



SPAG

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Single Person Approved by God

The Hidden Grief of Singleness

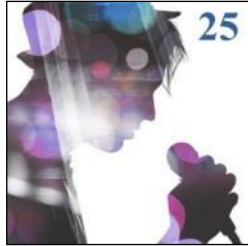
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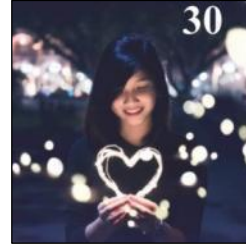
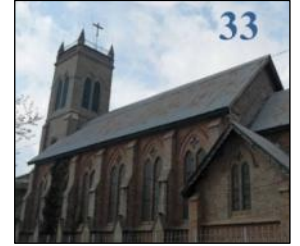
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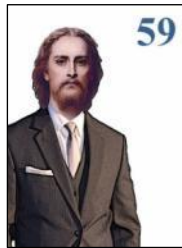
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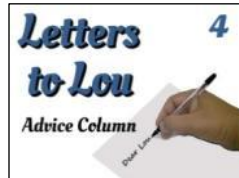
Tantalising Trivia

In 1994 in Spain after a truck collided with a car, the truck then fell down onto a railway track and was crushed by a train. Both the driver and the passenger of the truck escaped unharmed. Think they were fortunate? Just imagine being Aime Grosjean of Switzerland, who at the age of 72, was blown from the balcony on the 17th floor of a building by a huge gust of wind, but as she was falling, another strong gust picked her up, and she landed unharmed on a lower floor!

Regular Segments



Editor's Letter

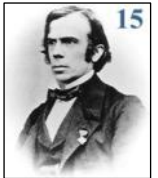
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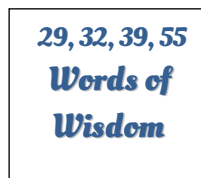
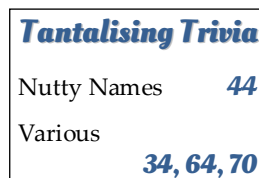
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Spot the difference



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Editor's Letter



Welcome to the fourteenth issue of SPAG!

Our feature article in this issue may be an eye-opener for many church leaders and married people, but for those of us who have experienced it, we know the very real pain and grief that we keep hidden. It's not something that's easy to talk about, but is very real for many Christian women and men. I encourage you to check out Lore Ferguson's article, "The Hidden Grief of Singleness." (page 35)

We have several articles in this issue with a focus on singles: on page 27, Laura Tharion shares her thoughts in the article, "Don't Get Married," and on page 40, Vaughan Roberts provides insight into the subject "Four Things God Says to Singles."

These singles articles are vitally important for church leaders and married couples to read to gain an understanding and empathy for their single brothers and sisters in Christ. But as always, we have articles suitable for everyone - check out 2018 September Compassion Games on page 30, a sixteen day annual (non-Christian) global event this month to draw communities across the world closer together and encourages us to act in intentionally compassionate ways.

There are great articles by writers from Press Service International (Christian Today Australia and New Zealand) who speak on a variety of relevant subjects.

Andrew Brandon shares his remarkable story-writing skills in the tale "The Toy Maker," on page 47. Inspired by Andrew, we're considering adding a regular fiction spot into SPAG Magazine, so if you're an aspiring writer or poet and would love to share your Christian-themed piece, please email it at spagmag@yahoo.com.au. Or consider contributing an article for our "Creative Urge" segment like Alik Whitfield on page 54 who talks about how she is inspired.

Won't you join me in sending out a warm welcome to Michael Hannett who has joined SPAG Magazine to take on our Prayer Points segment (page 58) and will also share an occasional article as well. In this issue, Michael shares a small spot on the subject "No Good deed Goes Unpunished," on page 46. **Welcome Michael!**

Congratulations to Joseph Kolapudi, one of SPAG's journalists who was a finalist in the 2018 Young Community Achiever of the Year, for his work in India on community development and raising awareness for youth engagement. He spoke in schools in North India about mental health and fostering healthy relationships, and assisted in driving positive business and social enterprises. **Well done Joseph!**

I hope you've gained some real insight through Ruth Lindsay's articles on domestic violence and the church in our two previous issues. It's vital that we as a church, consider how we should tackle this difficult problem within some Christian marriages, rather than pretend it's not happening. The final article will be in our next issue.

To finish, I want you to know that I'm conscious that not everyone is going to agree with all of the views and topics that we share in SPAG Magazine, but if we manage to challenge, inspire and/or encourage you to prayerfully consider another point of view on important Christian topics, then we've achieved half of our aim. At the present time, it is more important than ever that we work to support, challenge and grow each other in our walk, whatever our denomination or background.

Warm regards

Vicki Nunn,
SPAG Editor



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Joseph Kolapudi: Journalist



Lori Yanez: Journalist



Liz Gill: Journalist (Modern Missionaries)



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Kristie: Chef



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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

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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 – How to Find a New Church

Dear Lou

I moved to a new town after God encouraged me to go there. While I miss my friends and family, I have a good friend here and some close relatives. But I can't seem to find a church to settle in.

I'd like to find somewhere that there are single people like me, and who are mature so we can support each other. It's important to me to find a church where there's real Biblical teaching and encourages Christian growth.

My question is, how do I find a church that meets my needs, and one where I believe God wants me to go? I've already been to a couple and at one church, where I was starting to feel comfortable, the Pastor said something that really made me feel angry. During his sermon he said that their church was aimed at families, because families have many needs, not like single people who are more selfish!

Can you believe he said that? So, if that's their attitude towards single people, then I don't want to go there anymore!

I wanted to write to him and tell him how he made me feel, but I don't know if that would really help his attitude.

Can you help me figure out how to find a good church?

Rachel

Hi Rachel,

As a person passionate about ministry to single and single again people, I can say that the sentiment of your letter is one I have heard on a regular basis.

First priority is to find a church which is sound biblically and provides solid teaching. It would appear that you are doing this.

Second priority is to find yourself in a home group where you can connect with people at a deeper level.

Priority three is to start a ministry group for single and single again people. Offer your services to build such a group.

If that is not welcome - look for another church.

It is extremely disappointing to hear the comments made by the pastor regarding singles, yet this is a comment I have heard said on a regular basis from leaders of churches. So often churches do not care about or seek to understand the specific needs of our

singles family. If we cared to look around church we would see widows, widowers, divorcees, unmarried mums and singles who have never married. Often these people make up a good percentage of the church population.

Contact the pastor and remind him of what he said and listen to his response. This will enable you to determine whether you will get care in that church family. Ask simply what is being done to care for singles and their needs. Personal contact from you is far better than a letter.

My encouragement would be to find other singles in the church and build some new friendships, but don't neglect getting to know couples and others in the church.

Ask your family and other friends if they know of other singles in the community. If you can't develop this singles ministry in your church, look at building a healthy singles ministry on an interdenominational basis.

Kind regards

Lou

Letter 2 – Sometimes I Struggle with Being Alone

Dear Lou

I'm now in my 30s and although I'm ok with that, I still struggle sometimes with being alone and feeling lonely.

It would be nice sometimes having someone to sit and watch movies with or go for walks, etc. I've got some friends I can hang out with, but most of them have partners and kids, and when I crave time with friends or when I'm feeling a bit low, they aren't always available because they're busy with their own lives.

Sometimes I pray about it, but it doesn't make my sadness or loneliness go away. Can you tell me how I can make myself feel better when I'm feeling down? If God isn't going to give me a husband, why does being alone have to be so hard?

Giselle

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



Hi Giselle,

You correctly identify one of the most significant struggles faced by singles. In fact you identify one of the struggles of our modern day society. Some years ago I read that sixty percent of the population noted that loneliness was their major personal issue.

Whenever I am with a crowd of people I look around and wonder which ones are desperately lonely. The key for living is to find an opportunity to get to find these people and be a friend to them.

The key issue for you is to not sit down and wonder why you can't find friends, but to be proactive and go out and look for people you can bring into your care.

I would encourage you to get busy doing things for other people, get involved in your church, or sporting club, or a group which has similar interests or hobbies to yourself and work hard at being a giver and not a receiver only.

Doing this does not necessarily take away the loneliness you will face at times, but it will be a way of meaningfully filling your life.

I meet people on a regular basis who are living fulfilled lives because of the effort they make to reach other people. This is applicable to people of all ages.

Make the effort to get involved with people and care for people who need someone to speak into their lives.

Continue to pray that God would provide for you a very special group of caring friends.

Lou

Letter 3 – Anointing with Oil for Healing and Blessing

Dear Lou

In the Old Testament and in the New Testament, there are references to anointing people with oil for healing, blessing or consecration.

Why don't churches do that today? I mean, if it's talked about in the New Testament as a way to heal, or bless or consecrate, why aren't we doing that? Well, at least not in the churches I have been to.

How come we don't see or hear of demons being cast out of people? The disciples were casting out demons in the New

Testament. I'm sure there are still plenty of demons around today, so shouldn't we be doing it?

I find it confusing that things those early Christians did, we don't do them today. Does that mean there's something wrong with our modern churches? Does it mean we aren't obeying God?

Peter

Hi Peter

Thanks for your question and concern.

In all churches that I have been, a part of anointing people with oil is a common practice. James 5 is the key for us in this.

I believe it is a privilege for pastors and leaders to pray over people and to anoint with oil. This can be done within the context of church services, or in a home group, or by going to a family or individual and anointing with oil. My encouragement is to make this a key practice within your spiritual journey.

My first port of call in praying for people who are supposedly possessed by evil spirits is to always check to see if there is unconfessed sin in their life. Sadly, people blame the devil for stuff which in reality is their own sinful action. Unconfessed sin will always bring bondage in a person's life.

The Bible tells me very clearly that we know this fact, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." I John 4:4. Because of this a person walking closely with the Lord does not have to worry about demon possession.

On the other hand demonic influences are all around us. The devil and his cohorts were defeated by Jesus on the cross.

Our hope is in Christ.

Keep praying for people, and keep anointing with oil as we are commanded to do in the Scriptures.

Sincerely
Lou



Anointing of the sick

We've Got To Hurry!



by Leah
McDermott

I wanted to tell him to hurry up... but I paused and asked instead. His response, "I want to see if the vultures think I'm a dead animal."

I hadn't even noticed the vultures flying overhead... I was so focused on finishing the task and moving on to the next thing that I was missing everything.

How many times in a day do you tell your child to "hurry up?"

Rushing out the door, "Get your shoes on;" "Eat your dinner faster;" "Walk quicker;" "Chin up, eyes forward, let's go!"

We've got to HURRY..... To where? To what?

Do you stop and ask yourself what you're rushing for? What is so important that you are pushing your child so quickly through their childhood?

Do you ever wonder why? Why they are moving so slowly? Why they are staring off into space?

Well.... did you ever ask? Did you ever just STOP and try to get inside their head?

I stopped hurrying, and I asked, and these are just a few of the answers I got:

Not eating dinner: *"I'm counting my peas."*

Taking forever to get shoes on: *"I'm trying to decide which shoes are the best shoes."*

Lagging behind on a walk: *"I'm singing to the birds."*

Not coming in for a bath: *"I'm watching this worm to see how fast it can dig."*

Do you see what's happening here?

Our adult brains are conditioned to move so rapidly... to hurry as quickly as possible from one activity to the next, always rushing, always thinking about the next thing and never, NEVER paying attention to the current, present, beautiful moment.

But our children? They haven't been changed yet. They're still curious and full of wonder. They still see the beauty in weeds and will take the time to hop over every crack in the sidewalk for miles.

Why on earth would we want to do anything but encourage them to keep that passion, that attention to detail, and the ability to SLOW DOWN and just enjoy the world around them?

In fact, we can learn a lot from watching our children, and from asking ourselves why we are rushing constantly. Why we are so concerned about the next moment instead of focusing on enjoying the present one?

Ask yourself. Why?

Ask your child, what are they doing in THIS moment, and can I join you?



Watch your world change before your eyes... to slowing down. [END]

Biography:

I'm a homeschooling mother of two, natural learning advocate, Master teacher, speaker, author, and the founder of 'Your Natural Learner.'

My greatest joy comes from parents and teachers seeing their children have that AHA! moment when something they're excited about finally connects!

I help families and educators connect their children with Mother Nature through unstructured play, focused learning activities, engaging learning spaces.

I believe that each and every child learns in a unique and timely way - that they learn best when they can follow their interests and passions, and that we as facilitators should provide them with the resources necessary to fulfil their curious desires.

Bibliography:

McDermott, Leah, 24 May 2018, Facebook: Your Natural Learner, available: www.facebook.com/yournaturallearner/photos/a.522306884521473.1073741825.229469687138529/1675643922521091/?type=3&theatre, accessed 21/06/18.



Do You Know the Laws of the Heavens? The Bible and the Hydrologic Cycle



by **Ron Neller**
B.A. (Hons) PH.D.
Geomorphology

It is often assumed that the Bible's statements relating to natural phenomena can only reflect the inadequate scientific knowledge of the period when the relevant portion of it was written.

This is often used to deflect from and 'explain away' the obvious conflict between Genesis and the current 'scientific' paradigm of origins and pre-history. However, as this article seeks to show, consideration of the hydrologic cycle indicates the divine inspiration of the text by revealing detailed knowledge of the physical world that was not understood by 'science' until many centuries, if not millennia, later.

The Bible contains many observations of the natural world. On the planetary side there are descriptions of landscapes, weather and storm conditions, and of rivers and oceans. On the biological side there are descriptions of species, habitats, and ecosystem functions. There are also statements of physical and biological processes and of changing environments.

Whilst these statements may not seem unusual to a reader today, many of these statements may have seemed uncertain to readers when they were first recorded.

Perhaps the most common reference in the Bible to nature is to aspects of the hydrologic cycle, or the distribution and movement of water.

Water is essential to life, a cleansing substance, and a necessary basis for any civilisation.

Water is also referred to in the Bible as a component of purification, festivals, and ceremonies. Not only are there many statements on the hydrologic cycle in the Bible, but when combined from the various books of the Bible they provide an accurate insight into most aspects of the movement of water and the processes associated with these movements.

As will be shown in this paper, through a focus primarily on the wisdom literature (especially the Books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms), an adequate scientific description of the hydrologic cycle evaded scholars till only a few

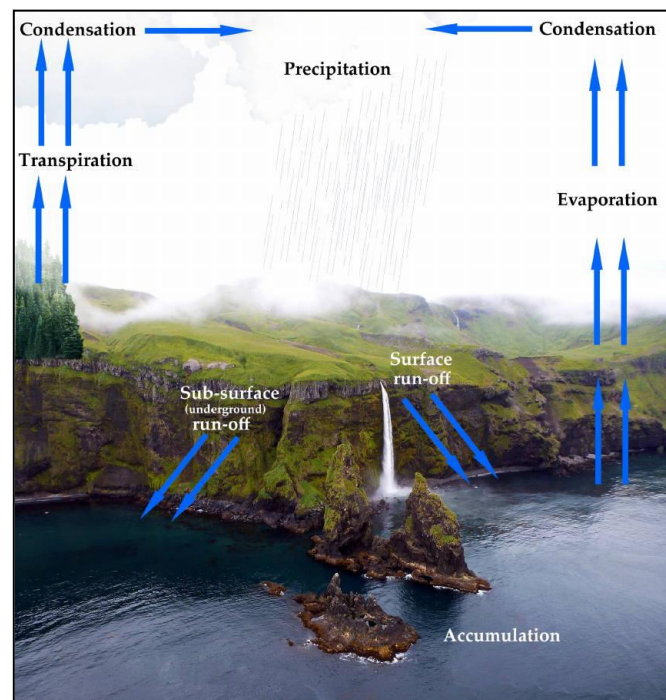


Figure 1: The hydrologic cycle

hundred years ago, even though the major processes of the hydrologic cycle were recorded in the Bible.

What is the Hydrologic Cycle?

The hydrologic cycle is simply the distribution and movement of water on our planet and it has a cyclic movement as suggested by the name (figure 1).

Precipitation falls to the earth and may be temporarily held in freshwater surface storage, infiltrates into the ground where some of it is stored as soil water and groundwater, and some of it is immediately evaporated.

That which cannot be stored or immediately returned to the atmosphere then finds its way into streams and rivers and eventually reaches lakes or the oceans.

Waters retained temporarily in the soils or in depressions on the land are then transpired by plants (evapotranspiration) or eventually evaporated from soils and open water bodies back into the atmosphere, where they are blown around the globe to begin the cycle once again.

Evaporation also occurs across the oceans. Obviously there is a lot more to it than this and we have skipped over many of the finer details (a more detailed description can be found in the introductory chapter of any hydrologic book) but the continuous and cyclic nature of this movement of water is quite apparent.

The hydrologic cycle is the planet's cleansing system, removing dust from the atmosphere and flushing streams and rivers clean.

It is also critical to all aspects of life as it is responsible for the breakdown and movement of nutrients and therefore the most important geologic process. A regular and consistent supply of clean water has been required by all civilisations and water has for most of civilised history been the major form of transport, particularly of goods and produce.

Ancient Civilisations and Their Use of Water

Before we examine the development of scientific thinking on the hydrologic cycle it is worthwhile noting that significant engineering and water supply systems were developed at the

dawn of civilisation before a clear understanding of certain aspects of the hydrologic cycle was developed. Andah¹ observed that early civilisations were able to manipulate and manage surface water flows without a clear understanding of the hydrologic cycle per se, and that this was achieved through damming and irrigation.

Shanan² notes that rain-fed farming can be a risky venture, particularly if there is seasonal rainfall uncertainty, whereas irrigation reduces this uncertainty and allows farming in otherwise unproductive lands. Shanan quotes an inscription on the tomb of Queen Semiramis of Assyria (about 2000 BC): "I constrained the mighty river to flow according to my will and led its waters to fertilise lands that before had been barren and without inhabitants."²

In Egypt, records of river heights (or stages) were collected from the Nile from the earliest days (as recorded on ancient manuscripts³) and a canal to transport potable water had been built between Cairo and the Suez.¹ From other ancient civilisations Biswas⁴ provides an extensive list of major water infrastructures, including water supply works and flood control structures, well before 600 BC.

These irrigation and aqueduct systems were developed before a rudimentary knowledge of flow dynamics emerged with the pioneering fluid flow investigations of Hero of Alexandria



Figure 2: The Aqueduct of Segovia in central Spain dates from around the 2nd century, and is an excellent example of the Roman Empire aqueducts that are still found across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Its purpose was to transport water from nearby mountains, some 17km away. Although the Roman engineers did not have a good understanding of the global water cycle, they nonetheless undertook significant water projects.

sometime between 150 BC and AD 250.⁵ So it is important to understand this distinction between the simple use of water on the one hand and a thorough understanding of its movements and processes on the other.

These early civilisations demonstrated that you did not need a full and thorough understanding of how natural processes worked before you could manipulate them (figure 2).

What the Philosophers and Scientists Discovered

The ancient Greeks had various ideas on the hydrologic cycle. According to Thales of Miletus (late 6th - early 5th century BC) streams and rivers emerged from underground. There was believed to be a vast subterranean freshwater lake, connected to the surface of the world by chasms and through surface springs water then flowed out into the rivers of the world.

Variations on this theme were expressed by numerous other Greek philosophers such as Plato and Anaxagoras of Clazomenae

(500–428 BC) who believed the earth to be full of watery caverns that provided springs for rivers as well as rainfall.

Aristotle's (mid-3rd century BC) view was somewhat more accurate. He argued in his work *Meteorologica*:

"Now the earth remains but the moisture surrounding it is made to evaporate by the sun's rays ... and rises. But when the heat which was raising it leaves it, ... then the vapour cools because its heat is gone and because the place is cold, and condenses again and turns from air into water. And after the water has formed it falls down again to the earth."⁶

Aristotle nonetheless remained convinced that subterranean water was the main source of stream flow. He believed it was 'absurd' "...if one were to suppose that rivers drew all their water from the sources we see (for most rivers do flow from springs)."⁶

Referring to Thales, Plato, and Aristotle, Dooge⁵ writes: "A common error in all their thinking was the firm conviction that rainfall was not sufficient to provide the flow of springs and rivers."

Vitruvius, a 1st century BC Roman architect, provided a reasonable description of the water cycle for his time. He described precipitation processes and the relationships between precipitation and surface flow, and on the basis of these observations recognised that rivers were primarily derived from precipitation, not from springs. Nonetheless, Vitruvius's concept was rejected by subsequent scholars.

With the emergence of modern science there remained uncertainty on why water continued to flow in rivers long after rainfall. Dooge⁵ notes that even Leonardo da Vinci postulated on the underground lifting mechanisms of water into the mountains in his writings (sometime between 1504 and 1506 AD) and that Galileo (around 1600 AD) was frustrated by stream flow.

It was not until the first quantitative measurement of the hydrologic cycle was made by Pierre Perrault in the 16th century that the argument was finally laid to rest.

Perrault measured both precipitation and streamflow in the Seine basin in France and determined that the amount of water precipitated was six times that flowing in the river. In short, there was more than enough rainfall to keep the rivers flowing long after the last rain had ceased. In determining this, a more complete understanding of the hydrologic cycle finally emerged.

What the Bible Says:

How old are the books of the Bible?

Before we compare what the Bible records about the hydrologic cycle with what the philosophers and scientists determined, we need to ensure that the two accounts are independent. To do so we need to understand when these books were written, to ensure that the Bible authors were

not simply recording current world views of the hydrologic cycle.

The Book of Job, though written primarily as poetic dialogue on the theology of suffering from a Hebrew perspective, provides a rich source of commentary on the hydrologic cycle, and as such is a great place to start. But its author and age have been subject to considerable debate. Habel⁷ notes that "Scholars have proposed dates from the 10th century to the 4th century BC" and suggests this is because there are no historical events mentioned in Job. What we do know is that fragments of the Book of Job were found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls,⁸ dated at around 200 BC, and that they were written in 'paleo-Hebrew'

script. "The many rare words and textural disturbances make the Hebrew text of Job one of the most obscure in the OT."⁹ Moreover:

"It is clear that the author wrote in a dialect distinct from the Hebrew of Jerusalem, in which much of the OT is composed. His dialect was much closer to Aramaic. ... He drew skilfully on his rich vocabulary and knowledge of the various dialects of Hebrew to probe the depth of his subject."⁹

Habel⁷ argues "the cumulative evidence may tend to suggest a postexilic era" (late 5th to 4th centuries BC). Numerous experts

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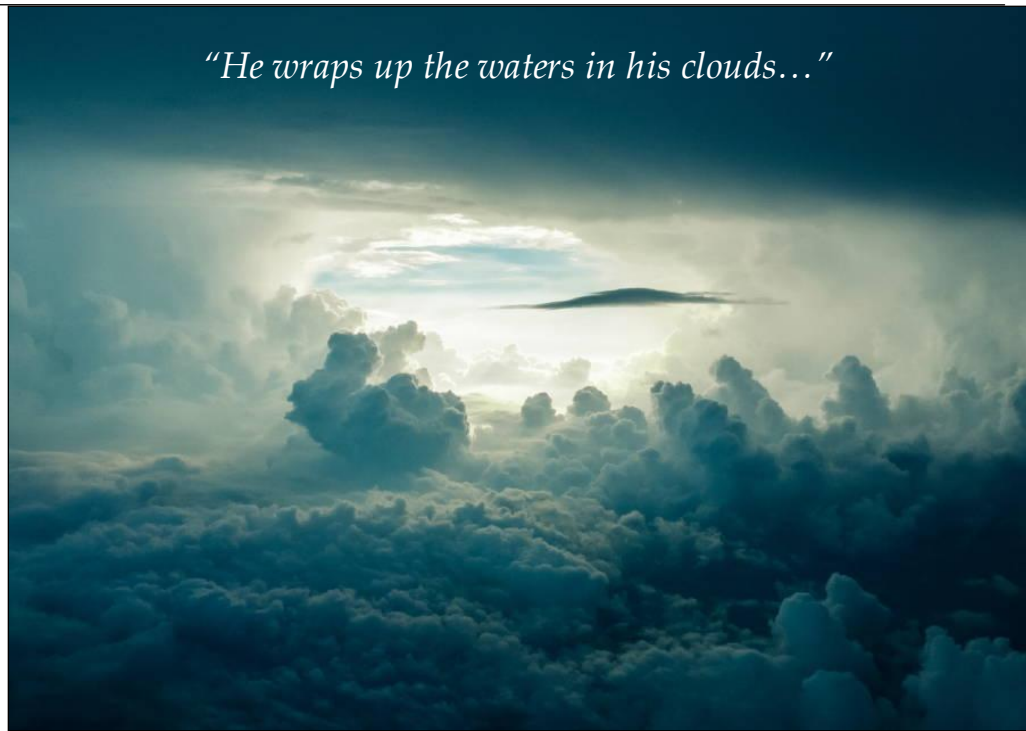
note that no Levitical institutions are mentioned and Job personally offers sacrifices typical of pre-Tabernacle days (Patriarch tradition). Harris⁸ states that “in view of patriarchal milieu, it seems possible to hold to a Mosaic or slightly pre-Mosaic date in accord with much older Jewish and Christian sentiment”. Hartley⁹ believes “the interplay between this book and other OT books, especially Isaiah, can best be accounted for by placing this work in the 7th century BC”. Regardless of these divergences, most experts propose a date for the Book of Job no later than the 4th century BC, and most likely much earlier, possibly pre-Mosaic.

Other references to the hydrologic cycle can be drawn from Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah. Whilst the earliest fragments of these are also to be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (around 200 BC) there is little argument amongst scholars that they were in fact written much earlier (and placed with the Ark of the Covenant).

The balance of evidence strongly suggests these books of the Bible pre-date the Greek philosopher Thales. As we shall see in the following sections, there are also significant differences in these accounts and there is no evidence to suggest the reflections of Thales or of the author of Job were in any manner connected.

Biblical descriptions of the hydrologic cycle

Because water is a necessary component of life it is not surprising that the Bible has something to say on the distribution and movement of water. The Bible does not raise



“He wraps up the waters in his clouds...”

these matters in a scientific or explanatory manner. Rather, God speaks to His people using common language and common concepts. Water is a common topic.

The Book of Job makes a number of points on what we today call the hydrologic cycle. But unlike the reflections of Thales, Job provides a clear description of the concepts that underpin the hydrologic cycle:

“He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight” (Job 26:8).

“He draws up the drops of water, which distil as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind” (Job 36:27–28).

“Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth? Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water?” (Job 38:33–34).

“Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the

water jars of the heavens?” (Job 38:37).

“... when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm” (Job 28:26).

As noted earlier, these verses were not primarily provided as explanations of a hydrologic cycle. Rather they were used as commonly understood images to illustrate God’s Kingdom, and in the scripture listed above of God’s authority over mankind.

In Job 26:28 God uses the water cycle to demonstrate that He does not deal with His people by chance but that just as nature is bound by a set of decrees so too is God’s Kingdom bound by laws. Job 38:33–34 reiterates His dominion over the earth and these laws, challenging humanity to comprehend His authority.

Having illustrated Job’s ignorance of these matters, Job 38:37 further highlights mankind’s weakness by focusing on their inability to comprehend the most visible works of nature.

Though the purpose of these verses was to illustrate God's Kingdom, nonetheless they contain some powerful hydrologic concepts that were well beyond the thinking of natural philosophers and scholars of the day.

Firstly there is the concept of 'laws' or 'decrees'. God is a rational being and here He exhibits this rationality by creating laws or decrees for what we now know to be the pathways of the hydrologic cycle.

This is perhaps a more important point than people today might realise. At the time of writing the Book of Job, other major civilisations were polytheistic (worshipped many gods).

In polytheistic cultures explanations for the human spirit and the mysteries of the natural world were sought from many gods. Indeed the uncertainties in life were so common that virtually all city states would have their own resident god. For example, the patron goddess of Athens was Athena, whose statue was housed in the Parthenon.

In polytheistic societies the concept that there were laws or decrees for natural phenomena was bordering on blasphemy. The irregularities of nature (flooding and droughts for example) were attributed to the gods who were unpredictable and potentially in conflict with each other.

The idea that nature could be systematic and predictable, provided we understood the laws or decree of a creator God, was revolutionary.

Secondly, the concept of a cycle is established in Job - the drops of waters are drawn up from the ground (evaporation), distilled (cleansed), stored (water jars or clouds that do not burst), moved (path-ways), converted to rain (condensation and precipitation) and returned to the ground 'abundantly' and blessedly for mankind.

Though this cycle was later described by Aristotle and Seneca, neither believed that it could account for the observed streamflow.

It was not until the 1st century BC that Vitruvius believed it to be sufficient and it was not until the 16th century AD that measurements were able to record that there was more than enough rainfall to keep streams flowing. Yet the Book of Job says that the rainfall is 'abundant' for man to use.

Ecclesiastes 1 provides a statement of important concepts underpinning the hydrologic cycle as we know it today.

"The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1:6-7).

Embedded in these verses are the concepts of a cycle and of a water balance (conservation of matter). Ecclesiastes was written hundreds of years before Vitruvius first echoed similar concepts.

Elsewhere in the Bible, various hydrologic processes are further described. Evaporation is recorded in a number of other books:

"He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Psalm 135:7);



Figure 3: Dew is an essential source of moisture in Israel during the summer, being blown in from the Mediterranean Sea. God likens Himself to dew ([Hosea 14:5](#)) in that the Israelites needed Him to survive.

as is precipitation:

"He waters the mountains from his upper chambers" (Psalm 104:13);

as well as the source of dew (atmospheric [figure 3]) and the storage of groundwaters:

"May the LORD bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below" (Deuteronomy 33:13);

the process of infiltration (soaking into the ground) as well as precipitation once again:

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish" (Isaiah 55:10);

and the release of groundwaters through springs:

"The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur" (Genesis 16:7);

"He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains" (Psalm 104:10).

There are even insights into groundwater hydrology. Isaiah 4:3-5 refers to a 'yaval' or 'yuval' which is a "sudden flood that appears in a dry wash after a storm"¹⁰ and replenishes the water table in semi-arid areas, allowing willows with deep roots (but not grasses) to survive difficult years.

Again, these verses are not designed to 'explain' the hydrologic cycle, but to use visible works of nature as metaphors.

Deuteronomy 33:13 for example, refers to Moses blessing Joseph prior to his death - that the Lord continue to provide precious

dew during the long dry season throughout the summer months.

According to Sansom¹¹ this dew is critical to the economic viability of this region.

Likewise Isaiah 55:10 is a promise that God's divine truth (like precipitation) shall be fruitful and does not return to him void - the writer knows that water (an analogy for the living water) falls as rain and snow and returns as vapour from whence it came, and that before it does it provides moisture and nourishment for an eventual harvest (Pulpit Commentaries.)

In summary, the physical descriptions of the water cycle used throughout the Bible to illustrate authority, blessings, and salvation are accurate.

Unlike the scholarly enquiries between 600 BC and AD 1600, the Bible does not present uncertainty, inaccuracy, or contradiction with its description of hydrologic processes. The hydrologic cycle is not described as subterranean waters sucked up into the mountains, to flow forth as springs that feed the rivers of the world. Instead the Bible paints a flawless picture of the dynamics and components of the water cycle more than a thousand years before the first 'scientific' measurement confirmed that this was so.

Before we conclude, however, we need to ask the question: 'Does the Bible ever state that waters emerging from underground are the primary source of waters

responsible for sustaining life?' Surprisingly it does, but on only one occasion.

"... but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground" (Genesis 2:6).

The Garden of Eden was described as paradise on Earth, a land of plenty deriving its life-giving water as a matter of course from underground. But we turned our back on that paradise.

Finally, there are also a number of occasions when water flowed out from the ground when there were no natural springs but these are all described in the Bible as miracles, not laws. One occurred when the three kings were challenged by Moab:

"... and he said, 'This is what the LORD says: I will fill this valley with pools of water. For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also deliver Moab into your hands'" (2 Kings 3:16-18).

Another is an Exodus miracle when water flowed from rock after being struck by Moses:

"In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock ... " (Nehemiah 9:15).

To reiterate - these were both announced by God as His work,

"The Garden of Eden was described as paradise on Earth, a land of plenty deriving its life-giving water as a matter of course from underground."

His miracle, and outside of the laws that He decreed.

To summarise, the Bible accurately describes the hydrologic cycle of our planet and did so well before an accurate modern scientific account emerged.

Reflections

A correct scientific understanding of the hydrologic cycle was a long time coming, but a divine explanation of this most critical life support system was provided to us from the beginning. Over 2000 years of scientific debate, observation, and measurement have now confirmed what God revealed (albeit in passing comments and analogies) to His chosen people.

What Lessons Can We Learn From This?

Firstly, God does not hide difficult concepts from us - He does not protect us in our ignorance from the truth of His creation. Was the hydrologic cycle difficult to fathom? Absolutely, and to give the ancient philosophers due recognition it would be arrogant to assume that we wouldn't have made the same mistakes of interpretation regarding the global hydrologic cycle if we did not have access to, and a belief in, a creator God who 'decreed' the laws of nature.

In particular, it could be argued that observational data (that which scientists use to generate hypotheses and ideas) could have been misleading in this case. What is meant by this? Quite simply, what we perceive nature does and what nature actually does can be quite different. For example, many people would agree with the statement that a bubbling stream



in the mountain headwaters flows faster than the apparently sluggish river on the plains but this is often a perception. Velocity measurements show that in the majority of cases this is not so. It is merely our perception that the splashing loud waters in the hills are flowing fast. Likewise, when people see a major river flowing months after the last rainfall many are unlikely to believe that the river flow did in fact originate as rainfall months earlier and that it simply took its time to get to the river (via soil and groundwater flow). To reiterate this point then - God did not simplify His revealed word because it would have been difficult for people of that era to fathom. So why do we think that He may have done so in other Books and in other accounts (such as Genesis)?

Secondly, this account illustrates quite clearly that when science and the Bible are at odds, science can be wrong. But all too often scientists seek alternative explanations. For example, when commenting on the stagnation of scientific enquiry into research on

the hydrologic cycle during the Middle Ages (after the early achievements of Greek and Roman philosophers) Bulu³ makes a mistake common to scientists: "Understanding and investigating ... nature had almost stopped because of the power of the Christian Church." This stagnation instead stemmed from decentralised communities and governance following the collapse of the Roman Empire, increasing reliance on local technologies such as watermills rather than canals, and a reduction in slave labour for large infrastructural developments.⁵ Despite the incorrect beliefs of scientists like Bulu, scholarly thinking on nature was promoted by the church, as evidenced for example by Bartholoeus Anglicus (about AD 1250), a Franciscan professor at the University of Paris, who examined the lifting mechanism to get water into the mountains.

After 2,000 years of pondering, observing, and measuring, do we now fully understand how this global hydrologic system works? If we do, why then are rainfall

predictions still estimates only? And why aren't scientists able to predict the severity of the next flood or drought? We still need to ask the question - will we ever fully understand this cycle? Perhaps we have already been given the answer to that question in Job: "Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy?" (Job 36:29). [END]

Biography:

Ron holds a B.A. (Hons) and a Ph.D., both in fluvial geomorphology.

He has held lecturing and research positions at universities in various countries. He has also initiated and directed a research institute in environmental sustainability and established two research stations in natural resource management.

While in these positions Ron undertook landscape studies in Australia, China, Finland, Peru, The Pacific Islands, and Libya. He held numerous government advisory positions with the Queensland Government and the Federal Government of Australia in natural heritage management as well as working with international agencies such as the OECD.

Ron was an occasional churchgoer through parts of his life, but only gave his life to Christ in his early 50s. Although not a Christian in his earlier years, he was also not a supporter of geological evolution. His research suggested otherwise. Indeed, it was only upon becoming a Christian that his data (derived from decades of research on landscape change) finally started to make sense. He then commenced to speak at local churches about this journey to the acceptance of the Bible's history regarding origins and the Flood of Noah, and faith in Christ.

Ron is now part of the Creation Ministries International (CMI) team in Brisbane, where he works as a researcher, writer and speaker. His articles are now appearing in Creation magazine and the Journal of Creation.

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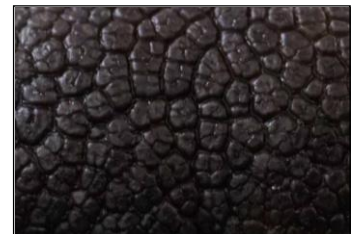
Why it's Good to be Single

Reason No. 27:

I like being single - I'm always there when I need me.



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



Answer
on page 73

Thrifty Tips



How to \$ave money!

Make Your Shoes Last Longer

Your feet can produce up to a cup of moisture every day, much of which ends up soaking into your shoes. All of that moisture can take two days or more to dry out and for the shoes to regain their shape. If you put the same shoes on again every day, you run the risk of mould, other nasties and stinky footwear. The ongoing moisture can cause them to permanently change shape which is how they get looser more quickly on your feet, and consequently they get worn faster, and can even lead to calluses and pain.

So how do you make them last longer? Put aside some cash every week until you have enough money to buy three pairs of shoes for everyday use. If you wear a different pair over each three day period, those three sets of shoes will last as long as four pairs of shoes, because they've had sufficient time to dry out between wearings. Continue putting aside a few extra dollars every week so that eventually when those first three pairs have finally worn out, you'll have enough to buy three new pair of shoes.

Consider how much that might be saving you in podiatrist bills or painful feet.

Inspirational People: Dr Louis Appia



by Vicki Nunn

Introduction

October 13 this year marks two hundred years since Swiss surgeon Louis Appia was born. Later he became a doctor specialising in military medicine.

Dr Appia was one of the five founders of the "Committee of Five" (Geneva) which was the forerunner of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Earlier Years

In 1838 in Heidelberg he studied medicine before returning to Frankfurt.

Ten years later during the February revolution in France as well as the revolution in March in the German states, he helped the wounded. It was due to this experience that Dr Appia's focus and specialty became about improving treatment of the war-wounded.

After his father's death in 1849, he accompanied his mother to Geneva where he began practising as a surgeon. While there, he wrote a thesis about surgical treatment for the war-wounded, and designed a way to immobilise a broken limb for the transportation of a wounded person.

He married Anne Lassere in 1853, and they had two sons and two daughters. Their son Adolphe, went on to become an architect and pioneered modern stage design.

War-time Work

During the Austro-Sardinian war in 1859, his brother George, a Pastor, wrote about the shocking conditions of the victims and the wounded. Dr Appia made his way to Italy and took on medical work in Turin, Brescia, Milan and Desenzano del Garda.

While there he gave out copies of his treatise on treating the wounded, to both French and Italian doctors, and arranged for the collection of vital supplies. He also wrote to his Genevan friends requesting donations to support treatment of the wounded.

It was at this time that Dr Appia's earlier design for the immobilisation of broken limbs was successfully tested in Milan..

Upon returning to Geneva, he completed his treatise on the immobilisation of broken limbs, with the help of his friend Dr Théodore Maunoir and they published it in book form. The book was distributed to important military personnel and political leaders in Europe.

For his medical work during the war, Dr Appia was awarded the "Medal of the Saints Maurice and Lazarus," the second-highest honour in the Kingdom of Italy.

After obtaining Genevan citizenship in late 1860, he became a member of the Geneva Medical Society.

Foundation of the Red Cross

Dr Appia was invited to join the "Committee of Five" in 1863 to consider Henry Dunant's concepts



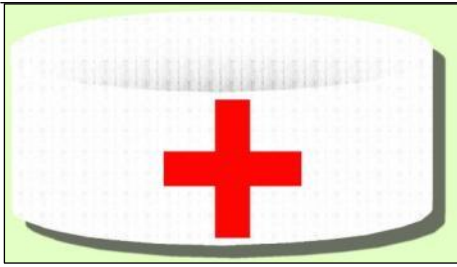
Dr Louis Appia

of a neutral organisation which would provide care for soldiers wounded in wars. It was Dr Appia who suggested that volunteers wear white armbands so that they were easier to identify on the battlefield, and later it was decided to place a red cross on the band which is the inverse symbol of the Swiss flag.

The group became the "International Committee for Relief to Wounded Soldiers" which in 1876 was renamed the "International Committee of the



Henry Dunant



Red Cross" (ICRC).

The first ever delegates to wear the white armbands with the red cross were Dr Appia and Captain Charles Van de Velde during the Danish-Prussian war at the Battle of Dybbøl, both as neutral observers and medical care providers.

In June 1866, after a request from his brother, Dr Appia became involved in the Italian unification struggle, where he and two volunteers treated the wounded.

After Henry Dunant dropped out of the committee, Dr Appia took over the position of Secretary. The Committee continued meeting about three to four times a month in his home.

The Formation of Other Red Cross Organisations

In August 1869, he met Clara Barton, an American who had been a nurse during the American



[Clara Barton

Civil War and he asked her why the United States had chosen not to sign the Geneva Convention¹ (about protections for people during war.)

The nurse had been unaware of Henry Dunant's concept of the Red cross and upon returning to America, she was instrumental in founding the American Red Cross and the US agreement to sign the Geneva Convention.

Dr Appia was deployed as a delegate during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), and in October 1872, supported the creation of the first non-European Red Cross while in Egypt.

He was supportive of Clara Barton's idea to extend the Red Cross societies' missions to include victims of epidemics and natural disasters.

Conclusion

In his final years, Dr Appia continued on as an active member of the ICRC and studied further into injuries during wartime, until his death in 1898 when he was in his eightieth year. [END]

Note:

1. The Geneva Convention established standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in wars and later came to include rights of wartime prisoners, protection for the sick and the wounded, as well as protections for civilians in and around war-zones.

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Organisation Promotion

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Open Doors:

Five of the Most Powerful Images from 2017

OpenDoors®

by Mike Gore

Open Doors
Australia & New
Zealand

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

I want to share five key photos from 2017 and the stories behind them.

1. Samson, Central Asia

We had arrived at another registered, but very much under the radar, church in Central Asia. We met Samson, he looked like a wrestler - in his early 50s but lean and strong. As we sat on the floor broke bread and sipped tea, Samson began to share his testimony.

This is - without a doubt - one of the craziest stories I've heard from my time at Open Doors.

One Sunday night they came at

2am to kill him.

Eight people with machine guns and knives. They said, "Come with us."

Samson could not see their faces as they were wearing black head coverings that only left their eyes visible.

Samson told his wife, "My friends have come and I'll be back in the morning. When you hear my voice then open the door."

Samson's wife locked the door and Samson went with them. They took him to a garbage tip.

They said, "Today is the last day for you. Jesus is not a God. He will not save you."

The Mujahideen came and grabbed his hair and pulled his head back placing a knife on his throat. They asked Samson, "What do you want to say?"

Samson replied, "Jesus loves you and I forgive you."

They asked him, "Do you accept Islam?"

And he said, "No I've found the truth, the creator of earth, heaven and all mankind. People created religion. 'You [God] created holy work. Please reveal Your work to my brothers here, salvation, protection for their children, and let them know that my blood is not on their hands. Please bless their families and I forgive them. Amen.'"

The Mujahideen (Islamic extremists) screamed at him, "Are you a fool? We want to kill you. And you are blessing our families! Go home, we will come again and take you."

Two weeks later thirty people and two Mujahideen's came back.

They said, "We want to talk! We are those that wanted to kill you."

And Samson replied, "If you want to kill me now please give me five minutes. I have been working so much I didn't get time to hug my children. I will not tell them you are going to kill me. I will come back."

They said, "We are not going to kill you."

The two Mujahideen standing at the front said the thirty men behind them were their army, "As the leaders we are the ones who kill our victims."

They proceeded to tell Samson how twenty-four heads



Samson holding a Bible

of the army would retreat to the hills during the day and come down at night into the town.

Recently twenty-four leaders came down from the mountains at night and walked into an ambush set up by the government.

The two leaders at the front of the group told how they laid on the ground with bullets flying over from all four sides. They couldn't raise their heads or they would get shot.

One of the leaders said, "While we were lying there we saw you and you came to us and said, 'Throw yourself into the water and you will survive,' and the two of us jumped into the water and we survived. The twenty-two other leaders were killed."

They asked Samson, "How did you manage to come to us? And why weren't you shot?"

Samson replied, "I was not there but my God sent an angel who looked like me because I am his servant. He did it for you to come to me to tell you Jesus loves you, died for you and can give

you salvation."

The man said to Samson, "I will never fight again." They threw open their arms and said to the soldiers, "This Christian speaks truth. I will accept Jesus."

2. Joseph, Central Asia

From the moment I met Joseph one of the things that stood out to me was his warm and inviting personality. Don't get me wrong, he is a tough man and I get the impression that he's someone you'd never want to get on the wrong side of, but he radiates Godly love.

But this has not always been the case.

In Christian circles we often talk about radical transformation, stories like that of the Damascus road, - and Joseph's is exactly that.

Joseph and his wife Sally have been married for 26 years.

As we sat eating dinner, Sally told us that for 12 years of their marriage she lived with blue eyes because he was always drunk and

beating her. According to Joseph, it was a common practice within Islamic culture.

Sally tells us that many times they were going to divorce but didn't want the children to grow up without a father so they stuck it out. Their love for each other is so evident and beautiful. They have a wonderful sense of humour and laugh a lot with each other.

Joseph began drinking when he was 10, and not long after dropped out of school and joined the military.

In 1998, Sally's brother John was sent to jail. A Christian man by the name of Paul would visit John in prison, and also Sally and Joseph at their home.

In those days Joseph was one of the most well-known jewellers in Central Asia. He had loads of money and would often walk home from work drunk throwing wads of money at people.

One day Paul came and visited Joseph at work. Joseph had cigarettes and vodka on his desk. He said to Joseph, "I see that you want to quit drinking but you cannot."

Joseph said, "That's true but I cannot because I've been drinking so many years."

Paul replied, "I know one person who can help you. Jesus Christ."

Joseph thought, "What can He do?"

Paul told Joseph how Jesus had changed his own life and that Jesus could change Joseph's life too. After that, they would meet together every week. Paul would tell Joseph about Jesus, and Joseph would try to disprove him.

In prison, Sally's brother



Joseph, Central Asia

became a Christian. Not long after, Joseph accepted Jesus too.

But this is the part that undid me. In my thinking, from this moment onwards Joseph should be a changed man, a good man - but that's not how it worked at all.

Joseph didn't stop drinking, he didn't stop beating Sally. He did start evangelizing, especially when he was drunk.

When John was released from prison, he came home and started telling everyone about Jesus, and trying to encourage Joseph to change his ways. But Joseph continued.

One day John came to visit Joseph, they went to church together. Joseph got dressed into his nice clothes - they were also his Islamic clothes.

Everyone was shocked when he walked into church. They thought Joseph had got the mosque confused with the church. He entered the church but didn't take off his Islamic hat and everyone was whispering between themselves.

John was sitting next to him and Paul went forward to preach, at the end Paul made an altar call.

Joseph told us, "Something happened inside me and I was not able to stay. I stood up and said to John, let me go and I went directly to the pulpit and I could hear people asking what was going on. I am sure people thought I was going to beat the pastor but I fell to my knees and started to repent and pray. The Holy Spirit was doing something supernatural in my heart. Then John ran to me and gave me a hug and fell to his knees. We were all crying and praising the Lord.

"Only later did I realise that for those 4 years John and Paul had been praying for me and that day their prayers had been answered. On that day 28 people one by one accepted Jesus. And that day I promised the Lord I would serve Him faithfully."

But still for years, Joseph continued to drink.

One day, while he was lying on the couch he heard the audible voice of God.

God said to him, "Did you love your earthly father? Why do you love your father?"

Joseph said to God, "Because he is my father."

The Lord replied, "Joseph you've been drinking for 21 years of your life. Why during these 21 years have you never dared drink in the presence of your father?"

"You've been smoking for so

long but why never in the presence of your father? I don't want anything from you except for one thing that our relationship would be the same as you had with your father."

Joseph rolled down onto the floor and started to cry. "Lord for me, you were so far away from me, you were in the sky in the heaven but since today and this moment you are my Father."

He told us that since that moment his life had changed - his world has changed. God has provided miracles, restored the relationship with his wife Sally, his children and brothers.

Joseph finished by telling us:

"There are Christians who want their children to live without any problems, without any needs. It always surprises me. I would tell them that we need to teach our children the different things.



They are Muslim and they are seeking Jesus, Lebanon

Moses says, learn to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and might and we need to teach our children the same. If we would teach them today how to love God, then God promises, 'The one who believes in Me will never be ashamed.'"

3. They Are Muslim and They Are Seeking Jesus, Lebanon

On a trip to the Syrian border in Lebanon I learnt more about prayer from Muslims than you could ever imagine.

The convicting reality that Muslims have a greater expectation that Jesus will answer their prayer than I do, is something I will never forget.

They pray with an expectation unlike anything I've ever seen.

The first church service here is full of Muslim converts.

The second... veiled women seeking Jesus.

The pastor begins the service by asking whose prayer from last week did Jesus answer? hands go up, testimony after testimony, the service finishes with the

pastor asking the women their prayer requests for the coming week, because, not only do they have them ready to share, but they wake up with an expectation that Jesus will have heard, and answered their prayer.

And even in those times where He may not answer them overnight they continue to pray

day, after day, after day with an expectation that He will respond.

It's the moment I realised, I can't remember what I prayed for yesterday, let alone last week – and more than that, what have I ever consistently prayed for with an expectation so great, it drove me to look for the answer?

I've learnt that Jesus hears our prayers, but doesn't necessarily answer them overnight. That sometimes we're called to pray more than once for something. That to ask without expectation is an insult to God. That trust filled respect in God should drive us to look for the answer. I've learnt that prayer is more than asking for the things I want. It's trusting him for the things I need. And that prayer, is indisputably an act of worship.

It's on the Syrian border in refugee camps that this is happening.

These people are Syrian. They are Muslim, and they are seeking Jesus.

Many of them have been displaced for five years and when it comes to prayer, they're not asking for shiny new things.

They're asking that Jesus would make himself real to them in their moment of need. They're asking for things like food, shelter, warmth, education and safety for their children.

And time and time again, Jesus is answering their prayer and more often than not He does so by moving the heart of the local church. Courageously obedient and unquestionably the hands and

feet of Christ to those living as refugees in their community, sharing Jesus in a way that doesn't compromise the gospel but brings it to life and offers them salvation.

Isn't it funny? How something so simple can become so complex. It's as though the moment Jesus answers our prayers, and reveals himself to Muslims all over the world, we question the process.

We love the end stories of conversion but their journey to salvation, it makes us feel uncomfortable even awkward. I've learnt from people still searching for Christ, that expectation filled prayer brings the gospel to life.

How's your prayer life? Because mine was in desperate need of change.

4. In the Company of Legends, Vietnam

We had come to Vietnam to see at what cost following Jesus came for believers in this country.

As we walked into the church there were three men sitting at a small table. We introduced ourselves and sat down eager to hear from them.

Dion began with his story of almost unbelievable persecution. He lives in a remote village, and he had travelled for two days just to meet with us. As Dion began to speak, the translator told us that it was the first time Dion had ever shared his testimony.

Dion was the only Christian in his village, in an animistic culture (where they offer sacrifices to idols) conversion is noticed almost immediately.

When he converted, the local police arranged a public screening

**They're
asking that
Jesus would
make
Himself real
to them...**



In the company of legends, Vietnam

of a film denouncing Christianity. It was a video showing extreme poverty in other countries - claiming that's what happens to Christians.

They were essentially turning the entire village against him.

The next tactic was to drag Dion in front of the entire village each night for a whole week and humiliate him and demand he renounce his faith.

But Dion said quietly but boldly, "I simply believe that God is powerful and he is coming back very soon."

The authorities came and slashed all of his crops, confiscated his field, killed two of his ducks, hurt his cow so it could no longer plow the fields. And as

a final insult they destroyed his house.

Large rocks were thrown through the roof of his house, his wife and child inside.

In August 2015, a group of young men came looking for Dion, they told his wife they wanted to kill him.

Dion escaped, and ran 50km to a nearby village and the safety of a pastor's house.

Dion told us that it's that kind of ongoing persecution that makes him so afraid that he spends much of the time just wandering.

He then said, "If you tell me to deny my faith. I will never do it."

He continued, "I always pray for them (the persecutors) the

people who came and beat me, my wife and my son and they don't know about God and God is a heart changing God and I just pray that one day they would come to know God and become a Christian."

5. A Challenging Journey, India

India, it's a place that I have always wrestled with.

In 1981 I was born in Madras, India and at the age of 6 months was adopted by a Christian family in Australia.

For as long as I can remember growing up my parents always said they'd take me back whenever I wanted to go. In 2000 I decided that it was time. Upon

reflection I think I did this more to bring joy to my parents as I know they desperately wanted to show me the country of my birth.

For much of my childhood I experienced varying forms of racism. I was spat on. Verbally abused and ostracised at times from other children.

Don't get me wrong. I had a good childhood with many friends but there was always an element of 'not fitting in', so heading back to India I was naively convinced that the mother land would open her arms and welcome home a long lost son. I was shocked when this did not happen.

I remember we landed in the year 2000 and started our four week tour of India and from the moment we exited the airport I didn't want to be there. I stood out. I wasn't ready for the poverty, the population density, the smell. I just wasn't ready.

This experience really tarnished my view of India. I left after those

four weeks never wanting to return but remember feeling the Holy Spirit say, 'you'll be back one day.' I didn't want to acknowledge it and in many ways have tried to avoid it since.

Flash forward 17 years and I find myself just landed in New Delhi, India. This time it is with Open Doors. It's for the persecuted church and I'm conflicted because there is a part of me that wants to be here and a part that doesn't.

We landed at the airport and went to the hotel. We're not even five minutes from the airport when we happen across two lifeless bodies lying on the side of the road.

A crowd begins to gather and as we drive past I find myself looking at a well and truly dead body.

Blood streaming from a head wound and one other male lying on the ground breathing laboured and no doubt on the verge of death.

Yes, I'm back in India and I'm feeling every bit of it.

There is a difference though. I can tell I've done a lot of growing up in the last 17 years. I'm feeling hopeful not fearful. I'm feeling excited at seeing what courage and boldness the believers here have.

I know that the cost of faith in India is increasing rapidly. I know what this ministry does, and I know that as a believer in Christ I have a carry in that.

Yep, this will be a different trip. It will be a life-changing trip. It will be a confronting trip. But I believe that the Lord is going to use it powerfully to pull down some walls and rebuild some. Speak Lord, your servant is listening. [END]

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A challenging journey, India

Up Close and Personal with Wildlife:

~ The Saltwater Crocodile ~

(*Crocodylus Porosus*)



by Vicki Nunn

The largest of all living reptiles, and the biggest waterway/ocean predator in the world is the saltwater crocodile, known informally as a saltie in Australia. This is definitely an animal we should avoid coming up close and personal with!

Although males can on rare occasions reach up to 7m (23') their mature length is usually around 6.3m (20.7') and they weigh between 1,000 and 1,200kg, while the females are generally much smaller at 3m (9.8')

The saltwater crocodile can be found in northern Australia, New Guinea, Southeast Asia, Myanmar and the eastern coast of India. They're also found in some areas in Thailand, Malaysia, the Bismarck Archipelago, the Aru Islands, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, the Maluku Islands, Kai Islands, other islands in the area including Timor, and most islands within the Torres Strait.

Where once they were present in countries such as Thailand, Vietnam and even Southern China, they have been wiped out.

Thanks to movies like "Jaws," many people consider the shark to be the most frightening predator in the water, while it is in fact the various crocodiles species of the world that kill more than one



hundred times the number of people killed by sharks each year in the water.

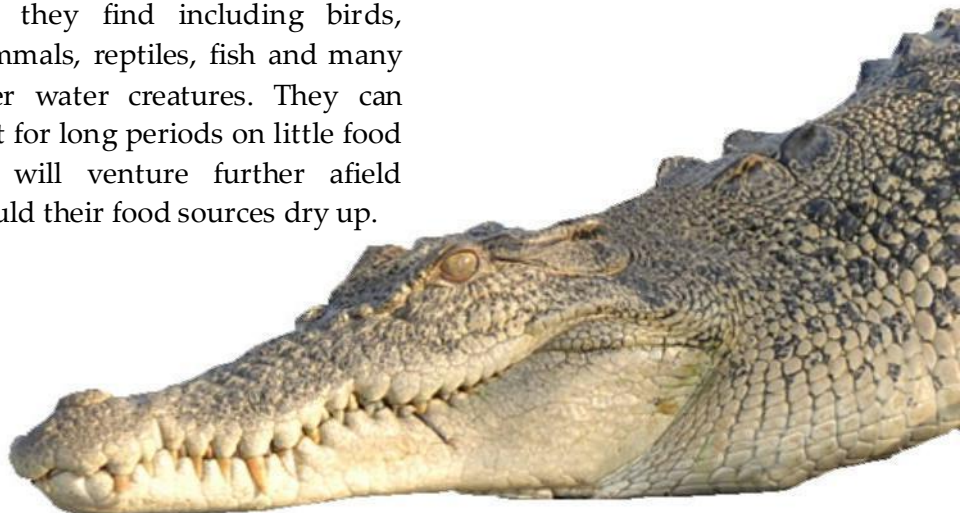
<i>Human deaths per year</i>	
<i>Sharks</i>	<i>Crocodiles</i>
10	1,000

The saltie will ambush and drown larger prey before attempting to eat it, or simply swallow smaller prey whole.

Not picky eaters, they have been known to kill and eat sharks, and will consume anything edible that they find including birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and many other water creatures. They can exist for long periods on little food but will venture further afield should their food sources dry up.

They are extremely aggressive and males can often have little fear of man, unlike sharks which are usually frightened by humans. While a shark may take a bite and swim off, crocodiles are not afraid to fight to ensure their meal is killed, particularly when hungry. The saltwater crocodile is considered the most dangerous and largest of the existing crocodile species in the world today.

In short bursts, they can swim





up to 29km per hour (18mph) which is three times faster than the fastest human swimmers, though most of the time they cruise at between 3.2 and 4.8km per hour (2 to 3 mph).

It is their speed at the water's edge where they use the enormous power of their tail and feet to explosively burst towards their prey or to chase other males, that is quite an alarming spectacle. While this may suggest that all humans they attack will be killed, around fifty percent of people will survive a crocodile attack.

Despite their exceedingly high bite force, the muscles to open their jaws are very small and weak in comparison, which explains why their jaws can be easily closed shut using several layers of tape or rope.

Newly hatched salties weigh

only about 71g (2.5 oz) and measure just 28cm (11") in length.

Within their first year they've usually grown to 1m and weigh around 2.5kg (5.5 lb).

Their weight increases exponentially as their length increases, so a 6m crocodile can weigh double that of a 5m specimen.

Unlike other crocodile species that will share food and basking spots with others of their kind, salties are very territorial. Males will only share their territory with females and will chase off rival males. Dominant males which patrol the best food producing territories, usually outweigh other males.

In Australia where killing of crocodiles has been outlawed, the saltie is thriving in northern-most areas, with an estimated population of between 100,000 to

200,000 adults and in many areas they've been known to co-exist with smaller crocodile species.

Before the wet season, they will mate and during the wet season will lay their eggs in a muddy mound of vegetation, where the parents will remain to protect the nest and their young. The average number of eggs in a nest are between forty and sixty, but can be as high as ninety.

When the eggs are hatching, the mother can hear the 'yelping' of the young inside the nest. She has even been known to roll eggs in her mouth to assist hatching of her young.

Once hatched she carries them to water in her mouth and spends several months with them. Despite her ongoing vigilance, only around one percent of hatchlings will survive to adulthood.

When searching for new territorial land, the saltwater crocodile can spend weeks at sea. Some spend sufficient time at sea that barnacles have been noted growing occasionally on these sea-voyaging crocodiles. [END]

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When Jesus was a Pop Star



**by Emma
McGeorge**

Press Service
International

The rain trickled in shiny rivers down the car window, blurring the outside world into a grey, muffled cocoon. My brother drove silently while my two sisters slept and I, in the back seat, kept the silence, lost in my own thoughts after a long and eventful day.

I leaned my head against the seat and watched the smudged cars and blinking city lights whirl past in the melting twilight. A music album I didn't know was playing in the background, and I half-listened to the unfamiliar tunes, my ears slurring the words in tiredness, but despite the peace of the quiet car and the soft music, it seemed that my mood was being coloured by the day outside, gradually becoming greyer.

The droplets drummed on the roof, the wheels swished through the rain, the tears began to pool - inwardly I froze, caught in the glare of hurried and hurting thoughts. Then one phrase throbbed heavily into my heart, as I gazed out at the crying landscape:

"I am not worth keeping."

The thought was as unexpected as it was painful, and in seconds my mind flew back over hastily buried memories: memories of friendships lost, of trust broken, of painful misunderstandings... and the overall nagging thought that I was too easily cropped out of others' pictures.

I staggered emotionally through a haze of flashbacks and fears. Could all this hurt still dwell in me? Could all this pain still cut so deep?

The tears poured hot and silent down my cheeks, blurring the rainy world outside into a melancholy fog. The words poured hot and stinging through my heart, slicing me with their dissonant mantra:

"I am not worth keeping."

Part of me held fast - defiant and angry that these words would try to bruise me so, but part of me had already given in to the despair, wrapping my heart in the cold cloak of sorrow, and slowly crumpling beneath the harsh discouragement.

The tears fell, the rain fell, the words fell harder still.

"I am not worth keeping."

At that moment, as I inwardly swayed on the edge of raw grief and pain, the track changed. The next song began to play. Still a

part of this unknown album, even the first hum of notes was foreign and unfamiliar to me.

With the opening piano arpeggios and the accompanying throb of the deep bass chords, a vivid image suddenly blazed into my mind. I stared wide-eyed out the rain-washed window, seeing nothing that was before me, seeing only a detailed picture.

A man stood on a stage, poised, ready to sing.

A microphone stood before him on its base. He lifted a hand to pull the mic free and held it firmly, his graceful movement illuminated in the soft, blue spotlight.

The wings and backstage slept in darkness. The seating area before him also lay in hushed darkness. There was no audience, no visible orchestra or band. Just the music pulsing through the shadows and this man, alone, centre stage.

He wore dark grey pants, a silvery-blue shirt, and black





polished shoes. His dark blonde hair was stylishly cut, short on the sides and swept over the top in the style of a modern pop artist.

I caught my breath, as I suddenly realised that his eyes - a strong grey blue - were looking straight at me as I stood on stage right. He held me in his gaze, and I could do nothing but silently stare back. We looked at each other, quiet, unflinching, waiting expectantly as the song preliminaries continued to build around him.

Suddenly and inexplicably, I knew two very specific facts:

First, this man - this pop star - was Jesus.

Second, whatever this song was, whatever it was that I was about to hear, he was going to sing it personally for me.

The chills swept up my spine, the air was thick with anticipation - his and mine. The cruel words from moments before still hovered in the background, but I brushed them aside. I knew that when he began to sing, they would disappear completely from the scene.

My heart thumped wildly as Jesus - handsome and confident, poised and strong - lifted the microphone to his mouth. He took a breath.

He sang:

*"You're like Gold Dust
It rains over me
A foreign sun that I thought I'd
never see
You're like Gold Dust
Oh don't change
Ever
No don't change
There's a
Hollow in this house whenever
you go..."*

My skin tingled with electricity, my ears burned with wonder as the music spilled over me. My entire being was smothered in wonder and beauty.

I listened. I wept. He sang.

He sang with such depth and raw feeling that I was completely swallowed up in the music. His passion ebbed in every note, his love painted each word gold, and I realised that he was not only singing, but singing desperately.

He was desperate for me to own this song.

*"You're like Gold Dust
It rains over me...
Oh don't change
Ever
No don't change
There's a
Hollow in this house whenever
you go..."*

He was desperate that I would know it was from him; desperate that I would know it was to me.

His song was for me?

His song was me.

The last shadows flickered and died, shrouding the scene in soft, serene darkness.

The broken pieces of my soul had lifted to listen in fresh hope. An inner glow had started to hum,

deep within my soul. A melody had looped itself into my heart, and it wasn't going anywhere.

And I - staring out the window into the driving rain, tears pouring down my face - I knew the truth, the real truth that laughed in defiance at the 'I am not worthies'. The truth that had flashed before my eyes in the form of a solitary singer on a solitary stage.

I had felt it shiver up my spine. I had heard it in an unknown song, and now I knew:

When Jesus was a pop star, I was his song.

For I am gold dust. [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

Notes:

"Gold Dust" is a song by Swedish electronic music duo Galantis. It was released on 23 February 2015 as the third single from their debut studio album *Pharmacy* (2015).

This piece was originally published as "Gold Dust" by Emma McGeorge: [link](#).

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Don't Get Married



by Laura
Tharion

This article first Appeared
in "Fixing Her Eyes.org"

When I was fourteen, I took a friend to see Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*. I had seen it before; she hadn't. Entering the sunlight afterwards, she looked at me with mascara sodden eyes and shouted in a voice wrought with horror, "You didn't tell me they died!"

I still wonder at the thought of watching *Romeo and Juliet* without this knowledge; it rends the heart enough without anticipating a happy ending. But few people get to experience the story afresh - the tale looms large in the Western imagination as an epitome of tragedy. We expect the story to go wrong. We expect to come away heartbroken.

The Cinderella Story

What story typifies the opposite of tragedy? What story is our quintessential 'happily-ever-after' tale? Did your thoughts jump to a girl who sleeps among the cinders, whose good heart is rewarded with a rags-to-riches transformation, cumulating in a glass slipper that fits and marriage to a charming prince? We even use the idiom 'Cinderella story' to refer to any story - in life and fiction - where against all odds, evil is overcome, dreams come true, and happiness is forever secured.

Why is this fairy-tale so prolific? Perhaps because within the groundwater of shared convictions sitting beneath our culture is an embedded belief that



the narrative arc of our lives should follow the Cinderella pattern. Our lives should progress towards better, and this progression is defined as overcoming trouble, finding true love, and getting married.

And getting married...

Let's have a glance at how emblematic a modern Western wedding is of ultimate success, happiness secured, and dreams come true - the bride radiant and victorious, the scrubbed-up groom

waiting to claim his prize, the crowd gathered to solemnly witness and joyously celebrate the union, and the bells and whistles of ceremony inexplicably forging two people into one and launching them onwards into a new, better life.

Perhaps let's look at how our culture treats singleness not as a legitimate, complete, and satisfying state of being, but as a disease to be cured, or a waiting room of unchosen ones, living in a

holding pattern, hoping to be called forth into a fully realised future.

I grew up in Sydney's inner west (Australia) - white, privileged, and with academics for parents. Our house was filled with books and my whole family read voraciously.

I by no means had anyone telling me that marriage was a must, yet when I looked to the future, at what it meant to grow up, at how my adulthood would culminate, at how my story would unfold, I nurtured the following hopes/expectations - I would go to university, I would get a satisfying job in a field where my gifting met my interests. I would find a soul-mate and marry. I would own a house, make a home, and raise a family.

As circumspectness and cynicism arrived with my teenage years, I became aware that insufficiencies within myself could hinder this narrative. I may fail in the field of my choice and end up in an unsatisfying job; I may not be desirable enough for anyone to marry; I may not find a soul-mate; houses are rather expensive and I may be bad at making money; my body could prove recalcitrant when it came to baby production; but I questioned myself, never the narrative. A future unmarried was a story gone wrong, survivable and with its own joys, but a lesser state of being nevertheless.

I married at twenty. He was dangerously handsome, irresistibly driven and devoted in his

ministry work, charming, cantankerous, and an unashamed goofball. He still is.

We made a home, we raise a family. Life is full of joy and trouble, swaddled with God's fingerprints, and interlaced with intersections which allow me to embrace my twin-fold mission: my growth in Christ-likeness, and my shaping as a vessel through which God can spread his light.

So it is not without a good measure of self-conscious irony that I now use this growth to look back and question the Cinderella narrative I allowed to fishhook my aspirations.

As a young Christian I received teaching on abstaining from sex until marriage, fostering contentment if single, and various warnings against marrying unwisely, but never did any book, teacher, or mentor I encountered ever suggest singleness as the most fruitful way I could live out my purpose to be loved by God and shine his image into all creation.

Yet when Paul instructs the young church on how best to live as shining Spirit filled outposts of the new creation within this trouble filled final age between Jesus' two comings, he presents singleness as the ideal state and marriage as a concession. Don't get married, Paul says several times in 1 Corinthians 7: time is short, life will be hard, there is work to do, and marriage brings extra trouble and distraction. I

have never heard this from a pulpit.

What Damage is Done?

What damage is done if we fail to challenge the Cinderella narrative?

We leave people who are single drowning in a culture which tells them that life at its fullest has left them behind; we risk deluding those married into believing securing their nuclear family is their ultimate mission; and we give those whose feel their life is progressing from better to worse no way to make sense of suffering but that they have failed to be sufficient as a person.

Recently as the question of marriage equality has come to the fore within Australia, marriage has been thrust rather nakedly into the public spotlight. Voices on either side of the debate shout forth its immortal splendour and unparalleled virtues, yet I fear the church's voice in this loud discussion - both affirming and non-affirming of extending the marriage act - has revealed an unhealthy and unscriptural alliance to this embedded Cinderella narrative.

I can only hope that this forced exposure will cause our inflated view of marriage to burst like a distended balloon and fall back to earth. Marriage deserves a place of honour and wonderment. God takes two whole people and mysteriously forges them into one. Within this bond God has purposed children to be seeded, enabling humanity to fill the earth. Yet let's not forget that man and women were united as mutual bearers of God's image and commissioned together as guardians of creation before

What damage is done if we fail to challenge the Cinderella narrative?

mention of marriage. Then in Genesis 2, marriage is introduced as one way Adam and Eve realised this calling.

But we are not in newborn Eden anymore; we are in the last days. Times have changed; priorities have changed. Jesus reminded his critics that marriage is finite not eternal; we enter the world single, and single we enter the new creation, and Jesus recommissioned those rebirthed in his image, not to marry and raise a family, but to go - filled with light and Spirit - and make disciples of every nation.

Old Testament women are often defined by marriage and fertility, yet they are burdened with the need to birth the child who will crush the serpent. In the New Testament, women simply appear as gospel workers, and Paul warns that marriage can hinder this calling. Does this not all suggest that marriage is no preeminent state, but one of many paths in which humanity can unite to carry our purpose and identity, to live loved by God as vessels of his light?

We Christ-followers have an epic narrative to underpin our identity, our hopes, our actions, our stories - salvation history, the gospel, and this epic plays out far more like a dystopian novel than a fairy-tale romance.

The story of our world has gone wrong, and we are called to make a choice: slot into place within all the dehumanising forces that have taken grip of our society - or join the resistance, strive to seed light into the darkness, and hope in a coming new world.

This is a story we can all be part of, regardless of age, gender,



ability, nationality, class, sexuality, or marriage status. In this story suffering is expected and will be redeemed for God's good purpose. In this story no one willing gets left behind.

Do get married, don't get married - it has little relevance to eternity. Do in all things and in all relationships seek God's Kingdom first. Do read scripture voraciously to gain a biblically broad and beautiful imagination regarding how to live as light within each moment God has given you within this final age.

Please let us teach this to our hearts, to our congregations, and most importantly to our young people, because Cinderella is a good story but a lie as life's narrative. Only in Christ are we fulfilled and completed. [END]

Biography:

I am passionate about spreading the joy and wonder to be found in living a resurrected life inside Jesus Christ. I enjoy tea, cake, history, hammocks, wild bushland, gardening, reading, and gifting my favourite books into the hands of others. I had the pleasure of studying at Sydney Missionary and Bible College

before my three lovely little boys arrived to fill my days. Here I picked up the pet soap-boxes of mission advocacy and teaching the Bible as one unified story.

I have a heart to write - sermons, studies, articles, meditations, poetry, and epic novels, all which aim to explore theology and encourage everyone to fully realise all they have been given and commissioned in Christ. I can be found writing at lauratharion.com or Facebook.

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Words of Wisdom

"If through a broken heart God can bring His purposes to pass in the world, then thank Him for breaking your heart."
Oswald Chambers

2018 September Compassion Games



Play in the September Games

The 2018 September Compassion Games, is a 16-day challenge to unify communities around the world in an expression of globally synchronised intentions with locally organised compassionate action.

Starting on September 8 and culminating on World Peace Weekend (September 22-23), players and teams will challenge and inspire each other to organise actions that build bridges between peace, prosperity, and the planet.

Players can create or join their own service projects and/or participant in any of the featured ways to play. As players and teams participate, results are shared on the Compassion Report Map to highlight, measure, and celebrate the collective impact our actions have around the world!

The Global Unity Games are part of the World Peace & Global Unity Campaign organised by Unify and Compassion Games. Watch the Campaign video [on this link](#).

The motivating vision for the Campaign states:

We are at a turning point in the development of our global community. It's an unprecedented time when many of us are reflecting on how we can make the most positive impact.

We are ready for more authentic connections, to promote peace and understanding, to

spread prosperity and freedom, and protect and restore our planet.

Let's use this campaign to come together to build the relationships that address our complex and interwoven challenges such as ending terrorism, reversing climate change, preventing pandemics, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as defined by the United Nations.

Individuals and teams from all over the world can sign up to play and participate in the upcoming 2018 September Compassion Games.



Why Play in the September Games?

1. Receive daily Compassion Missions for each day of the coopetition to inspire simple, thoughtful, and meaningful actions in your life and community;
2. Elevate your experience during the coopetition by participating with fellow players and change-makers; be inspired by the actions of others and benefit from the element of playful competition to ignite more excitement around your service.
3. Share your experiences on a brand new Compassion Report Map that displays coopetition

results in real time with teams and players around the world.

4. Receive invitations to exciting online events that feature renown luminaries and "Champions of Compassion" who offer wisdom and new ways to engage in compassionate action.
5. Gain access to personalised coaching with Head Coach Sommer Albertsen, along with many resources to ensure your experience is positive, supported, and meaningful!
6. And much, much more...!

Let's play together and bring compassion to life for Global Unity! ([Link here to sign-up page.](#))

How to Play in the Unity Games

There are many ways that individuals and teams can play, from organising creative service projects to give back to one's community to performing acts of kindness to promote unity of the human family.

All players will receive an Agent of Compassion mission to use each day of the Global Unity Games, offering meaningful, tangible ideas and inspiration for activities as a way to play.



Players then report on their activities on the Compassion Report Map. The reports of Registered Teams are reflected on the Global Unity Games Score-

board, displaying the number of volunteers, number of hours served, number of people served, and the monies raised for local or global causes.

To play the Compassion Games, you only need to follow four steps!

Sign Up to Play

1. Sign up to play as an individual or as a team! Invite and challenge others to generate excitement and catalyse more compassion!

Play Your Hearts Out

2. Organise service projects and inspire acts of kindness to give back to your community! Fulfil "Missions of Compassion" during the annual games, and get ideas from the gallery of Ways to Play to get started!

Report and Reflect

3. After your compassionate actions, report on your activities and outcomes on the Compassion Report Map, capturing the number of volunteers, hours served, monies raised, and people served!

Share and Celebrate

4. Share your Compassion Report to elevate compassion in the world and inspire others to play!

FEATURED WAYS TO PLAY



World Peace Weekend

The World Peace Weekend is the culmination of the World Peace Campaign and builds on the International Day of Peace by organising and supporting a

weekend celebration of peace and music events and activities to take place around the world. From Saturday, September 22 through Sunday, September 23, communities and teams will organise Musical Events, Peace Vigils, Peace Marches, Flashmobs, Service Projects, and Community Service Activities. On Sunday, September 23 at 12:00 pm PST, UNIFY is conducting a World's largest Global Synchronised Meditation for World Peace. Add Your Local World Peace Weekend Events here!



Be a Patron

"We the Global People" are collaborating on a Grand Strategy to reinvent the planet, contribute to achieving the Global Goals, and create Peace on Earth by 2030.

Become an ongoing monthly member patron of Compassion Games. As a flame and above you get lifetime access to all 9 Peace Wave Summits leading up to 9/20/2020, be a special guest on our monthly Global Social Media Cafes & Collaboratories, and so much more.

The call to action becomes a patron of Compassion Games and let's help each other achieve our dreams.

Become a patron of Compassion Games and help make the impossible possible, creating Peace on Earth by 2030 (link here.)



The Cities League

Teams from cities all around the world are challenging each other to see "who's got the edge on kindness." (Watch Mayor Greg Fischer putting out the call to play in the Games.)

This initiative is in partnership with the Charter for Compassion and their 400 Compassionate Cities and 1,700 Sector Partners.

Does your City have the kindness edge? Show us what you've got! *Learn more here.*

Contact jon@compassiongames.org if you are interested in having your city become a Compassionate City.



International Day of Peace

Lead by the UN, there will be a Minute of Silence on September 21st 12:00pm in each time zone, resulting in a "Peace Wave" around the world.

See what you can do on UN International Day of Peace Site here.

See events in your local community and add your own on the Global Calendar with We The World & Compassion Games and also UNIFY's World Peace Event Map.

Missions of Compassion

By signing up as a Player or Team, you will receive a unique Mission of Compassion each day of the Global Unity Games.



Each mission offers simple, thoughtful, and fun ways to bring compassion to life for oneself, others, and our Earth! View the missions for the 2017 Global Unity Games *here*.



11 Days of Global Unity

Hosted by We The World, the 11 Days of Global Unity, September 11-21, bridges these gaps by connecting and promoting for us all to take action in 11 identified 'themes,' such as Environment, Health, Human Rights and Peace - to create a comprehensive blueprint for global transformation.

11 Days of Global Unity September 11th to September 21st annually highlights 11 year-round Campaigns For Change which call forth the values, spirit and service needed to move us towards a culture of peace and a world that works for *all*.

Check out We the World's Facebook Page for daily live streams about each theme and how to take action.

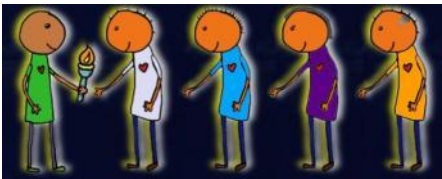
You can see resources, actions, and events that are part of the vision for 11 Days of Global Unity *here*. What is your theme of action

this September? Share this image above to spread the Global Unity Action on your favourite Social Media Pages and what you plan on doing. **Game On!**



The Compassion Report Map

During the Annual Compassion Games, players and teams report their compassionate actions on the Compassion Report Map, elevating their impact and inspiring others with their kindness and commitment to making the world a safer, kinder, and better place to live.



Compassion Relays

Compassion Relays illuminate outstanding organisations and individuals around the world whose work is contributing to a more peaceful, just, and compassionate planet. These entities are known as Champions of Compassion. Here's how it works:

- For each day of the Global Unity Games, a Champion of Compassion will receive and then pass the Compassion Torch.
- During the period a Champion has the Torch, their legacy is broadcasted over social media (in news articles, posts, interviews, etc.) to raise awareness around the issues important to them.

- The Compassion Torch is passed in a 'relay' between Champions of Compassion, each benefitting from the goodwill of highlighting the work of others while being honoured in return. [END]



Resources:

Hashtags: #BuildingBridges, #CompassionUnites

Follow Compassion Games on Social Media: *Facebook Page* | *Facebook Group* | *Twitter* | *Instagram*

Videos:

1. Mayor Greg Fischer - Global Unity Compassion Games Challenge
2. World Peace Global Unity

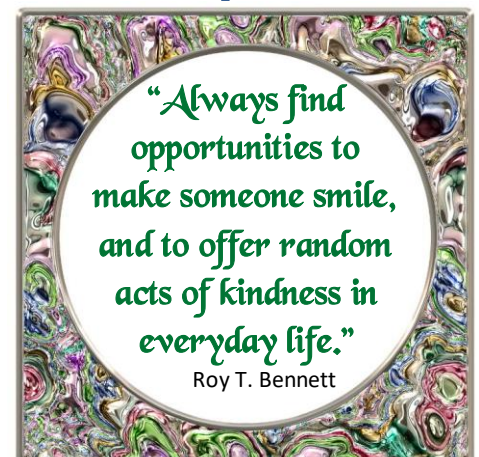


Donation link here:

Bibliography:

Unnamed author, undated, Compassion Games: Survival of the Kindest, available: www.compassiongames.org/global-unity-games/, accessed 23/06/18

Words of Wisdom



What if it Was Your Church?



by Renee Jenner

Press Service
International

Some Background

On Sunday 17th December 2017, two Islamist terrorists attacked a morning service in Quetta, Pakistan. This same Sunday, a church met in Sydney and didn't even know.

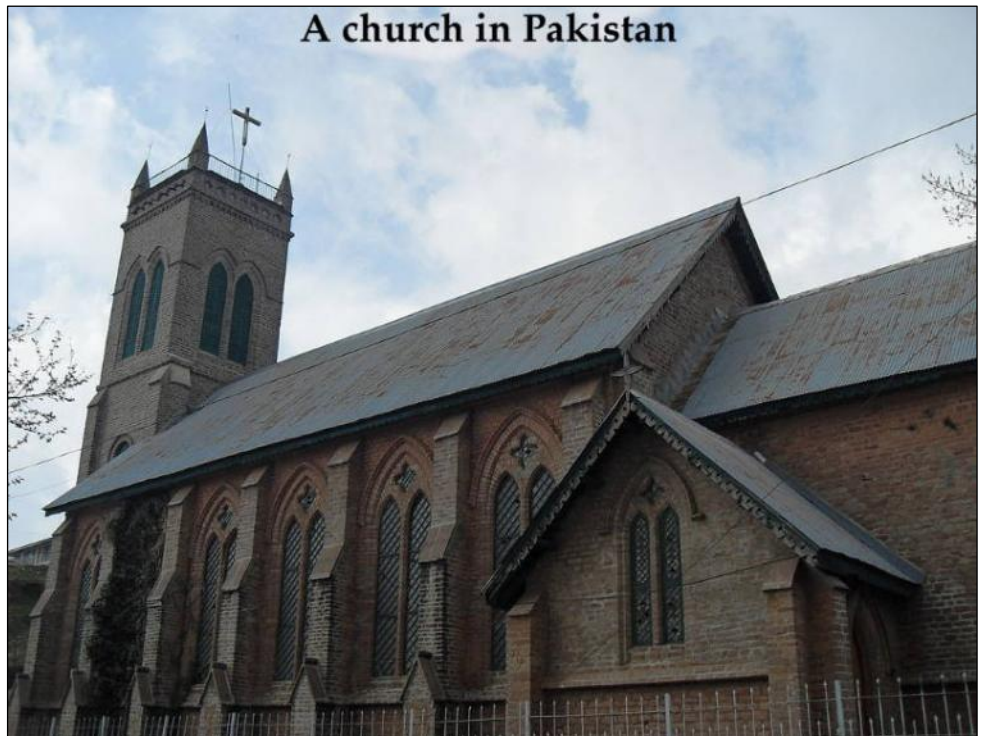
A Sunday in Pakistan

The cat from the street was purring outside my window. I checked the time, it was 6.30am and he needed some food. I woke up and gathered a few leftovers from last night's meeting - it had been a serious one.

The elders of the church had met together in my father's house to discuss if they should risk meeting the following day for our weekly service. I had eavesdropped on their conversation through the cracked door. The outcome was to go to the church building the next morning.

After feeding the cat I went to my mother, who had been muttering prayers since the crack of dawn, to see how she was feeling. She told me to urge my brothers to get ready. We hurried out the door shortly after.

The church was far from our house, yet we still parked our car two blocks away from it and walked discreetly to the building. It was a rundown warehouse that had been abandoned. We entered and saw a small group of believers, sitting on the ground,



huddled close together in the furthest corner of the room.

We ran to meet them and embraced them in tears. We were worried. We didn't know what was going to happen that day.

Our guitarist started to play a soft melody to one of my favourite hymns and my spirit began to lift as I sung the words to God. We were quiet in our singing in case we became so loud that the outside world would hear us. I looked around; some were smiling with closed eyes and others were looking up in desperation.

It was during this special moment that we were interrupted by a sudden yell from outside, "The Christians are inside! Get them!"

My heart dropped... or stopped, I couldn't tell. My father grabbed me from behind and rushed me to the corner closet where other fathers were already stuffing their children in.

Our fears had been confirmed and our prayers felt forsaken. The night prior I had chosen to peek through a crack to listen to a faith filled conversation, now I was to peek through a crack into a faith filled massacre.

A Sunday in Australia

The sun shone through the windows and my alarm beeped to wake me up. It was 7.30am. I snoozed my alarm for a bit. There wasn't any hurry to wake up. It was Sunday, and I wasn't 'on' for anything at church. I could sleep in.

By 8am, I thought I should make myself some breakfast. I put on some loud worship music and ate my breakfast in peace. After we were all ready for our church gathering, we left for the building. We drove in little traffic on a safe road and arrived to a spacious car park.

When we arrived at the building, two happy and smiling

greeters met us with a warming hello. We were welcomed in by music as we walked down the foyer into the auditorium. The foyer had chairs and tables for believers to gather and pray and eat scrumptious morning teas day in and day out.

We walked into the auditorium where we were kindly directed to our seats. The air was cooler in this room as the air conditioner was on full blast. We made our way to our seats, passing many worshippers singing loudly and raising their hands freely.

Our seats were cushioned, comfy, and easy to relax in. The music was loud, with words to songs on multiple screens and the preacher used a microphone to preach his sermon. At the end of the service, people were asked to if they would turn to Christ or if they needed prayer to speak to a church leader afterwards.

The benediction was read, and we moved back to the foyer to eat morning tea. In all of this, there was not one moment of fear or pain or discomfort - all of this, in peace and comfort.

What if it Was My church?

Often, during a church service I'll be sitting in my seat or singing a song and the Lord will cause me to remember those who are being persecuted for their faith. Everything around me feels suddenly strange, as if something was missing or something was wrong. I begin to question, why is it that I sit here in the air-conditioning whilst others watch their fathers die by the hand of Islamist terrorists?

It feels unjust. I feel guilty for my privilege, comfort and

freedom. I'm not sure what to do or how to help, and I'm saddened by the fact that my faith is so dependent on what is around me; that my faith is so weak I'm not sure I'd be able to face Islamist terrorists if they came into my church building asking me to renounce my faith. It's clear, I need a faith like a Pakistani Christian.

Remember Them

I'll continue to wrestle with doubt, guilt and confusion. In the meantime, I need greater faith and greater remembrance, so I can grieve with my family for those in persecuted nation's.

As it says in Hebrews 13:

"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body." [ESV] [END]

Biography:

Renee Jenner resides in Sydney, Australia and is currently in her third year of studying Social Work. She is the first born of home-base missionary parents whose ministry has made a huge impression on her heart. She always writes from the soul to the soul, desiring to encourage readers to enjoy God, relax in His goodness and spread His love to the utmost parts of the earth. She loves a good cuppa with a deep, thoughtful conversation. You can find her other writings at renee.jenner.wordpress.com

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[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.

Jenner, Renee, Press Service International, Christian Today: What If It Was Your Church?, available: www.christiantoday.com.au/news/what-if-it-was-your-church.html, accessed 14/04/18



CHRISTIAN TODAY News Snippets

Sexual Abuse in the Churches

As more allegations of abuse of thousands children within the Catholic church comes to light, it seems some are perhaps too quick to defend the actions of the priests. What may be the true problems lying beneath these horrific acts?

[Link](#)

Religious Affiliations under Scrutiny

Taking a look at the Australian population's recent Census, a surprising majority religion takes place. Dr. Tronson takes a look into the validity behind these statistics and how they affect society as a whole.

[Link](#)

www.christiantoday.com.au

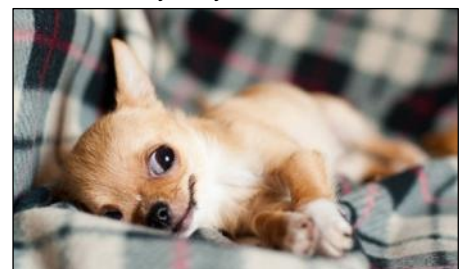
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Tantalising Trivia

Usually when we think of armed robbers we imagine someone holding a gun, but there have been some rather unusual weapons used in hold-ups including: a lit cigarette, an artificial leg, a frozen sausage, a hot fudge sundae, a wedge of cheese, and also a Chihuahua!

All you have to do is to look at this terrifying specimen of a Chihuahua to understand why they chose to use it:



Good Grief: The Hidden Grief of Singleness



by **Lore Ferguson Wilbert**

First appeared in
Sayable.net

I caught myself staring at my husband the other day. Gray is creeping into his full head of hair, small wrinkles forming at the corners of his eyes, a tiny patch of white in his beard. There is a dignity in aging for men, I think to myself, as I think ahead to my next cut and colour, dabbing vitamin E oil onto the darkening age spots of my face. Men grow more attractive the older they get and I think women do too, but the world is telling us our bloom came and went, it is time to droop and drop and become the ground from which the next crop will come.

The name Eve means "the mother of all living," but it does not mean "always mothering all that is living." There is not a woman among us who does not feel the age of fertility closing, the gap between fully alive and to dust we shall return ending. Most of us have a monthly reminder of one more opportunity lost. We are all coming to the last chapter of motherhood, whether we bear children or not.

I am leaving in a few hours to pick up my oldest friend from the airport. There is no one in the world who knows me as well, as deep, as long, and as wholly as she does. How could anyone, even my husband?

She held me through fitful nights after my brother was killed. I have listened to her for years mourn things she cannot control. She was equal parts older sister to

my youngest siblings and I to hers. There is no scent in the world as familiar to me as hers. I have always assumed she would marry first.

She is cute, vivacious, tiny, adventurous, nurturing, full of life, bringing joy wherever she goes. She gives of herself in every possible manner, always pouring out, never lacking in love to give. I have learned more about motherhood from her than anyone in my life, and yet, she is not married, and I am and it pains me. I physically ache for her in this sometimes. She was made to mother, to be a wife. I don't know anyone made for it more.

A Silent Pain

It occurs to me more and more recently that the barrenness of singleness is a silent pain. In our singleness we feel the lack of a partner often and others' suppose it is our deepest ache. It can be tempting to see it as the only barrier between today and joy. Yet there is another, sometimes more difficult, pain unmarried women face and this is the pain of barrenness.

Some find ways around this ache, adopting or fostering children, but for most unmarried women that monthly reminder of aging reminds them again and again that time is running out.



Men can prolong marriage as long as they like, but women know there is a deadline and it is half of a man's life-span. Men wonder why, sometimes, some women are anxious to be united? It is no mystery to me: we are dealing with only half the time and must move doubly fast if we are to become mothers of what is living.

The older I grow, and the more familiar I grow with my own body's failure to make and hold a child, the more I talk to my unmarried friends, the more I hear it is not the lack of a partner that pains or has pained us all most, it is the lack of motherhood.

There is a very real ache for children that cannot be replaced by mentoring, discipleship, practicing hospitality. Nothing can



be substituted for hearing the words 'Mama' or 'Daddy' from the lips of a child, yet, I think, we cannot look at the substance of our being mothers as only within the gift of children.

Nurturing others is not some consolation prize for the barren, it is the call for every Christian. Our problem is not that we are being withheld from, it is that we view the gift of nurturing too narrowly. We think it is only - and best - done with children we bear, but that is not the call to the New Testament family. In the Old Testament the family of God was nuclear and extended, but limited to one lineage. In the New Testament, the family of God is corporate and available to all, mothers and fathers and sons and daughters and brothers and sisters - this is the language of the New Testament Christian. We are all family now.

Eve was created to be a helpmeet, but she was named to be a mother. She was called to a man, but called mother. Her very identity, the way she specifically imaged God, was to conceive, birth, mother, nurture, grow, care for, and gather her offspring to herself. We may feel called to marriage (even if we have not been given the gift of it yet), but our identity, our substance, who we are is not some future event: it is now; Mother; now.

Face that Pain

If you are unmarried today and the secret pain of barrenness haunts you, I want to encourage you to face that pain. It is a very real and legitimate ache. You were made to ache for this.

A friend of mine talked recently about how the pain of singleness/barrenness doesn't haunt her, but sometimes it hits her and I loved that. I think God wants all of us, regardless of our season in life, to be hit by true, real, and good longings, but not be haunted by them. This friend went on to talk about a situation in which I've found myself too: buying a baby gift for a friend and going out to her car in tears.

John Piper said:

"Occasionally, weep deeply over the life that you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Feel the pain. Then wash your face, trust God, and embrace the life that he's given you."

The Bible gives us permission to weep deeply over the life we hoped we would have, and to not feel ashamed of that hope or disappointment. It is okay to grieve those losses and feel that pain. Go out to your car armed with tiny onesies you just bought for your friend, the scent of powder and sweet baby things still on you, and weep, cry hard aching sobs. You were made to mother. You are built for it, and it is not happening for you right now. That is sad - deeply sad, and that is okay - really okay.

Daughters of Eve

I'll pick up my friend today, my oldest and dearest friend, and for the next ten days we will do all the things we love to do together,

make, create, laugh, cry, be, dream, cook, talk, or not.

She will nurture me and I will hopefully nurture her. It is our identity to do so. We are daughters of the post-fall Eve, bodies broken, dreams unrealised, fears alive, but we are also the daughters of pre-fall Eve, imaging God, tending to life, nurturing growth, and mothers of what is living. [END]

Biography

My name is Lore Ferguson Wilbert. Yup. It's pronounced Lor-ee or Lori. My good friends call me Lo. My oldest friends call me Lor. My brothers call me Sister. But my best friends call me Lowly and I hope I can live down to that.

My life is small and simple. Grace is the marked measure of all things in me. God is the ultimate Creator and He's crafted all things for His glory and my good. I learn this, albeit slowly at times.

In 2010, I sold everything, quit my job, and moved 1200 miles away from my beloved northeast to the Dallas/Fort Worth area. In March of 2015 Nate Wilbert asked me to coffee to talk about pacifism and three months later we were married in his back yard surrounded by some of our best friends, pastors, and ministry partners. The night of our wedding we left for a honeymoon in the mountains of Colorado, a week later bought a house in Denver, and the next day I went on full-time staff as Director of Community and Formation at Park Church. We lived in a small 1800s stucco farmhouse in the city and a month after we bought it, my brand new husband lost his job. His new job took us to Washington, D.C. six months later, where we lived, trying to catch our breath and our bearings, until the Lord let us move back to Texas as quickly as possible. We're back here with our church family, living in the suburbs, and trying to live simply, faithfully, peacefully, and intentionally.

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What if the Worst Happens?



by Vaneetha
Rendall Risner

www.danceintherain.com

I found myself growing fearful - not a heart-stopping all-encompassing fear, but the kind of constant gnawing that creeps into your bones when you hear bad news or see something going awry; when you extrapolate the discouraging trends of the present into the future and assume things will never change; and when you think about where you're headed, and feel your stomach tighten.

Questions lingered in the back of my mind. What if I continue on this path? What if nothing ever gets better? What if the worst happens?

What if...

I've spent a lifetime considering the "what if's." Those questions have a way of destroying my peace, leaving me feeling hope-less. When negative possibilities loom before me, I can't seem to rein my thoughts in. Just asking "what if" unsettles me.

People in the Bible were unsettled by "what if" questions too. When he was told to lead the Israelites, Moses asked God, "What if they don't believe me?"

Abraham's servant asked about Isaac's future wife, "What if the young woman refuses to come with me?"

Joseph's brothers asked, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us?" All of them wondered what was going to happen if things didn't turn out the way they planned, just like we do.



We all face a staggering array of "what ifs?" Some are minor inconveniences while others have life-altering repercussions: what if I lose my job; what if I never have children; what if I get cancer; what if my spouse dies; what if my husband never loves me; or what if my child never believes in Jesus?

The uncomfortable truth is, any of those things could happen. No one is free from tragedy or pain. There are no guarantees of an easy life, for any of us... ever.

I considered this sobering reality on a silent retreat, and over the course of several days, I had brought numerous longings and requests before the Lord. I wanted

these fulfilled. When would God do it? As I penned my thoughts, I felt that familiar fear gripping me.

The question echoed in my mind: *What if my deepest longings are never met and my nightmares come true?*

I didn't even want to entertain that possibility.

As I sat in the empty chapel poring over my Bible, I sensed God asking the same question I had wrestled with for decades. "Am I enough? Even if those frightening things happen, am I sufficient?"

Each time that question had come up in the past, I'd pushed it out of my mind, but in the stillness

of the chapel, kneeling in front of the cross, I knew I needed to face this. I sensed God whispering again, "Vaneetha, am I enough?"

"If none of your dreams come true, am I enough? If your health spirals downward and you end up in an institution, am I enough? If your children rebel and never walk closely with me, am I enough? If you never remarry and never feel loved by a man again, am I enough? If your ministry doesn't flourish and you never see fruit from it, am I enough? If your suffering continues and you don't see purpose in it, *am I enough?*"

I wish I could have automatically responded, "Yes Lord, you are enough." But I struggled - profoundly. The weight of those questions felt crushing. *I didn't want to give up my dreams, surrender those things that were dear to me, or relinquish what I felt entitled to.*

I reflected on those past few days - much of it centred on the things I wanted, on my unwritten contract with God (that He never signed) where I promised to do my part if He fulfilled my longings.

I reluctantly admitted that part of my desire to be faithful was rooted in my expectation of a payback. Didn't God owe me something? But what if I didn't get it? What if my dreams were all left undone?

I knew I needed to relinquish my desires, but I was incapable of doing it myself. I begged God for help; to release my expectations; to let go of my dreams and embrace His; to not predicate my obedience on His gifts.

I sobbed as I opened my hands, filled with my dreams, and placed them on the altar. *I didn't want to love God for what He could do for me. I wanted to love God for who He was, to worship Him because He was God and not because I expected something in return.*

Even If They Do Happen...

God's presence overwhelmed me as I knelt in the semi-darkness. I was reminded that we have something far better than a reassurance that our dreaded "what if's" won't happen. We have the assurance that *even if* they do happen, God will be there in the midst of them. He will carry us. He will comfort us. He will tenderly care for us.

God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life, but He does promise that He will be there in the midst of our sorrows.

Kutless's song, "Even If," speaks to this important truth which is echoed throughout the Bible. The chorus says,

*"Even if the healing doesn't come,
And life falls apart,
And dreams are still undone,
You are God You are good
Forever faithful One
Even if the healing,
Even if the healing doesn't come."*

In the book of Daniel, Daniel's three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not guaranteed deliverance, and just before Nebuchadnezzar delivered them to the fire, they offered some of the most courageous words ever spoken:



"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it... But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods..." [NIV]

Even if... *even if the worst happens, God's grace is sufficient.*

Those three young men faced the fire without fear because they knew that no matter the outcome, it would be the best for them, the best for their nation, and the best for God's glory.

They did not ask "what if" the worst happened - they were satisfied knowing that "even if" the worst happened, God would take care of them.

At the end of Habakkuk, we see another beautiful picture of "even if." Habakkuk wants deliverance for his people and pleads with God to save them, but he closes the book saying:



"Even if the fig tree does not bloom and the vines have no grapes, even if the olive tree fails to produce and the fields yield no food, even if the sheep pen is empty and the stalls have no cattle - Even then, I will be happy with the Lord. I will truly find joy in God, who saves me. The Lord Almighty is my strength. He makes my feet like those of a deer. He makes me walk on the mountains."[GW]

...Even if...

Those two simple words can take the fear out of life. Replacing "what if" with "even if" is one of the most liberating exchanges we can ever make. We trade our irrational fears of an uncertain future for the loving assurance of an unchanging God. We see that even if the very worst happens, God will carry us, He will still be good, and He will never leave us.

Christa Wells's song, "Even Though," illustrates this beautiful principle as well. She says:

*"Even though we lose it all,
we'll not be lost, we'll not be*

shaken. Behold, this love of God has ransomed us, He's ransomed us. Even though."

God's love has ransomed us. We have nothing to fear. Even if everything falls apart, we will never walk alone. [END]

Biography:

Vaneetha Risner writes and speaks about finding joy in the midst of suffering. She and her husband Joel live in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. Vaneetha blogs at www.danceintherain.com and is the author of the book "The Scars that have Shaped Me: How God Meets Us in Suffering."

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Rendall Risner, Vaneetha, 24 July 2014, Dance in the Rain: What if the Worst Happens?, available: www.danceintherain.com/2014/07/24/worst-happens/, accessed 06/04/18.

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Organisation Promotion

Mission Aviation Fellowship



Fuel for Father's Day

Buy your dad a jerrycan of fuel for Father's Day!

Every jerrycan sold puts MAF in the air for 20 minutes: enough time to save a life!

- Mission Aviation Fellowship: takes food and supplies to those in need such as the people in Nepal who lost their homes, livestock and/or crops in the major earthquake;
- Provide medical supplies to remote communities; and
- Fly ill patients to medical care facilities.

[Link here to find out more.](#)



Words of Wisdom

"Even the securest financial plan and the finest health coverage aren't enough to hold us steady when the challenges come... We need something more, something deeper and unshakeable, something that will see us through life's hard times."

Billy Graham

Four Things God Says to Singles



by Vaughan Roberts

This article first appeared in Living Out

About thirty-five percent of adult church members in Britain are single, so clearly the subject of singleness has considerable personal interest to many people in our churches.

Each single person will have a different experience. There are age differences. Being single at 20 is very different from being single at 30, 40, or 70.

There are circumstantial differences: some have never married, while others are divorcees, widows, or widowers.

There are experiential differences: some have chosen to be single and are basically content; others long to be married and feel frustrated.

What Does the Bible Say to All These People?

1. Singleness is a Gift from God

So much in our society is structured around couples. It's often just assumed that adults will have a partner and that there's something rather odd about them if they don't for any period of time.

Oscar Wilde summed up the view of many:

"Celibacy is the only known sexual perversion."

There's nothing new in this negative view of celibacy. In the first century, Rabbi Eleazar said:

"Any man who has no wife is no proper man."

The Talmud went even further:

"The man who is not married at 20 is living in sin."

Given that background, it is astonishing how positive the New Testament is about singleness.

Paul speaks of it as a 'gift' (1 Corinthians 7:7), and Jesus says it is good "for those to whom it has been given" (Matthew 19:11).

A friend of mine once belonged to a young adult church group called "Pairs and Spares." Single people can be made to feel like spare parts in their families, social groups, and churches.

One man was so fed up with being asked "Are you still single?" that he began to respond, "Are you still married?"

We must resist the implication that singleness is second best. The Bible doesn't say so. Marriage is good, but so is singleness: it has been 'given' to some.

But what if I don't think I have the 'gift' of singleness? I don't find it easy being on my own, and I long to marry; does that mean I'm experiencing 'second best'?

No.

When Paul speaks of singleness as a gift, he isn't speaking of a particular ability some people have to be contentedly single. Rather, he's speaking of the state of being single.

As long as you have it, it's a gift from God, just as marriage will be God's gift if you ever receive it.



We should receive our situation in life, whether it is singleness or marriage, as a gift of God's grace to us.

2. Singleness has Advantages

Paul mentions two advantages of singleness in 1 Corinthians 7:

- single people are spared the 'troubles' of marriage; and
- there are many great blessings in marriage, but there are difficulties too.

Understandably, Christian couples don't often talk openly about the hard things they face, which can give singles a rose-tinted view of marriage.

There's a downside even when a married couple's relationship is good: life is more complicated.

There's more than one person to consider in decisions about use of time, accommodation, holidays, even the daily menu, and there's more than one person to worry about. Children bring great

pleasure but plenty of anxiety as well.

Marriage does bring “many troubles in this life” and, Paul says, “I want to spare you this” (1 Corinthians 7:28). He mentions these troubles here chiefly because of the bearing they have on the next point.

Single people can devote themselves more fully to God’s work:

“An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs - how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world - how he can please his wife - and his interests are divided.”

1 Corinthians 7:32-34 [NIV]

A vital part of the Christian responsibility of married persons is to care for their spouse and children. That should take time, time that cannot therefore be spent in witnessing to people, helping out at a camp, doing the church finances, or leading a Bible study.

Single people have more time to give to such things. It’s no coincidence that many activities in church life depend to a large

extent on those who aren’t married.

A few consciously choose to stay single to devote themselves to Christian work. Most single people haven’t chosen singleness in that way and yet they have the same advantages as those who have.

Instead of focusing on the difficulties of being single, as some do, we should all make the most of the advantages of God’s gift of singleness while we have it.

3. Singleness is Hard.

When God saw Adam on his own in the Garden of Eden, he said:

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Genesis 2:18 [NIV]

So Eve was created to meet Adam’s need for companionship, and the two came together in the lifelong, sexual relationship of marriage.

Although the New Testament is positive about singleness, there’s no doubt marriage is regarded as the norm. It is God’s loving gift to humanity and the chief context in which our desire for intimacy is met.

Single people are therefore likely to struggle with loneliness and sexual temptation. Those struggles are certainly not exclusive to the unmarried, but they are very much a part of the single condition. Some will seek to lessen them by getting married. Others will either choose not to marry or will feel unable to because of their circumstances, personality, or sexual attraction. They are likely to face a lifelong battle with loneliness and sexual temptation.

Those two battles are closely related. The lonelier we are, the more likely we are to struggle with sexual fantasy and fall into sin. We need to be proactive in seeking help in these areas.

We aren’t designed to be on our own, and if we aren’t to be married, whether in the short or long term, we should seek to satisfy our need for intimacy in other relationships. That will mean taking the initiative in keeping in close contact with friends and family.

We must be self-disciplined in “fleeing from sexual immorality.”

1 Corinthians 6:18 [NIV]

It often helps to have one or two close friends to whom we are accountable in this area.

4. Singleness is Not Permanent

Many who are presently single will one day marry. Others will remain single throughout their lives, but no Christian is single forever.

Human marriage reflects the marriage God wants to enjoy with his people forever. The Bible speaks of Jesus as the bridegroom who will one day return to take his bride, the church, to be with him in the perfect new creation.

On that day all pain will disappear, including the pain of a difficult marriage or singleness. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Revelations 7:17) and a great shout will be heard:

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”

Revelations 19:7 [NIV]

After we had spoken about heaven, an elderly single lady said to me, “I can’t wait for my





wedding day!" We should all share the same hope.

We can already experience something of that intimate marriage with Christ here on earth by the work of the Spirit in our lives. Human relationships do matter, but none is nearly as important as our eternal relationship with Jesus.

A Final Word to Those Who Are Single:

Thank God for the gift of singleness. Whatever your experience of singleness, recognise it as a gift from God and make the most of it for as long as you have it.

Do all you can to be godly. It's easy for those who are single to lapse into a selfish, self-centred lifestyle and into sexual sin, whether in thought or deed: be self-disciplined and accountable to others.

Keep your eyes fixed on heaven: it is our eternal relationship with Christ that ultimately matters.

A Final Word to Those Who Are Married:

Don't think of singleness as second best. Christian preacher and author John Chapman spoke of friends taking him for long walks and telling him he should be married. He commented:

"It would have been a great help if they had read the Bible, wouldn't it?"

Remember that your family is the whole church. There should be no lonely people in our church. We need to be opening up our

homes to one another and relating to one another not just in the nuclear family, but in the church family.

Keep your eyes fixed on heaven. Human marriage matters, but it will not last forever (Mark 12:25). Our relationship with Christ must come first. [END]

Biography:

Vaughan Roberts studied law at Cambridge University before a brief spell in South Africa where he was involved in student ministry.

He subsequently trained for Anglican ministry at Wyldiffe Hall, Oxford, and since 1991 he has been on the staff of St Ebbe's Church, Oxford, where he is now Rector. He is Chairman of The Proclamation Trust.

Vaughan has written a number of books, including God's Big Picture, Battles Christians Face, True Friendship and, most recently, a series of three mini books addressing topical issues: Assisted Suicide, Transgender and The Porn Problem. In his spare time, Vaughan enjoys playing tennis and golf.

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International Awareness Days

September

- 5 International Day of Charity
- 8 International Literacy Day
- 10 World Suicide Prevention Day
- 15 International Day of Democracy
- 18 World Water Monitoring Day
- 21 International Day of Peace
- 25 World pharmacist Day
- 26 International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
- 27 World Tourism Day
- 28 World Rabies Day; International Right to Know Day; International Day for Universal Access to Information; and World Maritime Day
- 29 World Heart Day; and International Coffee Day
- 30 International Translation Day

October

- 1 International Day of Older Persons; and World Vegetarian Day
- 2 International Day of Non-Violence; World Cerebral Palsy Day; and World Habitat Day
- 5 World Teachers' Day
- 9 World Post Day
- 10 World Mental Health Day; and European and World Day Against the Death Penalty
- 11 International Day of the Girl Child
- 13 World Thrombosis Day; and International Day for Disaster Reduction
- 14 World Standards Day
- 15 Global Handwashing Day; World Students' Day; and International Day of Rural Women
- 16 National Boss Day (Boss's Day); and World Food Day
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 18 World Vasectomy Day
- 20 World Osteoporosis Day; and World Statistics Day
- 22 International Stuttering Awareness Day
- 24 United Nations Day; and World Development Information Day
- 27 World Day for Audiovisual Heritage
- 28 International Animation Day
- 29 World Stroke Day
- 31 World Cities Day

November

- 1 World Vegan Day
- 2 International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists
- 4 International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted
- 5 World Tsunami Awareness Day
- 6 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict
- 8 International Day of Radiology
- 10 World Science Day for Peace and Development; and World Keratoconus Day
- 12 World Pneumonia Day
- 13 World Kindness Day
- 14 World Diabetes Day; and Children's Day
- 15 Day of the Imprisoned Writer; and World COPD Awareness Day
- 16 International Day for Tolerance; and World Philosophy Day
- 17 International Students Day; and World Prematurity Day
- 19 International Journalist's Remembrance Day; World Toilet Day; and World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims
- 20 Universal Children's Day;
- 21 World Television Day; and World Hello Day
- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Perspective



by Laura Miles
Press Service
International

"It's not what you look at that matters, but it's what you see."

Henry David Thoreau

Ah, perspective. Eleven letters - just one word - yet it houses the power to change your life in an instant.

In the real world, you aren't given the choice as to what your life will look like. This isn't The Sims™; you aren't given a series of options about your personality, what you look like or what your

family situation is.

But, what you are given is the ability to choose how you see things.

No matter what is going on around you, you have the power to own and control your perspective.

"The only thing you sometimes have control over is perspective. You don't have control over your situation. But you have a choice about how you view it."

Perspective doesn't make the issue disappear, but it means that your life doesn't completely derail because of a tough situation. If your perspective is one based in

hope, then you can still have full joy regardless of what's going on in your life.

In every situation, it is your choice.

Choose to see how heaven sees. Call to mind the nature He has given you, instead of the broken one this world offers.

Looking through a lens of negativity makes any and every situation look dire and hopeless. This is the perspective of the world; pessimistic and rational.

However, the perspective we are offered as children of God is one of overflowing hope, peace



and unreasonable joy.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13 [NIV]

This verse isn't relative to your situation. This verse is truth; standing apart from your life's circumstances. You and I have full, unrestricted access to ALL joy and peace and overflowing hope in ALL seasons. No matter what.

The word of God isn't just for the undisturbed times when everything is going according to plan. The word of God holds just as much relevancy for the "everything-is-so-overwhelming-I'm-going-crazy" sort-of times.

The word of God rings true in every environment, no matter the conditions.

In Every Situation

In every situation, you have the choice to decide how you are going to view it.

Are you going to let your thoughts be influenced by hopelessness or are you going to throw off the world's view in exchange for fresh eyes; eyes of expectation and delight?

When everything is falling apart at the seams - those are the times when it is the most important to grab onto what you know as truth.

Those are the times when you decide to stand in courage and childlike faith, in eager anticipation of the goodness of God to spring forth in your life like never before.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you

nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6 [NIV]

This verse says to be strong and courageous because God goes with you and will never leave you! Isn't that incredible?

God has given you the choice of your own perspective, but that doesn't mean that he is apart from you.

The reason that you have the bravery to choose to have a heavenly perspective is because your confidence is in God and his ever-closeness.

God is always present and close and always gives you more than you need, therefore you always have the grace that you need to align your perspective to that of Heaven.

The Holy Spirit is within you and has empowered you to elevate your thoughts and perspective to a heavenly one. One of hope, peace, joy and expectation.

There is so much freedom in the perspective of heaven! [END]

Biography:

Laura Miles is an excitable and fast-paced Brit, living in Australia. After recently committing to studying, she is ready and expectant to see all the crazy things that the Lord is going to do in her life.

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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:

Sir Geoffrey Cuthbert Allchin

Braser Bacon

Pinkie Mae Blowe

Elmyrtice J Boshaw

Virgil Bustle

Ewhen Chorny

Blose Darcy

Margaret Rose Early

Mazola Fluelen

Lowe Gear

River Jordan

Romeo LaGore

Ona Nation

Corney Papp

Peter J J Rabbitt

Organisation Promotion



**Single?
Christian?
Looking for
fun, friendship
and fellowship?**

Club Solo is delighted to invite you to an outing or camp. Operating for more than 34 years, Club Solo is an inter-denominational ministry which serves Christian singles. There are Club Solo groups in Melbourne, Adelaide, Geelong, Sydney and Brisbane.

One of the largest events is the annual Gold Coast camp which runs for around seven days in January. Singles from several states enjoy this friendly and relaxed get-together.

For more information, contact the Director, Rev Steve Mitchell who has a real pastor's heart for singles:

Phone: (03) 9407 1240

Email: clubsolo@tpg.com.au

Web: www.clubsolo.org.au



Event Promotion

Awakening Australia

Introduction

Awakening Australia is more than just a three-day event – it is a movement mobilising people to share their faith, uniting churches to lift up the name of Jesus alone, and an event where thousands of Christians are being set on fire for Jesus.

We are in a critical point in the history of our nation. Now more than ever we need God to break through in our government, in our churches and in our loved ones.

We need Australia to be awakened to the truth that is in Jesus alone, not to bend to what the world says. Australia needs a great awakening and we believe now is God's timing.

We are currently preparing for this event by helping raise up a nationwide prayer movement for the salvation of our families, friends and our country.

Pray for 100,000 Souls

We have been given a clear assignment and vision to pray for 100,000 souls to be saved in Australia in 2018.

Right now our country is at a critical point in history, so now more than ever we must lift up prayer that grips us for our loved ones who do not yet know God

and for our nation to encounter Christ.

If we all take our place in this mandate this is very possible.

Training to Break the Fear

One thing that we are enthusiastic about and highly encourage is breaking the fear of man. It is very difficult to share our faith if we are too afraid to say something. So often believers don't communicate their faith with a bold and confident expression because they are hindered by the possible opinions of the listener.

At Awakening, we want God to break the fear of man off Australians in a way, so that it becomes just as normal to invite God into conversations and relationships as it is to share any other part of our lives.

We are achieving this by training people during and before the event in 'breaking the fear of man', outreach and relational discipleship.

We really believe that this 'relational discipleship' model is the key to seeing millions of Australians come to Christ.

For many years we have expected that the pastor, leader or 'the course' would disciple every

person that becomes a believer. Not only is this impractical but it's simply not working.

God has an amazing solution to this problem and also an amazing opportunity for us – we now have the honour of being a part of their journey of knowing Jesus.

This will carry no real pressure because the discipler already knows and has a relationship with the new-born.

We will educate further in this in upcoming pre-awakening events and at our main Awakening Australia event on the 16th to the 18th of November, 2018.

The Main Event

Awakening Australia will be held at the Etihad Stadium in Melbourne. Join thousands from all over Australia coming together with one purpose:

"AUSTRALIA FOR JESUS"

This will be a nationwide event like no other for all believers in every denomination and also an amazing opportunity to bring unsaved friends to meet Jesus for the first time.

Come with us for three full days in the stadium, huge outreaches flooding the city with the love of God, thousands coming from all around the world, leaders and churches coming together as one to show our country a united family of God.

For more information, visit awakeningaustralia.org. [END]



100,000 for Jesus in 2018

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished



by **Michael
Hannett**

"No good deed goes unpunished."

I'm sure we've all heard, or perhaps uttered that phrase from time to time, especially when we do something good and yet bad things happen to us or to others.

We shouldn't feel that way. Let us be reminded that if bad things happen, it's not because of anything to do with our good deed, and we certainly aren't being punished for doing right, or for showing someone kindness, generosity and/or love. God celebrates when we love one another - it's what He wishes for us to do.

Any bad that happens, is simply the result of living in a dark and broken world. It is the enemy's way of trying to deter us from spreading God's goodness to the world, to stop us from caring and loving, and perhaps even to

make our heart grow cold.

We cannot let harsh outcomes stop us from doing good or from loving each other as God intends, because the rewards are far greater than the worst this world can do to us.

Every act of goodness is a moment where God shines through us - where His love burns bright, and even if those who were the recipient of our good act didn't react well or if they hurt us, that light and love you showed didn't go unnoticed. Someone saw it - and it gave them hope to know that someone really cares. It gave them assurance that there is still love in this world, and it very well could inspire them to spread that hope and love to others, changing the lives of many.

Let us remember too that acts of goodness please God. It put a happy smile on His face to see His beloved children love each other. It fills our Father's heart with joy.

We need to do good in this world, no matter the consequence, or even if it isn't reciprocated. When we do, we spread a light and love from God that cannot be extinguished, that changes and renews lives in amazing ways. We spread hope, and through God, we change the world.

"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9 [ESV]

"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

Hebrews 10:24 [ESV]

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:16 [ESV]

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

John 13:34 [ESV]

[END]



The Toy Maker

SHORT STORY



by Andrew
Brandon

Father, Son and the Nameless One

Most stories begin with 'Once upon a time', but this story began before there were any clocks or watches to measure the time.

There may have been other universes stacked together cover to cover like books on a shelf each telling a very different story, but this story begins before our universe joined the multiverse library.

Once before time there lived a Toymaker who had the most amazing secret. He was Three Persons in One. Imagine that! Each of the Persons was exactly the same as the Others but they had very different jobs to do.

Let me introduce these remarkable Persons. There was the Father, the kindest and wisest Father you could ever imagine.

You could ask him any question and he would know the answer. He was like all the cleverest school teachers in the world rolled into one and then multiplied by the biggest number you can think of.

He was cleverer than cleverest, bigger than the biggest, wiser than the wisest and so kind, loving and joyful it was impossible not to smile and dance in his presence.

He was the toy inventor.

The Father's Son, the Second Person, looked exactly like his Father and they were the same age. They were the Great Unborn who live forever and ever, for they have no beginning and no end.

They shared the same thoughts and ideas, spoke the same words and were both equally intelligent: **cleverer than the cleverest and wiser than the wisest.**

The Son turned the Father's thoughts into the most beautiful songs. Each song was different from the last and perfectly expressed the Father's thought.

The Son managed the Toy factory on the Father's behalf.

He was the toy factory manager

The Third Person didn't have a name. He was the Nameless One, but that doesn't mean he was ignored and the other Two didn't like Him. The Father and Son loved him to bits and relied on him to build the toys.

The Nameless One turned each of the Son's songs into fantastic toys, for each toy had its own special song. Long after they were made, the toys continued to sing.

Listen and you may be able to hear choirs of stars, the big boom base of planets, the gentle, joyful notes of flowers, and the harmonies of whales humming in the Deep.

LISTEN!

The Nameless One was the toy builder

Welcome to their Factory and the biggest story of all.

Creation

"I have dreamed a universe," said the Father to the Son and Nameless One.

"Look! I will show it to you." And he showed them the dream and they danced for joy.

They saw all the galaxies, black holes, supernovas, quasars, constellations and planets like the moving parts in a gigantic clock, but it was like no clock you've ever seen.

All the moving parts were constantly growing bigger or smaller, some vanished altogether,





The toy universe hung in the air above the Toymaker's work bench.

and the Son's song conjured new moving parts from nowhere and gave the universe its first 'Hallelujah!'

The creation song of Father, Son and the Nameless One was so wondrous, it has never ended. The Father, Son and Nameless One were the lead singers.

All creation accompanied them and sang their special songs in a super-gigantic choir. And this is the marvel of the Creation Song. Each song was different, but when sang together there was only ONE SONG. The song soared through the universe in flights of joyful notes.

LISTEN!

The Father's dream took shape in a universe so big that you could never travel to the end of it, but the Toy Factory was even bigger.

The toy universe hung in the air above the Toymaker's work bench, suspended on nothing and held together by the unseen force we call gravity. The universe was the Toymaker's most wonderful creation and had required all his skill and cleverness. He was very proud of it.

"Marvellous!" said the Father.

"Marvellous!" said the Son.

"Marvellous!" said the Nameless One.

They repeated 'Marvellous' at exactly the same time in exactly

the same way because the Three were One.

Then they began to dance and sing and perform the most amazing back flips, cartwheels and handstands.

The Three never argued, quarrelled or fell out with each other. That is why the Three could be one Person. I will tell you a deep secret.

Their joy in each other was much greater than their joy in creation. You and I were born out of their love for each other.

Man and Woman

The Father spoke in his big deep voice. His voice could be heard very clearly in every part of the universe but it was never loud or deafening.

"I have dreamed a Man and a Woman," he said, "the wonder of our creation," and showed the Son and the Nameless One two strange upright creatures who stood on spindly legs. Around them were all manner of wonderful beasts and birds and fish.

"Man and Woman will be our son and daughter and we will make them in our image and likeness. They will rule the earth and give names to all we have created."

(Illus. 9. Creation of man and woman. Man and woman with the animals in the garden).

The Son and the Nameless One were accustomed to the Father's marvels, but Man and Woman were the marvel of marvels, more wondrous than anything he had ever made before.

"Oh!" cried the Son.



"Oh!" cried the Nameless One, for there were no words to describe their amazement and delight.

"We will speak to them and they will know us and love us," said the Three with one voice, "and when they are ready, we will take them from their world and they will join us forever."

And so the Toymaker created Man and Woman. The Father's dream became the Son's song and it was beautiful, but there were notes of a sorrow in the song as well as joy. As the Son sang, The Nameless One interpreted the music and crafted Man and Woman and placed them in a garden called Eden.

The planet was very small but it shone like a sapphire in the blackness of space.

"These are our children," said the Three, gazing at the Man and Woman, and as they spoke, the Man and Woman looked up and recognised Them, for the Toymaker had given them ears to

hear, eyes to see and tongues to speak the language of the Three.

The Man they called 'Adam' and the woman they called 'Eve' and we are all their children.

The Toy Wrecker

The Toymaker had only one enemy in the universe. He was called 'Wrecker'. He hated goodness and beauty and the Toymaker's Creation song made him 'shrieeek' in fury. Full of rage and spite, he sneaked into the garden of Eden.

"Big trouble!" exclaimed the Father, Son and Nameless One, for Wrecker was the cruellest of the cruel and the wickedest of the wicked.

He was so cunning he could hook a fish with a word and steal the teeth from the fiercest lion without him knowing it. He knew the shapes of all the creatures the Toymaker had created and could twist himself into the forms of any of them.

He was the Great Shape Shifter, the trickiest of the tricky, better far

than any magician you have ever seen on TV, but his heart was fixed: a bottomless pit of evil: darker than the darkest; eviler than the vilest; viler than the vilest. If you saw his heart it would turn you to stone.

The Fall

Wrecker had been thrown out of the Toy Factory in disgrace and hated the Toymaker and all he had made. But of all that the Father, Son and Nameless One had created, Wrecker hated the Man and Woman most of all because they reminded him of the Toy-maker and all the good and beautiful things he had lost.

"I will steal their souls and hang them on the tree of death," he snarled. "I will have my revenge on the Toymaker and he will regret throwing me from his Factory into the cold dark."

So he crept into the garden like a thief to steal their souls, for they were innocent and did not know the difference between good and evil.

Wrecker's voice was sleep's whisper. If you listened to it the mind grew drowsy and the world faded and vanished into a mist. Soon there was nothing but the voice, and then abruptly the voice changed and screeched like grinding, tearing metal. The man and the woman fell under its terrible spell.

"You are the Toymaker's toys, chained to his commands," said Wrecker. "While you serve him, you will never be free."

The grinding voice roared in their heads: "Free yourselves from his chains and trickery and become toymakers in your own world."

"How can we do this thing?" said Adam and Eve, for they were one and their union was yet unbroken.

Wrecker spun cords of gold, silver, scarlet, blue and black in the air before them. He was the trickiest of the tricky and deceived them with the quickness of his fingers, for they were still children in the world.

The World Wrecker had already planned the theft and had hidden the cords beneath his sleeves, ready to dazzle the Man and Woman with their sudden appearance. Now he performed the trick that ruined the world.

The cords writhed and coiled like brightly coloured snakes in the space before them. Wrecker's hands moved in a blur of speed and he plucked them from the air with long fingers.

"Take these, he said, "for they are my gift to you," and offered them to Adam and Eve.

"Attach these to your legs and feet and arms and hands and fingers and shoulders and heads. Then you will be free and as wise as the Toymaker. Indeed, you will become toymakers in this world and your children will inherit the stars. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Wrecker's Big Lie shook the foundations of the Toy Factory like an earthquake. The Toymaker wept and all the angels covered their faces, their bright wings dimmed and dipped in sorrow, for they could not bear to watch the ruin of the Man and Woman.

"Stop!" cried the Father.

"Stop!" cried the Son.

"Stop!" cried the Nameless

One.

And their voice was so full of grief that the universe itself began to weep. Stars quivered, planets wobbled, meteorites fell in dark swarms, and the stars in a billion galaxies flickered off and then on as the voice swept through them.

Man and Woman heard the voice and faltered.

"Do not listen to him," whispered Wrecker, and his words were soft, icy snow flakes drifting into their minds and freezing thought.

"The Toymaker is cruel and wicked. He wishes to keep you as his slaves. These are your freedom, dear ones."

He offered them the cords and they seized them and tied them to their arms and hands and fingers and legs and feet and shoulders and heads, and wherever they were tied they could never be undone.

Two voices clashed in the floating universe that hung above the Toymaker's bench: the sobbing of the Toymaker and Wrecker's cruel laughter.

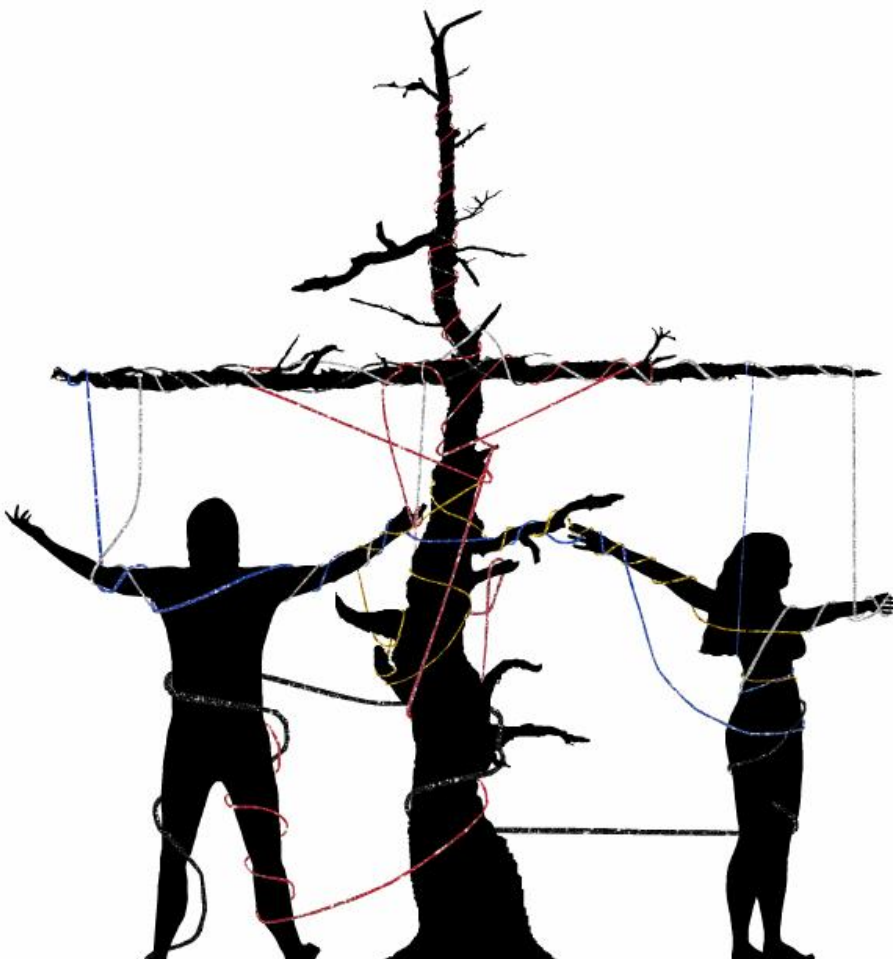
Wrecker seized the strings that bound the Man and Woman and hung them on the tree of death.

"Here you will dance my jig," he said, "and fill this world with wickedness and sorrow."

The jig broke the Toymaker's heart.

Rescue

Wrecker was foolish in his pride. "I am the cleverest of the clever and the most cunning of the cunning," he boasted, but the Toymaker was the Creator and could see all things that had been and ever will be. There is no limit



to the knowledge of the Three in One and the long ages of our world pass in a blink of their eye.

Time's wheels turned and turned and turned and the children of the First Man and Woman filled the earth and forgot the Toymaker. The cords that tied them to the tree of death became invisible and only the wise could see them.

The universe groaned. In a garden of a centillion stars and planets, one planet lay in darkest shadow. Its song was full of notes of sorrow.

Suddenly a fanfare of trumpets sounded in the Toy Factory. The fanfare was so commanding that all the toys stopped what they were doing and stood to attention. Angels arranged themselves in rank upon rank, captained, by gigantic archangels who glittered like mountains of gems.

The fanfare sounded again and after the echoes had died, there was a deep silence. The universe held its breath.

"It is time," cried the Father.

"It is time," cried the Son.

"It is time," cried the nameless One,

And the toys and the angels and the universe danced and sang for joy.

The Son loved the Father more than he loved his own life.

"The time has come. I will go," he said, "and free the children of the Man and Woman from slavery. I will cut their strings and give them freedom. By my deed you will truly know how much I love you."

"We will never be apart, my dearest Son, for we have been

together always," said the Father and lifted his voice and praised the excellences of his Son.

The Nameless One took his words and composed them into a song of such loveliness that the universe was hushed in wonder. The song was more majestic and beautiful than the Toymaker's creation hymn. It is called the Song of the Beloved.

Wrecker laughed a grim, sniggering laugh when he saw the Son slipping into the world.

"This is my world," he snarled, "and you have no power here," and he showed the Son the strings he'd attached to every man and woman in the world.

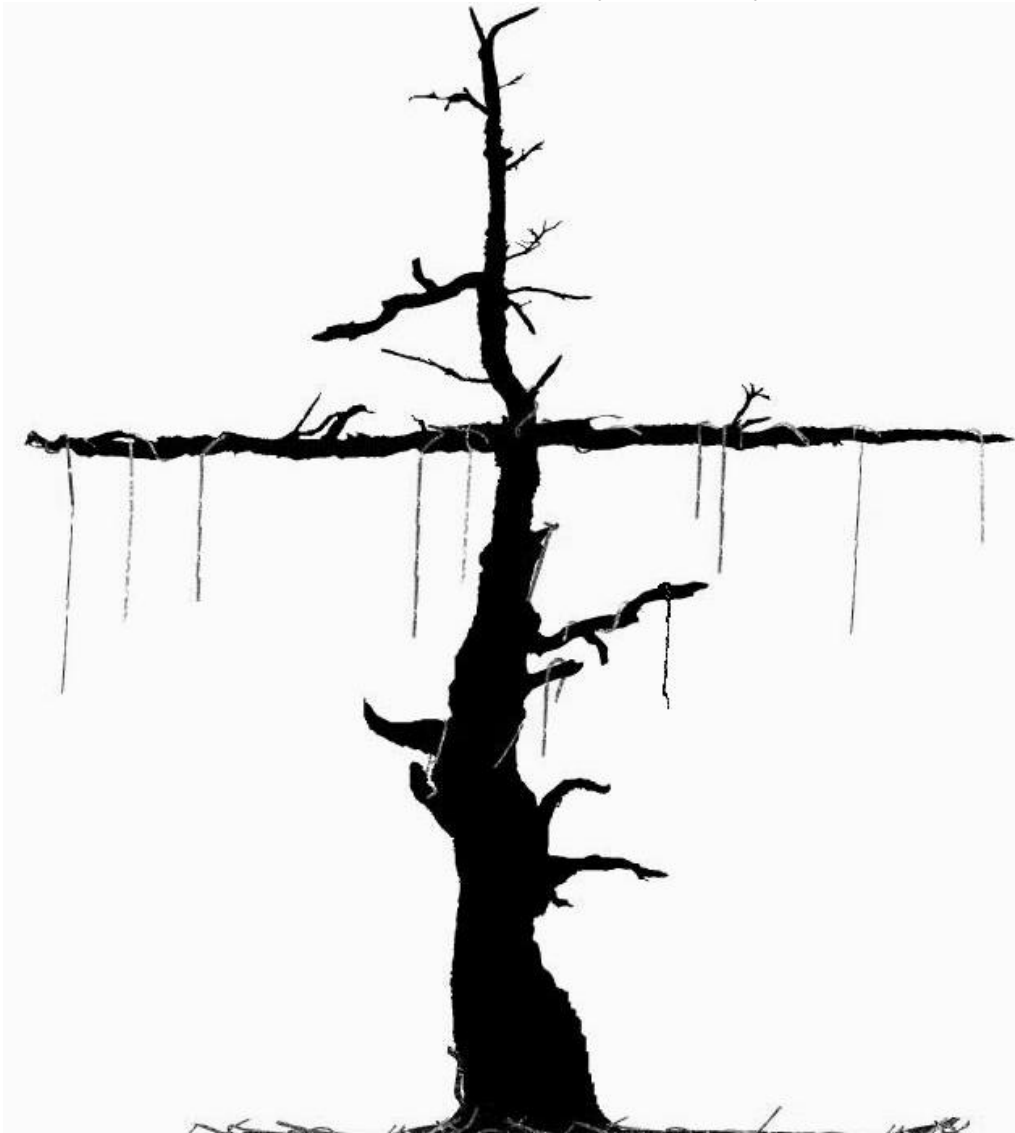
"I'm the puppeteer. I pull the strings in this world," and he began to tug on the strings, his fingers moving in a blur of speed.

The people began to dance his ugly jig and droughts and famines and plagues and war and cruelty spread across the world.

The dance was so horrible, the Toymaker wept and his tears were bigger than oceans, but wherever his tears fell, new worlds were born and stars flared into life.

Wrecker spat in the Son's Face. His spittle was like acid. It burnt and smoked, but the Son's face was unharmed.

"If you tell them they're bound with my cords, they won't believe



"The time has come. I will go and free the children of the Man and Woman from slavery. I will cut their strings and give them freedom."

you," sniggered Wrecker.

"They can't see them anymore."

He rubbed his hands together gleefully and laughed at his own cleverness, but he had underestimated the Toymaker, for he was cleverest of the clever and the wisest of the wise.

Wherever the Son went, Wrecker's cords became visible and the people cried out in fear and dismay: "We're slaves pretending to be free. Who will deliver us?"

The cords were no longer brightly coloured but as grey as smoke and covered in tiny barbed hooks. Each cord had a name: pride, envy, hatred, selfishness, jealousy, bitterness, lust, lying, deceit, treachery, greed, rage, cruelty, theft and laziness.

The Son's word was a sword that cut the cords and set the people free.

"I teach you the song of grace," he cried. "Come to me and I will cut the cords that bind you."

Redemption

Fierce was Wrecker's anger and

fiercer still his hatred of the Son. He tugged the people's cords faster than the Son could cut them.

"I am the king of this world, the Great Controller. Better my darkness than this Son of Light and Goodness," he howled, and seized the Son and bound him with the world's cords and hung him on the tree of death.

"I cast you from my world," he screamed. "Die, deathless One, and share the fate of your silly toys."

"Death to the deathless," repeated Wrecker's puppet army, but their eyes were blank and their minds were full of darkness. Wrecker had blinded them all and they were lost in a world of shadows.

Wrecker shook his fist triumphantly at the sky: "Look what I've done to your Son, wretched Father."

But the Father was silent and his silence was a darkness that covered the Land, muffling sound and hiding the Son as he hung on death's tree, bent and broken under the weight of the world's

strings.

Midnight fell at noon, a darkness without hope, so deep you could feel it. All the stars winked out and the moon covered her face with a black veil.

Then the Miracle of Miracles! The Son's cry cut through the darkness like a bolt of lightning.

"It is done," he cried, and his spirit fled his body singing like a shining white bird.

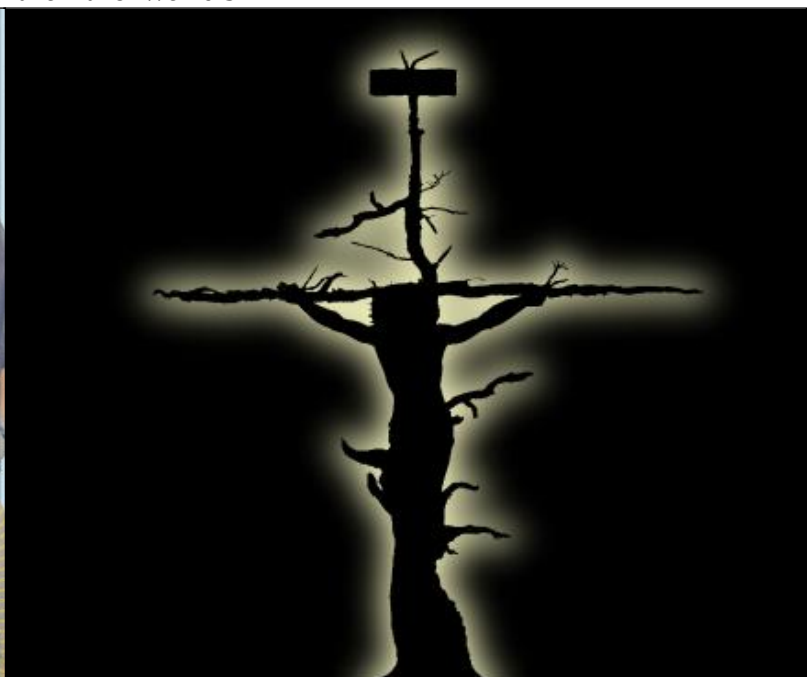
The Father laughed, great gusts of merriment that shook the Toy Factory and made the universe spin like a dancer pirouetting/spinning on her toes. His laughter was so joyous and infectious that all who heard it laughed with him, but they were also confused by his laughter.

Why does he laugh so happily when his Son hangs from death's tree in a distant world? Has grief sent him mad?

In reply, the Father lifted his voice and sang a New Song, the Song of Resurrection and Life, and its music was laughter, the rolling of drums and the fanfare of many



...their eyes were blank and their minds were full of darkness.



The Son... hung on death's tree, bent and broken under the weight of the world's strings

trumpets.

The Nameless One spun the notes of the song into a beam of radiance, so bright and fast it leapt across space and time and struck the Son with the brilliance of a Nova. He blazed with light and awoke from death's sleep a Conqueror, for death was only a short interval in his forever.

Crack! The Son leapt from the tree, broke it in pieces and cast it into a smoking pit.

"No," squealed Wrecker, but he was powerless to stop the Son.

Too late, he realised his mistake. His wickedness had blinded him. You see, he couldn't imagine anyone as important as the Toymaker loving people so much he would give his Son to free them.

Wrecker's rule of earth ended in the longest shrieeeeeeek of all. The shriek will never end but you can't hear it, for it has been silenced by the Toymaker's song.

There is no song louder, stronger and more beautiful than the Toymaker's song of love.

In the place where Wrecker's twisted tree had stood, a sapling grew. In seconds, it changed from sapling into a magnificent tree; its

branches encircled the world and its crown touched the clouds.

The tree had gold and silver leaves that shimmered in the sun and many kinds of delicious fruit hung from its branches. This is the Tree of Life and its fruit is for the healing of the nations.

"Glory!" cried the Father.

"Glory!" cried the Son, and the word rang like a greeting to his Father.

"Glory!" cried the Nameless One.

And the Three began to dance and where they trod new galaxies flamed into life.

"This is the beginning of our New Creation. We will make a new heaven and a new earth and there will be no more suffering and evil," said the Father.

"I have paid the ransom for their freedom," said the Son. "They will be your children, Father, and I will be their Brother. We will wipe away their tears and death will have no power over them. They will live and reign with us forever."

"I will cut them loose and lead them to you, O, Father and adorable Son," said the Nameless One, for he delights to reveal the majesty of the Father and the Son and sing Their praises.

The Nameless One seized the sword which is the Word of the Son's death and resurrection and sped to earth to conquer hearts and free people from Wrecker's strings.

He is Nameless because his joy is not in Himself but in the names

of the Father and the Son. If you let Him, He will guide you to Them and their smile will be the warm smile of welcome.

LISTEN and you will hear the Toymaker's song. BELIEVE and you too will sing the song and share their joy and life eternal.

[END]

© Andrew Brandon

Biography:

Andrew Brandon is the Director of CWEST, a mission and media charity, and the Creative Director of Gladius Pictures Ltd. He has worked internationally as an evangelist and itinerant Bible teacher, but in recent years has been writing for theatre, film and documentaries. His most recent film, 'Parallel City', is currently on the international film festival circuit and is beginning to pick up award nominations.

Andrew's writing includes theatre and pantomime for children and adult theatre and film as well as documentaries. He defies stereotyping and has written in a number of different genres: science fiction, fantasy, comedy, musical theatre, historical, romantic, Westerns, action and topical.

He has completed a groundbreaking twenty episode TV series that combines

For his last documentary, 'Epic Journey: Seven Ancient Churches', he cycle-camped from London to Istanbul

Brandon's aphorism, "If the imagination doesn't move it stagnates," defines his approach to his art.

He is the creative powerhouse behind Gladius and is responsible for the company's motto : 'Excellence without Compromise'. He is a professional with high professional standards. Andrew has never missed a writer's deadline.

As creative director, Brandon mentors and inspires other artists, most of whom come from the UK's ethnic minorities. He lives and breathes diversity. Change stimulates him. He is happiest when he's in transit through London's diverse ethnic worlds, drawing his inspiration from the city's melting pot of cultures.



Tree of Life





Pressing In

Introduction (by Vicki Nunn)

Q. What is the very first act of God that we read about in the Bible?

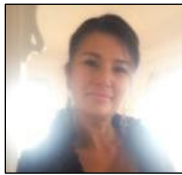
A. The act of creation.

Creation is an inherent part of God's nature, and as we are made in God's image, creativity is therefore also inbuilt into our human nature, and into our very DNA.

Just as God delighted in the goodness of His creation, we too can delight in our creative endeavours.

As Christians, the Holy Spirit works through us and encourages us to express our creativity and to use it as a means of relaying truths and messages about God and from God.

In this issue, artist Alik Whitfield shares a little of her personal experiences of the creative urge.



**by Alik
Whitfield**

**Speaker, Writer &
Performer**

Creative urges blow into my life as unpredictably as Melbourne weather. They take different forms, though usually touch on common ground: my delight in life and God.

Today, I'd like to share three creative urges with you.

A few months ago, I rode my Royal Enfield Himalayan (motorcycle) down a country track heading to a defunct diary shed perched with views of the Clarence River. An insanely creative and just plain insane woman, Wendy Donohue, owns this glorious spot.

Let me pause here to say that riding my motorcycle on dirt is a favourite creative urge. It may not look creative from the outside, but on the inside, my mind is happily picking lines, assessing obstacles, fine tuning speed (which is 40% slower than the boys) and recording memories of beautiful places.

Every corner, rise, creek crossing or wash out presents an opportunity to ride it with more finesse than the last. It's an art.

Back to Wendy, she calls this old diary, 'the crafty chook shed.' Yes, there are chickens scratching in the lavender patch but I think the chooks are the human visitors.

Most Fridays a cheeky group of women gather to work on artistic projects in various states of completion or disaster, as the case may be. They arrive one by one for morning tea, and then sprawl on the veranda like chocolate sauce on ice-cream with all manner of arty gear. The mind boggles as sets of pastels, pencils, paint and anything else that can make a mark on the day, emerges from bags and cases.

The atmosphere is a joyful mayhem. A loving and authentic sharing of skills and humour that inspired me to try something I wish I was good at - painting... of what? Well I wanted to try something iconic, like a Vespa scooter.

I own a silver 150cc 1964 Vespa that I'm looking at right now. It's a design masterpiece that decorates my lounge room. Step one was to sketch a Vespa onto canvas, which took me from 11am to near on dark and it still looked like it had come from the wreckers.

Wendy took pity on me by loaning a miniature overhead projector (remember those?) to





and photographs are on my website, www.aliki.com.au.

However, this creative urge birthed in Australia was not easy to fulfil. Some evenings I would study the photographs of the day and think to myself, "Nothing here inspires or speaks to me."

I stared at beautiful scenes with an open bible and came up blank.

"Father," I'd pray, "What can I say from Your word through this picture? Is there anything here that's worthy?"

That to me is the essence of 'pressing in.' It's leaning into the whispers of God to hear His voice or catch the

fragrance of His thoughts, then taking time to explore creative avenues. It only takes a hint for me to light up, but that initial spark isn't guaranteed just because I took a photo and opened a bible.

blow up and trace the image onto canvas when I got home. Despite my freehand nightmare, the journey swept me into a quiet and relaxing concentration. The steady sips of tea and glances at the rolling landscape, made for one of life's greatest achievements - stillness, which is an art all of its own. Yes, by late afternoon, I was sitting in a mess of eraser fragments, but everything in my world had paused in those hours.

'Pressing in' requires stillness and faith, after all, how can we discern His 'still small voice' in the middle of a panic-stricken rant, or discover His heart if we've taken a short cut? So, after twenty-one days I believe God loved me 'pressing in' more than finishing the devotions. It became about 'us'.

At the end of every day, what we achieve for Him is not as valuable as how we got to know and enjoy Him in the process. Creative urges usually take me on a journey where the destination amounts to less than what I gleaned along the way. [END]

Biography:

'Down to earth' and 'captivating' are the two most commonly used phrases to describe Australian conference speaker, writer and performer Alik.

Since Bible College in 1994, she has inspired Australians in all walks of life - from CEOs to drug addicts. Her message of grace is delivered in honest and often humorous stories. Her communication style is disarming and highly engaging.

Today Alik writes from her base on the Orara River west of Grafton (Australia), and travels throughout Australia to share in ministry. Her two adult children are completing an internship with the C3 college in Newcastle. Alik's spiritual home is Riverside Church in South Grafton.

Find out more about Alik on her website: www.aliki.com.au



Words of Wisdom

"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep."

Scott Adams



We Want You!

Do you have a passion for writing Christian stories, poetry etc? SPAG Magazine is presently considering adding a regular fiction spot with a Christian theme.

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I've Been To Twelve Schoolies¹ and It Gets Better Every Year



by Kurt
Mahlberg

The sky was cold and dark in Victor Harbor. Music thumped in the background. Conversations were happening all around me. I looked through the crowd and saw a Year 12 student with a couple of police officers.

She was a little wobbly on her feet and she was wearing her tattered school dress as a costume. With a friendly word, she handed them hot donuts, and they were on their way. The whole scene made me smile.

I'll let the media write about drunken fights and screaming sirens - and sure, there was some of that too. But I've got a different story to tell.

I'm on the Green Team, a group of five hundred volunteers from Adelaide's churches, rallied by *Encounter Youth* to host one of the safest schoolies events in Australia. (Of the 10,000 school leavers that descended on the south coast this weekend, only one was arrested).

This is the twelfth year I've been a Green Teamer. Every year I come home glowing and grateful that God would use me to help bring the light of Jesus into a dark corner of our culture. And every year I learn something new. Here's what stood out to me in 2017.



Where Green Team is, Trouble Isn't

Green Team is by no means the only reason SA's schoolies is safe. Police, paramedics, the local council and many others do an outstanding job, providing all sorts of services we're not qualified for. Our role is far more modest - we provide banter, free food, directions, dance moves, and a phone call for help if it's needed. It's small, but it makes all the difference.

By the first night of the festival, Green Team has already become an army of trusted allies to the Year 12s. Remove us from a queue, a caravan park or a dark street corner and trouble brews quickly. But when we're there, even our presence diffuses most problems before they escalate.

A Culture of Care Spreads Like Wildfire

Mix drugs, alcohol, all-nighters, and inter-school rivalries, and you quickly create a culture of darkness. I've just described schoolies in Victor Harbour twenty years ago before things changed.

Instead, this year I saw a girl handing donuts to police officers - a scene that captured the spirit of the weekend. It's hard to imagine unless you've seen it, but Green Team sets a culture of care that spreads.

This year a third of our church's team was brand new. It didn't matter if they were young or introverted or wide-eyed at the drunken antics. Within an hour, they *got it* - and they were Green Teaming like veterans.

When light shines, it spreads

1. 'Schoolies' is an Australian term which refers to end of year activities and partying in which high school graduates participate once their schooling is completed. Many of these youth get together at popular destinations to party, sometimes consuming drugs and/or excessive alcohol and/or indulging in inappropriate behaviours, including fighting, vandalism, hooliganism etc. Not all of the youth do this, but the misbehaviour can sometimes lead to injuries and/or youth getting into trouble with authorities, and this is often the main focus of Australian media.

and refracts far beyond its source, and darkness can't overcome it.

Young People are Desperate for Trusted Adults

I'm going to miss the class of 2017. Many were just a face in the passing crowd, but I won't forget those I spoke with who came back the next night looking for me, or for someone else on our team who'd showed them love and remembered their name.

Young people are crying out for trusted adults. I count it a privilege to be one of those every year, even if it's just for the weekend. At such a fulcrum moment in their lives with the whole world at their feet, words of affirmation and challenge have a powerfully shaping effect on a teenager's life.

Australian Youth aren't Post-Christian, They're Pre-Christian

Last year's census told us that Christianity still scraped through as Australia's majority religion at 52%. That might be true, but the percentage is far smaller among the nation's young people.

I spoke with one girl from a respected public school who said her whole class experiments with hard drugs. Countless schoolies, as always, asked why we volunteer - and when we mentioned Jesus in our answer, occasionally we had to explain what that word meant.

For decades we've been talking about a post-Christian culture in Australia - and that's still relevant for most generations. But Gen Z has arrived, and many of them are mind-blown and enthralled to hear about a God who created them and loved them so much that he suffered in their place. It's a



refreshing change from rolled eyes.

Community-on-Mission is the Church's Calling

I think we the church sometimes believe that the end game of following Jesus - the way to graduate as a mature Christian - is to get a career, marry, have kids, and buy a house.

Those are all great things, but as Scot McKnight says, the mark of a follower of Jesus isn't any of that - it's *following Jesus*.

We're all on mission as individuals. But what I love about Green Team, and what makes it incredibly unique, is that it's 'community on mission.' It's groups of believers praying for each other as the day begins, sharing stories of breakthrough on the streets, facing fears and inadequacies together, and getting up to try it all again the next day.

This is how Jesus trained his disciples - remember the seventy-two?

This doesn't happen much in church life anymore. But it should, because it works, and it turns believers into *disciples*. I don't have an answer to this question, but you might: how can we create more opportunities like Green Team to mobilise Christians?

Past Volunteers Forget What They're Missing

Every year, there's a 40% turnover of volunteers. I'm not surprised that two hundred new people want to join the cause every year. But I am surprised that 200 past volunteers don't want to continue.

Schoolies isn't for everyone, and it's not for every life stage (though I am impressed how Green Teamers with kids still manage to get out every year). Even still, a turnover of two hundred is far too many.

If you're a past volunteer, can I ask you to consider rejoining the movement? This year, one of our teams was made up of twenty-five

volunteers serving 1,700 campers. We need you.

I know it costs sleep and a day or two of annual leave. But remember the difference you made in so many lives. And remember when you thought to yourself that the cost was worth it - because I know you did!

If Revival Comes, it Will be Through Movements Like This

God worked miracles again this year, and a bunch of the schoolies we met were supernaturally healed from sprains and other injuries. Many asked about our church and now plan to come visit.

It's been said that the closest Australia ever came to revival was when Billy Graham visited in 1959 and many gave their lives to Christ at his crusades. But let's face the facts: the time is gone when everyday Aussies will fill stadiums to hear an evangelist preach. Now we need to go to them.

I don't know if revival is coming to Australia, but if it is, I know that it will be through

movements like Green Team.

It's time for us to rewrite the story of the church in this country, put God's mission ahead of our comforts, and step out with prayer and boldness so that His dream will come to pass and Australia might truly become the great southland of the Holy Spirit.

[END]

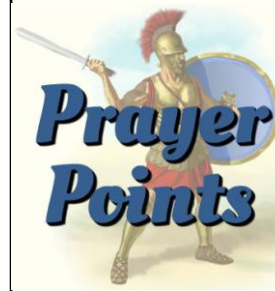
Biography:

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

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

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Mahlburg, Kurt, 27 November 2017, *Culture, Worldview and Life with Jesus: I've Been To Twelve Schoolies and It Gets Better Every Year*, available: www.kurtmahlburg.blog/2017/11/27/ive-been-to-twelve-schoolies-and-it-gets-better-every-year, accessed 22/07/18



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 those with health & mental struggles

Our Heavenly Father,

Day 1: For the broken-hearted:

Heavenly Father. I pray for the broken hearted, to whom You are always near. I pray that You give them healing and strength. That You give them courage and the hope they need. Help them to feel love and help them to believe and trust that You love them. In this I trust You will provide. *"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed."* Psalm 34:18 [NLT]

Day 2: For those with mental illness and/or depression

Father God. I pray for those whose illness cannot be seen outwardly, the one many people try to keep hidden - the hurt that starts in the mind, but eats at the soul. I pray for restoration of their soul and mind. I pray for them to find calm thoughts and rational thinking and wisdom in you Lord, and I pray the chaotic storm that their mind has become, through your command, let it be still. *"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."* Psalm 34:17-20 [ESV]

Day 3: For those with ongoing medical and physical challenges

Heavenly Father, this is my prayer for those who suffer illness, those whose bodies are failing them, or who disease has afflicted. I pray for healing for their affliction, and even if You choose to allow illness, pain or disability to be a part of their life's journey, that You will help their minds and spirits to be alive and on fire with Your courage, strength and spirit. Help them to remain strong in You and their faith. *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* John 16:33 [ESV]

Day 4: For those whose ailments affect every area of their lives

Father, there are many who suffer from physical disabilities, things that limit how they function and live, and it can be frustrating and even soul crushing for them. I pray Lord that you heal and empower them - body and soul, and help them to know that in You, there are no limits, that in You they are strong, that in you there is no impossible thing. While their journey may be impacted by their restrictions, help them to find joy and purpose in it, and to find ways to honour You and grow even closer to you. *"He said to them, 'Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."* Matthew 17:20 [ESV]

Day 5: Help us who struggle with social anxieties and fears

Heavenly father, I pray for those who struggle with the fear of attending church. They may stress about being in large crowds; worry that they'll be judged; or be concerned that they won't measure up to others. I pray father that You will give them the courage they need to step through those doors, and I pray that You'll help them to trust in You that they will be alright. Give them assurance that they will be accepted as they are in Your house, and they will not know judgement, but only love from their Christian family. *"This is my command - be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* Joshua 1:9 [NLT]

Day 6: Help those who are imprisoned by their health conditions

Heavenly father, I pray for those who are restricted and feel imprisoned by their afflictions. It may be hard for them to do even the simplest of tasks. I ask father, that you free them of this pain and bondage, that you heal them in body, mind and soul. If this condition is to be a part of their journey, help them to find freedom, comfort and joy through Your Holy Spirit, and to obtain the help they need for their daily struggles. *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."* 2 Corinthians 3:17 [ESV]

Day 7: Help all who have mental, physical or spiritual problems

Lord, give peace to all of those who struggle with physical, mental and spiritual challenges. Give them hope and strength in You. Help them to know and trust in Your love, and let Your comfort, love and assurance be stronger than their pain and difficulties. Let them find rest in You, I pray. *"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-30 [ESV]. Amen

These prayer suggestions were provided by SPAG'S Journalist, Michael Hannett



Five Errors of the Prosperity Gospel



by David W
Jones

The Gospel Coalition

[NOTE: previously: "Prosperity Gospel Born in the USA" (Russell Woodbridge) The following is an edited version of an article that originally appeared in the 9Marks Journal on the prosperity gospel.]

More than a century ago, speaking to the then - largest congregation in all Christendom, Charles Spurgeon said, "I believe that it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth. You will say, 'Are we not to strive all we can to get all the money we can?' You may do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do service to the cause of God. But what I said was that to live with the object of accumulating wealth is anti-Christian."

Over the years, however, the message being preached in some of the largest churches in the world has changed - indeed, a new gospel is being taught to many congregations today. This message has been ascribed many names, such as the "name it and claim it" gospel, the "blab it and grab it" gospel, the "health and wealth" gospel, the "prosperity gospel," and "positive confession theology."

No matter what name is used, the essence of this message is the same. Simply put, this "prosperity gospel" teaches that God wants believers to be physically healthy, materially wealthy, and personally happy.



Listen to the words of Robert Tilton, one of its best-known spokesmen:

"I believe that it is the will of God for all to prosper because I see it in the Word, not because it has worked mightily for someone else. I do not put my eyes on men, but on God who gives me the power to get wealth."

Teachers of the prosperity gospel encourage their followers to pray for and even demand material flourishing from God.

Five Theological Errors

Russell Woodbridge and I wrote a book titled "Health, Wealth, and Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?" (Kregel, 2010) to examine the claims of prosperity gospel advocates.

While the book is too wide-ranging to summarise here, in this article I'd like to review five doctrines we cover in it - doctrines on which prosperity gospel advocates err. By discerning these errors regarding key doctrines, I hope you will plainly see the dangers of the prosperity gospel.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant is a Means to Material Entitlement

The Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22) is one of the theological bases of the prosperity gospel. It's good that prosperity theologians recognise much of Scripture is the record of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, but it's bad that they don't maintain an orthodox view of this covenant.

They incorrectly view the inception of the covenant; more significantly, they erroneously

view the application of the covenant.

In his book "Spreading the Flame" (Zondervan, 1992), Edward Pousson stated the prosperity view on the application of the Abrahamic covenant:

"Christians are Abraham's spiritual children and heirs to the blessings of faith... This Abrahamic inheritance is unpacked primarily in terms of material entitlements."

In other words, the prosperity gospel teaches that the primary purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was for God to bless Abraham materially. Since believers are now Abraham's spiritual children, we have inherited these financial blessings.

As Kenneth Copeland wrote in his 1974 book "The Laws of Prosperity:"

"Since God's covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realise that prosperity belongs to you now!"

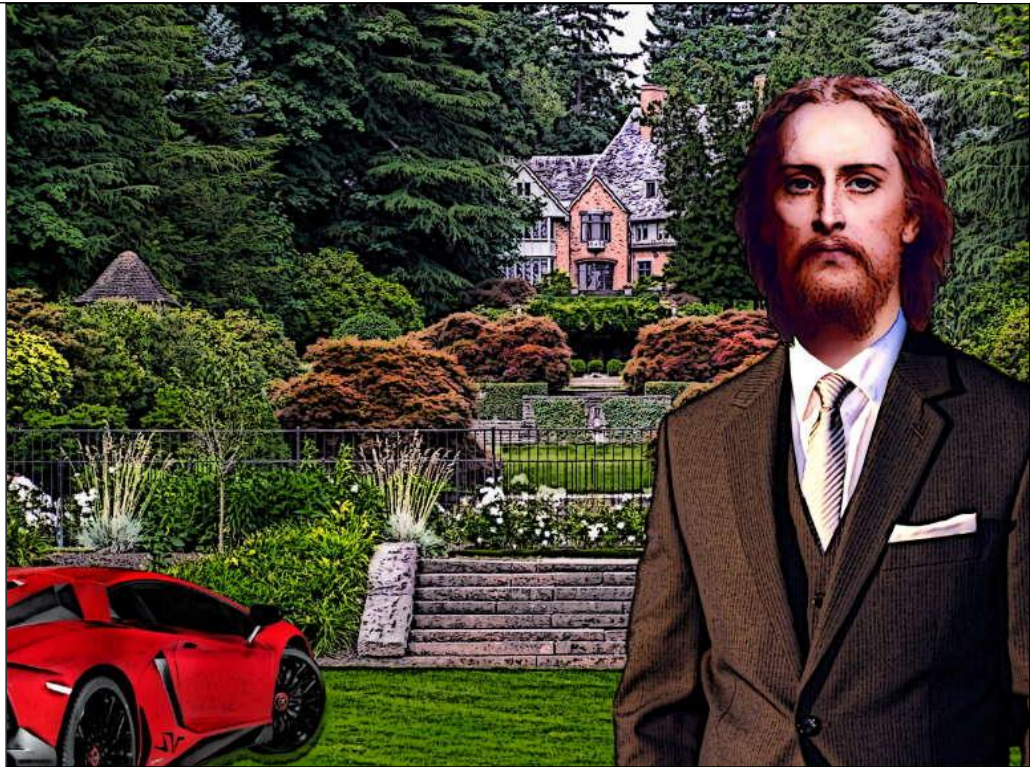
To support this claim, prosperity teachers appeal to Galatians 3:14, which refers to:

"the blessings of Abraham [that] come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus." [ESV]

It's interesting, however, that in their appeals to Galatians 3:14 these teachers ignore the second half of the verse:

"that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." [ESV]

Paul is clearly reminding the Galatians of the spiritual blessing of salvation, not the material blessing of wealth.



"Jesus was handling big money," and he even "wore designer clothes."

2. Jesus's Atonement Extends to the "Sin" of Material Poverty.

In his Bibliotheca Sacra article "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," theologian Ken Sarles observes how the prosperity gospel claims that:

"...both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the atonement."

This seems to be an accurate observation in light of Copeland's statement that:

"...the basic principle of the Christian life is to know that God put our sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, grief, and poverty on Jesus at Calvary."

This misunderstanding of the scope of the atonement stems from two errors prosperity gospel proponents make.

First, many who espouse prosperity theology have a fundamental misconception of the life of Jesus. For example, teacher

John Avanzini proclaimed on a TBN program, Jesus had:

"a nice house,"

"a big house,"

"Jesus was handling big money," and he even "wore designer clothes."

It's easy to see how such a warped view of the life of Christ could lead to an equally warped misconception of the death of Christ.

A second error that leads to a faulty view of the atonement is misinterpreting 2 Corinthians 8:9, which reads:

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich." [ESV]

While a shallow reading of this verse may lead one to believe Paul was teaching about an increase in material wealth, a contextual reading reveals he was actually

teaching the exact opposite principle.

Indeed, Paul was teaching the Corinthians that since Christ accomplished so much for them through the atonement, they should empty themselves of their riches in service of the Saviour.

This is why just five short verses later Paul would urge the Corinthians to give their wealth away to their needy brothers, writing:

"...that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack"
2 Corinthians 8:14 [ESV]

3. Christians Give in Order to Gain Material Compensation from God.

One of the most striking characteristics of the prosperity theologians is their seeming fixation on the act of giving. We are urged to give generously and are confronted with pious statements like:

"True prosperity is the ability to use God's power to meet the needs of mankind in any realm of life," and,

"We have been called to finance the gospel to the world."

While such statements may appear praiseworthy, this emphasis on giving is built on motives that are anything but philanthropic.

The driving force behind this teaching on giving is what prosperity teacher Robert Tilton

referred to as the "Law of Compensation." According to this law - purportedly based on Mark 10:30 - Christians should give generously to others because when they do, God gives back more in return. This, in turn, leads to a cycle of ever-increasing prosperity.

As Gloria Copeland put it in her 2012 book, "God's Will is Prosperity:"

"Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000... In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal."

It's evident, then, that the prosperity gospel's doctrine of giving is built on faulty motives. Whereas Jesus taught his disciples to:

"give, hoping for nothing in return" Luke 10:35 [ESV]

prosperity theologians teach their disciples to give because they will get a great return.

4. Faith is a Self-Generated Spiritual Force that Leads to Prosperity

Whereas orthodox Christianity understands faith to be trust in the person of Jesus Christ, prosperity teachers espouse something quite different.

"Faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function,"

Copeland writes in *The Laws of Prosperity*.

"There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God's Word. Faith causes them to function."

This is obviously a faulty, perhaps even heretical, understanding of faith.

According to prosperity theology, faith is not a God-granted, God-centred act of the will. Rather, it is a humanly wrought spiritual force, directed at God.

Indeed, any theology that views faith chiefly as a means to material gain rather than justification before God must be judged inadequate at best.

5. Prayer is a Tool to Force God to Grant Prosperity

Prosperity gospel preachers often note we:

"have not because we ask not"
James 4:2 [ESV]

They encourage us to pray for personal success in all areas of life. As Creflo Dollar writes:

"When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass... It is a key to getting results as a Christian."

Prayers for personal blessing aren't inherently wrong, of course, but the prosperity gospel's over-emphasis on man turns prayer into a tool believers can use to force God to grant their desires.

Within prosperity theology, man - not God - becomes the focal point of prayer. Curiously, prosperity preachers often ignore the second half of James's teaching on prayer:

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend

God x  =



it on your passions"

James 4:3 [ESV]

God does not answer selfish requests that do not honour His name.

Certainly all our requests should be made known to God (e.g., Philippians 4:6), but the prosperity gospel focuses so much on man's desires that it may lead people to pray selfish, shallow, superficial prayers that don't bring God glory.

Further, when coupled with the prosperity doctrine of faith, this teaching may lead people to attempt to manipulate God to get what they want - a futile task. This is far removed from praying "Your will be done."

False Gospel

In light of Scripture, the prosperity gospel is fundamentally flawed. At bottom, it is a false gospel because of its faulty view of the relationship between God and man. Simply put, if the prosperity gospel is true, grace is obsolete, God is irrelevant, and man is the measure of all things.

Whether they're talking about the Abrahamic covenant, the atonement, giving, faith, or prayer, prosperity teachers turn the relationship between God and man into a quid pro quo transaction.

As James Goff noted in a 1990 Christianity Today article, God is:

"...reduced to a kind of 'cosmic bellhop' attending to the needs and desires of his creation."

This is a wholly inadequate and unbiblical view of the relationship between God and man. [END]

Biography:

David W. Jones is a professor and author working in the field of Christian ethics. Dr. Jones is currently serving as Professor of Christian Ethics, Associate Dean for Graduate Program Administration, and Director of the Th.M. program at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wake Forest, NC, USA) where he has been teaching since 2001.

Dr Jones holds a B.S. pastoral ministries, an M.Div. in pastoral ministry, and a Ph.D. in theological studies with an emphasis in Christian ethics. Dr Jones' scholarly interests include biblical ethics, material stewardship (including financial ethics, environmental ethics, and related issues), and topics related to marriage and family life.

Dr Jones serves as a Fellow at the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith & Culture, and is a Research Fellow at the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Dr Jones is the author of many books and articles over a wide range of moral and theological issues. His literary works have been translated into numerous foreign languages. Dr Jones is a moral consultant as well as a regular speaker at colleges, seminaries, academic conferences, professional society meetings, churches, camps, radio shows, and other ministry-related events.

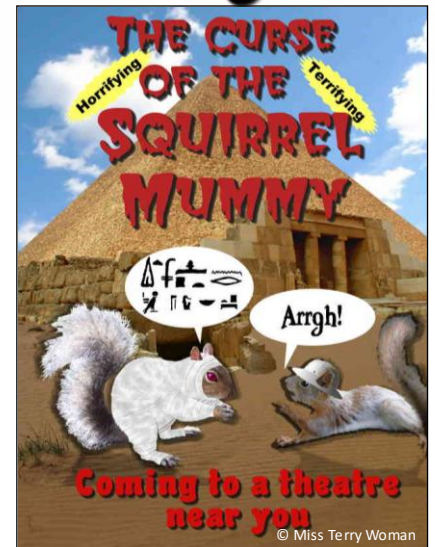
Additionally, Dr Jones has experience in pastoral and church-planting ministry, denominational work, Bible teaching and curriculum design, and has served as Associate Editor of The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and is a referee for The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. Dr Jones also serves as a theological reviewer of manuscripts for several major Christian publishers, and holds memberships in many theological and ethical organisations.

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David W Jones, 5 June 2015, available: www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-errors-of-the-prosperity-gospel/, accessed 31/07/18

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Kooky Corner



Advertising Promotion

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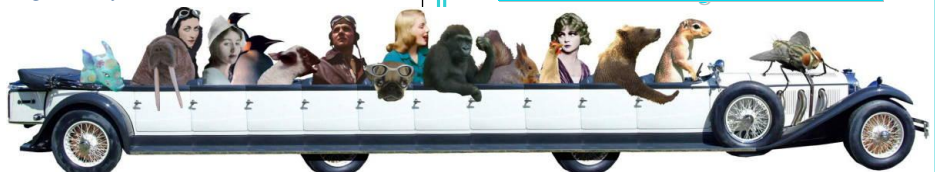
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Are You Pacing Too Much and Missing God's Calls?



by Lisa Copen

Sometimes we pace ourselves so much we start holding onto the security of whatever we consider our safety net. Lisa shares.

“‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed Him.

Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets.

Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.”

Matthew 4:19-22 [NIV]

When was the last time Jesus called you to do something and you did it immediately? Or ... when did you last do anything immediately?

Living with illness can be compared to running a marathon, not a sprint. It is all about pacing ourselves. I pace long-term plans, trying my best to not sabotage an event I must attend in the future (like my sister's wedding). But I also pace myself every single day - as you likely do.

I struggle to decide if I am becoming more of a procrastinator



or if I am just pacing myself so I have the energy to do what is most important for the Lord and my family.

As I write this I have a list of five different companies to call regarding billing issues - including a pharmacy and my medical insurance. I am dreading the energy I must dedicate to each of these conversations, and yet, every day, if I listen closely and avoid procrastination, the Holy Spirit can point me towards what I should do.

It is easy for us to say, “Well, if Jesus showed up today and said ‘follow Me’ I would go! What does a doctor's appointment or a phone

call have to do with following Jesus?”

I have found that the most important divine appointments are orchestrated because I did something I didn't feel like doing.

I have made countless connections with receptionists and telemarketers over the years. Just yesterday I ran into an acquaintance at Dollar Tree - an errand I forced myself to run, to grab some school supplies.

I didn't know she had a son who was hurting, or as a mom she was tired. Without even questioning, I asked her if she and her husband would want to join our local small group for Bible study and support.

We never know where God will lead us and who He has prepared for us to reach out to.

Next time you look at your 'to-do list,' consider this:

Are you taking a risk and immediately leaving your boat and your nets – that which you depend on – and following Jesus where He leads you?

Prayer: *Father, I know You want me to learn to manage my illness effectively, but it is so easy to slip into caring for myself—rather than following Your promptings and then letting You take care of me. I don't want to miss out on an opportunity to bless someone because I was so rigorously pacing myself and caring for my own needs. Give me discernment and help me trust Your voice. Amen.*

When was the last time you did something even though it didn't make much sense and you felt God blessed your efforts?

Do you believe one can get caught up in pacing ourselves too much and miss out on God's last minute appointments?

Song Link: It can be hard to go

when God calls us to go. It doesn't involve logic or reason - just trust - fully trust!

This is Jeremy Camp singing, "I am Willing." Are you willing – even when you don't understand or cannot predict how it will all turn out? [END]

Biography:

Lisa Copen began RestMinistries.com in 1996, a non-profit, Christian organisation for those who live with chronic illness. Their daily devotionals send out encouragement to people around the world.

She has written a number of books on living with chronic illness, one of the more recent ones is "Refresh Me, Lord." It is a book of prayers on topics related to the everyday struggles of having a chronic illness, while praying the scriptures.

Lisa has lived with rheumatoid arthritis for over 20 years and resides in San Diego, CA, USA with her husband and son.

Lisa's books include, "Why Can't I Make People Understand?" which are available from various sources.

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Copen, Lisa, 17 September 2014, Rest Ministries: Are You Pacing Too Much and Missing God's Calls?, available: www.restministries.com/blog/2014/09/17/pacing-much-missing-gods-calls/, accessed 31/08/18

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.

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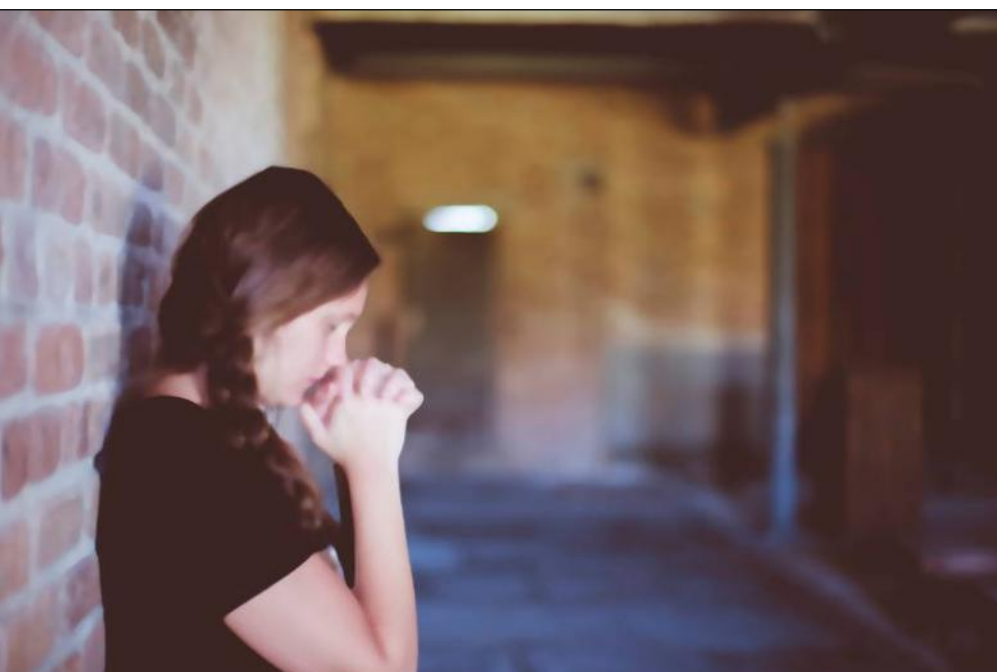
Tantalising Trivia

If you're left-handed then I'm sure you'll be fascinated by the following lefty facts:

Of the general population, between 5 and 15% are left-handed, but in mental institutions, between 15 and 30% of the population are lefties!

Left-handed people tend to fit more into the ends of the intelligence scale, ie they tend to be either quite dim-witted or extremely intelligent with IQs over 140.

While you may be the more intelligent of the lefties, you may be horrified to discover that lefties tend to be more prone to insomnia, migraines, allergies, schizophrenia and alcoholism than right-handed people.



Modern Missionaries: PNG Adventures

~ A Time for Learning ~



by Liz Gill

Interface

Throughout the months of June and July, I had the privilege of participating in an amazing short-term missions program called Interface (ITF).

Held every year, for 6-8 weeks, in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Interface introduces adults from all over the world to cross-cultural missions. It considers the many, varied roles people must play in order for others to hear the gospel in their heart language – from the Church who sends and supports missionaries, to the team planting a new Church, as well as all the people it takes to get that team their groceries.

I was originally asked to join ITF as the nurse: looking after the twenty-five students plus staff and their families. With the hope that my nursing skills would not be needed too much, I was then asked if I would like to participate as a student as well. It was a little strange for me to take off my missionary hat and go back to being a student after having served over a year in the field, but there is always more that we can learn.

The teaching is all undertaken by missionaries. Some have been in PNG for many years, seen a Church planted and maturing, and translated a significant portion of the Bible. Some are in

the middle of that process right now. Others are just about to move into a village and begin this work. Still others are missionaries serving in support roles.

They all have first-hand experience with what they are teaching us. They share the good, the bad, and the ugly, and yet, they all believe they have the best and most important job in the world.

Our classes included a chronological overview of the Bible, from eternity to eternity; lessons on phonetics and language learning; and topics such as prayer, worship, decision making and many more.

The Redemptive Threads

There is something very powerful about studying the narrative of the Bible as a whole. It was wonderfully assuring to see God's redemptive plan for mankind woven throughout all of history. It was challenging to be reminded of how often we try to do things our own way instead of trusting God's plan and timing.

It was incredibly interesting to hear how these stories, which are very familiar to me, were understood when they were heard for the very first time by people here in PNG.

It's confronting to consider that while I grew up hearing these truths over and over again, there are millions of people in this country who still have not heard them for the first time.

Culture and Language Acquisition

Outside of the classroom, we spent a lot of time on what they call culture and language acquisition (CLA). CLA is the first thing missionaries must do when they go into a new tribe.

If we aren't fluent in someone's language and culture, it is very difficult to effectively teach them something new. With such an important message as the gospel, our missionaries want to be sure that they communicate it as clearly as possible!

During ITF, we applied these CLA principles to try to learn



New skill: climbing a coconut tree

Pidgin and Papua New Guinean culture.

Some CLA sessions were very hands on like learning to climb a coconut tree; shopping at the market; starting a fire without matches; preparing and cooking food over an open fire; and gardening.



New skill: preparing local food.



New skill: learning to cook over an open fire



Old skill: enjoying the local cuisine

At other times, we just sat down with small groups of locals and tried to talk to them and learn from them. Fortunately, Pidgin is close enough to English that we were all able to learn some of the language! It also helps that the PNG people are very patient with us.

Overall, the month of classes at the New Tribes Mission base near Madang were hugely insightful and challenging! Even after being a part of the mission here in PNG for a year and a half, I learnt so much!!

But the highlight of the ITF program is the week-long side-trip to an established Church plant. My team went to a village called Yifki to learn from the Kopf family and the Hewan people.

Each group of students was paired up with someone from the village who had volunteered to be our language helper. We had to apply what we had learnt about CLA to try to learn some Hewan.

They also taught us about village life – gardening, cooking, building, hunting, etc. Things that are simple and everyday life for them are strange and awkward for us.

The Yifki people were so gracious to put their lives on hold for a week to teach us so much!

In addition to our CLA time, we all had a lot of fun together whether hiking through the jungle, playing volley ball and soccer, or worshipping God.

Despite our limited language ability, we grew connected with these people in a special way.

This time in Yifki really cemented what we'd been learning in Madang. It took things

from theoretical to real life – real places, real people, real eternities.

Special Things I Learned

I could go on all day about the lessons that God taught me during ITF but there are a few particularly special ones that I want to share with you.

Possibly the most powerful lesson I observed in Yifki is the power of God to transform lives. On so many levels, Yifki is different to anywhere else in PNG that I have visited.

Eighteen years ago, Jonathan and Susan Kopf and their teammates, moved into another village nearby. They spent four years learning the Hewan language and culture and then presented the Gospel.

At that time, only ten people in the whole village believed God. At that point there had been an increase in violence in that area, so the missionaries had to leave shortly after.

Jonathan, however, felt responsible for these baby believers and made trips back to visit them when he could. One of them asked Jonathan if he and Susan would move into his family's village. They agreed and began again the process of teaching literacy and Bible lessons.

This time when they presented Jesus' death and resurrection, the majority of the village trusted God for their salvation.

A few years later, the people decided they needed an airstrip. They scoured the area for an appropriate location and hacked an airstrip out of the rainforest by hand. They then moved the whole village down to the airstrip.

Today, 80-90% of the people in Yifki profess faith in God. As they have built their new village, they have sought to build a community that honours God. Their whole worldview has changed and that makes them different from all the other Hewans around them.

Jonathan has written their story in a book called "Canopy of Darkness." I am reading it at the moment and I would encourage you, to get your hands on a copy!

A number of times over the course of ITF, I was reminded of the following verses.

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" Revelation 7:9-10 [ESV]

One night, a small group of us were singing worship songs around the campfire, when the two German girls started singing along in German. It was incredibly special to be able to praise God together in our different languages!

Again, at the Church service in Yifki, I looked around at one point

and noticed that the Bible was being read in four different languages: Hewan, Pidgin, German and English.

How wonderful that we could all be reading the same amazing truth about God at the same time in our own language!!

One Family

No matter where we are from, or what language we speak, all believers are one family! One day we will all praise God together!!

One very personal lesson, that I am constantly needing to learn, came to me while we were hiking to "spirit rock".

Spirit rock is a large formation down in the river bed. For us, a 2½ hour hike from Yifki. Traditionally, the Hewan people believed that spirits came from this rock. If they went too close to it, the spirits would attack them. The fact that they are now free from that fear and willing to take us down to the river is an amazing testimony, though that is not the only lesson I learned that day.

I was also struck by the beautiful picture of trust we were living out.

We were hiking through the jungle (and by 'hiking' I mean, slipping and sliding up and down the mountains), to a place none of us knew, being led by people we barely knew, and we couldn't even speak their language, but Jonathan and Susan said we could trust them, so we did.

We'd only know Jonathan and Susan for a few days but they're missionaries so they must be ok, right? They are! And it was... it was a great day!



These are our brothers and sisters in Christ, each and every one of us are part of the same family, no matter our background, our language, our history or where we live.



They hacked an air-strip out of the jungle ... by hand! Then they moved their entire village there.



Jerusalem Journal

ירושלים יומן

'Madman' Jesus Causes Havoc in Temple



by Abel Lissnar
April 30AD

The 'miracle man,' Jesus of Nazareth, has been gaining notoriety over the past three years, with large mobs gathering wherever he goes, likely hoping to see him perform another magic trick or a 'healing.'

He preaches around the countryside, with his regular band of 12 followers, some of whom come from quite disreputable backgrounds.

His preaching draws ever larger crowds, and the talk of him being the Messiah has not dissipated, despite warnings and threats from our religious leaders.

As yet, this impoverished carpenter has never claimed the title, preferring to keep out of trouble with our own leaders and likely steering clear of the Romans for fear of retribution.

He almost caused a riot when he went into Jericho recently. I was in the area and when I caught up with the excited crowd, I saw Jesus talking to someone in a tree. It was the chief tax collector Zaccheus whose main claim to fame is he's the likely the shortest man in that city, and one of the most disliked!

The crowd began to turn ugly though when that thief came down and Jesus asked Zaccheus if he would invite his group home. Although the little man was surprised, he agreed.

The crowd began to break up at that point, many angry that Jesus was socialising with such a notorious sinner, but this only confirms his earlier behaviour, demonstrating his desire to mix with our society's scum.

My understanding is that some of Jesus' closest followers include a former female publican and we know what kind of people they are! He befriends the lowest in our society, and at one time even defended a woman who had

at least two 'husbands.' He convinced the crowd not to stone her, despite God's clear command about adulterers.

If he wants to win the people's favour and sway them to believe he's the Messiah, he's going to have to start associating with a better class of people, and toady up to our highest clerics.

The following day he travelled onto Jerusalem. I arrived shortly before him as I'd been delayed by the larger than usual crowds due to the Passover Festival.

As he approached the gates on a donkey, the people began singing the pilgrim song, "God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord," and laid palm leaves on the road in front of him, as if he was an important celebrity.

Then on Monday Jesus entered the temple's outer courtyard and almost immediately caused havoc, yelling at the merchants who were selling birds for sacrifice, turning over tables, spilling their coins and breaking cages. Angrily he shouted "The Scriptures say, 'My house should be called a place of worship for all nations.' But you have turned it into a den of thieves!"

The people have been complaining for years about the extortionate prices at the temple, but nothing is ever done. This Jesus certainly has a compelling, authoritative style, but by the expression I noticed on the faces of the chief priests, he's not winning any important friends there.

A source within the temple claims that the priests have been in discussion about putting a stop to Jesus' erratic and appalling behaviours.

Hopefully once the festival ends, Jesus will take his rag-tag group of reprobates back out into the countryside and stop stirring up trouble in Jerusalem. [END]

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No name, undated, The Bible Journey: Jesus Entry into Jerusalem, available: www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney1/6-jesus-last-journey-to-jerusalem/jesus-entry-into-jerusalem/, accessed 01/09/18

But why was it so easy to trust these people I didn't know, when so often I won't trust God who I do know?

When one little girl took my hand and started leading me a different way than everyone else, I didn't think twice about letting her lead me. In the same way, I need to trust God. He knows where I need to go. I know that I'd be completely lost and helpless without Him, so, I need to trust Him without question.

This is a timeless lesson and one I have been taught many times. This is one I'm sure I'll continue to learn on a deeper and deeper level, because there is always more we can learn. [END]

Biography:

Elizabeth Gill has been a Registered Nurse with New Tribes Mission in Papua New Guinea since February 2017. You can follow Liz on Instagram.

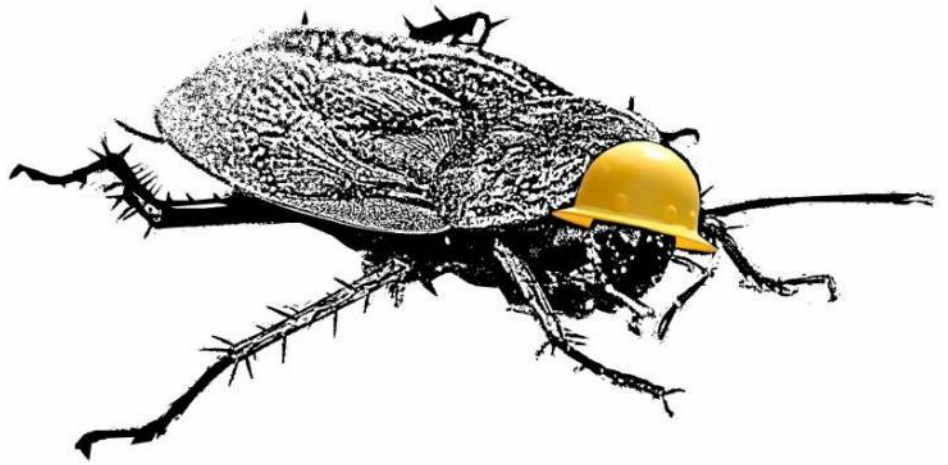


A-Musings



by Vicki Nunn

Close Encounters of the Cockroach Kind



I fear that I have become too well acquainted with cockroaches over the years. What is it about these insects that cause so many of us to shriek with terror at the mere sight of them?

Looking back over the years, I recall that I have had four styles of encounters with the dreaded little beasties, but before I share more about those occurrences, let me explain why I developed such an aversion in the first place.

As a young child, I remember my grandmother regaling us with a horrifying tale about a cockroach that had crept inside her ear while she was sleeping – and had died in there!

My little eyes opened wide with revulsion and horror, and for years afterwards I imagined that cockroach kicking its legs in its death-throws inside my grandmother's ear canal, while she frantically tried to dig it out!

Then there was my father who loved to entertain us with stories of his adventures, including the period when he worked as a signaller in the railway.

At the time he was required to stay overnight in the tiny signal cabin. In between trains he'd catch a nap on the floor. In fact, one night he managed to catch more than a few winks.

The hordes of cockroaches that lived there would scurry about at night, and dad spent most of his

sleep flicking them off when they crawled over his skin.

He recollected one night when he woke up from a sound sleep and found he was chewing on something, just as he'd been dreaming about eating something delicious!

This may help you to understand my dread of the horrible things and the way that I reacted the year I turned twenty.

1. The sadistic cockroach that wouldn't die

In my flat one night, an enormous cockroach that I swear was almost the size of a volkswagon, flew in through an open window and immediately honed in on me. No matter where I went running, screaming, with my arms flailing about in revulsion, the wretched creature would fling itself off the wall and aim itself directly at me.

In the vast expanse of that large, two storey flat where I was the only occupant that night, it persisted in trying to land on me!

Eventually, I managed to bravely run past it and snatched a

can of insect killer from the kitchen cupboard and went over and sprayed it.

I stepped back, waiting for it to fall down and die. Instead, it clung onto the wall as if enjoying the view, and so I sprayed it again and waited... and again... and again, until it was coated with white foaming liquid.

I reckon if I'd been courageous enough to step in for a closer look, the rotten thing would have been grinning sadistically at me.

I wondered why it was still alive, and when I glanced at the can I was holding, I realised I wasn't using insect killer but it was instead a tin of air-freshener.

While I hadn't managed to kill the cockroach, when it returned home, it sure was going to smell nice to its friends and family.

2. The hallway through hell

One of the flats I rented years ago was in a dilapidated old Queenslander that hadn't been bug-sprayed for probably half a century. Consequently it became cockroach central for a vast breeding crowd of the vile critters.

I used to dread having to use the old bathroom at the back of the building at night. Not only was it completely dark with no lights down that long, LONG corridor, there was always at least thirty huge cockroaches between me and bladder relief.

Sometimes they would join me in the bathroom, just in case I felt lonely.

3. Toilet rule number 1

In another rental property, an enormous fig tree overhung the residence, from which cockroaches used to dive in for regular visits.

I developed a very important rule while I lived there which I still observe to this day:

ALWAYS check the black toilet seat for cockroaches before sitting down.

Yes, I personally learned that lesson the hard way, and no amount of scrubbing made me feel clean.

4. A unique, scientific find

At one time I rented a flat in a lovely old house that unfortunately was home to a plague of small, brown cockroaches.

They emanated in their dozens from the flat next door where the resident had lived for more than twenty years. From what I

understand, he had likely never thrown anything out and possibly may never have cleaned it either.

It didn't seem to matter what cockroach baits or repellents my flatmate and I placed around our home, the creatures seemed to be breeding faster than we could manage to kill them.

After termites were discovered in the building, the place was treated for white-ants, and for six glorious months, we were cockroach-free!

Then slowly they began to reappear. The next wave of the bugs though were seriously messed up, with mutated, shrivelled up, useless little wings.

One night we received a visit from an albino cockroach. As it skittered down the wall beside me, I thumped the wall-panel next to it. The creature received the fright of its life, and flung itself off the wall, preparing to fly away because in its tiny cockroach brain, it was engineered to believe that it could still fly. Instead, after leaping from the wall, it immediately fell to the floor.

I realised at that moment that I'd discovered a rare albino, mutant, kamikaze cockroach! I'm sure there are few other people who can make that boast! [END]

Share your true drama story

Do you have a great Christian story about something that happened to you? Send it into us for consideration - you may just see your name in print and be able to boast about it!

Perhaps you've got a great writing talent and are keen to contribute as a regular volunteer journalist on the SPAG Team.

For more information, contact the Editor, Vicki Nunn via email on:

spagmag@yahoo.com.au

or phone (+61) 042 44 33 772

Tantalising Trivia

Did you like to play pirates when you were young? Sorry to have to break it to you, but two often repeated ideas from Hollywood movies are myths.

Buried treasure and walking the plank are a load of old parrot droppings.

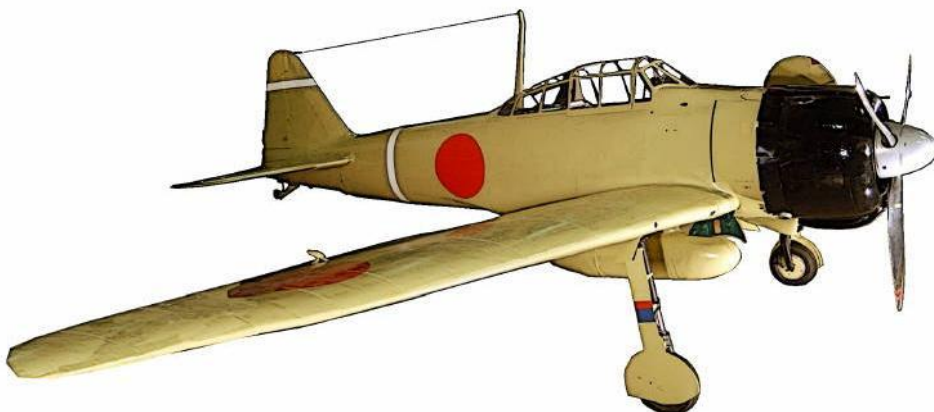
When you think about it, how likely would it be that a shipload of tough, worldly pirates would trust their captain to keep their treasure safe for them? In reality, once loot was taken from a captured ship, it was almost immediately shared out amongst the crew, and most pirates took it home for their families, or gambled their treasures away. Burying treasure on a deserted island would have seemed like insanity!

Secondly, walking the plank would have been a waste of time, when they could simply have thrown people overboard, or skewered them with their cutless.

While we're on the theme, many pirates had nicknames and aliases like 'Bluebeard' so their families couldn't be identified, otherwise they might be punished for their relative's crimes, or used as a bargaining chip to lure the pirate back home.

"Well, shiver me timbers!"

Sorry, but that's likely phoney as well, along with most of the pirate-type jargon spoken in old films!





Puzzle Page

Spot the Difference

Here's a new type of puzzle we haven't shared before. Can you spot the 21 differences between the original image at the top and the one below it? Some are easy and some are really tough! How good are your eyes?



Answer on page 73



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!

ENTRÉE: Bacon, Cheesy Brussel Sprouts

(serves 2)

Ingredients:

8-10 fresh brussel sprouts (not frozen)
 50-75g of full-fat Brie (not light)
 2-3 strips of streaky bacon 2-3 tbsp olive oil
 Salt & pepper Toothpicks

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F.) Cut the brussel sprouts in half and toss gently in the olive oil until well covered. Place onto an uncovered baking tray, then sprinkle on salt and pepper. Cook in the oven for 15-20 minutes or until tender, gently shaking once or twice.

While they're baking, cook up the strips of bacon and wipe off any excess oil. Cut the bacon into pieces just a little wider than the brussel sprouts.

Remove the brussel sprouts from the oven, then place a piece of brie on, then bacon and basil leaf on the top. You can make more of these as individual ones or place the second half of the brussel sprouts on the top before skewering.

Place back into the oven for a further 5-10 minutes until it heats through and the cheese softens, and serve immediately.



MAIN COURSE: Italian Meatballs (serves 2-3)

Ingredients:

500g (1lb) ground beef 1 tbsp full-fat cream
 ½ tsp onion powder ½ tsp Italian seasoning
 ¼ tsp pepper 2 tbsp olive oil
 1 tsp garlic paste or crushed garlic
 ⅓ cup whole milk ricotta cheese (drained)
 ⅓ cup Parmesan cheese (+ extra Parmesan cheese if you want them skewered)
 1 cup tomato & basil pasta sauce (no sugar & low carb) *or* low carb herbed tomato paste
 Fresh basil leaves and/or toothpicks (optional)

Italian Meatballs continued:

Instructions:

There are two choices here, and while they start out the same, they are two options about how you want to serve them. As shown in the photo, you can use them for a party or as an entrée, or you can cook it in the sauce in a pot as a main course.

Begin by combining meat, cheeses, cream, garlic and seasonings in a bowl. Mix until well combined, but don't over-mix.

Heat the oil in a large pot on low-medium heat. While the oil is heating, use an ice-cream scoop or round spoon to scoop up the meat mixture, then make into balls.

Gently brown the meatballs in the hot oil, but be careful because they're more delicate than standard meatballs as they're held together with dairy rather than breadcrumbs. When the meatballs have browned on all sides and cooked through, here are two options:

Your two choices:

1. Meatballs in pasta sauce; or
2. Skewered meatballs

Option 1: place the meatballs into a pot, then pour the pasta sauce over the top.

Stir gently to combine. Turn the temperature to low, cover the pot and simmer for ten minutes, gently stirring once or twice.

Option 2: dollop a little tomato paste over each meatball. Cut the extra parmesan into pieces and place a piece on top of each meatball. Then finish with a basil leaf on the top if you like, and skewer with a toothpick. Place into a heated grill and cook until all ingredient have heated through, then serve.

Note: There's no need for extra sauce as these are very flavoursome...

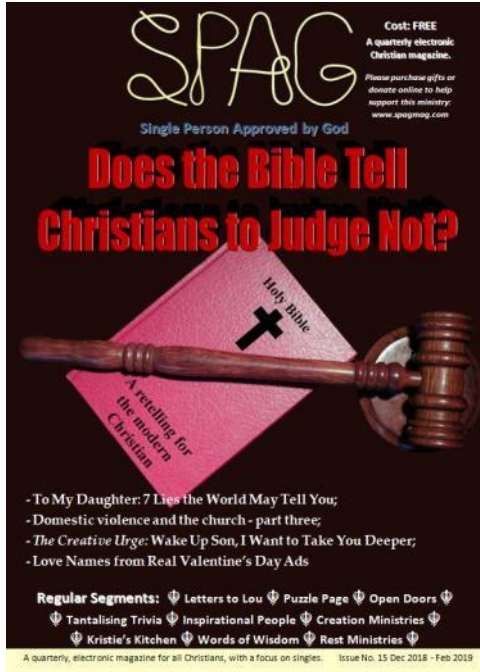
Gustoso! (tasty!)



Bibliography:

Wieland, Jennifer, undated, My Sweet Sanity: LCHF Italian Meatballs, available: www.mysweetsanity.com/lchf-italian-meatballs/, accessed 22/08/18

Next quarter's issue:



~ You can so easily help this ministry! ~

I urge you to seriously consider supporting us. Perhaps a one-off donation, or purchase something from our online store (www.spagmag.com), or set up your bank account to donate a regular amount. Even \$5 a month can make a difference, considering that in the last year we have received less than \$200. As you can imagine, that doesn't cover the many costs we encounter.

How about getting together with a group of 9 friends and each throw in a couple of dollars a week for a year, and hey presto - you've covered our internet costs, web fees and our post office box rental. That would be amazing, and would reduce the ongoing financial stress currently placed on our Editor, Vicki Nunn, who pays all costs out of her own disability pension.

~ Thank you for considering how you can make a difference. ~



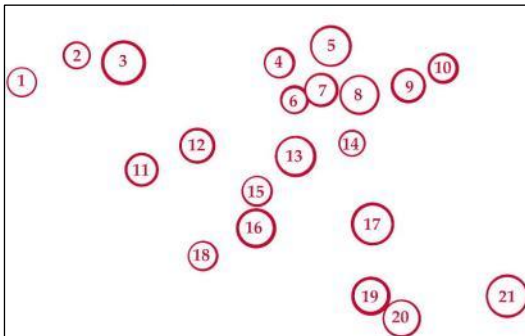
Did you guess what the item is in the close-up image on the top right from page 14?

If you guessed a dog's nose then *well done!* You deserve a big sloppy doggy kiss, or how about a juicy bone? Now drop and roll over!

-Answer- Puzzle Page Spot the Difference

Did you enjoy our newest type of puzzle on page 71? If so, there are plenty more to come. Here are your answers:

1. Instrument is longer; 2. Part of trombone is missing;
3. Shirt colour changed; 4. Instrument case a different shape;
5. Concrete has changed colour; 6. Book is now green;
7. Internally, the instrument colour has changed;
8. Trombone part is much longer; 9. Music stand is missing;
10. Bag has changed colour; 11. Man's hair has changed;
12. Bag colour has changed; 13. Music book has changed;
14. Music case is longer; 15. Tiles have changed;
16. Instrument is bigger; 17. Stripes on shirt now a different colour; 18. Suspenders have disappeared;
19. Man now wears a cap; 20. Book is missing; and
21. Person has disappeared.



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[NLT] New Living Translation, Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

[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.

17 December, 1998, "What's in a Name: Reflections of an Irrepressible Name Collector" by Paul Dickson, Published by Merriam Webster, ISBN 13: 9780877796138

Cape Otway, Victoria, Australia

