother, my spouse and my children, even my own life, I can't follow him (Luke chapter 14 verse 26).

Wait, Jesus said what?

There are many things about Christianity that are off-putting, and this is one of them. If you put the phrases 'my kids are my life,' and "I must hate my family to

follow Jesus" side by side, it's pretty obvious which one seems right and which one seems wrong.

So what on earth does Jesus mean?

Jesus is saying there's a cost to following him, and the cost is high.

The Greek word for hate used by Jesus is '*misei*', and can be translated literally as 'hate,' but also as 'to esteem less,' or 'to love less.' When we look at the wider teachings and life of Jesus, it is pretty obvious He meant the latter.

Matthew quotes Jesus as saying:

"... anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

Matthew 10:37 [NIV]

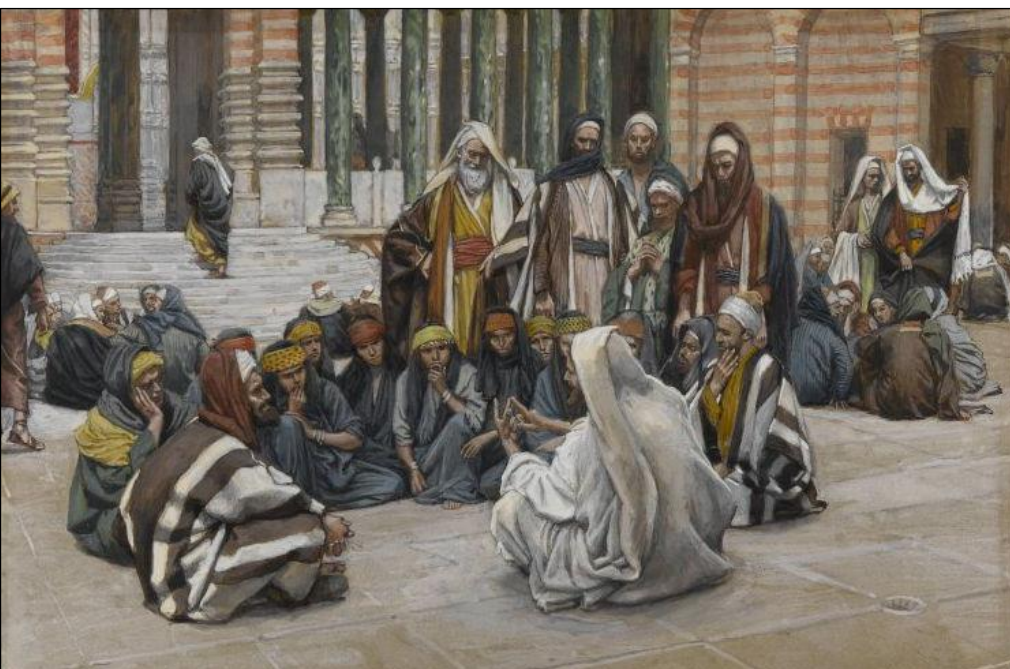
Jesus insists that His disciples will put him first, ie that loving Jesus will be their priority.

The Most Important Thing

As a young mum, and a first time mum, there is a huge temptation to make my daughter 'my life,' to spend all our money on new clothes for her; to spend my spare time browsing Instagram® in search of cool kids brands and fun places to take her; to not go to church on a Sunday so we can hang out at home; or even because it might muck with her sleep schedule.

Being a parent is a wonderful thing, but it is not the most important thing. Being married is a wonderful thing, but it is not the most important thing.

Jesus tells his followers to count the cost (Luke chapter 14 verse 28) before choosing to follow





brunch every Sunday because we want to worship with God's people.

I want her to see us love and welcome all people into our home and to our table, with generosity and joy. It's one of those confusing, wonderful paradoxes of following Jesus, that

Him, and for those first followers the cost was high: their lives were on the line.

Jesus made it very clear what they would have to give up. However, he also told them what they would gain:

"Whoever loses their life for my sake, will find it."

Matthew 10:39 [NIV]

Motherhood and Jesus

As an affluent Australian, it is highly unlikely that I will literally lose my life for loving Jesus, and as someone from generations of Christian families, I don't have to choose between my family and Jesus either. However, I am at risk of making my life revolve around being a mum, or being a wife, and not about being a disciple of Jesus.

You see, one of the other things I hear (and say) a lot is, "I'm just a mum." Being a mum is awesome, and I am well aware of the gift our little girl is, but I don't want to be just a mum, I want to show my little girl who Jesus is. I want my life to point to Him. I want to lose my life, and gain the abundant life Jesus brings (John 10:10) in motherhood.

I want our daughter's life to be filled with people instead of stuff, action instead of complacency, and grace instead of fear. I want her to know that we don't go out for

by giving up our life, we gain true life.

I can only be that mum, the mum I just described, if my daughter is not my life. I will be a better mum, a better wife, a better human, by putting aside those aspirations and making my life revolve around Jesus. I will love my little girl better, if I love Jesus more.

Sometimes it's hard, sometimes people don't get it, sometimes our family is going to seem weird, but I've counted that cost, and I truly believe that what Jesus said is that following Him will be hard, but it will be worth it. [END]

Biography:

Jess is married to Colin, and they have a one year old daughter, Lucy. Together they are striving to live like Jesus every day, by loving God, loving people, and serving the world with joy.

Jessica Currie's previous articles may be viewed at: www.pressserviceinternational.org/jessica-currie.html

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[NIV] New International Version Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Currie, Jessica, undated, Christian Today: Jesus said what?! available: www.christiantoday.com.au/news/jesus-said-what.html, accessed 17/07/17.



Tantalising Trivia

Nutty Names

Did your parents saddle you with a dreadful name? If so, you may feel a little better after checking out these monikers. Yes, the following are real names of real people, extracted from birth records, voting rolls and more:

Preserved Algar

Innocent Babe

Morticia Bloodsaw

Waynard Bopp

Coit Bustle

Lunis Cansler

Sylvia Chinchilla

Ike K Dye

Lentilhon Fluegge

Quo Vadis Gates

Coy Ham

Joy Jolly

Latitia LaFauce

Lesterine McCurine

Spurgeon Nanney

Thrifty Tips



Ideas on how to save money!

Tired of your kids demanding name brand clothing or items? To me it seems ridiculous to pay more for a brand-name when I believe the brand company should be paying us to advertise for them!

You have a couple of choices here: be too soft-hearted and watch your hard-earned cash fly out the window; or toughen up.

Encourage the kids to save up and pay for it themselves, either from their own pocket money, or by completing new chores (not the standard chores) at an agreed rate, eg wash the car, clean windows or walls, weed the garden and so on. If they only do a half-hearted effort, then only pay them a half-hearted amount and explain why. If you have more than two kids, perhaps you could encourage them to bid against each other for the lowest rate of pay. Eventually, it may just help them to appreciate how over-priced those brand-names really are, particularly if you toss in some comments when you pay them, explaining how many 'unnamed' items they could have purchased with that same money. *Happy saving!*

Earthly vs Heavenly Mindset



by Ziri Dafranchi



The significance of the human mind to life in general cannot be over-emphasised. Simply put, we are what and how we think; and these two form and shape our mindsets.

Our mindsets determine our overall behaviours, attitudes and value system.

With respect to mindsets, there is an earthly (or natural), as well as a heavenly (or eternal) mindset. Whichever of these two that predominantly characterises us, determines how we live.

As believers, we're supposed to strive for a heavenly mindset; hence this admonition:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 2:5 [KJV]

(Verses 6-8 provide further elaboration on the type of attitude to which it refers).

The need for a heavenly mindset is further emphasised by none other than Jesus himself thus:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21 [KJV]

This seems, to me, to suggest that we ought to be heavenly focused in all our doings including in all our aspirations and accumulations - i.e. having a heavenly mindset.

The admonition above, apart from demonstrating our need of a heavenly mindset, also reveals a very important truth with respect to material wealth and prosperity. It would seem that in today's Christianity, material wealth and prosperity has overshadowed the true essence of divine worship to the extent that it has become a controversial issue amongst believers.

Nowadays, it would seem one of the main reasons people are encouraged to become (and indeed why many become) born again believers is so as to prosper materially. Hence Christianity today is awash with many 'financial breakthrough strategies,' and has become more an earthly than a heavenly adventure.

Affluence it would seem has become a measure of righteousness, while financial lack, an indication of a divine curse.

While the need for material provision, including financial, cannot be overlooked both in personal lives and in ministries, the truth remains that we're promised provisions for every need we would ever have (see Matthew 6:25-32). Therefore, clamouring for material wealth

and prosperity isn't supposed to be part of our longings or endeavours, because these are not our primary responsibility and so shouldn't be.

Jesus categorically stated that we should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and not here on earth; and thus begging the question why a majority of those who claim to be His followers would insist on accumulating most of their treasures here on earth (e.g. various palatial residences; fleets of exotic cars, boats, jets; various business investments; and more money than truly needed).

One is left to wonder how much we care about laying up at least a little treasure for ourselves in heaven. Jesus also said that it is impossible to serve two masters, i.e. God and mammon, but present attitude of some who claim to follow Him tends to suggest that Jesus was wrong.

Perhaps the strongest indicator that material wealth and prosperity isn't the primary objective of the Gospel can be seen in the following: Jesus, himself, wasn't entirely materially prosperous (at least not in present day context): He wasn't married; had no children; didn't own a house, horse or any tangible material assets but He never lacked anything He truly needed when the necessity arose.

Likewise, most of Jesus' disciples (later apostles) couldn't be said to have been materially prosperous, but these are the same people whose names adorn the foundations of the walls of the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 21:14).

Paul the Apostle, a respected name in Christianity and whose writings form a significant part of the New Testament Bible, although a learned scholar, he lived and died in material poverty, having to depend on charitable generosity, of fellow believers, for most of his latter life.

If material wealth and prosperity is a measure of righteousness then the aforementioned would all have been stupendously rich, but they weren't! Ever wondered why this was the case for them?

Although there were also a significant number of righteous

people who themselves were very rich materially, these are some of the examples listed by some who desire to justify material wealth and prosperity as the goal of becoming a believer, for instance, Abraham, Kings David and Solomon, and a few others.

It is instructive to note that it was Jesus himself who made this remark:

"And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Matthew 19:24 [KJV]

Now you interpret that as you may.

Similarly, Jesus also gave a parable about a certain rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus, where both men died and the rich man found himself in hell and Lazarus in paradise (see Luke 16:19-26). I wonder why it was the rich man who went to hell in this story told by Jesus - interpret this also as you may.

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out that the main subject here isn't material wealth and prosperity but rather a heavenly or earthly mindset. A heavenly mindset will ensure that we're contented with whatever natural circumstances have been apportioned to us by our Maker.

We have to understand that we all cannot experience the same things in life.

God is primarily responsible for the path ordained for each of us as we journey through life, hence the reason that Abraham, for example, was very rich while Paul wasn't.

I believe God ordains different circumstances for each of us as a way of revealing that this natural world and existence isn't the endgame. It isn't even the main playing field, but is just a preamble to the main event. It is only in the main event, in the New Heaven and Earth, that our true identity and status will be revealed, just as Lazarus' was revealed in that parable by Jesus.

Note the contrast in the ultimate circumstances of both men in comparison to their initial and temporary states, hence the need to keep heaven - or eternity - our main focus. [END]

Biography

Ziri Dafranchi is a nature lover who enjoys walks in woodlands, parks, and gardens; and who believes that a closer interaction with nature should bring people closer to the Creator by revealing more about the many qualities of the supernatural Being behind creation and nature.

He is passionate about a united humanity and about exposing the real enemies of mankind to be spirits and not bodies.

Ziri constantly advocates a better life through a knowledge and application of the truths about life and existence which forms the crux of his first book: *Life a Mystery Solved*. Other writings by Ziri can be accessed via www.facebook.com/officialZiriDafranchi1888/ and also on his personal Facebook page and Google+ profiles.

Bibliography:

[KJV] King James Version: Public Domain



Paul preaching to the Thessalonians

Inspirational People: **Billy Graham**

An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Calling



**by Joseph
Kolapudi**

Most people know Dr. Billy Graham as an “evangelist to the nations” or perhaps as “The Pastor of Presidents,” or maybe even as one of the great heroes of the Christian faith, but for Billy, as he was affectionately known, he was just a “poor farmer from North Carolina”, as he put it, who was called by God as a witness to the world.

Despite his small beginnings, his impact has been far-reaching, and many people, all over the globe, can attest to his effect on their lives in a very personal way.

The Early Years

Born on 7 November 1918, and passing away a few months shy of his 100th birthday on the 21st of February this year, his life began on a dairy farm near Charlotte, North Carolina, in the southern part of the United States.¹

Known as a cheerful young boy who loved sports, especially baseball, he was very outgoing and spent a lot of time outdoors; yet also found great interest in books, including novels.

Eventually, when his mind turned to matters of spirituality as he grew older, he apparently was turned down for membership at his local youth group for being ‘too worldly’²; yet eventually gave

his life to the Lord at a local revival meeting led by a man named Mordecai Ham.

Inspired by Ham, he enrolled at the Bob Jones College straight after high school, which, for its day, became quite controversial because of its stance on dating and ‘college-sanctioned’ relationships (though boys and girls were not allowed to officially date outside of their race.)

Billy eventually transferred to Florida Bible Institute (now known as Trinity College of Florida), and then transferred again to Wheaton College in Chicago, where he graduated with his degree in anthropology.³

During his time at college, his first job was as a door-to-door salesman selling paintbrushes; at which he apparently became quite good, selling several suitcase loads per week.⁴

While he was at Wheaton, he also met and married Ruth Bell in August of 1943, whose parents had been missionaries to China.⁵

After College

A fan of Christian radio, especially the radio program called “The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour” led by Charles E. Fuller, which he used to listen to as a child, Billy eventually took over a friend’s radio program, “Songs in the Night” in January 1944.



Billy is welcomed to Amsterdam in 1954



Billy in Amsterdam in 1954



Speaking in Amsterdam in 1954



London crusade at Wembley Stadium in 1954

He recruited the bass-baritone singer, George Beverly Shea⁶ who soon became well-known as the opening singer in Billy's revival meetings.

In 1947, after moving on from the radio ministry, Billy was approached by the president of Northwestern Bible College in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to take over the college as their new president, and became the youngest person to serve as a sitting president of any United States college or university, during that time. He served as its president from 1948 to 1952.

Billy considered joining the armed forces as an army chaplain, but unfortunately, contracted the mumps.

Youth for Christ

After recovering, he was hired as the first full-time evangelist for the newly incorporated Youth for Christ, which interestingly was co-founded by his friend Torrey Johnson, the same friend who had initially led the radio program which Billy took over in 1944.

In 1947, he scheduled his first revival meeting at the Civic Auditorium in Grand Rapids, Michigan, attracting a reported crowd of 6,000 people.⁷

He would often hire large venues, such as sports stadiums, public parks, or even parking lots; arranging for large choirs led by friend and singer George Beverly Shea and others, as well as partnering with local churches, who sent trained counsellors to follow-up with those who made decisions to accept Jesus Christ during Billy's meetings.⁸

Billy's Crusades

During this time, he attracted much media attention through both TV and radio, leading to larger crowds and marked responses amongst both young and old alike. This spearheaded his most famous 'crusades,' as he called them, that began to gain nationwide, and eventually, international acclaim.

Billy conducted similar revival meetings in different countries all over the world, with over four hundred crusades held in a reported one hundred and eighty-five countries and territories in six continents, and continued as an effective messenger of the Gospel in each country he visited.

Eventually, he formed what became known as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) in 1950 – which is now headed by his son, Franklin Graham⁹ who also serves as president of Samaritan's Purse, a Christian relief organisation.

Under the BGEA, many ministries continue to have quite an impact today, including the *Hour of Decision* (a weekly radio broadcast), *My Answer*, a syndicated newspaper column distributed by Tribune Media Services, *Christianity Today*, a Christian magazine publication, and World Wide Pictures (which has produced and distributed over 130 films), amongst others.¹⁰

Other Influences

In addition, Billy spoke out against several controversial issues, including segregation and racism in the United States (he was friends with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who spoke at his crusade in New York City at Madison Square Garden), the Iron Curtain (during his revival

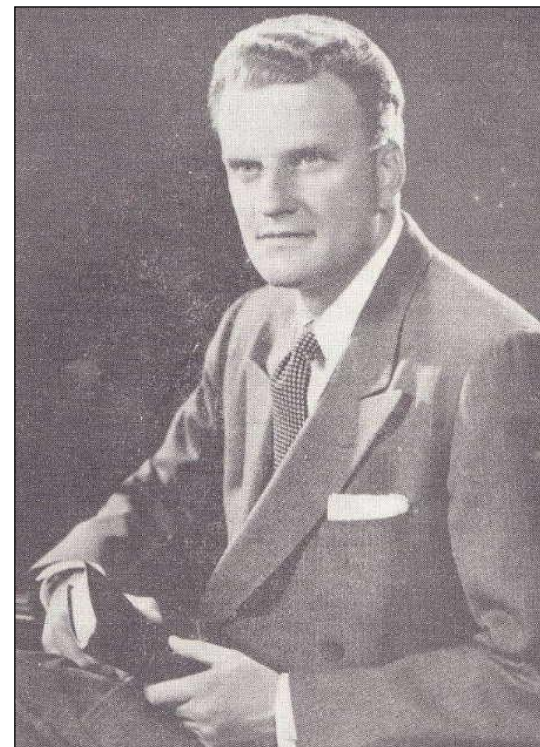
meeting in Moscow, Russia), and also spoke about, most notably, the Vietnam War, and the United



Billy Graham preaching in London in 1954



Speaking at Doak Campbell Stadium in Tallahassee, Florida in 1961



Billy in 1966

States involvement in regards to its political agenda.¹¹

He also sparked many worldwide movements, including the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelisation, which was first held in Switzerland in July, 1974. Its purpose was to strengthen the global church for evangelization worldwide, and was described by TIME Magazine as "possibly the widest ranging meeting of Christians ever held."¹¹

Billy was also invited to the White House by every US President from Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush.

He also helped start a number of Bible colleges, most notably Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary¹² in Boston, Massachusetts, and also, Fuller Theological Seminary, in Pasadena, California.¹³

My Connection

So what does this have to do with me? Good question! It was as a twenty-year-old at Fuller Theological Seminary that I made some of the deepest connections with other students, and especially singles, in Pasadena during my two years living in California as a masters student.

While there, I learned about the impact that Billy Graham had on the school, being amongst the first appointed to the Board of Trustees at its inception, and being a personal friend of the founder, Charles E. Fuller, after whom the school was named.

Fast forward to the present day, and I was able to attend the Lausanne International Researcher's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, where I met a number of alumni from my school, as well as others

who had been influenced by Dr. Billy Graham through his various ministries.

As a first-time speaker at the conference, it was interesting to note how many, many people from many, many nations around the world could still meet, connect and collaborate with one another, despite Billy's passing just months earlier.

Billy's numerous books still have a profound impact on the lives of those who read them; and I personally recall reading his books as a kid in primary school, especially biographies of his earlier years and the way he was able to closely connect with others.

This is not to say that Billy Graham was some sort of out of this world, unattainably perfect Christian. In fact, over the years Billy himself often pointed to this own flaws when people praised him.

He controversially maintained his friendship with President Richard Nixon during the Watergate crisis, was criticised for anti-Semitic comments, and also critiqued on his stance regarding universal salvation. Nevertheless, his gift of humility and his ability to honour Christ far above his personal awards and accolades will continue to be the hallmark of Billy's lifelong legacy.

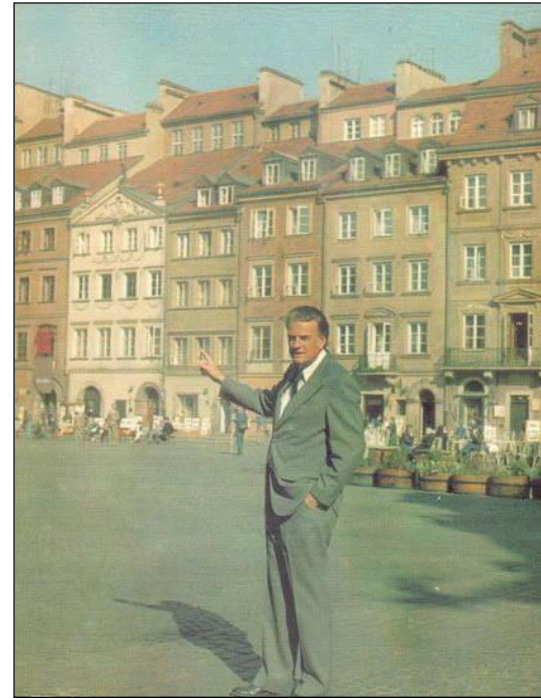
Billy's Legacy

During his lifetime, Billy Graham preached to live audiences of nearly 210 million people, in almost 200 countries worldwide,¹⁴ with over nine million responding to the call of the Gospel.

He was once quoted as saying, "I may be but a small item on



Graham preaches in Katedra, Poland in 1978



In Poland in 1979



At an International Conference
in Amsterdam in July 1983

the back of heaven's newspaper,"¹⁵ yet his testimony of personal witness to millions, his unwavering commitment to Christ, despite the ups and downs of history, along with his gift of spiritual humility show that he was an ordinary man who was obedient to God's extraordinary call to reach the world for Christ.

[END]

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¹⁵ TIME Magazine. "From Humble Beginnings to 'Pastor in Chief': How TIME Covered the Evolution of Billy Graham", <http://time.com/18394/billy-graham-time-covers/?iid=sr-link6>, accessed 18/05/18.



Billy Graham greeted by Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan at the National Prayer Breakfast held at the Hilton, Washington 1981



Graham with Barak Obama in 2010



Billy at an International Conference in Amsterdam in July 1983



President Reagan presents Presidential Medal of Freedom to him in February 1983

"The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grand-children is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith."

Billy Graham

CHRISTIAN TODAY News Snippets

Israel Turns 70 With a Population of 8.8 Million

Reflection of Israel's rapidly increasing population takes place on its 70th birthday, whilst also comparing the many similarities the nation holds to Australia. Both countries contain largely uninhabitable land that could pose a problem as population continues to grow.

[Link](#)

Look Further than Smith's Cricket Saga

A former Australian cricket team chaplain reflects and provides a unique perspective on Steve Smith's now infamous ball-tampering incident, reminding us of the importance of forgiveness in light of accountability.

[Link](#)

What Greater Love is There than to Lay Down One's Life for Their Mates?

The relevance of the gospel within Anzac Day services is undeniable as a former Cadet Journalist reminisces about the most memorable and impactful Dawn Service he's ever attended. Just as Christ laid his life down for us, as did Anzac soldiers for their loved ones.

[Link](#)

Commonwealth Games - Ups and Downs Rap - But Great Christian Outreach

The Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast was filled with serious problems and issues throughout as many major events do. However, a multitude of Christian ministries, outreaches and volunteers packed the Games in overwhelming numbers.

[Link](#)

The NBN Example Reinforces to the Public Who are the Biggest... Just Like Us All

As the NBN's target dates are continually proved to have been over-ambitious, politicians continually point fingers to refocus the blame, reinforcing the problems we see within our own society, and even within the church itself.

[Link](#)

www.christiantoday.com.au

Josie* and the Gift of Singleness



by Vicki Nunn

Introduction

In recent months I have corresponded with Josie* who had some questions about the gift of singleness.

Josie has kindly allowed me to share our correspondence here in the hopes of providing some insight to singles who may be struggling with this concept as well as leaders in the church and married people, to help them to understand this important issue.

Consider that in every church there are likely a number of single (never-married, divorced and/or widowed) people of all ages, who need guidance which is specific to them.

Their issues are often different to married people but for whatever reason, this group can often be treated as unimportant, inferior or even ignored by their church, sometimes because there is the ridiculous idea that once they get married, then they'll be cured!

The church needs to put some serious consideration into the needs of their singles and be honest enough to look at whether they're doing the best they can for them. We must recognise and acknowledge that issues for singles are just as important as issues for married people .

I hope that this article will encourage churches to seek out the singles in their midst and to engage with them in order to

ensure that they more fully understand the struggles with which many singles struggle.

Following now is the correspondence between Josie and me.



Hi

I am Josie. I am 34 and have been single for many years.

I am obedient to God and have accepted my gift of singleness, even though it may mean that I am single for life. I don't complain about it, but willingly accept that God has a special plan for me.

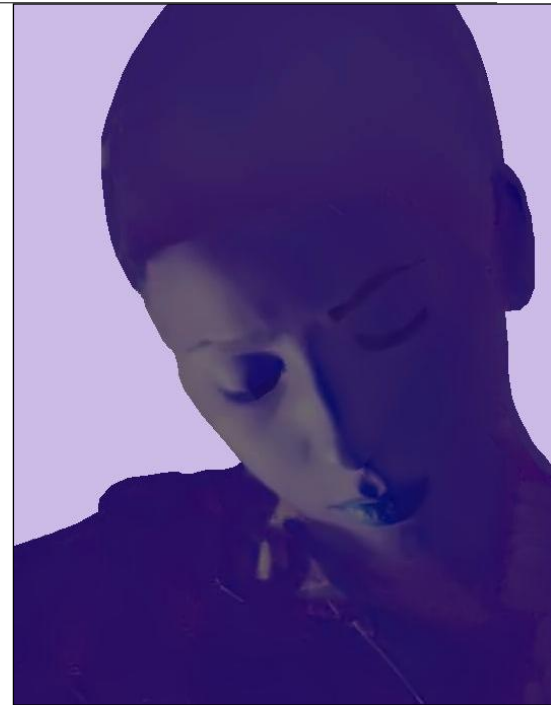
Last year God gave me a dream to serve in a missionary field. I have a burden to share the gospel to places where people don't know God, and I strongly believe that sharing God's salvation is far more important than wanting marriage for myself.

I'm willing to surrender my desire to marry and to focus on serving God, and I pray that God will give me the willingness to remain single forever as I want to obey and serve Him without distraction.

I shared with God that even should a time come when all of my friends are married except me, I will not be affected, because God is enough for me and I still prefer to remain single and give my best to serve Him.

While many of my church friends have found a husband and live happily , it didn't make me feel too unhappy, because I believe that God has a special plan for me which is different for my married friends.

Sometimes I have feelings of envy, but I find that I can conquer it by turning back to God in prayer and



...I felt so confused and envious of the couples I saw with children who were happily celebrating Christmas together, while I was alone.

remember that He has a special plan for me.

Recently though, I became very emotional. During last year's Christmas service, I served as an usher. We had a candle lighting session, and I helped to distribute the candles to people in the congregation. When all of the candle were lit, we sang together, taking photos of friends and family.

I was surrounded by couples with children. They were very happy, holding their lighted candles and taking pictures, laughing and hugging each other.

Suddenly, I felt very alone as most of my church friends weren't able to attend the service (my church is a mega-church so there are many people I don't know.)

I was overcome with emotions. I felt so confused and envious of the

*Name has been changed to protect identity.

couples I saw with children who were happily celebrating Christmas together, while I was alone.

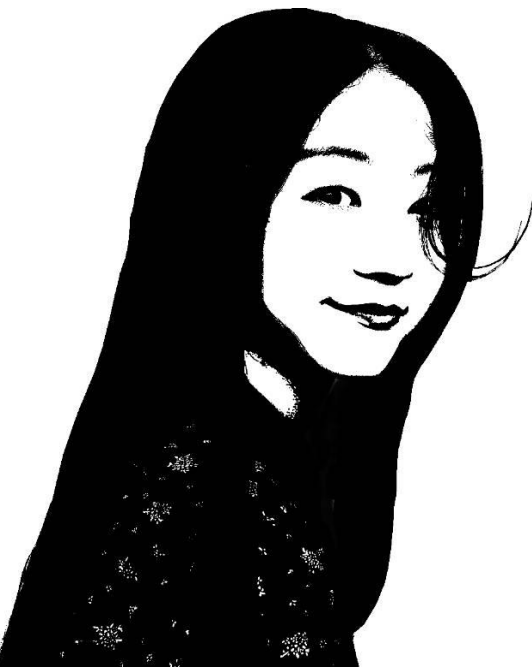
When the service ended, and I was driving my home, I began crying out to God about how I felt, and while I knew He was with me, comforting me, those confusing, aching feelings stayed in my heart.

Those feelings and that confusion has stayed with me. While I am willing to remain single for God, I still struggle with my singleness....

What should I do? Am I lacking the gift of celibacy? Am I wrong to want pursue the dream that God has given to me to focus more on serving Him? Have I misunderstood God? Is it normal to go through such struggles with singleness, although I believe that I have been given the gift of singleness/celibacy? There are many questions in my mind..

I would like to seek your advice as I still feel so confused. Thank you

Best regards, Josie



God gives us contentment and blessings in other ways that don't include a husband/wife and children.

Dear Josie

Thank you for reaching out to us (at SPAG Magazine) and sharing your struggles.

First, let me say thank you for your commitment to your gift of singleness. Many single Christians that I have met over the years have difficulty understanding how singleness can be a good gift from God.

I think the main reason why people refuse to accept the gift of singleness, is that we have all grown up with the idea that to be successful or complete as a person, we need to find a partner and get married.

The idea that accepting their singleness and that their role in God's purposes can bring a sense of completeness, is too hard for many singles to understand.

We human beings are naturally selfish creatures. So few Christians seem to be able to let go of the idea of fulfilling their own needs and instead to shift their focus to God and what He wants for their life.

It can be hard for singles to let go of their natural desires for a partner and children. We grow up in a society that tells us that these should be our main purpose in life.

For those of us who are willing to let go of our desires, God gives us contentment and blessings in other ways that don't include a husband/wife and children.

God does use married Christians for His purposes, but much of their time, energy and emotions go into their relationship with their partner and their children. It leaves them little time to put towards God's plan.

God delights in singles who willingly offer up their life for His purposes. We often have more time and energy to put towards His plans and purposes than married people. We are able to offer so much more of ourselves than those who are married.

I'm almost 55 years old, and I have never had children of my own. God gave me a very strong maternal instinct and a strong desire for children. When I was in my mid 20s and I was getting used to the idea that God wanted me to give myself for His purposes. I remember praying for a long time, "God, you have given me such a strong maternal instinct and it hurts my heart that I may never be able to have children. Can you take away the pain in my heart."

I continued to pray that, and before long God led me to working with children through children's ministries at my church.

Within a few years, I realised that God was using me to reach out to these kids and to love them for Him. Slowly the pain in my heart began to grow smaller and to hurt less.

Later in my 40s, I did foster care for about six years where children came to live with me in my home. I gave them lots of love, compassion and guidance and it helped my heart too. (Due to health problems, I have had to give up doing foster care.)

There are still times though when I feel a little pang in my heart that I will never know the love of my own children, or the love of a good Christian man. That is a very natural response.

When it feels sometimes that the pain is too much, I pray about

it. I also do something called "self-talk." Is this something that you have heard about? It's a good way to help you to move on from your struggles and pain. I say things to myself (self-talk) like, "It's perfectly natural that you feel some sadness. There's nothing wrong with feeling that way. Just remember that it will pass." And soon the pain eases.

When I'm having some struggles or perhaps I have made a stupid mistake, I do self-talk and say something to myself like, "Yes, I made a mistake there and hopefully God will help me to learn from that," or "Yes, I'm having a struggling with that at the moment, but eventually it will pass, so I can't allow myself to focus on that one difficulty."

Sometimes I remember dumb mistakes and things I did when I was younger. Satan likes to make us feel bad about ourselves, and whenever those negative thoughts

and feelings come up, I do the self-talk, "Yes, that was a dumb thing to do, but I have learned from that. I have grown from that mistake. God is growing me more and more every day. I choose not to let myself waste time worrying about or thinking about my mistakes or where things may have gone wrong in my life. If I could go back and change my mistakes, I would, but since I can't change them, there is no point in getting upset about it. I choose to let those unhelpful thoughts and feelings float away like a cloud." Sometimes I imagine them floating away from me.

Occasionally those thoughts come back to me time and time again, but one thing I have found as I've grown older, is that those negative thoughts and feelings come less and less often.

Churches and Their Leaders

There are many churches and church leaders who do not

appreciate the wonderful singles they have in their midst, and the great work they can do for God.

Many leaders and married people within the church think that single people are incomplete or even sometimes as less important than married people. How sad that they don't recognise the importance of the singles in their church and that God delights in their commitment to Him.

It's important that we pray for our churches and church leaders that God will give them understanding and that He will break through any wrong and silly thoughts they have about single Christians.

In fact, that is one of the reasons why I began this magazine, after God inspired me to develop it (back in 2015.)

Through SPAG Magazine, we hope to reach married people and church leaders to show them that they may have wrong ideas about the singles in their church, and we hope to encourage them to appreciate their single people.

We hope to inspire them to reach out to the singles in their church and include them in more church activities, and we hope to motivate them to encourage the single Christians that they know.

We hope to open the eyes of married people and church leaders to the true value of the singles in their church and to understand that God has a special purpose for them in their singleness.

We hope also that they will come to understand that God wants to use singles and to stop telling single people that they need to get married, or that they



"There are many churches and church leaders who do not appreciate the wonderful singles they have in their midst, and the great work they can do for God."

are not important unless they are married, or even to ignore them simply because they're unmarried.

On the other hand, as single Christians, we must include regular prayers for our churches and our leaders, that God will really open up their eyes to the true value and importance of the single Christians they know, and that they will trust singles with important roles and ministries within the church.

Your Struggles

Josie, you will probably struggle with many different issues and feelings, after you make a commitment to follow God's plan for your life.

Celibacy can seem hard when our natural human desire is for a close intimate relationship and to have children. Those struggles and those painful emotions do get easier to manage as time passes -

at least that is what I have found.

Those struggles and emotions don't stop happening, but they do get easier. That is part of the work that God is doing in my life, and what He does in the lives of many other singles who willingly offer themselves to Him. As we grow and willingly give ourselves to God's purposes, He strengthens and grows us a little more each day. Through our commitment to Him, we gain skills and wisdom and grow in confidence both in ourselves and in Him.

Will envy come up again in your life? Probably.

Will you feel some sadness in years to come that you are still single with no-one to love? Yes, that idea will probably come up time and time again.

Will those feelings get any easier? Yes - I can say with certainty, that those feelings have definitely gotten easier for me over the years.

Is it worth giving myself to God for His purposes, rather than trying to fulfil my own natural, human desires? Absolutely! Along with our willingness to give ourselves to God come joys and compensations and a sense of contentment that few married Christians can ever know.

Remind yourself that this is God's BEST choice for you. It's not His second-best choice, it's not an accident or a punishment - the reason you are single is because God wants the BEST for you.

Don't ever believe the lie that some people try to tell you that being married is the most important thing. The most important thing for a Christian is to be obedient to God and to be

willing to go and do whatever He asks of you.

Josie, I hope that you will keep this letter and reread it every now and then. You may find things will become clearer.

I encourage you in your walk with God - how thrilling for you, that God has such a great plan for your life! It's exciting to imagine what path lies ahead of you. Remember 1 Corinthians chapter two verse nine:

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." [NLT]

God bless you Josie.

Warm regards, Vicki



Dear Vicki,

Recently I shared with my leaders that I am willing to be celibate for God and focus on a ministry. I am satisfied with His presence without a husband.

The leaders advised me to discern (if I have) the gift of celibacy, through prayer

I started to pray to God today.. but may you share your own experience? How did you discern your gift of celibacy?

Thanks for your help ☺

Regards, Josie



Dear Josie

How nice to hear from you. I hope you are well.

I believe that the gift of celibacy and the gift of singleness are the same. Naturally as a single Christian, celibacy is part of the requirement, that is, every Christian who is single should abstain from sex and therefore is celibate.



"Celibacy can seem hard when our natural human desire is for a close intimate relationship and to have children."

Every Christian who is single has been given the gift of singleness/celebrity - this may be a short-term, long-term or a permanent gift. For some, this gift remains with them for life, while for others God may eventually take away the gift of singleness/celebrity and give them the gift of marriage in its place.

There are also some Christians who chose the gift of singleness/celebrity for life as part of their commitment to God for the purposes of furthering His Kingdom. Surprisingly in some rare cases, God may later give a Christian the gift of marriage, even when that person had chosen the gift of singleness/celebrity.

The Bible says that there are some people who struggle with their sexuality and may find it impossible to be celibate, and that they should marry. Even for those of us who are celibate, our sexual drive often continues to cause us struggles.

Our sexuality is a part of what it means to be a human being - it is an innate part of our nature. There is nothing wrong with being a woman or a man with sexual urges. It is natural for our bodies and our minds to be temporarily sexually stimulated.

In our modern world, in music, movies, TV, magazines, advertising etc, much of the media is highly focused on sex, which means that many of us are

exposed to images and ideas that stimulate our sexual urges, more so than at any other time in human history. It makes it much more difficult for Christians to deal with those thoughts and feelings when they arise, because we are repeatedly exposed to sexualised concepts.

So, when a Christian chooses the gift of singleness/celebrity, they must have plans in place about how they will deal with those urges.

What then is your church asking you? Are they asking:

"Do you accept the gift of singleness/celebrity for the time-being?"

or are they asking you:

"Do you accept the gift of singleness/celebrity for a life-time?"

A life-time commitment to singleness/celebrity can be very tough (if not impossible) for most of us, so this decision is not one that can be made without much prayer and thought.

It is normal for us to worry that if we make such a huge commitment, that we will miss out on the experience of the gift of marriage.

It is natural for us to yearn for and desire to be loved in a marriage, because after all, that is the way that God made Adam and Eve. In-built into our very nature is a yearning for that special connection in marriage.

It can also be tough to make that commitment because we may continue to struggle with our sexual nature, particularly in modern times because we are continually bombarded

with such sexualised concepts in the media.

Before you can respond to your church's question, you will need to determine if this is a commitment that you can make for a lifetime or for a shorter time. I encourage you to read God's word, pray and seek God's guidance about whether you should make a life-time commitment to singleness/celebrity **OR** if at this time you feel you can only make a short-term commitment. Be willing to open your heart, mind and spirit to His choice for you.

If you feel troubled or unsure about a life-time commitment - that is perfectly fine. God will honour whichever choice you make.

Perhaps later in life, you may come to a time when you are finally ready to make that life-time commitment, or perhaps later in life, God may choose to give you the gift of marriage.

I would encourage you not to rush into making a life-time commitment, unless you are truly sure. Whatever your decision, I believe that God will bless you and your choice.

Kind regards, Vicki



Hi Vicki,

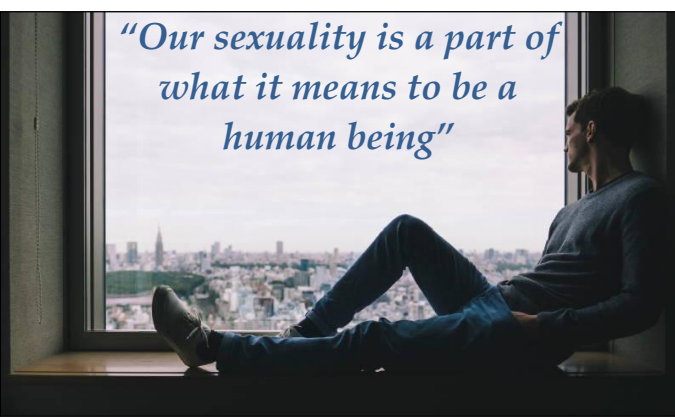
I did pray to God that if He is offering me lifelong celibacy, that I am willing to obey and receive the calling with a joyful heart. Is this considered lifelong commitment you mentioned previously?

Thanks, Josie

Hi Josie,

Sometimes God may ask a person to make a lifetime

"Our sexuality is a part of what it means to be a human being"



commitment to singleness/ celibacy. For most of us though, that would be far too difficult to think about, especially when we are a young and immature Christian. I think it would be a rare person indeed who could make such a commitment when they're young.

For me, I have never said to God, "I will be celibate/single for life." Instead, I have accepted that I am called to be single/celibate, but there is still a small part of me that would dearly like to be in a loving marriage - to know that close connection with a husband.

But if that never happens for me, that's ok. I can gladly accept that it's God's choice for my life. There will always be a little part of me that feels sad that I have never known the love of a husband or my own children, but on the other hand there have been so many compensations and God has blessed me enormously.

I can get quite emotional when I look back and see God's hand so clearly throughout my life. I can never doubt that He is so very real, and that He loves me.

One of the difficulties is that God rarely tells us in clear words what He wants for our life. He doesn't say clearly, "I want you to be single/celibate for life," or "I want you to do this," or "I want you to do that." Instead, for many He simply asks, "If I call you to give your life to me, will you do that?"

There is a very big difference between committing your **whole** entire life to singleness/celibacy and committing to it for the **time-being**.

I've honestly never met any person that God has asked to make a lifetime commitment to singleness/celibacy. I think it would be far too difficult for 99.9% of us. As I said, it would take a rare individual to make such an enormous commitment, and I think it is rare that God asks such a lifetime commitment.

Can you imagine when we are young if God were to ask us, "If I call you to give your life to me, can you do that:

- even if it means that you may never marry? Or
- even if it means you will never have any money and struggle all of your life? Or
- even if it means you will never have a good job? Or
- even if it means you will never have children? Or
- even if it means that you will have health problems and/or disability?"

I think this is why God doesn't ask for such an enormous commitment when we are young Christians. If God asked us to make that kind of lifetime commitment when we are young and immature, I think that most of us would likely run away, screaming "No!!!!!"

Instead God kind of eases us into it. For many of us, as time passes, it becomes easier to accept our singleness or whatever it is that God has chosen to be a part of our life's journey.

Then more time passes and one day we're fifty-five years old, and looking back we can see God's hand so clearly on our life, and find joy and contentment in being where God has led us.

That doesn't mean that our life has been without challenges or difficulties, but that as we've been more willing to give ourselves to God, to give over to Him all of our personal desires and wishes, He has gently, firmly and lovingly guided us to a place where we can more easily accept His purposes and His desires for us.

Some churches have the wrong idea about the gift of singleness/ celibacy. Some think that it is **ONLY** a choice for life. Some don't understand that while we are single, whether it's because we are widowed, divorced or never-married, we are given the gift of singleness.

For some of us, that gift of singleness **IS** for life, but for many it is a gift for a shorter time.

However long we are given this gift of singleness, God has a purpose for us in it. We must be open and vulnerable to God's guidance for this period of our life while we are single, and are ready and willing to give up our own personal desires if that is what God asks of us.

Warm regards, Vicki



Dear Vicki,

Thanks for your clear explanation, you are so right... When I was (in my) 20s, singleness was an unwanted gift, but now I can embrace it and live to the fullest.

I gain more understanding and will continue to obey God, allowing God to lead my life. Right now I just need to enjoy the gift and give my best to serve God.

Thanks, Josie



When You Pray



by **Michael
Hannett**

Prayer doesn't have to be an essay - that's what I would like you to understand.

I think that a lot of people when they pray, feel like they have to make it really wordy. They treat it like they're judged on how well they say it and feel that if it's not worded well, and not long enough, they won't be heard and that God will only listen if it sounds right, or if it's perfect.

Perhaps that's why some people don't pray at all.

Prayer isn't supposed to be like that. It's simply your alone time with the Father. It doesn't have to be filled with a lot of words or grand speeches. It doesn't matter if you say it right or not, as long as what you say comes from faith

and your heart - that's all that God cares about.

God wants to spend time with you - that's what prayer is: a Father and His child spending time together.

He takes great joy in hearing from you, and it can be about anything, even just you wanting to say hi to Him. He delights in it all the same.

So, pray to God my friends. Pray often, and don't worry about the words you say and the length of the prayer. It's not supposed to be an essay. You're not being graded. I can assure you, no matter how you word it, no matter if it's two thousand words, or just two, God will be more than willing to listen and happy to hear from you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, amen.

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

Romans 8:26 [ESV]

"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Matthew 6:6 [ESV]

[END]

Biography

I'm the oldest of four and attended church as I grew up. I live in Greenport in upstate New York in the USA, and work as a float teller in a bank. I love the Lord and I pray that the words He gives me will help others. My aim is to serve God full-time as a Christian writer, and to have my work published.

Bibliography:

[ESV] English Standard Version, The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.



Domestic Violence and the Church

~ Part 2 ~

Warning: this article may distress some readers.



by Ruth
Lindsay

In part one of this article, I shared a little of my own personal journey through domestic violence within a Christian marriage. I provided information about domestic violence and how and why it occurs, and provided some statistics about domestic violence within the community and the church family.

In part two, we'll look at some of the common mistakes that are made by the church, Christians and people in general, in dealing with domestic violence - especially in dealing with the perpetrator and the victim.

This series of articles were *not* written as a means of criticising the church, but as an endeavour to make people aware that domestic violence is far more common than we realise within many Christian marriages. I am also hoping that the information provided here will bring insight both to church leaders and Christian adults about domestic violence, as well as suggestions about how the Church can truly help its victims.

Due to the lack of reliable data on domestic violence against men in marriages, I am focusing on female victims of domestic violence within intimate Christian relationships or Christian marriages in Australia. Should further information become avail-

able, a more complete article could be put together.

Common Mistakes

As more churches change from traditional ways to modern concepts that nowadays often seem to be more about being a perfect social club than a group of believers striving to grow more Christ-like, the gulf between the compassion and love of Christ, and judgements and opinions of those within the walls of the church/club grows ever wider. This is often shown in the ways that some Christian people treat those around them.

The question needs to be asked - are we able to effect change and growth through the work of the Holy Spirit rather than being influenced by what each church wants their club to be? Is the example of Christ while He was on earth, and how he treated men and woman, the way we treat others?

What we think of others, the importance of our desire to be part of a club, and the way we treat others, often affects how the congregation deals with the more difficult issues that arise among its members.

This leads us to ask, is God changing our lives completely and do we love others in a way that changes our words and our actions?

One evident reflection of this is within the Christian family where problems exist in the Christian



home that shouldn't exist. Why is this? I would suggest that it's behind the walls of the home that people become who they really are. While many people seek to hide who they are in public, this isn't able to be hidden within the four walls of a home nor in the relationships of those within those walls.

Family members are the ones that know who a person really is, and in domestic violence situations it's someone who is very different to the person that walks out the front door. For many victims of domestic violence or abuse it is like living with a street angel/home devil or Jekyll and Hyde.

Outside of the home, few others truly see the person's real persona which is why it often remains hidden, and why the victim finds it difficult to reveal the true picture to others in the outside world. The perpetrator's 'Christian' behaviours that are seen in public are witnessed by far more people than the real

behaviours shown within the home.

Domestic violence is one of those hidden problems because the perpetrator wants to appear to be a loving, Christian person to those outside of the home. They don't wish the truth to be known possibly because they fear rejection or dislike, or even censorship. This will be one of the areas I will touch on later - where we examine how to reach the perpetrator while providing accountability and the need to change fully and completely.

Any leader, pastor or counsellor who becomes involved in these broken and troubled lives needs to be aware of the very real danger of the mistakes that they can make. From my own personal experiences and the research that I've undertaken, I believe that for every pastor and Christian person who has dealt with domestic violence in the wrong way, there are an equal amount that are dealing with it in the right way. I have dealt with and spoken to a lot of ministers about the subject of domestic violence and most are simply overwhelmed in dealing with the problem. My purpose here is to provide some tools to work with.

Some Mistakes to Avoid

What then can we do? First, it is necessary to understand where most churches and church leadership struggle, and here are a few glaring mistakes of which we should remain aware:

1. Confusing personal beliefs and opinions with Godly or biblical instruction.

A person's own background and what was taught to them in

childhood and/or as young adults, remains with us as we venture into adulthood, so that what we've been taught becomes our belief. Here is an example from my own life:

My father abused my mother. He controlled her life and my own life, and I married a man that was like my father because I believed that was what love and marriage looked like.

If anyone had come to me in the early years of my marriage to help me with domestic violence, I would have responded that it's what a good wife is supposed to do. I believed that a good wife never angered her husband, and that submitting to my husband would result in him showing better behaviours. My understanding was that if my husband was unhappy, it was my fault alone.

I went through eight years of domestic violence in my marriage before I began to see things differently.

For those eight years, I would have counselled any other victim in a domestic violence relationship, that they should remain. This was based on what my father believed from his own interpretation of scripture, and then what he taught me. This was also the cultural belief of many people prior to twenty to thirty years ago.

There are still theories and beliefs floating around the Christian church and the world, that the husband will be a good husband when firstly, the wife is a good wife. Another belief is that a husband's needs and desires come before everything else, and here are some examples:



- A husband will not stray if his wife is keeping him sexually satisfied;
- A husband will be unhappy in a messy house; and
- A wife must keep herself attractive to keep the marriage together.

These beliefs are often engrained into generations of family members, without giving any thought to whether the belief is in fact, correct.

Recently a lady (not a Christian), was told by a Christian counsellor that she should stay with her alcoholic husband even though her children were sometimes going without food because of his costly addiction.

Another woman was criticised by her pastor because she stopped her gambling-addicted husband from drawing money from her own personal account. She was told that this was not what a "good wife did."

One victim was personally contacted by a Christian leader, who told her that he had received a "word of knowledge" for her, which is supposed to mean that God personally gave this leader a profound Christian truth to share with her. His wise words were

that she should listen to the song "Stand by your man" by Tammy Wynette so that she would understand how a good Christian woman is supposed to behave towards a less than perfect husband:

*But if you love him you'll forgive him,
even though he's hard to understand
And if you love him oh be proud of him,
'cause after all he's just a man*

*Stand by your man, give him two
arms to cling to,
And something warm to come to
when nights are cold and lonely
Stand by your man,
And show the world you love him
keep giving all the love you can
Stand by your man¹*

The leader then went on to say that he believed that if she stood by her estranged husband than he would change, and that her husband needed her to believe in him and stand with him.

The fact that she had already stood beside her husband for many, many years, didn't even enter into the leader's thinking. To hear that male leader saying to her that he believed that God was telling her "stand by her man," simply added further pressure when she was receiving condemnation from many others anyway.

The claim: "thus sayeth the Lord," was strongly applied to the word that leader gave her and also ended with the warning that she needed to heed his advice ...or else.

Later it was revealed that this leader didn't even believe that her husband had a problem nor did he accept that her husband had ever hit her. The leader's own beliefs and opinions were actually his own "word" from God, and not the work of the Holy Spirit at all.

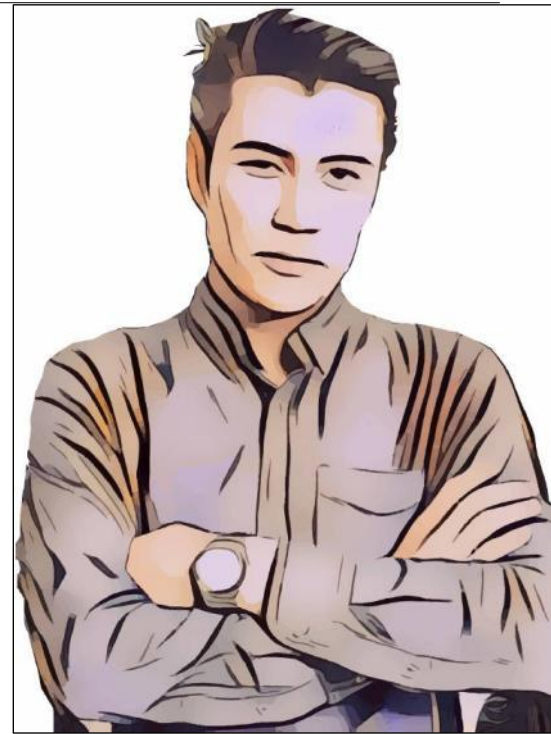
When we give advice as a friend, pastor, prophet, counsellor or mature Christian woman, in the congregation, our own beliefs and judgements need to be put aside if we are going to speak wisely. When we read the book of Job, the words that the 'friends' spoke sound good and sensible, but we learn otherwise towards the end of Job when God reveals that Job's friends were unwise.

2. Not wanting to upset the abuser or are fearful of the abuser coming after them

People are often fearful of the abuser, especially if they have had to deal with them in a social situation where they may have seen the abuser's anger surface unexpectedly.

The old saying "let sleeping dogs lie" is not quite true for dogs or people with anger issues. Just because someone

is not confronted about their problem does not mean that they aren't going to become angry. Oftentimes their anger is a means of controlling the situation and the people within that situation, because it has worked effectively on others in the past.



Not only are people afraid to upset the perpetrator when they are a witness to their anger, but often when it becomes known that someone is an abuser, people can sometimes become afraid that they themselves may become their target.

Another issue for abusers is that aside from their violent behaviours, they can often be vindictive in words or actions which impact negatively upon others.

Vindictive behaviours are a common tool of abusers, and following is an example:

I personally know of an incident where the pastor was threatened and intimidated by a parishioner who had been accused of physical abuse. The Pastor was too afraid to stand up in court. Deciding instead to step back from the situation, he used the "private confession of a parishioner" to keep the information a secret.

This pastor had both the ability and the knowledge of abuse and the woman's predicament but

*...the pastor was
threatened and
intimidated by a
parishioner who
had been accused
of physical
abuse.*

chose to stay quiet and unmoved by injustice. He remained concerned that the perpetrator might act upon their threat of harm, simply because he was personally afraid of what had been shared with him.

3. Wanting the couple to reconcile quickly and repair the marriage

Women that I have spoken to, have found that most pastors are both:

- (a) expecting the marriage to be reconciled over time; and
- (b) hopeful and expectant that the abuser will change once repentance has been shown.

While these are both admirable and understandable, it shows that there is a lack of understanding of the root of the problem. If it were

simply a matter of repentance and reconciliation, then the abuse would have not recurred in ongoing cycles within the relationship in the first place. The cyclic image here and the link here, further explains the cycle of abuse:

Please allow me to explain a little further. The abusive partner creates cyclic phases within the relationship in order to maintain dominance of their partner and to feed their own addictive need for power and control.

Two of the stages of the three phase cycle is "remorse/repentance" and the "honeymoon stage."

Most women who have been abused will recognise that these are part of the ongoing abuse.

Even with all of their hope for change, they are likely aware, even if it's only unconsciously in the early stages, that any change will never likely be permanent.

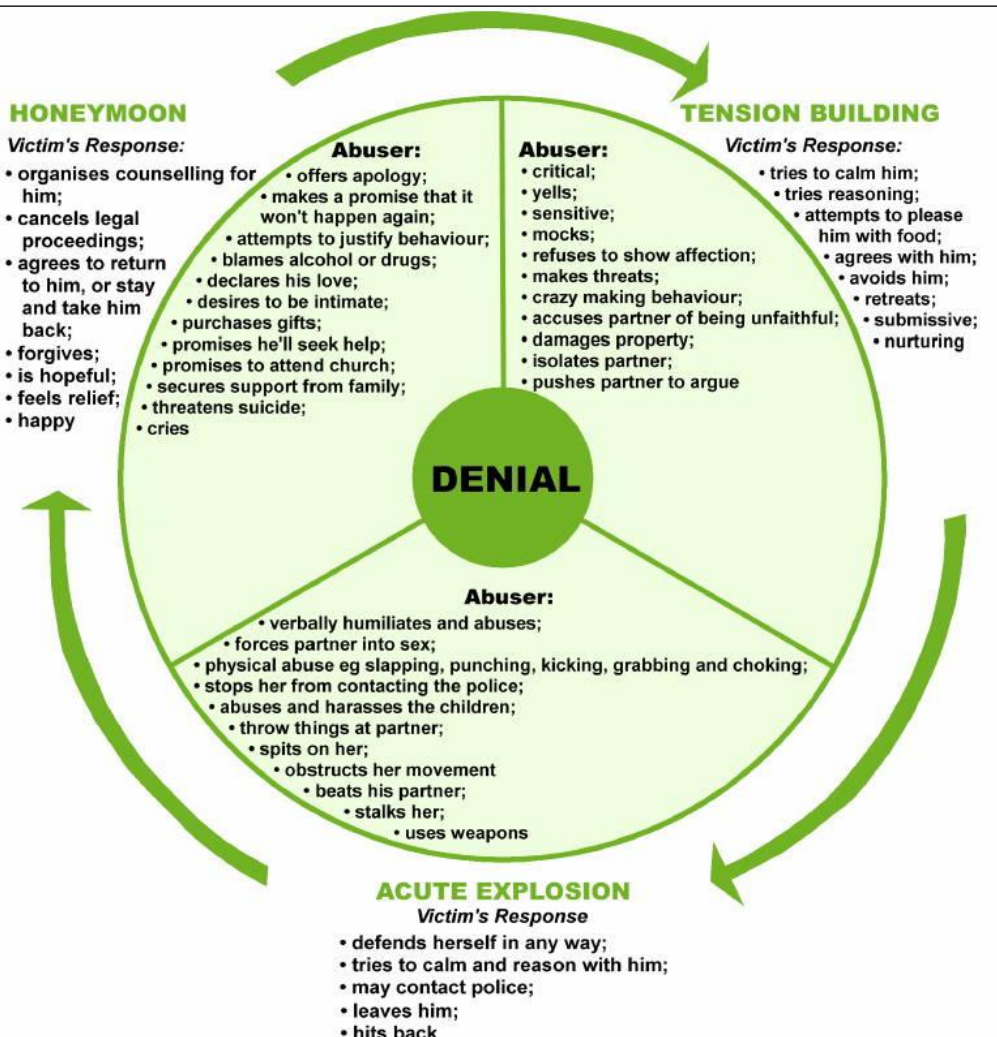
While patterns can be similar, the passage of time through these cycles will differ in all relationships. Sometimes it moves quickly through the stages, while at other times it moves more slowly. A cycle may take two weeks or last for six months.

It's vitally important that a counsellor or minister recognise that during the period when the abuser seems to be showing repentance and attempts to woo their partner, that this is a common and repetitive response within this unhealthy relationship and doesn't mean that they have any intention of changing other than to make a token gesture.

4. Not knowing what to do or not having the ability to deal with the problem.

It is impossible for one person to have the ability to deal with every problem that can occur within the members of a congregation. Most pastors are overworked and very underpaid and simply cannot handle everything that comes their way. Many that I have spoken to simply cannot cope with the problem of domestic violence let alone help the people involved. They have neither the people to do the required work nor the time or energy to help.

If you have neither the understanding of domestic violence, or the personnel to help deal with the people involved, it is necessary to guide them towards the people who can.



Generally what happens instead of finding appropriate people to help them, for many leaders it's easier to just believe that God will fix it all with prayer shared with the couple in the confines of an office. This is often the simple way out - leaving the troubled people in the hands of God and trusting that God will save them.

I have seen enough of what God can do to know that He is a God of miracles, and can move mightily in the lives of those who long for His touch and the power of His work of mercy and grace, but there will be those that neither seek to change nor wish to have their sins forgiven and won't sincerely repent of their problems. More so, the desire to be accountable to anyone is something that the foolishness of pride will usually not allow in the perpetrator. It is only the work of the Holy Spirit that brings about a true desire for change once revelation takes place. Even then, they need to seek forgiveness, make restitution and reconcile over a period of time once trust has been re-established. I am yet

to see this happen in these kinds of relationships.

5. Faulty understanding about forgiveness and love

Too many Christians believe that if you love someone enough, that they will change, and so it's important that we talk about the concepts of changing behaviour.

For many of us, we see a tearful heart as being a sign of repentance, yet been caught doing something wrong and being sorry for oneself is different to true repentance. Repentance is not about a surface and temporary change of behaviour - a change of behaviour must be both long lasting or permanent. True repentance brings about a complete about-face that remains because of true conviction and godly sorrow.

Luke 3:8 talks about producing fruits in keeping with repentance. In this verse, John the Baptist is speaking to the crowds who came to watch him. He was saying to them that being the sons of Abraham was not what God was interested in. God wanted repentance and people whose

hearts obeyed Him, and true repentance results in other changes such as how people think, speak, and act.

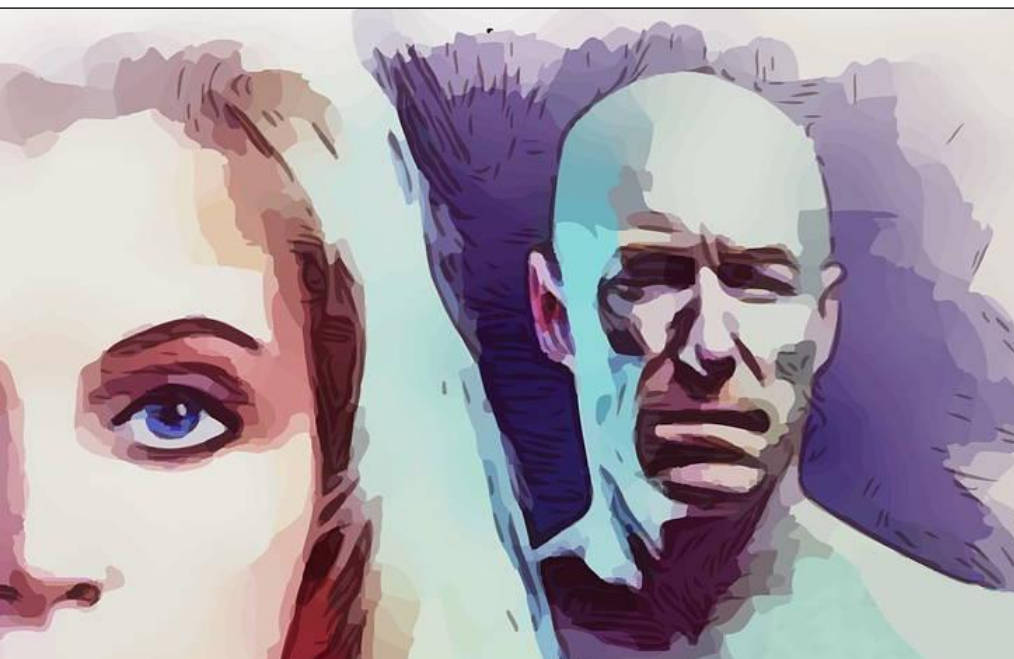
An old farmer once said to me, "if it quacks like a duck, walks like a duck and lays duck eggs... well, it's probably a duck." This is what John the Baptist was referring to, that people's actions, words and fruit demonstrate their true nature and desire for repentance and he was baptising the truly repentant and not those who wanted to remain unchanged.

If repentance of the abuser is not real, it will soon become evident. I cannot state this clearly enough: only time will tell if the abuser's contrition is real. This is not a personal judgement of abusive people, but rather being realistic about the real intention of many abusers.

Other Beliefs that May Cause Confusion

It may seem easier, in difficult and emotional times, to attempt to find a quick answer to a complex problem, and it's not uncommon to find that there are things that people believe deep down that arise in these circumstances. Every church leader I know, tries to do their best using what they have and what they know. Please understand that I am not overtly critical of what I see in most churches today.

There are so many issues in dealing with domestic violence and abuse, that most church leaders are likely to find the situation overwhelming. This is a difficult and emotive issue, and they're likely to see a number of other problems brought into the mix which include a combination of statement and belief systems



within both church beliefs and the personal beliefs of some Christians. Hopefully this information will be of benefit both to Pastors and church leaders, as well as other Christians who may come in contact with believers who are victims of domestic violence.

1. Domestic violence is not a problem of submission nor one of obedience

This is a subject about which I could write an entire article on its own. It would amaze and probably horrify most people about what I personally have been advised to do over the years by both Christian leaders and pastors. After four months of being married I was admitted to hospital due to domestic violence. In talking to a pastor a few months later, on I was counselled to "submit to my husband and be a Godly wife." Years later this same pastor wrote a Statutory Declaration on behalf of my former husband's legal case stating the same kind of thing.

Many women have shared with me that leaders within the church, both male and female, had verbalised to them that in 'their opinion' the problem behind the abuse was lack of submission and obedience by the woman. The use of the words 'unsubmissive' and 'disobedience' are a regular excuse for poor behaviour by Christian men who abuse. In fact, be aware that if any person you come across uses the words submission and obedience regularly in the context of marriage, it should cause you to

consider that abuse may be occurring in that relationship.

From my personal experience and that of other women, I have learned that when the wife is obedient and submissive to their abusive husband, the wife's submissive behaviour did nothing to quell the abuse, and often caused it to increase.

This is such a vitally important fact that I must restate it here:

It is never the fault of the wife that her husband is abusive - ever!

There is nothing which can excuse abusive behaviour and the issue of the wife's obedience and submission does not even touch on the problem, let alone the deep roots of its cause.

It has also been my personal observation that women I've known in an abusive relationship are sometimes excessively submissive in the marriage. The need to be obedient often comes within the territory of abuse

whether it's within a Christian marriage or not.

In those relationships, any form of disobedience is punished

swiftly. I have heard of cases where the way a meal was prepared was likened to an act of disobedience! One lady I knew had to stand aside when her husband walked through a door or down a hallway. To stand aside showed that she respected him, and any other behaviour was not

worth the resulting punishment inflicted upon her.

Submission will not solve the issues of financial and social abuse. Verbal and emotional abuse is about control and manipulation and its purpose is to make the women feel responsible for every negative situation and to increase her feelings of powerlessness.

Domestic violence does not start because a wife is disobedient or not submissive, and yet I've heard it repeated many times over the years including church leaders who use it to bring the wife 'in-line.'

I am horrified by what I've heard said to abused women and I cannot say this strongly enough:

be aware that if any person you come across uses the words submission and obedience regularly, it should cause you to consider that abuse may be occurring in that marriage.

2. Sexual abuse is not the fault of the victim

Sexual abuse is one of the areas that also has a taint of the idea of 'submission.' It is this area that indicates some of a perpetrator's selfish ways and beliefs.

A man may accuse his wife of being unresponsive or frigid, but often the problem doesn't stem from her. I have spoken to women who have been sexually abused by their husbands because of the man's serious problem with lust and pornography. Submission has nothing to do with that. Submission only permitted the sexual abuse to continue.

I personally know of one wife who was raped by her husband for a slight mistake in communication. Then there were

It is never the fault of the wife that her husband is abusive - ever!



two other women who were constantly forced to have sex because the husband threatened to find a prostitute if they didn't.

The church leaders and counsellors need to make sure that the victim of abuse - the wife - is not blamed for the behaviour and actions of the abuser.

3. It is not about problems with alcohol and drugs

There are many people who believe that alcohol and drugs cause domestic violence. Research figures indicate that when domestic violence occurs, there is more often than not some form of inhibitor that affects the perpetrator.

My understanding is that domestic violence is not about hitting or physical violence or verbal abuse - it is a personal belief that if an abuser can force someone by words, actions or restraints, to do what they want them to do, then the abuser will do it. The abuser sometimes lacks the understanding that people have their own free will and should be allowed to exercise that free will.

Domestic violence is about control, intimidation and fear, and not about drugs or alcohol.

While domestic violence and abuse can and does happen when the person is drunk or high, it usually still exists when they are sober. It can be seen in their words, attitudes and actions. It may also be visible when the perpetrator becomes upset, though more restrained when out in public.

4. Ownership

I will only touch on this briefly, as I am still undertaking further research on this matter. Simply put: a Christian woman and man are not owned by their spouse.

The couple belongs first to God and they are united together as one under God's direction. God's

Domestic violence is about control, intimidation and fear, and not about drugs or alcohol.

'ownership' of us does not include force, intimidation and the removal of our free will, and therefore this should be reflected within the marriage. For some abusers, this understanding and thinking goes awry and many believe:

- she is mine, she belongs to me and everything that we have including our children, are mine;

- as a husband, my role includes control through over-protectiveness;
- every wrongful act that my wife does, even when innocent of a deliberate act of wilfulness, is a pure act of rebellion and defiance and should be punished by me; and
- my wife's body is mine to use for my own needs and pleasure and as my wife, it's her duty to fulfil my lustful desires.

The abuser believes it's about his rights as her husband and has nothing to do with shaming or domination.

In these kinds of marriages, often the woman believes that her husband's domination and control is correct within a Christian marriage, because they were told (sometimes from birth) to believe that the Scriptures also taught this.

It is through the Holy Spirit that many women from abusive relationships begin to understand what God truly desires within a Christian marriage. Biblically there are many examples of men who were dominant to some degree, over their wives. Many of these references are in relation to corrupted cultures, particularly those of Israel, where the women had become subjugated after being influenced by sinful and corrupt nations outside of their own, something that God continued to warn Israel about when they were first becoming a nation. This was not what God ever intended for marriage.

Once again if we take a look at God's relationship with us we can see both control and love, domination and service. While Jesus came to undertake the most



incredible dedication and service to mankind, He still remained God and Lord over us. Submission to Him has never been about utter mindless subservience, but about service first to Him, and then to each other.

5. Jezebel and spirits of darkness

Due to space and other restraints, I will keep this topic brief.

There is a religious belief that women who seek to control men are Jezebels, taken after the two people in the bible: King Ahab and his wife Queen Jezebel.

Another part of this concept which has gained ground, is the belief that when a man hands over his godly headship to his wife, he's an Ahab and she's a Jezebel. The claim is that this happens because the 'spirit of Jezebel' seeks to cause men to have the 'spirit of Ahab' which allows the woman, in the spirit of Jezebel, to rule over and control the home and the earth.

The jezebellic spirit is seen as one who over rules and dominates the man. Some writings on this subject state that the jezebellic spirit is able to be in both men and women, but rarely have I seen this taught within the church. It has arisen from concepts based on dealing with demonic spirits.

I few years ago my second husband and I were visiting a couple, and during the conversation the wife disagreed with something her husband said. Nothing she said was unusual or critical. She was simply putting forward her understanding of the subject which was a little different to that of her husband.

I wouldn't have noticed it all, except suddenly the husband spun around to her and forcefully went straight into spiritual warfare on his wife. He "bound the spirit of Jezebel" and "commanded the spirit that was speaking out of his wife to be silent."

After a moment she nervously got up from the table and went into the kitchen. I followed her and held her as she sobbed.

I couldn't really deal with the situation as it was a little too close to home after what I'd personally experienced in my first marriage. If I'd spoken up in defence of the woman at that time, I would likely have suffered the same consequences for challenging the man.

Later my husband told me that the man had been recently listening to someone talk on the subject and had decided that this was the problem within his own

home. He believed that it was his responsibility to deal with the spirit of Jezebel in his wife.

In my experience, the only time I've seen this Jezebel issue brought up, is by men who are abusive and use it as another tool with which to degrade and humiliate their wife. It seems that it becomes a case of "looking for a demon behind every bush" scenario where a woman's unacceptable behaviour is deemed as the spirit of Jezebel and thus rebellion.

This belief, this attitude and this action is not the act of a loving husband or a godly man.

I believe that there is a spiritual battle happening all around us, and that spiritual issues need to be dealt with spiritually. I also believe that there are many people who use this concept more as a means of dominance, power trips and ego building, than about finding the truth or truly helping others.

If a man who believes in the Spirit of Jezebel is challenged, they will insist that the challenger also possesses the same spirit. Women who hear similar teachings about the Spirit of Jezebel, and/or who have learned to be submissive in marriage may also come to believe in the Spirit of Jezebel too and seek help in overcoming their perceived rebelliousness.

Note that if you come across a marriage where the couple believes in the Spirit of Jezebel, usually the wife is a confused mess and likely you'll find the man almost impossible to deal with.

During a period in my first marriage, I wondered at my own sanity because I came to believe

the multitude of lies told to me. That belief system caused increasing feelings and beliefs of hopelessness and utter unworthiness which are the opposite belief to that which God holds for us. It was only through God's healing that I was eventually able to understand that He saw me as worthwhile, and deserving of His love, compassion and of the title of daughter.

6. It is not because she is crazy or hormonal.

Time and time again I have heard this cry from the lips of abusers, "My wife is crazy, she is hormonal and I am concerned for the children."

It is the protective side of most Christians that encourages them to listen to and sometimes believe these words. Nobody wants to be responsible for the fate of little ones, or wants the death of a child on their hands. This can sometimes be used as a way of distracting attention away from the behaviour of an abuser, and can cause mixed and varied responses from leaders in the church.

Each issue that the family faces must be looked at separately and also as a whole. Abuse is abuse, healing is healing, broken homes are broken homes and a woman disengaging from an abusive relationship is person who needs vital help and support.

Often on top of that are the children who are left bewildered and upset. Once abuse is acknowledged, it can bring a flood of concerns and interconnecting problems.

A woman breaking away from an abuser is often very emotional

and will find it difficult to cope with her new circumstances. She worries for her own safety and the safety of her children, and feel concerned that the threats that have been made to her over the years will actually be carried out.

Not only will she often question her decision to break free, but may also have symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, depending on the severity and/or length of the abuse.

In her mind she is trying to reassess everything that has ever been told to her such as:

- she's not good enough;
- she's stupid;
- she was never a good, godly wife;
- she was always rebellious; and
- she was disobedient

She may even believe that she deserved the abuse.

For a victim of abuse to get past these lies and to break free from it, takes all the courage that she can muster.

An abuser can cause division within the church he attends, by telling his own twisted version of the situation and bringing others onto his side. Usually the perpetrator does this to save face.

I might add at this time too, that the concept that "all-men-are-monsters" can cause division. It is important to be careful that we don't make this a gender problem. It is a control problem, an abuse



problem, and a selfishness problem - not a man problem.

Satan loves to divide and conquer, and from this he can cause incredible levels of conflict and strife.

Due to the very nature of domestic violence and abuse, it is most likely that the church needs to be there to provide a safe place for women and children to heal while allowing other organisations to deal with the rest. Ministers often seek to solve everything using their limited own resources.

An abuser may find it easy to manipulate a church whose foundations are built upon the very concepts of love and forgiveness.

When Dealing with a Victim of Domestic Violence

In dealing with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, I believe it's a necessity that all church leaders and pastors become familiar with the following topics.

1. Laws need to be obeyed

Church leaders will need to familiarise themselves with court orders and Domestic Violence Orders (DVOs.) This is also relevant for Christian schools and day care facilities run by Christian churches. This can be very

uncomfortable position for some who feel like they are having to take sides. Consider that the law takes court orders very seriously and so should the church.

Domestic violence laws and legislation relating to violence against women vary between each state and territory, so it's important to have the most accurate and up-to-date information for the local area.

The church building itself may be off-limits to the husband if there is a DVO which inhibits the husband and wife from being in close proximity. Church leaders need to understand the laws and what is mentioned in those specific orders, to ensure they don't cause the DVO to be breached.

Some DVOs require that the abuser not be allowed within 100-200m of the victim. If an abuser is invited to a church service which the victim is attending, the DVO is likely breached. Counselling would also be a problem as most pastors or Christian counsellors are more inclined to counsel a couple together rather than individually.

The offender may also use the church services or children's church to visit his children, and if there is a DVO, it is necessary for the church to adhere to what the law requires.

Another tool of an abuser is to use any situation to intimidate their ex-partner. This can be hard to manage if the estranged couple attend the same church when there is no DVO. The abuser may deliberately sit directly behind the victim in order to cause distress and angst. They may serve in a church service as another way of



making their presence felt by the victim.

2. A Christian wife will be concerned about her marriage vows

One important issue that may encourage a woman to return to the perpetrator is in response to the marriage vows that she promised on their wedding day. These may cause her to rethink the decision to remove herself from danger.

There are numerous scriptures which seem to suggest how Christian people should respond in the issues of separation and divorce. For a woman already struggling with the decision to leave, these can cause her to fear for her salvation and her relationship with God, and then encourage her to question her decision to leave and be safe. Pressure may be brought to bear because of the wording of the scriptures.

Two particular scriptures that were regularly quoted to me were 1 Corinthians 7:10-11:

"To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): a wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her

husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." [NIV]

and 1 Corinthians 7:4

"The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife." [NIV]

While there is not sufficient space here to provide a detailed response in response to these verses, I will simply say that our concern first and foremost should be for the safety and well-being of the vulnerable.

The bible does not appear to, at a quick perusal, to answer the questions that an abused wife would ask, however, if our concern as Christians is the letter of the bible (law) rather than the safety of women and children (grace), then we must consider whether we are acting with compassion or being legalistic.

Consider also Proverbs 31:8

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

Most women that I have spoken to, made vows to submit to and obey their husbands and took those vows very seriously.

In some of the more traditional marriage vows, women promise to obey or submit to their husbands. While this has changed for most churches, some couples still choose to use these vows. A pastor would do well to be concerned if a prospective groom and bride insist on these vows.

The very concepts of submission, obedience and marriage are usually muddled in with a mix of misquotes and misuses. It will take time for a

victim to be able to approach these subjects and ask for help in understanding the grace and mercy which God applies to all bible scripture verses.

3. Going back to a place of danger

Many women return to their abusers even though it took an enormous struggle to leave. Most women that I have spoken to, still hope that their husbands have or will change. They are not only hoping for a change but believing that it will happen. This makes them vulnerable to returning.

If they return, the abuser recognises the huge courage that it took for their wife to leave, and that it will make it harder for them the next time.

The other reason many women return can be the threat of harm. DVOs only work if the abuser is concerned about breaking the law.

I understand that most abusers justify breaching a DVO because they don't believe that their wife could have turned against them, or that if they could only just speak with her, then all the problems could be sorted out.

Some abusers do not take the DVO seriously and/or feel that they are within their rights to breach it. This may cause the wife

to believe that it would be safer to return to the abuser rather than having to deal with the constant fear of stalking and retaliation.

In my own situation, the Christian counsellor I was seeing, placed an older woman in my life for my own good and protection. Any time that I made a decision, it was necessary that I first talked it through with her. Many times, she stopped me from returning simply by encouraging me to work through the reasons behind my decision. I am also aware of and thankful for the many Christian people who were very concerned for me, and their support helped me through that difficult time.

4. A safe place

A wife in the presence of her husband will rarely say that she is being abused, especially if the abuse is severe.

When social abuse is one of the tools of the abuser, the wife may only be allowed to go to the functions where the husband is more likely to feel that he has sufficient control. Because of this, she may not be able to find a safe place in which she can share what is occurring within their marriage.

I am very aware that in my own case I let it drop into a conversation with a woman that I

thought could take it. Her response was so awful that I was left fearing the repercussions for months afterwards, in case she shared it and my husband heard about it.

Most people are shocked to discover that a seemingly loving husband could possibly be an abuser at home. There is a saying "street angel/home devil" for a reason. What someone is like at home, is who they are in reality. Who they purport to be in public is a sham, designed to fool people into believing he is a good, decent, loving Christian husband.

This makes it difficult if a wife decides to share her pain. She not only has to reveal the abuse, but also the source of the abuse. Once this information is out in the open, she cannot return to the home for fear of retaliation by her husband, and she needs to find a physical place of safety such as a women's shelter, and also a place of safety to heal.

From the moment the situation is revealed, help is immediately and urgently required, including the police if there has been physical violence and threats of harm.

For many women, contacting a local women's shelter for their advice and help is the only source of assistance for her and her children.

5. Leaders may also be abusers

Sometimes the reason why church leadership are unwilling or unable to help women in domestic violence situations is because they themselves are abusers. This makes it not only an unsafe church for the victim, but a place where the abuser is unlikely to be



challenged or given appropriate support to change.

One area of concern that has come to my notice is that male leaders who are constantly talking about obedience or submission of those under them, are often the ones that have a problem with submission to leadership themselves.

In my observation, they usually have a huge problem with authority figures and so seek to place themselves into those positions of leadership.

6. What about men who are abused?

This is a question that I get asked regularly – what about the men that are abused by their wives?

This is a controversial subject and quite often is asked not because the people are asking out of genuine concern about the welfare of men, but to get the point across that women can be abusers too.

This is true. Men can and are the victims of abuse. Abuse is wrong, full stop - no matter the sex of the abuser.

It doesn't matter who is the victim and who is the abuser. If a man comes to his church leader and shares his situation with them, it should be taken seriously, and help, safety and support provided.

I personally know a man who was verbally abused by his wife, then in one incident was also physically assaulted. This man was not believed and ended up leaving his wife as well as his church to find safety.

Why is this issue of abused men controversial? It's because of

the way that statistical and related information is gathered together, which is often by those that report violence by women towards men and can therefore be subjective.

Recently it was claimed that one in three men were victims of domestic violence, however upon looking into those statistics it became evident that the figures were incorrect, because they included:

- women who were abusing male children and not just their partners;
- fathers and partners who were abusive towards males;
- men who were abusing men;
- long-term, systematic abuse towards men; and
- one off incidences of abuse towards men.

These statistics are then biased as they're about ALL violence towards men and not just violence perpetrated by women within the confines of a marriage or partnered relationship.

This important data is necessary to establish whether the violence stemmed from the need for control, intimidation and fear, or simply an anger issue.²

The best fact sheet that I have found that was easily explained, quoted the possibility of one in every twenty men being in abusive relationships, but even that information stated that the findings were unreliable³.

Overall, the information provided by statistics and research seem to suggest that of the ninety-five percent of cases of violence reported by both genders, the perpetrator was male⁴.

Care should be taken when

quoting information simply for the sake of causing division.

One thing needs to be made very clear: all forms of abuse are wrong, and it doesn't matter if the perpetrators or victims are male or female. If our actions harm another person, we need to seek help to stop.

7. When it's not the truth

A pastor once asked me, "How do I know if someone is lying?" The answer is - I don't know. We can only go on information put in front of us. People lie: both women and men.

I have seen men who, after their abuse has been found out, then accuse their wives of abusing them.

I have personally experienced what happens when the husband completely denies the violence. Fortunately, in my case I had medical records that proved otherwise.

I have also witnessed a woman lie about her husband, accusing him of abuse which had never occurred.

These situations add to the confusion and create cynicism in the minds of those who are trying





The abuser has broken the very backbone of a marriage: trust, intimacy and love. He has used his mouth to destroy, and his hand to hurt. He has forced another human being to feel less than they ever should feel. Unless he sees the worth of the woman who is loved by God

There will be another more difficult problem for the church they attend, if they're a leader or someone in a trusted position of authority. The first thing that most abusers do when they are exposed, is scramble to save face and attempt to regain control. This may cause serious conflict within the church and its leadership.

It is my understanding from what I've seen and experienced, that most men who are abusive have a problem with authority figures. They are often in leadership positions themselves, but they behave very differently at home to what they do at church.

There is one other part of the equation: the family has been ripped apart. While it is due to the perpetrator's own behaviour and actions, it is still very painful for him. The anger which is already an issue, can increase to an explosive tendency, and bitterness and revenge may fill his heart and mind.

While he may not speak it out aloud, he may consider that the death of his family is an option to him. Consider then how vital it will be for him to obtain help from professional counsellors.

In my own separation from my former husband, I was very aware of how devastated he would have felt to have his life exposed to the prying eyes of strangers. Since he was home very little due to his job, I was fortunate to be able to arrange help for him when he returned home to an empty house. Unfortunately, my kindness to him did not help me later, when it was used against me by a minister who suggested that I had 'planned' my former husband's demise.

to help.

While physical violence is often visually apparent and some women are able to produce medical documents, especially in severe cases, it's not possible to obtain medical help in every case of physical violence, because of the very nature of domestic violence and abuse. It is also reported that eighty percent of women do not contact the police about an incident.

In helping people, we may very well come across people who lie about something that is vitally important in regard to the abuse they receive.

It's important to note that when someone claims that they're a Christian, it doesn't always mean that they're telling the truth.

8. What about the abuser?

An abuser is still a human being, with feelings and emotions. Despite the fact that he has hurt the person that he's supposed to love, he has then been exposed for what he really is.

This can be a painful and a very difficult time for him. He will need men who will surround him, and not allow him to be anything but truthful and honest about himself and his problem.

before he ever knew her, the abuser will never be able to change. Unless he acknowledges the damage he has done to his wife and children by his behaviour, he will never see the need to change.

Accountability is the only way to keep someone honest with themselves. He may have destroyed the capacity for reparation in the marriage, but the ultimate win for him will eventually be a changed heart and a transformed man that will walk the face of the earth.

After a marriage has broken up, many abusers continue mistreating their former partner in a variety of ways. They may use churches, friends, children, courts and child support agencies to continue to hurt their former wife.

Each and every abusive behaviour must be challenged and the person encouraged and supported so that they can commit to a one hundred and eighty degree turnaround. This will not happen over weeks or months, but over years.

Only time will tell if the person has made a worthwhile and permanent change.

While my husband had hurt me badly, I did not wish him harm. He is a human being with feelings and like anyone else, does not want to be disliked, but my concern for him often allowed me to let down my guard and later led to grief in my dealings with him.

While trying to help the perpetrator, it is necessary to keep a balance in one's mind: it is the victim that needs the protection, and not the perpetrator.

Finally

As I said at the start of these articles, this is a difficult subject with lots of problems that can arise when two people and their families are involved.

One subject that I haven't touched upon is the children caught up in homes where domestic violence and abuse is portrayed as normal behaviours. Due to the length of that subject alone, I have chosen to omit it from this article.

Children are hurt by both seeing and witnessing abuse, and also by the separation of their parents and the breakup of the home.

My own children wear the scars of those experiences, and I pray for them in these areas. I am also a child who witnessed domestic abuse and saw it as a normal part of marriage, so much so, that I married into it.

In the next issue on the subject of domestic violence and the church, I'll cover what the Church can do.

It is not my desire to criticise or point out the wrong that Christians or churches are doing, but to show what can go wrong



and provide church leaders and ministers something to work with.

My prayer is that God will give you wisdom and understanding as you read these pages.

In Part Three:

We'll look at whether domestic violence is worse today than it was twenty to forty years ago, and we'll look at what we can do:

- be aware;
- educate ourselves and our church leaders about domestic violence and abuse;
- know what the laws are for domestic violence and abuse in the local area;
- reach out to others in the community that deal daily with this issue;
- have a plan within our church to deal with the issue should it arise;
- be honest about the possible failings of those in leadership; and

- provide a safe and compassionate environment for women leaving domestic abuse.
- [END]

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Cuttlefish Colour Changes Inspire New Energy-efficient TV Screen Design



by **Jonathan Sarfati**

www.creation.com

Cuttlefish are well known for their brilliant colour changes, and are even known as the “chameleons of the sea.” Sometimes they produce a zebra stripe pattern that even appears to move across the body. They have several ways of doing this, and one of them has inspired scientists to design a new type of TV screen, with very low power requirements - under 1% of normal screens.

How Cuttlefish Change Colour¹

Cuttlefish have several types of structures that allow it to change colour rapidly.

Chromatophore

This is a group of cells that include an elastic saccule that holds a pigment, plus 15–25 muscles attached to this saccule. When the muscle contracts, it stretches the saccule so it covers a wider area. Chameleon colour² is also largely caused by chromatophores, but cuttlefish chromatophores each have a nerve ending. This allows finer control, so one saccule can be expanded while the neighbouring ones contract. This allows the cuttlefish

to produce complex patterns that can change quickly.

Iridophore

These are tiny stacks of plates, which act as a diffraction grating, and produce iridescent colours. Iridescent blues in butterflies and birds are also produced by diffraction, i.e. splitting and spreading out the different colours of the spectrum. Depending on the spacing and the angle of the observer, different colours are seen.

These are called structural colours, since they depend on the structure of the material rather than a pigment. In the cuttlefish, iridophore colours are relatively fixed, but hormones do cause some change.

Leucophore

These are similar to iridophores, but are flat and more orderly plates that reflect light rather than diffract it. Their colour matches the surrounding light: white light will produce a white shine, but if incoming light is a different colour, then that's what will be reflected. This helps with camouflage.

Photophore

This actually emits light, rather than absorb (pigment), diffract (iridophore) or reflect



(leucophore) already existing light.

They use bioluminescence, or producing light from a chemical reaction with very little heat.

Sometimes, these creatures have sacs containing bioluminescent bacteria in a symbiotic relationship.

New TV Screen Design

A team led by Edwin Thomas at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology knows a good technology when they see it, and described it in the journal *Advanced Materials*. Dr Thomas explains, evidently talking about the iridophores:

Cuttlefish change their colour by secreting different chemicals to change the spacing between membranes. ... We have created an artificial electrical system to control the spacing between layers.³



The prototype screen is a few inches square, but only a micron thick (a thousandth of a millimetre). Filling this micron are very thin layers of alternating “dirt cheap polystyrene” with poly(2-vinylpyridine) (2VP). The former is inert, but the latter expands when a small voltage is applied.

By increasing the voltage, the 2VP layer thickness increases, and with it the light wavelength reflected to the viewer.⁴ So low voltage produces

violet and blue light while higher voltages move through the spectrum until red is seen at 10V.

The screen doesn't emit light, which is why it needs very low power. But this means it needs an external light source shining on it. And it needs to be viewed from right in front, because the image colour changes with angle.

According to Thomas, it's very easy to assemble such a screen. So he is working with a local high school science teacher to make a variety that is simple, cheap and safe enough for schoolchildren to build in a chemistry class. But despite its simplicity, Stephen Foulger, of Clemson University, South Carolina, says:

“The tunability of these systems is fantastic. There is a huge span of colours and applications.”

Stephen Foulger

The tunability of these systems is fantastic. There is a huge span of colours and applications.

This is hardly the first time that Nature - or rather, the Designer of Nature - has surprised scientists with sophisticated and efficient ways of producing exquisite colours and patterns (see articles linked after this⁵).⁶

NOTE: [This is the pre-publication version which was subsequently revised to appear in Creation 32(1):22–23.]

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A Bit of Fun!

~ Collective Nouns ~

In our last issue we challenged you to come up with some original humorous and/or clever collective nouns of your own, eg we know that a group of birds is called a flock, and a group of kittens is a litter.

Following are some examples of made up collective noun that a few people created:

An imagination of fiction writers;
A migraine of mothers;
A silence of librarians;
A passion of pastors;
A bruise of boxers;
An aggravation of politicians;
A pi of mathematicians;
A fire of Samsung 7s;
A butt of baboons; and
A trembling of seismologists

We received submissions from both Ziri Dafranchi and Colin Nunn - thanks Ziri and Colin:

Ziri suggested:

- a nursery of rhymes;
- a college of students; and
- a university of scholars

and Colin suggested:

- a publishing of magazines

Words of Wisdom

“When granted many years of life, growing old in age is natural, but growing old with grace is a choice.

Growing older with grace is possible for all who will set their hearts and minds on the Giver of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Billy Graham

Modern Missionaries: PNG Adventures

~ Jack of All Trades ~



by Liz Gill

Talk to any nurse and they will tell you that nurses wear many hats. Our job inevitably involves more than just nursing.

That has never been more true for me than in my role here in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In our clinic, the nurses are trained to take x-rays, dispense medication, and process blood tests in addition to regular nursing duties.

Now, I can add another whole new skill to my repertoire: dental extractions!

Lack of Dental Services

There is a serious lack of dental services in PNG. In a country with approximately 7 million people, the World Health statistics from 2013 reported that there were only thirteen qualified dentists working outside of the capital city.

The traditional practice of chewing buai¹ is widespread in PNG. It can cause broken or decayed teeth, gum disease, and mouth cancer. However, many people who suffer from these things are not aware of the connection or are unwilling to stop.

Additionally, throughout the country we are seeing an increase of imported, sugary foods, but unfortunately, there is not a corresponding increase in the education of oral hygiene. This is leading to massive amounts of tooth decay in young people.

Altogether, the result is millions of people suffering with damaged teeth and no one to help them.

God's Training Team

Through a sequence of incredible events and connections, God brought together a small group of us to be trained in the art of extracting teeth.

Our instructor: a retired maxillo-facial surgeon from Australia, had undertaken many work-related trips to PNG previously and wanted to help with some grass roots training but didn't know where or who to start with.

Our Co-ordinator: a nurse from New Zealand who is currently serving at the Christian Leaders Training College (CLTC), felt led by God to start a dental clinic at their centre but had no dental training or contacts in the industry.

Team Member 1: one nurse, a Papua New Guinean from Rabaul, was sent over by the hospital she works for as they will soon have a dentist but currently have no staff members who are trained to assist.

Team Member 2: another Papua New Guinean lady, who wants to train as a nurse but couldn't afford nursing school, lives with her

parents at CLTC and is now working in their new dental clinic.

Team Member 3: myself, a nurse from Australia currently working with New Tribes Mission (NTM), who had no idea why God put it on her heart to go and do this course.

Team Member 4: a fellow NTM missionary from Belgium, who is a teacher by trade but now runs our little dental clinic and assists visiting dentists when we have them.

Such a random group, yet, God brought us all together. God helped us grow and learn and showed us how to help others. We will never forget our time together.

Dive Right In!

After just a couple of days of theory, we were right into the practical side of things! Initially, each of us were directly supervised every step of the way but as we grew in our ability and confidence we were able to do more and more on our own so that by the end we were seeing most of our patients independently.

During the two weeks course, we



Helping a patient with dental problems



We sterilised our instruments in a pressure pot



We always had an audience



An elderly patient after her second round of extractions



Another satisfied customer

ran six 'bush clinics.' We would pack all our supplies into a van and drive to a nearby village where we set up at a local church.

There were no fancy dental chairs and no electricity but the people were eager and very appreciative. In just six days, we helped over two hundred patients!

Many of these people had been living with pain for months. Some of them had teeth that had broken so long ago they couldn't remember how long ago. All of them were grateful for the relief that we were able to provide.

One elderly lady came to us with at least half the teeth in her mouth missing or broken. The roots that were left behind in her gums were giving her grief but she was so scared of how much it might hurt to have them taken out that the first day she came to us and asked if we could just do one.

We convinced her that taking out the four she needed removed on one side would hurt the same as just one and she agreed we could do all four. Afterwards, she was so happy she wanted us to do the rest!

Fortunately, we were returning to the same church the next day and we could do more for her. She was incredibly grateful and we will cherish the memory of her smile.

[END]

Biography:

Elizabeth Gill has been a Registered Nurse with New Tribes Mission in Papua New Guinea since February 2017. Follow Liz on [Instagram](#).

Note:

1. buai is the addictive fruit of the Areca palm (*Areca catechu*), commonly known as the betel nut or betel leaf which grows in much of the tropical Pacific. Habitual chewers of betel leaf and areca nut have a greatly increased risk of developing a range of serious diseases as it affects most organs of the body, and chewing it in the long-term affects the teeth and gums.



Here is our team



My colleague teaching oral hygiene



A little push when the van got bogged



Learning to administer anaesthetic



...and then it was time to say goodbye.



From Muslim Sheikh to Secret Believer

OpenDoors®

by Beth Ross

Open Doors
Australia & New
Zealand

This story first appeared on Open Doors Blog
(www.opendoors.org.au/blog)

"I kept it a secret for ten years, but in 2016... I formally declared myself to be a Christian. The news quickly spread and I immediately started getting threats."

Hussein is 68 and from Uganda. He's been a Muslim sheikh and leader of a mosque for most of his adult life. But in 2006 the questions he had about his faith came to a head. After hearing teaching about Jesus at a Muslim/Christian dialogue meeting, he secretly chose to become a Christian.

In 2016, after 10 years of secrecy, he revealed his faith. Since then Hussein has faced death threats, kidnapping attempts and more.

"In July 2017, I offered my land to build a church," Hussein said.

"When the community got wind of this, they threatened to burn the pastor's vehicles... Three young men dressed in a black with their faces covered came looking for me. They told my wife they wanted Bibles and heard that they could get them from me."

"My wife was suspicious and did not tell them where I was. We later learned that the young men had been sent to kidnap and kill me for apostasy... I sent my wife and children to live with my in-laws while I fled to a nearby refugee camp."

"No matter what I am going through now, I know God is in



control. Although my life may be in danger, I know my life is secure in God's hands."

"Although I am old and have lost everything after clan leaders took my land, I have hope. I also know that the best gift I will ever give my Muslim family and friends is the Bible... Please Christian brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, remember me in your prayers."

Hussein is being cared for by a pastor who has received training in discipleship from Open Doors, including how to care for new believers.

Thank the Lord for his faithfulness in caring for Hussein. Pray for the Lord's protection over him and his pastor and that the Lord will use both of them to spread the gospel in Uganda.

For over 60 years we have been serving the persecuted church, enabling them to reach their communities with the gospel.

We train pastors and church leaders around the world who disciple believers like Hussein.

[END]



"Although my life may be in danger, I know my life is secure in God's hands." Hussein



Teaching leaders in Uganda to disciple new believers.

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Click here if you'd like to find out more about how you can help Open Doors make a difference for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Hate Like Jesus



by Emma
McGeorge

Press Service
International

"When we see others as the enemy, we risk becoming what we hate. When we oppress others, we end up oppressing ourselves. All of our humanity is dependent upon recognizing the humanity in others." Desmond Tutu

Since the dawn of the human era - when the first son born into this world murdered the second son born into this world, we have found hatred an easy weapon to pick up and brandish. We use it without a second thought and with far too much precision and skill.

Did you know that our brains are neurologically wired for empathy? Do you realise that when we see another's state of being, deep inside we automatically resonate with it or 'get it'?

Our souls are hardwired to empathise, but only as far as our beliefs will let us. When our personal values are not matched by another, our belief that we are right corrupts our natural desire to care.

We Can't All Be Right

"Hate one another as I have hated you..."

said Jesus never.

Hate is a very strong word. It encapsulates intense feelings and actions of dislike, resentment, hostility and so on, but what causes such depths of vitriol in our otherwise kind souls? What



drives us to ostracise, bad-mouth or openly attack another human being?

Much of the time, hate seems to stem from a ridiculously pointless and irrelevant fact: we are different, and we cannot both be right.

Everybody Should Be Different ... and the Same

"Hate those who are different to you..."

said Jesus never.

Time and again, a vicious family feud, an obscene cultural attack or an outright shunning all stem from this basic truth. You are not like me, therefore, I shall not like you.

Of course, some differences are exciting or inspiring or even celebratory. We take delight in who can be the most different and unbelievable and exceptional. But only if it makes us laugh or feel good or feel 'Christian.'

Everyone is unique and special, but everyone should think and be like me.

Go figure.

The minute someone comes along whose 'differentness' makes us feel confused or God forbid - uncomfortable, we kick them out of the herd... often rudely... often publicly.

Hate Loves Company

"Hate those who are hated by others..."

said Jesus never.

The hating disease somehow intensifies when we find ourselves standing next to someone who feels the same way. Suddenly, our neighbour who, in the past, seemed obnoxious or unkind or just full of bull is now our hating ally against another. Now we have found someone else that we can hate in unison, together - as a team.

Either you're 'with me,' or you're 'against us.'

Communal hatred breeds problems of its own (crowd brutality, group exclusion, even suicide), but the key point which we hang onto is that strength is found in numbers.

It is no longer just one person standing alone and hating what is different. Now there is a whole team of qualified-to-be-judgemental sleuths, ready to sniff out anyone who is different to 'us,' hold them up to the light, and then accept or reject them according to how well (or not) they slot into our carefully pre-fabricated mould of acceptableness.

Don't believe me? Get on Facebook and watch how we band together to hate on Barack Obama or Donald Trump - depending on which 'different' works for you.

We're hating and fighting and tweeting as many upper-right crosses as we can, because your opinion is always wrong and my opinion is always right.

Christian Love: With Strings Attached

"Hate those who are not walking the same path..."

said Jesus never.

Here it comes - the worst result of hate which plays out over and over in churches and communities and sometimes even in our homes:

...rejection...

We're all about love and forgiveness, but only after the dirty rotten sinner has realised their waywardness and run back to our caring circle of peace and love.

Perhaps we have forgotten our old buddy Jesus, (remember Him?) who dined with the losers and chatted with the sinners and



hung out on the fringes, while the 'acceptable' members of society spoke out against such open-minded, non-hating.

Why is it so hard for us to see the human behind the skin colour; the belief; the lifestyle?

It should bother us when a staunch church-goer refuses to sit next to a practicing drug addict.

It should shock us when a community leader spurns his only child for not living up to his standards of life, the universe and everything.

It should sadden us when a religious community cuts all ties to a member who dared to question their 'tried and true.'

Can Hate Point to God's Light?

"Hate your family until they find the light..."

said Jesus never.

We should be weeping in agony over the shunnings and blackmailings and outbursts and ostracisations that occur in our

towns and cities and home Bible study groups.

Instead, we're too busy checking our own backyards, making sure great-aunt Jo is walking the straight and narrow line which we've drawn in our heads, and if not? Well, she can say goodbye to her place at the Thanksgiving table until she's ready to comply again with our personal definition of 'the way' or 'the truth' or 'the light.'

Sometimes Hate Drifts In

Sometimes hate doesn't come across as vitriolic speech or violent actions or downright murder.

Sometimes it drifts in, soft and subtle and sweet, and we wear it gently and hold it with humble pride and use it to keep at a distance anyone who is too different or downtrodden.

"Hate? Never," said Jesus.

Apparently, there is a Great Golden Rule of Life. It is written down in many religions, quoted by many parents, even preached

in school playgrounds as, well, the 'golden rule,' and it goes like this:

"Do to others as you would have them do unto you." (Jesus Christ - direct quote. Check out Matthew chapter 7, verse 12.)

Feel like being hated on? Keen to be judged by your family and friends? Just asking to be kicked out of society and community life? Didn't think so...

Jesus Was Never About Hate

If there's one thing Jesus taught us about love and hate, it's that He was only ever about the first (love), even if all we deserve is the latter (hate.)

Could it really be this simple? Could being a believer, a person of faith, even just a decent human being, come down to nothing more than choosing love over

hate?

I'd like to think so. I'd like to believe so. In fact, I'd like to live so, and maybe you would too.

If we're honest, this is just what Jesus did do, and we should want nothing less than to make like a real follower of Christ and do just that:

...follow Him.

Forgive those who hurt you; love those who are different to you; and accept those who walk a path not of your choosing. Love against the flow; bless despite the darkness;

and hate like Jesus: *never*.

[END]

Biography:

Emma is an Italian-South African with a New Zealand passport, living in Papua New Guinea. As well as years of running a puppet ministry and directing student choirs, she has served with Mission Aviation Fellowship since 2007, currently based in PNG. Emma's deep joy is in writing, music, playing with her ginger cats and finding God in unexpected places.

Read Emma's creative expressions at www.girlkaleidoscope.wordpress.com or follow her PNG adventures at www.pngponderings.wordpress.com

Emma McGeorge's previous articles may be viewed at www.pressserviceinternational.org/emma-mcgeorge.html

Bibliography:

McGeorge, Emma, 15 February 2018, Christian Today: Hate Like Jesus, available: <http://christiantoday.com.au/news/hate-like-jesus.html>, accessed 16/02/18



Why it's Good to be Single

Reason No. 14:

I'll never have to give up control of the TV remote



We zoomed in on an object which you can see below. Can you guess what it is?



Answer on page 59

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"Acme Excavating. Faith speaking."



Jerusalem Journal



ירושלים יומן

Thousands Hypnotised by 'Miracles'



by Abel Lissnar

April 26AD

As far back as Adam and Eve, God has promised us a Messiah. There are around 3,000 references, and over 100 predictions about him in the Torah.¹

During the past 1,500 years, dozens of men have declared themselves to be the promised Saviour and in the last century alone there have been no less than ten men who asserted the same. Not one has ever lived up to their claim, and likely the latest candidate will be the same.

The new 'Messiah' is Jesus, son of Joseph, a barely literate carpenter, from Nazareth, who I earlier witnessed perform the most incredible magic trick when he fed a crowd of thousands.

Admittedly, Jesus differs from the other Messianic claimants:

1. He doesn't boast that he's the Messiah, but rather it's those who have heard him speak and witnessed his 'miracles' who make that claim for him;
2. He's oddly reluctant to bring attention to himself, repeatedly telling those he 'heals' to keep quiet about it;
3. Jesus' teachings are simple, yet profound, using relevant, well-reasoned and compelling allegories to illustrate them;
4. He doesn't seek payment nor look for admiration for his 'miracles';
5. He appears completely disinterested in placing himself into a position of power;
6. He shows no interest in stirring up rebellion against the Romans;
7. He suggests that our religious laws have become onerous and have taken us away from the love of God to focus on rituals and rules rather than a relationship with Almighty God; and

8. For a rough, uneducated man from the backwoods of Israel, his astonishing leadership style has beguiled, if not hypnotised thousands into believing and hoping that he is the promised redeemer, much to the disgust of our religious leaders.

For the past few months I have followed behind this Jesus, speaking with those who have been 'healed,' as well as their families and close neighbours.

I've been unable to determine exactly how these so-called 'healings' occurred, particularly since at least one was a crippled man who the local Pharisees confirmed had been severely disabled from birth, and several lepers who were later declared 'clean.'

Therefore I suggest one of the following:

1. Jesus is a prophet who took the opportunity to place himself in the right place at the right time when he knew that God was about to perform a miracle, so it would appear that he was the actual miracle worker; or
2. those who were 'healed' and their families were paid to say so; or
3. this new 'Messiah' has a special hypnotic gift and causes mass hallucination wherever he goes.

One thing that has become apparent to me is the increasing grumbling amongst our religious leaders about this itinerant carpenter, and his curious band of obviously, unsophisticated and completely deluded followers.

I'm not sure where this will lead, though I suspect that Jesus of Nazareth will disappear, forever forgotten to history, once the people's fascination with him wears off. [END]

1. Kaiser, Walter C., 22 November 2006, Jr, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association: The Promise of the Messiah, available: www.billygraham.org/decision-magazine/november-2006/the-promise-of-the-messiah/, accessed 27/05/18

International Awareness Days

June

- 1 Global Day of Parents, International Children's Day & World Milk Day;
- 4 International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression;
- 5 World Environment Day;
- 8 World Oceans Day;
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour;
- 13 International Albinism Awareness Day;
- 14 World Blood Donor Day;
- 15 Global Wind Day & World Elder Abuse Awareness Day;
- 16 International Day of Family Remittances;
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought;
- 18 Autistic Pride Day & Sustainable Gastronomy Day;
- 20 World Refugee Day;
- 21 World Music Day & International Day of Yoga;
- 23 World Whistleblowers Day & International Widow's Day & United Nations Public Service Day;
- 25 World Vitiligo Day & Day of the Seafarer;
- 26 International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking & United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture;
- 27 Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day;
- 29 International Day of the Tropics.

July

- 7 World Chocolate Day;
- 11 World Population Day;
- 15 World Youth Skills Day;
- 17 World Day for International Justice;
- 18 Nelson Mandela International Day;
- 26 International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem;
- 28 World Hepatitis Day;
- 29 International Tiger Day;
- 30 International Day of Friendship & World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

August

- 4 Aboriginal Children's Day;
- 8 World Cat Day;
- 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous People;
- 13 International Left-handers Day;
- 19 World Humanitarian Day;
- 21 World Fashion Day;
- 23 International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition;
- 29 International Day against Nuclear Tests;
- 30 International Day of the Disappeared;

NB: the first Friday is International Beer Day

Words of Wisdom

"The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless."

Billy Graham



Do You Use Your Illness to Argue with God About His Plans?



by Lisa Copen

Do you ever tell God that His plans aren't going to work because of your illness situation? Lisa explains.

"... an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.' So he got up, took the child and His mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod" (Matthew 2:13-15a).

When is the last time you felt a prompting from God where He simply said, "Do it... Go... Step out... Commit..."?

Illness can bring us closer to God and we may be more likely to hear His words to our soul, and yet, when I hear words that require action on my part – or they demand I trust Him to allow me to fulfill a commitment – I assume it isn't God, but that is must be my own desires.

Volunteer... Go to the conference... Plan that time with friend...

Whatever it is, if it requires more than my body may be able to give, I can easily assume it is not of God.



Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus resting during their journey to Egypt

I come up with what I consider reasonable rebuttals.

But, God, what if I can't do it? Will I disappoint people if I cancel? I need more preparation.

Joseph could have easily explained to God all the reasons why travelling with a youngster, on camelback, across foreign lands, leaving in the middle of the night - all while running for his life - wasn't a good plan. He had a choice to have it out with God, present a better plan, give a list of reasonable excuses why God needed to give him to time prepare and get used to the idea. But he didn't.

Joseph got up in the middle of the night, grabbed his son and his wife, and left - for years (estimates vary from 2 to 8 years).

Take note how Mary trusted her husband and believed he heard God's voice. I don't doubt that Mary was quickly throwing

Jesus' blankets, handmade wooden toys, and a few snacks into a sack - when she could have been arguing with Joseph about how God would never ask them to do such a hard task.

Ironic, isn't it? Because just when God presents a situation into our lives when we desperately need Him, our sinful human side is more likely to argue with Him about His plan. We prefer an easier plan - one where we don't have to depend on Him, because our circumstances will take care of themselves.

Prayer: O Lord, help give me discernment so that I hear Your voice when You speak! Sometimes it is my desire to step outside of my comfort zone and it is not Your will, but Satan's temptations. Other times, You just say "Go!" and I am to trust to explicitly. Give me wisdom to hear Your voice and follow Your commands so that I can know the

blessings that come with complete surrender to You. Amen.

Do you find yourself telling God, "This is not a good idea, Lord! Do you know what you are asking?" Can you recall a circumstance when you followed God's prompting and were blessed - or when you did not follow His prompting and regretted a missed opportunity?

Song Link: This song is "My Soul Says Yes" with Dietrick Haddon.

So frequently our head may say yes, but our soul, deep down, still clings to that which is secure, rather than fully letting God take us where He desires us to be I hope this song blesses you.

This is one of the songs that speaks to me when my worries say no, but my soul says yes. It is just two minutes so take time to listen.

I am so glad my soul said yes when God placed it on my heart to reach out to those with chronic illness. You have blessed me more than I can ever say. [END]

Biography:

Lisa Copen is the founder of Rest Ministries and she lives in San Diego with her husband and son. She struggles with the logistics of life and seeing those she loves suffer - and not be able to fix it. This devotionals is one of the ways God spoke to her one week.

Lisa's books including, "Why Can't I Make People Understand?" are available from various sources, and will be available at the Rest Ministries shop as soon as possible.

Bibliography:

Copen, Lisa, 29 September 2014, Rest Ministries: Do You Use Your Illness to Argue with God About His Plans?, available: www.restministries.com/blog/2014/09/29/his-plans/, accessed 21/05/18

Up Close and Personal with Wildlife: Australian Water Dragon (*Intellagama lesueurii*)

In Australia there are two water dragons including the Eastern and the Gippsland water dragon.

Possessing powerful limbs and claws for climbing, their long, muscular tail means they are perfectly adapted for swimming, and can swim completely submerged for up to ninety minutes.

While females can grow as long as 60cm, males can grow to 1 metre and weight up to 1kg. The male adult is generally bolder in colouring and have larger heads than the female.

Overall both species are a light green-grey with dark bands across their tail, legs and back. They also have the ability to slowly change their skin colour to blend in more with their background.

While shy in the wild, water dragons have adapted to the presence of humans in populated areas, generally ignoring them.

Males are very territorial and raise the spikes on their neck when showing aggression (see photo below.)

Around October the female begins digging a burrow for her eggs which she backfills with soil and covers loosely with debris. After hatching, the young stay around the burrow's entrance and eventually group together with before venturing out, and avoid adults when possible.

Younger dragons eat smaller



prey such as spiders, crickets, caterpillars and ants, and as they grow, so does the size of their prey, with adults adding rodents to their ongoing diet of insects.

Water dragons are often seen laying out in the sunlight near creeks, rivers and streams and are increasingly becoming road-kill due to their tendency to prefer hot places for basking such as bitumen and concrete. They can become victims of dogs, cats, foxes, snakes and birds including kookaburras, butcherbirds, currawongs as well as larger birds of prey. [END]

Bibliography:

No name, no date, Wikipedia: "Australian Water Dragon," available: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_water_dragon, accessed 15/12/16



Persecution is Normal for Us

"In the past, persecution meant bodily harm," Lei shared, "Now they use psychological pressure. It's mental warfare out there too."

"What keeps you going?" we asked.

"I never thought about stopping serving the Lord," Lei replied, "God is God and there is no other. I need to serve the Lord otherwise I feel empty."

Sometimes a room can get quite crowded, but in this case, all seven of us were on the edge of our seats in a Chinese hotel listening intently as a Chinese couple described to us some powerful testimonies associated with their ministry.

Lei told us how important it was for her to have a solid foundation in the Word of God and expressed her profound gratitude that the all-important material used at the Bible college she attended, was supplied

by VOM Australia.

The teaching was specifically designed to equip God's people for ministry and was extremely practical and systematic throughout the three year course.

The first year centred on basic theology from Genesis to Revelation and helped students understand the Bible. The last two years involved teaching the students how to serve the Lord in ministry, how to teach Sunday school, plant a church and basic leadership training.

Today this course, is being taught in over twenty provinces throughout China and there is a strict interviewing process when screening prospective students to ensure those chosen will remain committed to the course and persevere until it is completed.

New churches within China are excited to support this program as it

improves the quality of ministry.

After attending the course, students are more confident to stand up and preach and older believers in the congregation are given the opportunity to also learn from this program and become equipped for ministry.

Voice of the Martyrs is committed to providing the best ministry equipment which will improve the lives of believers who hunger to serve God.

How Did All This Training Impact on Your Desire to Serve God?

For Lei, her training at the Bible college meant being set apart for three years and do nothing else apart from studying God's word.

"I received very good teaching of the Bible there" Lei said. "My prayer life changed rapidly as we always were praying. I remember one time at the Bible college that





there was a temple close by and a special event was happening. We could smell the incense coming into the windows." She did not understand why they all started to pray but she felt a sense of fear in the room.

After a time of prayer there was an overwhelming feeling of peace among all the students and Lei understood the importance and power of prayer.

Lei knows that prayer can be used as a weapon in spiritual warfare and whenever she has faced fear, she always remembers what happened at the Bible college.

Like Pieces of a Broken Bottle

Many times people had told Lei she had a gift of teaching, but she rejected the thought as she only saw herself as a simple servant of the Lord. However, Lei constantly sought the Lord in prayer, seeking His will for her life.

One night she heard a very peaceful voice say, "I want you to be a teacher of My Word."

At the same time Lei saw a vision of a bottle broken into many pieces then suddenly the pieces came together, and the bottle was restored. Considering the vision Lei understood that her life had often been broken into many pieces.

As Lei surrendered her life to the Lord for service and saw the broken bottle made whole, she now had the confidence the Lord had rebuilt her life for a purpose and God's

purpose for Lei was to share his Word with others.

This experience caused a radical change in Lei's life. Her desire to teach God's Word became firmly established.

"My calling is very clear and even though I went through a time of transition I felt that in having the vision I found God's direction for my life."

After graduating from Bible college, Lei returned to her home town. She was immediately asked to teach a Bible class and preach at the church before the elders. All she had was her Bible and no preaching material, but Lei trusted the Lord and over a three-day period, Lei taught from Second Peter.

Fulfilling the task, became a great encouragement to Lei and confirmation that God was with her as she used the teaching gift He had entrusted to His servant.

Because of Lei's unwavering faith, she now has an inspiring testimony and her teaching ministry is expanding into new and exciting places. Lei is now responsible for a teaching program which is impacting believers throughout China.

Please Pray for This Ministry

Find out more about donating a Bible plus some basic life essentials through Bibles Plus 2018 on the link here. [END]

Bibliography:

Unspecified author, 28 May 2018, Voice of the Martyrs: Persecution is Normal for Us, available: www.vom.com.au/persecution-is-normal-for-us/, accessed 28/05/18

Kooky Corner

Skunkilosophy

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John F. Skunkedy

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Condemned to Celibacy?



**by Justin
Campbell**

First appeared in "More
Than Don't Have Sex"

In 2017 I attended a conference on healthy sexuality. It was very well done and the spirit of the event was super encouraging to say the least.

Within the many different topics and conversations was of course the discussion of how a person who is attracted to the same sex should live out their life.

Now this wasn't a conference where people were demanding that anyone live a certain way and it was all non-confrontational, but the general answer was that from a biblical perspective that person should not be engaged in a same sex sexual relationship. In other words they should live a celibate life.

In response to this, one person said, "So basically we are condemning them to a life of loneliness and isolation."

I'm quite sure that this person was far from the only one in the room thinking that way.

I'm not going to dive too far into the topic of homosexuality today (I have a couple of posts that I can share if I ever decide I want to go viral). But instead, I want to respond to this person's understanding in a very different way.

I can't speak for him, but I can deduct that the reason this gentleman said what he said about celibacy is at least twofold.

First, in evangelical culture, we have completely left out the call to celibacy, the gift of celibacy and those who for one reason or another end up unmarried and yet desiring holiness.

Literally we have spent about 500 years of protestantism screwing this up. It's a real problem.

Because we have no place for or theology of celibacy, we then only dust it off for special cases. Because we have no place for a heterosexual to pursue the call or gift of celibacy, we look like idiots suggesting that the homosexual should be "condemned to that".

This comes from the Church's nuclear family idol. Marriage and family are seen as THE path to holiness and wholeness.

You can't go around preaching that message for decades and then dust off the other path for a few people, but that is exactly what the evangelical leadership of our generation has attempted to do. Obviously that's not working out very well. This comes partially

from an adaptation of a secular belief into our evangelical culture.

That is the secular belief that sexual fulfilment is a right. Not only do I have the right to sexual fulfilment, but in the secular culture, I have the right to fulfil that sexual desire in just about any way I want (assuming everyone is an adult and 'consents.')

Now evangelical culture has not adopted that belief. Instead they have adapted it to their own framework. The evangelical culture says that each person, at least each man, cannot possibly contain their sexual desire. It must be fulfilled. The message is that it is controlling you, bigger than you, bigger than your moral agency, bigger than your spiritual maturity. Therefore the only answer available to holiness is marriage.

Marriage makes you an adult. Marriage makes you mature. Marriage makes you holy.

Now let me be clear - I'm extremely pro marriage. I think that most people should pursue





marriage, but we cannot assume that in our theological, and practical teaching. In fact, by assuming that we hurt not only those not called to it, or unable to achieve it, but we hurt even those who do get married.

If the way to holiness is marriage, then what we are saying is that the person called to celibacy, the person with the gift of celibacy, the person born without desire to get married, the person who can't get married, or the person who doesn't desire the opposite sex, cannot be holy on their own. By doing this we are literally agreeing with secular culture that sexual desire must be fulfilled in order for a person to be whole and holy.

This is basically what Justice Kennedy said in the supreme court decision on Gay Marriage. He writes of those wishing to marry, "Their hope is to not be condemned to live in loneliness..."

Sound familiar?

If celibacy is something that someone is 'condemned to,' then we are all in a lot of trouble.

Was Jesus 'condemned' to celibacy? Paul? The early Church Fathers? The Pope? Do we really want to see celibacy as a punishment?

This is what we have helped set up. This is why we can't afford to answer the culture by adapting it into a Christian Version. It's why our answer to an increased delay in marriage, and people fulfilling sexual desires in ways other than marriage can't be simply: 'marriage will set it all right.'

Instead we have to rescue the celibacy of the New Testament. We have to rescue the idea of family from a focus on the nuclear family to a focus on the family of God.

We have to have a more complete theology (or picture if you will) of how celibacy and marriage are both pictures of the Kingdom and both paths to holiness and wholeness. If we don't, then we all lose. It will get worse.

The Church, including and starting with each of us in it, is the only hope of something different. We have to be counter cultural, not just sub-cultural. Read that line again - it might be from the Lord.

We have to lead, not follow, not just respond and react. If the Church (read all of us) don't step back and consider the whole picture of celibacy and marriage, no one else will. [END]

Biography:

Justin was a single Christian until the ripe 'old' age of 41 and in those intervening years he made many mistakes and bad choices, but learned a lot.

After his church held a singles forum that many singles did not find helpful, Justin realised there was a need for guidance and advice, particularly from the perspective of a single Christian, rather than married church leaders who often don't have a clue. Recognising this need, Justin began a website for singles: *"More Than Don't Have Sex: Thoughts on Christ Centered Singleness and the Church."*

Justin presents his writing from a man's perspective, and is the first one to admit that he doesn't have all the answers, but hopes what he does know can help other Christians who are struggling as a single person.

Bibliography:

Campbell, Justin, 8 March 2017, *More Than Don't Have Sex: Condemned to Celibacy*, available: www.justinmcampbell.net/2017/03/08/condemned-to-celibacy/, accessed 28/05/18



Organisation Promotion



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Samaritan's Purse®

Operation Christmas Child 2018

At age 9, Mya* was diagnosed with HIV. In her rural village in Myanmar (Burma), there is little access to medicine and medical care.

HIV also brought fear of the unknown to Mya's family, and they worried the village would shun her. So, Mya went to live at an orphanage in the city.

Mya didn't know why she was sent away until she arrived at an orphanage just for Burmese children with HIV.

I met Mya and children from the orphanage when they attended an Operation Christmas Child distribution.

The Burmese children who received shoeboxes rarely receive gifts of any kind.

She told me that her mother died of HIV, but she didn't know the cause of her death until teachers at the orphanage told her. Mya has never met her dad.

With the help of a translator, Mya shared her story with me, but I think she could have done well on her own. She knows a lot of English, and I could tell by the way she shared an occasional smile with the translator that she understood many of my questions. She's bashful, but she'll get there.

In fact, the teenager wants to be a translator when she grows up. Mya, who loves to laugh and smile, is hopeful.

Operation Christmas Child also helps encourage children like twelve year old Cho* who lives with his grandmother and two younger siblings.

I met Cho during the same shoebox distribution. Cho is a soft-spoken, polite, sweet child who enjoys playing soccer.

His mother lives and works in Singapore. Cho's father works at a factory and lives with Cho's other grandmother so he can help take care of her.



*Names have been changed to protect identity.



It's hard for his grandmother to provide for Cho and his siblings, and they live in a poor village. Cho and his siblings rarely receive presents - and certainly nothing like the new gifts and toys in their Operation Christmas Child shoe-boxes.

Cho isn't bitter, and he doesn't complain. He wants to be a pastor when he grows up so he can tell other people about Jesus. I pray Cho remains steadfast in his resolve to live for Jesus. I pray God uses him, even now, as a child, to share the Gospel.

Mya isn't facing her future with anger, either. She's determined and isn't letting fear steal her dreams.

This Program Brings Hope

Mya and Cho have already endured much hardship in their young lives. Operation Christmas Child brings hope to children throughout the world who, like Mya and Cho, could use a little more joy in their life.

Please pray for the millions of children in more than one hundred countries who will receive a shoebox gift this year. Pray for the children who enrol in The Greatest Journey, our 12-lesson follow up discipleship program for shoebox recipients.

Please pray that God will change the lives of children, their families, and communities through these simple shoebox gifts.

You Can Make a Difference

You can put together a shoebox of your own and encourage your church, your family and your friends to join in. Click here to find out more.

If you would like to support the work of Samaritan's Purse, please click the link here for more information. [END]

Bibliography:

Writer unlisted, undated, Samaritan's Purse: Shoebox Good News and Great Joy for Orphans and Children in Poverty, available: www.samaritanispurse.org.au/good-news-and-great-joy-for-orphans-and-children-in-poverty/, accessed 29/05/18



Do you struggle with prayer? Do you find it hard to know what to say or are at a loss for words? Many Christians struggle in this area too.

We'll provide suggestions with each issue about various people and topics which we hope will inspire and help you in your prayer time. May we encourage you to make this prayer a part of your regular daily routine.

Prayer for Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters

Our Heavenly Father,

Day 1: For those who suffer terrible persecution

Thank you for the freedom that Christians still have in many parts of the world, but we know there are many who are persecuted in their own countries, resulting in physical, emotional and/or psychological harm, or even death. The stress on Your children to endure often daily persecution, must make them feel so very weary, struggling to get through each day, wondering and worrying about their loved ones and friends, or perhaps how they will provide for their families. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith, that the leaders in their country will develop compassion, integrity and wisdom and please create in those leaders, a strong desire to make their country better for its people, particularly for those of a different faith to them. Break through those barriers of hatred, and speak to those who have hardened their hearts towards You and your children.

Day 2: Stand up for our brothers and sisters

Dear Lord, we ask You to honour the promises in Isaiah 25:4-5 and help those who are oppressed, whether through persecution or slavery: "You stand up for the poor and weak, You comfort and empower them in their distress, Giving them safe harbour and cool shade when it's hot; You shelter them from their oppressors' blows As a strong wall holds back the driving rain. You shelter from the relentless heat of the desert. You quiet the clamour of outsiders, ease them to stillness. Like a full, dark cloud relieves the heat, You silence the arrogant song of the violent." [VOICE]

Day 3: Heal and strengthen our brothers and sisters

Bring healing to our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for Your name. Strengthen them, and give them wisdom and guidance as they endeavour to live in a country where their faith is treated as hateful. Give them strength to stand up for You when danger arises, and send Your angels to protect them. Reveal to their oppressors, the vision of Your angels so that they are filled with fear and trembling and understand and know without a doubt, that You are real. Continue speaking in dreams and visions to your children, and reveal Yourself to those who would harm them.

Day 4: Bring about a change in attitudes in places of persecution

Where we have seen oppression and persecution, continue working daily in those places in the hearts and minds of the persecutors. Open their hearts and minds to Your presence, to Your incredible power and might, to Your love and compassion and break through those whose stubborn hearts refuse to want to know you. Break through the barriers they put in place, in every single person who seeks to harm Your children. Let those countries which once were known for their heavy oppression of Christians, become places of love and freedom in Your name we pray, and lead the world back towards You.

Day 5: Help us to speak out for the voiceless and the vulnerable

Teach us to honour the requests in Proverbs 31:8 "Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable." [CEB] and in Hebrews 13:3 "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." [VOICE] Help us to join with the voices of others to demand that governments and people of other religions be strongly encouraged to desire to see change for the better for Christians in their country. Let their own countrymen who stand quietly by and allow persecution to happen, at last find a voice so that they too will be encouraged to use their strength for the oppressed.

Day 6: Help us when we are subjected to negative behaviours

Each day, as many of our brothers and sisters in Christ face terrible persecution from those that do not know You, whether due to ignorance, hatred or fear. Sometimes we too may experience poor behaviours from non-believers who see us as a target for their nastiness and negativity. This can impact us, even in the workplace. Please let Your children feel You near to them in those moments, to know the comfort of Your Holy Spirit's presence, and to grow in our faith so that despite our ongoing struggles, we can trust that we are safe under the protection of Your wings, no matter our circumstances.

Day 7: Show us how to help those who are persecuted for You

Give us wisdom and guidance and show us how we can reach out and make a difference in the lives of those who are persecuted. Answer our prayers we ask, so that their oppressors will come to know Your name. Guide us and show us how and where to write to governments and their leaders who encourage oppression in their country either openly or by their silence and lack of action. Amen



God's Sacred Gift of Life – NO to Euthanasia



**by Ross
Clifford**

Press Service
International

It's hard to believe, but the issue of Euthanasia is before our (Australian) Parliament again. One of the reasons I wrote my book, *"Apologetics Teaching and Preaching - for the Church and the Marketplace,"* was to equip Christian leaders and the church, like Euthanasia, in knowing how to respond to faith issues that pose ethical dilemmas in today's society.

In this book, there is a sermon outline I have co-written with Rev. Rod Benson who is an ethicist and was the Public Affairs director of New South Wales Council of Churches when I was President. It explores the issues of Euthanasia. Let me highlight some key aspects from this piece of writing that speak into the issue today.

Common Arguments Against Euthanasia

1. Sanctity of Life

Humans are created in the image of God, and human life is therefore of incalculable value. Taking an innocent human life dishonours God who gave it and cannot be condoned.

2. Abuse of Vulnerable Persons

A patient may feel obliged to consent to euthanasia out of convenience to others (such as health relatives, or tax payers who fund the public health system).

3. Misdiagnoses are Possible



Though rare, the misdiagnosis of a terminal illness is possible and death cannot be reversed.

4. Benefits of Suffering

The experience of suffering may facilitate character development. Also, suffering may be more in the eyes of the relative or friend than the patient.

5. Playing God

Legalisation of euthanasia would place physicians (or others) in the place of God in determining how and when death occurs.

6. Slippery Slope

Legalisation of voluntary euthanasia may lead society to accept involuntary euthanasia.

7. Patient-doctor Relationship

Legalisation of euthanasia may undermine the trust between a patient and their physician, as well as the moral integrity of the medical profession.

8. Health Care Funding

Legalisation of euthanasia may weaken a society's resolve to provide adequate funding to care for the dying.

9. Health Care Methods

Legalisation of euthanasia may undermine the impetus to develop better approaches to the care of suffering and the dying.

10. Smokescreen for Murder

Euthanasia may be used as a justification for an act which would otherwise be classified as murder.

Selected Church Statements

On 16 May 1995 the NSW Council of Churches issued the following media release on euthanasia:

"The practice of euthanasia as the intentional killing of one person by another can never be regarded as the compassionate answer to the burdens which



may be suffered by a dying patient.

It is not a private matter since it always has serious implications for all members of society.

Evidence from Holland, where voluntary euthanasia is permitted under strict conditions, shows that it is quickly followed by non-voluntary euthanasia.

Christian teaching affirms the value of each individual, made in the image of God. Our lives are a gift from God. Neither our own lives, nor the lives of others, are ours to take.

Giving one person the power of life and death over another strikes not only at the heart of Christian teaching, but also at the obligation of the State to protect its citizens - particularly the weak and vulnerable. Additionally, it places an unacceptable burden on doctors.

...It may, at times, be judged as necessary to withdraw or

withhold certain treatments because they are considered futile or unduly burdensome. This differs radically and in a morally significant way from intentional killing.

The compassionate answer is to provide the best palliative care and medical services possible for the patients, and to give support and comfort to all those affected by the pain and suffering of their loved ones.

Even in the midst of these, the Christian hope of eternal life beyond death stands firm, giving dignity and meaning to death itself."

The 1995 statement by the NSW Council of Churches offers a considered evangelical Christian response to the increased pressure on legislators and health care providers to relax current prohibitions on active euthanasia. It outlines six principles:

- (a) All persons are made in the image of God and therefore possess intrinsic worth;
- (b) Intentional killing can never be a compassionate response to suffering;
- (c) The state has an obligation to protect its citizens, particularly the weak and vulnerable, from abuse;
- (d) Legislation of euthanasia would place an unacceptable burden on health-care professionals;
- (e) Best medical practice may require the withdrawal or withholding of certain

treatments because they are considered futile or unduly burdensome to the patient;

- (f) The preferred compassionate response to suffering is to provide the best possible palliative care and medical services.

Biblical principles undergirding this statement include:

- the sanctity of human life (see Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Hebrews 9:27);
- an ethic of compassionate care (Micah 6:8, Luke 10:25-37); and
- the Christian hope beyond death (1 Corinthians 15)

Those who follow Jesus:

"...are called to heal the sick where we can, comfort the dying always, and entrust the dead to God. But we are never called, and we are never free, to hasten the dying across the threshold into eternity" (David P. Gushee, "Killing with kindness," Christianity Today, 7 Dec 2004), 62.

Together we must ensure that we take a stand and inform all people of good will that this is a key time for expressing real concerns about Euthanasia.

Human dignity and human worth are at the centre of the Christian ethic. [END]

Biography:

Ross Clifford's book is *Leading Lawyers' Case for the Resurrection*. Ross is a former lawyer, Baptist Pastor and now Principal of Morling Theological College, Macquarie Park.

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A-Musings

A Concentration of Curiosities



by Vicki Nunn

I have come to the conclusion that while strange experiences occur in our normal lives, they seem to intensify when one goes away on holidays - well at least they have for me.

Take for example the small vacation I had one time in Brisbane (Australia) with a family member.

On our first morning out, as we stood waiting for the lights to change on a busy street corner, our group was approached by an overly excited gentleman who enthusiastically and loudly shared his news about an enormous cruise ship that was in the city's harbour. This complete stranger then felt compelled to repeat the same story to every new person who joined us on that corner.

We all smiled politely and secretly hoped he wouldn't follow us.

A couple of days later we headed along for a quick visit to Fortitude Valley, where we were greeted by the vision of a slightly overweight white man, prowling the street in broad daylight, dressed in a very colourful kimono and wearing a pair of dainty white gloves.

Fortunately he didn't feel duty-bound to express his delight at any oversized ships of which he knew.

On our second last day there, I may possibly have been mildly

surprised when a woman crossed the street in front of us, carrying a life-sized skeleton.

Later, on a long weekend as I prepared to drive up to my old hometown, I harnessed my dog Scout into the seatbelt in the front passenger seat of my car. At one point, I was loudly and may I suggest, beautifully, singing along to the music when I glanced across at Scout - who just happened to be nodding her head exactly in time to the music!

It was a surreal moment, and I laughed aloud, even though I recognised that it was purely coincidental that the small bumps on the road were appropriately spaced enough for this phenomenon to occur, though I might possibly have been mildly astonished if she'd decided to sing in harmony with me.

The weirdness continued the following morning when I received a rather strange text message from a friend who asked if I had a fake pineapple that she could borrow!

Now, I can honestly say that I have never been asked that particular question before in my entire life. I suppose I could have responded with something like, "Sorry - no pineapples, but how about a fake artichoke, an aardvark and a collection of very bad poetry?"

It was later during that same weekend that I discovered



something truly amazing which I am sure will astonish everyone.

Before I share it with you, you might like to take the opportunity to sit down... are you ready?

I discovered that burps do not register on an electronic guitar tuner!

Yes, I know! Astonishing isn't it?

Since that momentous breakthrough, I have decided to retire from all further academic pursuits, as I believe that any future breakthroughs will simply pale in comparison.

No! Please don't beg me to continue contributing my incredible findings - I believe I've done my duty in giving this gift of knowledge to the scientific and music world.

Do feel free to applaud. [END]



Road to Damascus



by **Amy Manners**
Press Service
International

The Village

On the road to Damascus, surrounded by mountains, lies a village soaked in cool air and dappled sunlight. Here, birds sing from olive trees that cast soft shadows over the courtyards of ancient monasteries.

Legend has it that St Tekla, the daughter of a pagan prince and disciple of Saint Paul, fled to these rugged mountains in the first century to escape persecution.

Her way was blocked by jagged rock. With those who threatened to kill her in pursuit, she fell to her knees and cried to God. The tale goes that in response God parted the mountains for Tekla, so she could hide in one of the many caves. Thus, the place where she took refuge is still called Ma'loula today, which in Aramaic means 'entrance'.

Even though this story enters the realm of myth, the caves of Ma'loula have provided cover for persecuted Christians throughout the centuries. The village is home to one of the oldest Christian communities in the world.

Nuns live side by side with their Muslim neighbours in peaceful tolerance.

Ma'loula is one of only three villages where Aramaic, the pre-Islamic language of Syria, is still spoken. Aramaic was the language of Jesus.

When the War Began

The inhabitants of Ma'loula wanted nothing to do with the Syrian civil war that raged around them, but even this oasis of peace was not exempt from the chaos.

In September 2013 a Jordanian suicide bomber blew up a truck at the village's entrance, killing eight people.

Two months later, twelve nuns were kidnapped by the rebels.

Then in 2014, the sound of machine guns echoed off the mountains as the rebels, who for months had occupied St Sergius monastery, were driven out by Syrian government forces.

During the violence, UNESCO listed churches were burnt, crosses were shot at and Christian villagers held at gun-point, forced to convert to Islam.

Not even this mountain hide-away was exempt from the horrors of a war which has displaced twelve million people and left half a million dead, becoming the greatest humanitarian crisis of our times.

This March marked the seventh year of conflict in Syria, which began in 2011 with a group of school kids and graffiti.

Inspired by the 2011 Arab Spring, which swept across the Middle East in a series of protests and uprisings, teenagers from a town in southern Syria decided to write anti-Assad government slogans on a wall at their school.

They were arrested, beaten, tortured and thrown into prison. Peaceful protests began as citizens demanded the release of the



children - the people wanted torture, paranoia, and political corruption to end, and so shouted for freedom.

In response to the protests, Syrian police fired at the crowds, but the protesters fought back. Soon, a fully-fledged war had broken out between the Assad government and those who called themselves revolutionaries.

Today the conflict has snowballed into a complicated war-zone involving foreign parties, each with their own agenda.

Syria is burning, but those flames could easily ignite the entire Middle East.

The current crisis is the siege in Eastern Ghouta, north of Damascus. Government forces, backed by Russia, are attacking this rebel held area with chlorine bombs, barrel bombs and rocket shells.

By March 2018, close to 800 civilians had been killed in the one month after the siege intensified in February. Thousands more have been trapped, starving and without medical assistance. The destruction of Ghouta can be seen from space.

Light from Heaven

When we read in Acts about Paul travelling the road to Damascus and encountering the light of heaven, we see ourselves in this account.

Like Paul, Jesus shone his light into our darkness and saved us. This is a powerful and personal interpretation. But I like to think that when Jesus met Paul on a road in the Syrian desert, he did so because he looked ahead and saw today.

He saw blood and bombs; He heard children's screams; held mother's tears; longed to comfort tortured and abused souls; and pined for the rain of his Spirit to soothe this searing land.

On the road to Damascus Christ unveiled his light to a man on a mission to kill people in Syria. Outside Damascus, Paul gave his heart of hate to Christ, who gave him God's heart of love.

This zealous persecutor became God's missionary. The Gospel reached the world because God did something radical to one man's heart, in Syria.

There are seeds of Christ planted in Syria. In Genesis, God set apart a Syrian woman, Rebekah, to be the mother of Israel.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus heals everyone from Syria who came to Galilee to hear him preach.

In Acts, we discover that believers were first called Christians in Syria, and it was here that Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the church to take God's message of salvation to the nations.

Syria is still part of God's plan, for upon a wooden cross of torture, Jesus carried the brokenness of this nation. Our Saviour spilt Middle Eastern blood, on Middle Eastern sand, for the salvation of every Middle Eastern soul.

Such suffering I cannot understand, but I can pray, like Saint Telka, for God to move mountains so His people can find eternal safe refuge in him.

May they find a Ma'loula for their souls a holy 'entrance' into a

peace that transcends all understanding. [END]

Biography:

Amy is a photographer/ videographer from Adelaide. A portfolio of her work can be found on this link here.

Bibliography:

Manners, Amy, March 2018, Christian Today: Road to Damascus, available: www.christiantoday.com.au/news/road-to-damascus.html, accessed 23/03/18



Special Olympics Celebrates Fifty Years

It was fifty years ago on 20 July 1968 that the first International Special Olympics Games was held.

Founded by Dame Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of former US President John F. Kennedy, Shriver conceived of a camp (Camp Shriver) for children with intellectual disabilities which initially was held at her home in Potomac, Maryland, USA in June 1962.

She was inspired by an innovative study in the late 1950s, which demonstrated that activities and physical exercise for children with intellectual disabilities brought about many positive outcomes and even led to improvements in the classroom.

Her own sister Rosemary, had an intellectual disability and Shriver recognised that most people with intellectual disabilities were hidden away and were looked on as a problem and

an embarrassment, even within her own family.

In the early 1960s, it was Shriver's article about her sister in a prominent newspaper, that began to break through social barriers and long-held negative beliefs and attitudes that people held towards those with an intellectual disability.

Recognising that people with intellectual disabilities had limited opportunities to take part in athletics, the annual Camp Shriver encouraged children to participate in athletic activities. The Kennedy Foundation of which she was the head, offered grants to community centres, recreation departments and universities to hold similar camps.

A strong catholic, Eunice Kennedy Shriver was involved in various organisations to improve facilities for people with intellectual disabilities and to work towards breaking down barriers against them. She was a particularly staunch campaigner and supporter for children.

Around 1,500 intellectually disabled athletes from Canada and the USA participated in that first International Special Olympics in Chicago in 1968 and at the time Shriver suggested that perhaps one day, one million people with intellectual disabilities would compete in athletic competitions.

In 2008, in a tribute to Shriver, Jack McCallum wrote in 'Sports Illustrated' that:

"...She was wrong."

"Today, more than three million Special Olympic athletes are training year-round in all 50 states and 181 countries.Schooling, medical treatment and athletic training have all changed for people with intellectual disabilities as a result of Shriver's vision; more important, so have minds, attitudes and laws." [END]



Opening Ceremony of the Special Olympics held in 2003, in Ireland



Speaking at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) ceremony held in her honour in 2008

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Eunice Kennedy Shriver





~ Crossword ~

Plants, Trees and Fruit of the Bible

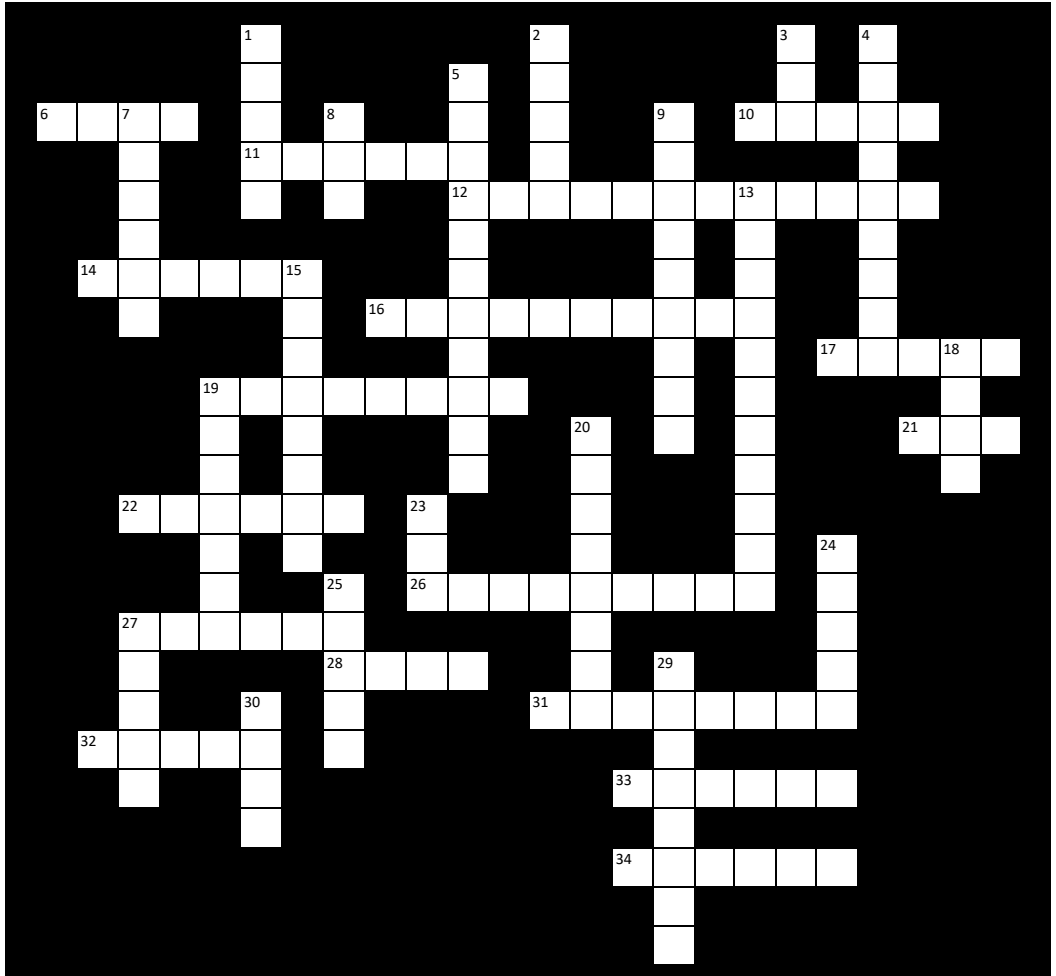
[Answers on page 59]

Across:

6. This generic term means a plant with trailing or climbing stems.
10. In the 15th century, the branches of this plant were used to sweep floors, which is where it got its name
11. A tree which is a member of the pea family, can sometimes be called wattles.
12. It's seeds are yellow and ground to make a well-known paste for cooking.
14. Common nut-producing tree.
16. One of two important trees mentioned in Eden, and haven't been seen since Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden.
17. Likely the most common grass cultivated for its seed.
19. Tree that produces nuts which can be cooked in a fire and then eaten. Its durable wood has long been used in the production of furniture.
21. A three dimensional square.
22. A tree which is an old-fashioned woman's name as well as the name of an Italian fairy-tale.
26. It's fruit makes one of the world's oldest, popular drinks in the world and was a staple in Biblical times as a fruit and a juice.
27. Sounds a bit like the word which describes a slight convulsion of one's throat.
28. A very common tree used in building construction or furniture making
31. Was a very popular and valuable fig tree in Jericho and Canaan, and is well-known because Zachaeus climbed it to see Jesus.
32. Sounds like a girl's name which is a palindrome and is similar sounding to something that is used to colour hair or in temporary tattoos.
33. A common cereal grain that is one of the earliest cultivated grains.
34. This semi-evergreen deciduous tree was mentioned in ancient times for its medicinal use.

Down:

1. A tree used for construction and furniture making and was mentioned in Solomon's temple for its beauty.
2. Another name for an aquatic plant although there is a species of this which are also a tree and a bush.
3. Sounds like the coat of an animal.
4. A spiky bush.
5. A generic name for any wild, prickly bush.
7. Has spikes and sounds a little like the colourful part of a flower.
8. Strong large trees that were used to make furniture.



9. Also known as the turpentine tree, it's a large flowering shrub or tree of the cashew family.
13. An old fashioned round fruit with thick red skin and can have as many as 12,000 seeds in just one fruit. The edible flesh around the seeds can range in colour from white to deep red or purple.
15. Sounds like a day on a calendar and a part of one's hand.
18. The opposite of goodbye? A couple of the more than 400 species were traditionally used as herbal medicines.
19. A tree which sounds like a Mediterranean island nation (35°10'N 33°22'E)
20. A tree which, depending on where it originates, has edible berries which can be black, red or white.
23. A tree with edible fruit that is often eaten after it is dried and is mentioned numerous times in the Bible.
24. A common tree with edible green fruit whose oil is used for cooking or as a salad dressing.
25. A common fruit with red or green skin which has white flesh.
27. Is both an eye colour and a nut tree.
29. An ornamental shrub which can be used as a wind-break or shade tree and is fairly tolerant of saline soil. Its wood can be used in carpentry. (Hint: if you want to risk it.)
30. Often found on tropical beaches, it's also part of the hand.

Still struggling? Below find each of the answers to the puzzle in no particular order, all of which have been mixed up. Unscramble them to find your plants, trees and fruit.

thewa	irf	camoreys	evin	pleap	bintereth
stuntech	ealo	velio	shubnorth	stardum tnalp	oxb
koa	rayleb	sprycles	nahne	dolman	skimarta
arangemopet	epin	physos	lymert	lampated	lahez
napergive	blushbamber	letent	owlwil	slout	caacia
gif	morob	lamp	blumerry	tere fo flie	drace

[Answers on page 59]



Low-Carb Recipes

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

MAIN COURSE:

Tex Mex Mince (serves 2)

Ingredients:

350g beef mince
100g crushed tomatoes
½ cup crème fraîche or sour cream
30g pickled jalapeños
40g butter (pure)
50g shredded mild cheddar & 50g havarti cheese
1 small spring onion (scallion) finely chopped
½ tsp ground cumin
1 tsp onion or garlic powder
1 tsp chilli powder
1 tsp paprika powder
Pinch of pepper
½ tsp salt

Optional to serve: ½ cup guacamole & some leafy greens

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 200°C. Meantime melt the butter in a frying pan and cook the mince through. Stir in the tomatoes and all of the seasoning and cook for a further five minutes.

Grease a small baking dish (approx 16x8cm) and add the mince. Then sprinkle the cheese and jalapeños over the top, and place on a higher rack in the oven. Cook for 15-20 minutes until golden brown.

Mix the scallion and the crème fraîche (or sour cream) and serve, drizzled over the top.



DESSERT:

Creamy Chocolate Mousse (serves 2)



Ingredients:

120g mascarpone cheese
1 tbsp cocoa powder (sugar-free & lower carb)
Sweetener equivalent to ½ tbsp of sugar
½ tsp pure vanilla extract

Optional: add 1 tbsp thickened cream if mixture is too thick

Instructions:

Mix all ingredients together thoroughly, using a mixer if preferred. Check thickness at this point and add extra cream if needed. Taste and if desired, add extra sweetener or cocoa and mix thoroughly.

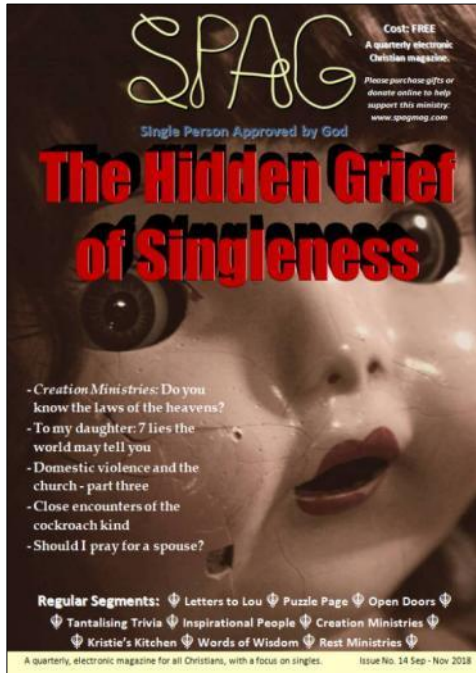
Serve on its own, or you may like to garnish with raspberries or some whipped, unsweetened cream.

A delicious chocolaty favourite at around just 2 carbs per serve.

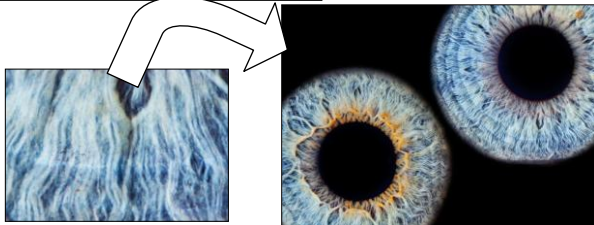
Tantalising Trivia

Next time you're thinking about being sassy with your Pastor, keep in mind Father Oswald T. McGinn from San Antonio, Texas who was a crack shot with a revolver. He was so good, that in 1956 at the age of 77, he could split a bullet poised on a razor blade!

Next Quarter's Issue:



From P42: *Did you guess it?* It's part of the iris of the human eye (see below)



Organisation Promotion

CHRISTIAN TODAY Australia

Since its founding in 2002, Christian Today Australia has become the leading non-denominational Christian news website in the country. Christian Today Australia gains affiliation to the Christian Today network based in the UK, and is part of the CMCI Group, the world's largest Christian news company.

Christian Today Australia's vision stems from the calling to establish the kingdom of God on earth through media by serving as a platform from which Truth is presented according to Matthew 5:37, "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'"

The publication aims to bring unity among Christians across all denominations and restore God as the centre of the nation.

Web: www.christiantoday.com.au

Can You Help Us? It's probably easier than you think!

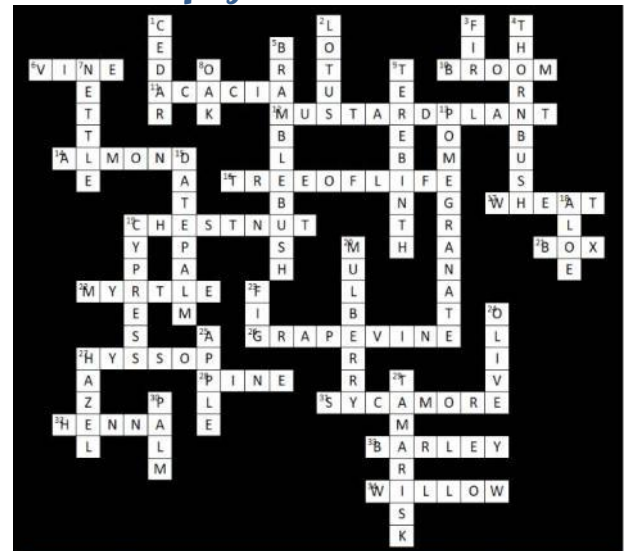
May I encourage you to please seriously consider supporting this important ministry either financially or through prayer. You could make a one-off donation, or donate regularly through your bank. You can even purchase items from our online store, such as our gorgeous online e-book "Reflections" with over 120 pages of stunning scenery photos and inspirational quotes and Bible verses.

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, and nor do we have anything to pay our wonderful staff.

May I encourage you to join our SPAG Prayer Network on Facebook, where you can join other Christians to pray for this important ministry.

Would you consider being one of our vital prayer warriors?

Puzzle page crossword solution:



Still struggling? Below find each of the answers to the puzzle in no particular order, all of which have been mixed up. Unscramble them to find your plants, trees and fruit.

wheat	fir	sycamore	vine	apple	terebinth
chestnut	aloe	olive	thornbush	mustard plant	box
oak	barley	cypress	henna	almond	tamarisk
pomegranate	pine	hyssop	myrtle	date palm	hazel
grapevine	bramble bush	nettle	willow	lotus	acacia
fig	broom	palm	mulberry	tree of life	cedar

Tantalising Trivia

I always thought Billy Graham had an amazing ministry, but have you heard of the American revival preacher, Billy Sunday? Sunday preached well before radio and television were invented, and during his career managed to preach to an estimated 100 million people!

While we're on the theme of longevity, there's a bunch of nuns in a convent in Stetyl in the Netherlands who have maintained continuous prayer in their chapel, for more than one hundred years and that's no nonsense!

Bibliography

This issue's crossword puzzle was created here: www.armoredpenguin.com/crossword/bin/crossword.cgi

[VOICE] The Voice Bible Copyright © 2012 Thomas Nelson, Inc. The Voice™ translation © 2012 Ecclesia Bible Society All rights reserved.

[CEB] Common English Bible Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible
17 December, 1998, "What's in a Name: Reflections of an Irrepressible Name Collector" by Paul Dickson, Published by Merriam Webster, ISBN 13: 9780877796138



"Almighty God, to know You are unchanging gives me peace in a frighteningly changing world."

Billy Graham



Wallaman Falls, Girringun National Park, Queensland, Australia

