

SPAG

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- How to Make Sure You
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- *Real Life Drama*: They Feared
What Might Await Them
- It's Time for Revolution
- 7 Pieces of Financial Advice that
Forever Changed My Life
- Is This the Greatest Easter Painting
of All Time?
- The Agony of Waiting ... *and more*



Christianity in China Today

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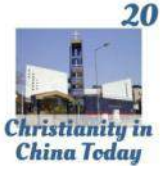
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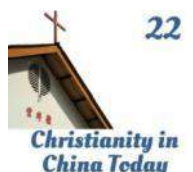
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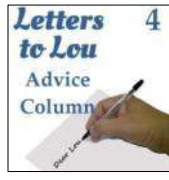


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"Every truth, every deed, every teaching is reduced to nothing more than religious noise when it isn't placed under and clothed in the commandment to love." Greg Boyd

"What if I speak in the most elegant languages of people or in the exotic languages of the heavenly messengers, but I live without love? Well then, anything I say is like the clanging of brass or a crashing cymbal." 1 Corinthians 13:1 [VOICE]

Editor's Letter



Welcome to the sixteenth issue of SPAG!

This issue's feature article is about what's happening to our brothers and sisters in China. While we'd initially planned to share an article about whether we're winning the war against slavery, with recent events in China, it was decided to postpone it.

While we may think that the loss of our religious freedom will never happen in our own life, and don't want to get involved in politics or make a fuss, that's the same kind of thinking that allowed the Nazi's to gain power in Germany. We must be alert to what's happening in our own country and across the world, and must resist efforts to take away our religious and personal freedoms! If we can learn anything from history it's this: our freedoms and liberties can be taken away silently if we don't resist, or in such small steps that we don't recognise it's happening.

Although our prayers may be small and humble, there is power in them! It's vital that we offer prayer support for our persecuted brothers and sisters, whether in our own country or elsewhere. Additionally, we can write letters of protest to country leaders who persecute those of faith. I would urge you to read this issue's articles "Christianity in China Today" beginning on page 18 and particularly Pastor Wang Yi's letter on page 30 which shares what standing up for our faith might look like in today's world.

We have lots of other inspiring and thought-provoking articles, and in fact Liz Gill has rejoined the team after her experiences as a nurse in Papua New Guinea. Welcome back Liz! Her new series is titled "I Wonder as I Wander," on page 51. On page 36, RUM (Return Unwanted Medicines) is a good reminder about what to do with unwanted medicines and its dangers. If this isn't a project in your country or town, perhaps you could consider instigating it.

On page 60 Vaneetha Rendall Risner shares about the agony of waiting, and while this is not specifically aimed at those who are single, this is an article I wish I'd read as a single person in my 20s or 30s, and during the times when I was going through some difficult and painful medical problems. Waiting on God can be agony, but I've come to understand that God has a purpose in it.

In our next issue we're celebrating SPAG Magazine's FOURTH birthday! Don't miss helping us celebrate. Did you know that you can support this ministry, by purchasing jewellery and keyrings etc from our **online shop**, or by donating? More importantly we ask that you help this ministry through prayer and that through it, God's voice will be heard, as He promises in Isaiah 55.



It is with sadness I report that Lori Yanez, one of SPAG Magazine's volunteer writers (USA), passed away mid February. She was a widow with an adult son. Lori had shared some terrific articles since 2017, and will be missed. Her various health issues meant she had to use a wheelchair, so I'm sure Lori's whooping it up in heaven right now!

Warm regards

Vicki Nunn,
SPAG Editor

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SPAG (Single Person Approved by God) is a free quarterly, online magazine for Christians adults, with a focus on singles. While it is based in Australia, it is an international, inter-denominational publication. Our threefold aims are:

- to honour and exalt God;
- to encourage, challenge and inspire all believers, with articles suitable for all Christian adults; and
- to provide Christian singles, Church leaders, married couples and Christian counsellors with some insight into the problems and needs of singles who can sometimes feel overlooked or even unwanted in their church or Christian community.

SUBMISSIONS:

Feel free to write to us via our email: spagemag@yahoo.com.au. Ensure you title your email with the relevant section of SPAG or address it to the Editor. You may feel compelled to respond to an article, or you may like to submit an article* or photo* of your own for consideration. Perhaps you have a question or personal struggle you'd like Lou, SPAG's Counsellor to respond to.

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

ADVERTISING:

If you would like to promote your business or major Christian activity in SPAG, please contact the Editor, Vicki Nunn on email: spagemag@yahoo.com.au or phone (+61) 042 44 33 772. Information about advertising costs can be found on our website ([link here](#))

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

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Singles: we understand that you may feel invisible, overlooked or even unwanted in the church. Be assured that your needs, concerns and problems are real. You are not alone, but are part of a vast family of brothers and sisters. God sees you and your struggles: He knows you and He loves you. The articles here are written to encourage, challenge and inspire you, whether single or married.

~ Please feel free to share SPAG Magazine with others.~

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 – My Sister is a Pain!

Dear Lou

My sister was always difficult to get along with when we were growing up, and I find her hard to tolerate, even as an adult. She's always sure that her opinion is the only right one, and if anyone disagrees with her, she claims we're saying that she's stupid.

She can also be very rude and sometimes nasty, and when we point out how rude or nasty she is, she says it was a joke, and that it's our fault we were offended because we don't have a good sense of humour! But usually her 'joke' is a mocking or nasty comment about someone there or even the person she's speaking to.

I know there's nothing that I can do about her manners, but whenever there's family get-togethers, I have so little patience with her behaviours that I find myself responding negatively to her know-it-all comments or rudeness. She seems to know just how to push my buttons, and even seems to take great delight in seeing me flare up. I'm struggling with knowing how to deal with it. I've been praying about it, but I don't know how to change my responses. Can you help me please Lou?

Miss Struggling

Hi Miss Struggling,

The only person who can make a change in your situation is you. It is time for you to step back and evaluate your situation afresh and then make the necessary changes in your life. At this point whether you like it or not your sister has total control of you and this includes your reactions to situations. Whether she is doing it intentionally or not, she is controlling you.

I know two brothers in a similar situation, and even though they're now in their forties, the older brother knows exactly how to get his younger brother going, and still finds great delight in doing it.

A few suggestions:

1. Take a significant step back from your sister and avoid letting her control your thoughts and behaviour.
2. Never react to her words, but walk away from any confrontational situation.
3. Remember the choices you have. You can either react or respond. Walking away stops you reacting. Take time to think about what was said. If there is any truth in it take it on board, but if it is incorrect or inappropriate then at a suitable time simply say to her, "I have thought about what you said and want to Say that you were incorrect in what you said." Then walk away – no discussion. NB No discussion.
4. You are now taking control of your situation.
5. It is sad that within a family you must step back from a sibling for your own sanity, but in doing this you are setting a new wholesome direction.

I remember reading years ago this phrase:

No one can make you angry.

You make yourself angry.

When a person can push your buttons and get you going, they very quickly learn that they can control you.

Now is the time to take back you power. What your sister does with the change in your response is not your problem. You are about getting the best possible outcome to allow you to move on in your life

I trust you can get your personal power back.

Kind regards

Lou

Letter 2 – What Do I Do About My Workplace?

Dear Lou

I started an apprenticeship in the building trade about ten months ago and I still have another three years to go before I'm finished. The thought of spending another three years here with these same guys, makes me feel sick. I'm starting to feel anxious and nauseous in the mornings before work.

It was ok at first. At the end of the first week we went and had a beer at the pub, and I had just one beer to fit in, even though I don't like beer. They kept on pushing me to have another one but I didn't, and that was ok. We muck around and have a bit of fun sometimes at work, and I was enjoying learning.

Then one day I let it slip that I was a Christian and ever since then, they go out of their way to ridicule me. I've just let their comments go by, but when they deliberately talk dirty stuff about their girlfriends or wives in front of me, just to see my reaction, and they'll say something about me and not having a girlfriend, or they'll talk about porn and it makes me feel disgusting when they talk like that.

I don't want to hear this stuff, and their dirty talk. I'm sick of hearing their rubbish and I've lost my enthusiasm for this work.

I don't think it's going to get any better and I'm wondering if it would be better for me to do an apprenticeship in another trade, since I'm still fairly early on in this one.

I don't really have anyone I can talk to about this, and when I wanted to talk to my Pastor, he always seems so busy and so I've just let it slide. Can you help me?

Confused and Stressed

Dear Confused and Stressed,

Welcome to a fallen world.

Stick to your standards and don't compromise your values. You talk about your current work situation, but you don't tell me anything about your family of origin. I don't

Letters to Lou

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want to assume anything about your upbringing, but simply wonder how well you were prepared for a secular world environment.

If you read my letter to Miss Struggling you will see two words I mentioned:

react and respond

In every life situation you will do either one or the other. I would love you to do an exercise for me. Get a piece of paper and make two columns. At the top of one column put the word 'react' and on the other column the word 'respond.' Now put this piece of paper on your refrigerator and for the next month evaluate every relationship situation in your life and see whether you reacted or responded. Put a tick in the appropriate column.

My suspicion for you is that much of what you do is a reaction. Again, you need to change your behaviour to one of response. This way you begin to take back your power. I would suggest some of the negative behaviour comes toward you because people know what pushes your buttons.

It will mean that you never join in negative or degrading situations, but learn to simply walk away from it.

Sometimes the behaviour that is thrown at you is to check if you are the real deal. Maintain your values and take control of your situation. You will be surprised to know that you will be respected for doing so.

I remember years ago building a close friendship with an alcoholic man. He would call me a wowser along with a host of other things. One day he said to me, "I know we give you a rough time by mocking you and laughing at your standards, but please don't change because we look up to you and secretly admire your courage. Please don't change."

Don't even think about changing your apprenticeship, but get a stronger backbone and be the kind of person God wants you to be. Make sure your faith is strong and secure.

Sincerely

Lou

Letter 3 – A Scary Roller-Coaster Ride

Dear Lou

I been a Christian for 6 years and sometimes its really good and I'm feeling really good. Then theres other times when I do something stupid or someone says something nasty to me and I feel really awful and want to hide under in my bed and never come out again.

It kind a feels like I'm on a roller-coaster ride. When I'm

feeling really good it's like I'm up high, and when I'm feeling really down, it feels like I'm so far away from feeling good that I'll never get back their again, and God seems really far away.

I hate it - the highs and the lows and being emotional an all over the place. I cry sometimes when its really hard and I wonder why it has to be so hard. I'm feeling confused and angry and I don't understand why God is letting it be so hard for me, specially when I sometimes feel like giving up.

Felicity

Dear Felicity

There is so much more about you that I would like to understand. To respond to your letter is all that I can do. I trust I am not making too great a number of assumptions.

Felicity, I hear a very young Christian speaking, one who has come to faith in Christ, and now desperately needs discipling to grow in their faith.

When I had young children, it was a day by day teaching, modelling, setting standards laying a foundation for them as children, then did the same as they became teenagers, young adults and even now as adults, I am still a model for them.

For you this will mean making sure you are a part of a sound Bible believing church, and being involved in a home group where you learn to grow spiritually.

Even more importantly than that is to have a spiritual mentor who will help you build accountability. Someone who will get to know you, and the areas of your struggle, and help you to grow in your life journey, and your relationship with God.

Anyone who has sat under my teaching will have heard me say 'get a mentor.' By the way, a good mentor is not going to be a best friend, because you will need someone to say the tough things to you.

I would love to get someone like you Felicity, and get you set up on your spiritual journey. [Contact the editor if you would like some help in this and she can refer you to me.]

I have often said that I don't have a problem changing a baby, feeding them and cleaning up after them, but if I am still doing that after twenty years I have a problem.

Felicity, you can make it, and your life does not have to be a roller coaster ride. Please get the help and guidance I have suggested.

Sincerely

Lou

Can We Fix It?

~ A Reflective Letter of Our Current Times ~



by **Joseph F. Kolapudi**

I recall that there was a time when things around us were not as they should be, a moment in time when for those in the past it was the present. The disease-ridden epidemics of the earlier centuries, the short life expectancy, the uncertainty of the world that hung in the balance, were times when the future looked far from optimistic, and change was just a dream.

Growing up prior to the Year 2000 was a time when things seemed a lot simpler to me than they actually were. Of course, the modern technological advances were not available, the conveniences of today were not present, and the availability of people at any given moment was simply not there. However, people seemed a lot more content, given the circumstances, but this does not seem to be the case today.

Although it seems that people are more optimistic in this day and age¹,



Job, his wife and three friends

the problems of the past still haunt us.

The recent tragedies in the United States² and Asia³, as well as the failures of our legal system and government, coupled with the persistence of disease and death is all cause for concern.

Whenever I recall visiting my grandparents, who lived in a small village in South India for their entire adult lives, they always seemed to be happy and content.

Having never travelled outside the country, and never encountering the technological marvels that we have today, they had no cause for worry about the future. In fact, simply being around them made my heart sing; not because I forgot my problems or the problems of the world, but because being with them made me feel content as well.

Job's Story

The story of Job sounds a lot like the premise of a bedtime story that goes horribly wrong, and then amazingly right.

A man who lived in Biblical times had a large family, a wonderful estate, and plenty of wealth and friends. He lost it all, literally overnight - his family, his estate, his wealth, and what seemed like all his friends; and the ones he had left showered him with scorn and shame.

Yet when he reached his lowest point, and wanted to throw in the towel, he finally realised that there was Someone who had been with him all along: God. The same God who had given him everything he had been blessed with in the first place.

He finally heard from God, and confessed that He was greater than whatever difficulties Job had faced, or would face, in his limited time on earth.

It was then that God restored to him everything he had lost, and more, and through his understanding, Job regained his confidence in God.

Reflecting on this story, and on my own life so far, it seems that we often take for granted what we already have, and either look back on a time when things seemed better, instead of looking forward to what the future may hold. It often seems easier to live in the moment, or does it?

Is it Possible to Find Contentment While on this Planet?

As I write this letter, I pause to ponder on the twists and turns, the ups and downs, the good and the bad that life often brings. Perhaps a change in perspective is what we most need to find the ever-elusive contentment that we often seem to chase after, but never find.

"The Pursuit of Happiness" is a film that I recall as being quite an inspirational one for me growing up as a kid. It retells the true story of Chris Gardener, a man who invested his savings into a bone density scanner to sell to medical organisations. The equipment, while a better quality than xrays, was also more expensive and eventually he loses his wife and apartment because he's unable to sell enough to keep them afloat.

Taking his only child with him, they live in homeless shelters until he can find employment. Wanting to better himself, Chris takes a chance and agrees to take on an unpaid internship for a year at a stockbrokers.

Desperately he works at keeping his son and himself fed and protected for the duration, until he can prove he is worthy of paid employment.

The film has many memorable quotes, but I just want to highlight

two. The first comes from a scene in which Chris is talking to his wife, by now separated, about seeing his son.

He's standing in the rain on the street corner, with only a few pennies to spare as the bus pulls up. He is forced to hang up the phone and board the bus with the change he has left. There he sits dejected, the rain drops mingling with the tears on his face as he thinks aloud:

"It was right then that I started thinking about Thomas Jefferson on the Declaration of Independence, and the part about our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And I remember thinking, 'how did he know to put the pursuit part in there? That maybe happiness is something that we can only pursue, and maybe we can actually never have it. No matter what. How did he know that?'"

Eventually, he gets offered a paid job as a stockbroker through an amazing turn of events, and just before the close of the film, Chris comes to the realisation that:

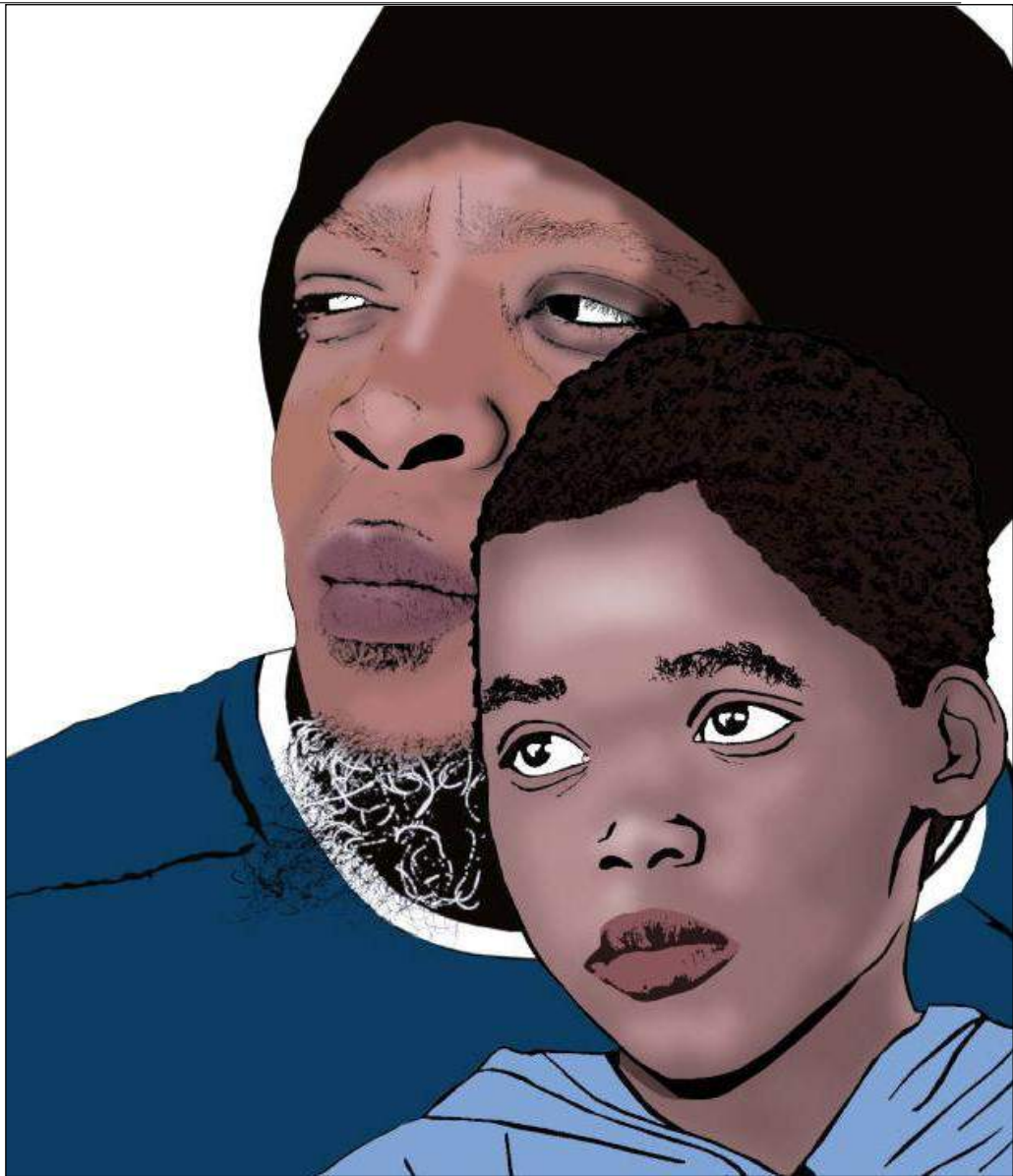
"...the future was uncertain; absolutely, and there were many hurdles, twists, and turns to come, but as long as I kept moving forward, one foot in front of the other, the voices of fear and shame, the messages from those who wanted me to believe that I wasn't good enough, would be stilled⁵."

So he found a way to be content in his situation, simply by accepting that the status quo was unacceptable.

The Key To Contentment

Understanding the possibilities in life, and the places and stages in which we find ourselves up a creek without a paddle is inherent to finding the key to contentment.

Constantly longing for "the good old days" isn't going to make their return any likelier than finding out our future which is still waiting to be written.



"The Pursuit of Happyness"

In closing, I find that the Serenity Prayer sums it up best by stating:

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference⁶."

The key to contentment comes when we allow ourselves to know the God who gives it.

[END]

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Mantis Shrimp 'Fist' Could Inspire New Body Armour



by Dr Jonathan
D Sarfati

[Note: this is the pre-publication version which was subsequently revised to appear in *Creation* 36(4):40–41.]

Traditional cameras use a single average light setting to control brightness of an image. That works well when there are similar levels of brightness over the whole scene, but not in areas with non - uniform illumination. This is a critical problem for video surveillance cameras, where the clarity of images is crucial for later police identification of suspects.

The mantis shrimp (aka stomatopod), has one of the strongest 'punches' in nature. A specimen only an inch (2.5cm) long can draw blood if they hit a human finger, and bigger ones have caused severe injuries. Considering how some can grow a foot (30cm) long, and one has even reached 15 inches (38cm) long, they are not to be messed with!¹³

With an intricate catapult mechanism, its 'fist' (called a dactyl) can accelerate up to 10,600g (a greater acceleration than a 22 calibre bullet - while underwater - and hundreds of times what humans can stand²), high enough to induce a mini -

explosion called cavitation.³ If kept in captivity, this punch can shatter the glass walls of their tanks. And in the wild, it breaks the shells of its prey, which are often marvels of engineering toughness in their own right.⁴

We also noted its amazing colour vision, with 12 primary colours receptors - four times as many as humans.⁵ Later we noted how DVD makers wanted to copy the shrimp eye's ability to change the polarization over multiple colours.⁶

But back to its powerful punch: it raises the question of how the 'fist' itself can survive. We noted that it moults frequently to regenerate. But frequent moulting could not be the whole story. It could not be frequent enough to withstand 50,000 high - speed strikes against hard prey shells in its lifetime.

Recently, a research team at the University of California, Riverside's Bourns College of Engineering, discovered what makes its club so damage-resistant.⁷

There are actually three different regions of the club that cooperate "to create a structure tougher than many engineered ceramics."⁸



The outer region that actually contacts the prey is mineral rich, like our bones. But this intrinsically brittle material is buttressed by the next layer, comprising "highly organized and rotated layers of chitin ... fibres dispersed in mineral". (Chitin is a



complex polymer, i.e. made from smaller molecules joined together, in this case modified sugars. It is the main component of the outer "skeleton" of many invertebrates, and we have used it to make a strong biodegradable material called "shrilk"⁹) In the mantis shrimp club, the arrangement of its tough chitin fibres enables them to absorb the energy of stress waves from the impacts. And the third region comprises "oriented chitin fibres, which wrap around the club," which holds it together.

The three layers allow small cracks to form, but the differences in hardness and orientation prevent the cracks propagating. Researcher David Kisailus, "who studies the structures of marine animals for inspiration to develop new materials," says:

It's counterintuitive: Mother Nature prevents catastrophic failures by allowing local failures. It's that architecture that makes them so strong.¹⁰

That is, as with so many biological materials, it's not only the chemistry, but also the fine structure that makes them extremely strong. Kisailus also said:

"This club is stiff, yet it's light-weight and tough, making it incredibly impact tolerant and

interestingly, shock resistant. That's the holy grail for materials engineers."

Indeed, a summary article said the shrimp club "has a much higher specific strength and toughness than any synthetic composite material."¹¹ He sees the immense applications if we can reproduce this design. The reduced weight could cut fuel consumption in electric cars and airplanes, and the increased impact resistance should reduce repair bills. Dr Kisailus also hopes to help soldiers, because at present body armour adds about 10kg (over 20lb) to his load. Armour based on this design could be just as strong for a third of the weight.

Dr Kisailus and colleagues received \$590,000 in funding from the Air Force Office of Scientific Research to continue their great research. But given the high-class science of making the imitation material, what does it say about the Maker of the original?¹² [END]

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7 Pieces of Financial Advice that Forever Changed My Life



by **Joshua
Becker**

Becoming Minimalist

Motivational speaker **Jim Rohn** famously said we are the average of the five people we spend the most time with.

One significant reason this happens is because of their example and model. As we recognise their positive aspects, we seek to emulate those characteristics in our own lives.

Another reason is because of the conversations we have and the advice we share. The more quality time we spend with people, the more nuggets of wisdom we begin to hear from them.

Over the years, I've been blessed to have countless positive influences in my life. Their example and their wisdom have shaped me in every way - including my financial practices. Here are seven specific ways.

1. "Most people who overspend their income do so in one of three ways:

1. Too much house;
 2. Too much car;
 3. Too much entertainment."
- (Financial adviser, 2008)

I made a passing statement to a financial adviser friend of mine one particular evening over dinner. I had no data to back up the claim, it was purely an observation made on anecdotal evidence. I told him that most people I know who are living in debt seem to carry a monthly car

payment. That's when he offered the financial advice above in the form of his own personal interactions.

There are outstanding circumstances for sure (medical emergencies, tragedy, job layoffs, etc.), but generally speaking, if you have a hard time living within your income, check your spending on your home, your car, or your entertainment (dining, tickets, trips). I have tried to keep all three modest ever since.

2. "Begin your marriage living on just one income." (Boss, 2000)

My wife and I got married in June 1999. During our first several years of marriage, we both worked full-time jobs. My boss at the time, a man I looked up to in countless ways, offered me financial advice one day during a short conversation by the coffee-maker.

He suggested, even though both of us had steady incomes, as a newly-married couple we should work hard to live on just one of the incomes and save the other.

So we did. My wife's income each pay period went immediately into savings and my income went into the checking account.

One year later, that savings account became the down payment on our first home, and four years later, when we had our first child, we were still living on one income which freed up my wife to



choose to stay home if she desired.

3. "Buy your car with cash." (Friend, 2004)

My first car, a Chevrolet Corsica, I bought from my parents and paid them back monthly over the course of one year. When that car began to sputter eight years later, I entered the marketplace to purchase another.

Talking it over with my friend one day over a roast beef sandwich, he offered me his thoughts:

"Whatever you have in savings," he said, "make that your budget for your next vehicle - even if it isn't much. Then, rather than making a payment to the bank on your existing car, begin making a monthly payment to yourself for your next car.

Whatever you would have paid for a car payment, put into a savings account. When your next car dies, you will have a

bigger budget for the next one - then, repeat the cycle.

You'll be surprised how quickly you are able to upgrade your vehicle over the course of your life."

This is advice I have never strayed from, and it's totally true.

4. "If you can't keep a monthly budget, use a spending plan instead." (Writer, 2009)

In 2009, as we were just beginning our journey into minimalism, I was introduced to the idea of a Spending Plan.

Contrary to a monthly budget that requires detailed tracking and frustrates many, a spending plan provides flexibility as it offers more of a snapshot, moment-in-time glance of your current spending, but the knowledge and lessons learned from the snapshot view of income vs. expenses provides valuable insight for course correction.

The idea is worth the effort for everyone. First, determine your monthly take-home pay. Second, subtract your fixed monthly costs. The money left over is your monthly discretionary income.

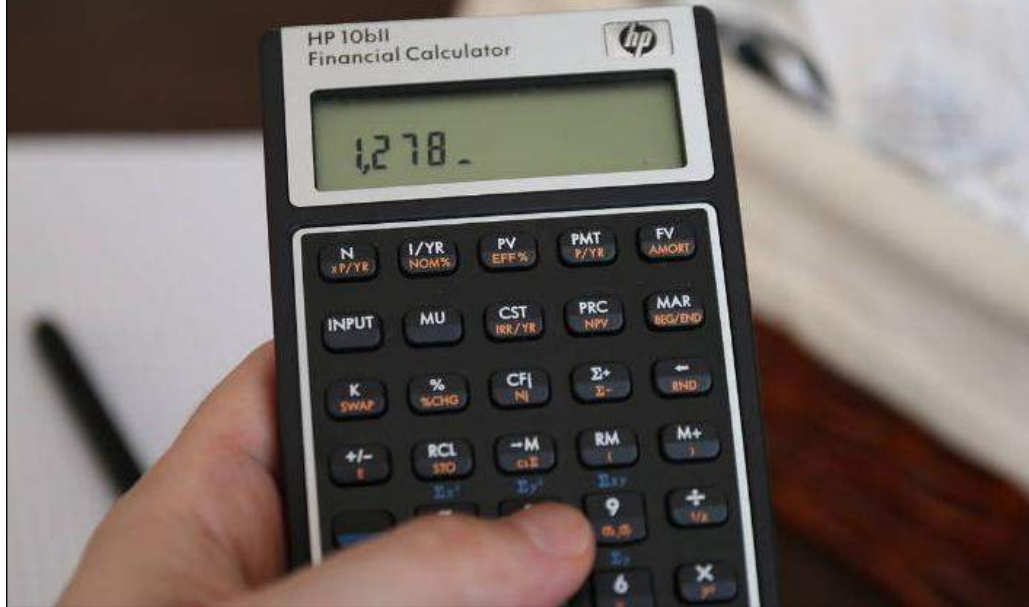
With that number in hand, you are in a good place to determine where you'd like that money to go. **(A more detailed explanation is linked here.)**

5. "You are never too poor to give." (Parents, 1979)

Growing up, there was not excess money around our home. In fact, only years later did I begin to hear the stories and understand how tight it was at times.

The most significant involves a local grocery store raffle contest that happened to draw my parents' names on the very week

If you can't keep a monthly budget, use a spending plan instead



they seemed entirely out of options to feed their young family, and yet, through it all, my parents lived with a simple philosophy on generosity:

"We will give to charity, and we will teach our children to do the same."

Their example and their advice have revolutionised my life and my view of money.

No matter how tight my money situation has been over the years, I don't think I have ever missed the opportunity to give away at least a small portion of every paycheck I have received.

This is not because I made lots of money. Quite the contrary, it is because I learned from a young age that generosity has rewards of its own and is always worth the sacrifice.

6. "Never take a job just because of the money. Always consider the money, but never let it be the determining factor." (Mentor, 1998)

In 1998, following a two-year internship after college, I began the search for my first full-time

job. I remember, at that time, seeking the counsel of a spiritual mentor of mine.

Sitting across from his desk, I asked about money and how much I should let that factor dictate my decision.

He responded with some of the best advice I have ever received:

"Joshua, you need to consider the money. A job that pays too little or seeks to take advantage of you will ultimately add stress and worry to your life and keep you from doing your best work. So you have to consider it, but never let it be the most important, determining factor in your search.

Always consider your talents and skills and strengths and the opportunity to make a difference in the world first."

I have tried, throughout my life, to consider income in the jobs I have taken, but have never allowed it to be the most determining factor, and I have literally no regrets concerning the

*One extra monthly payment per year on your mortgage
shortens the length of your loan by years*



path that career advice has taken me.

7. “One extra monthly payment per year on your mortgage shortens the length of your loan by years.” (Real Estate Broker, 2001)

While working through the specifics of our first home purchase, our real estate agent made a passing comment concerning our mortgage payments. For her, I think it was just a simple fact about the mechanics of amortisation schedules. But for me, it became a life-changing goal:

make one extra monthly payment each year on my mortgage.

Over the course of the next sixteen years, we’ve worked hard to add a little extra each month to our mortgage principle - even if it’s just \$50.

In the end, most years it’s added up to a full extra monthly payment. As a result, we’re on-track to have our mortgage fully paid well before 2031, and for that, I’m forever grateful. [END]

Biography:

I’m a writer who wants to inspire others to live more by owning less. (WSJ Bestselling author of *‘The More of Less.’*)

Our story begins in suburban Vermont while I was cleaning the garage, my wife was cleaning the bathrooms, and my five year old son was playing alone in the backyard. I struck up a regular conversation with my neighbour who commented, “Maybe you don’t need to own all this stuff.”

The juxtaposition was striking. My possessions piled up in the driveway... my son in the backyard... my day slipping away... I immediately recognised something needed to change. My belongings were not adding value to my life. Instead, they were subtracting from it.

We began donating, recycling, and removing our unnecessary personal possessions. We embarked on an intentional journey to own less stuff.

As a result, we discovered more money, more time, more energy, more freedom, less stress, and more opportunity to pursue our greatest passions: faith, family, friends, and we decided to write about it.

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Thrifty Tips

New Car or Used Car?

A friend or workmate turns up with a gorgeous, new car, and you look at your seven year old, not quite so shiny car and suddenly it looks like a heap. Financially, would you be better off purchasing a new car, or keeping your old one, even though it’s starting to require more repairs?

Extensive studies suggest that mid-range price vehicles around eight years of age, are likely to be cheaper to repair and run than repaying or leasing a new vehicle.

Still unsure? Ask yourself, which is more important: getting into serious debt, or looking good in a flash car?

Consider also, your new car is only going to be new for about a year or until you get that first scrape. After that, it’s just another used vehicle that’s getting older by the minute. Do you really want to get yourself into such a big debt simply to please your ego? [END]



Calling All Music Lovers!

~ Positions Vacant ~

Do you love Christian music? How are your writing skills? Do you regularly buy new Christian music? Would you like to take on a challenge? How about becoming a volunteer Christian music reviewer with SPAG Magazine?!

Want to know more? Contact SPAG Magazine’s Editor, Vicki Nunn on our email:

spagmag@yahoo.com.au



G.O.D: Global Outreach Day

~ 25 May 2019 ~

What is G.O.D. About?

It is about you sharing the gospel in any possible way to people who never heard it or are not yet born again Christians and leading those people to salvation in Jesus. Churches across the world get involved with G.O.D. every year

All you need is a willingness to go - share the gospel according to your personal gifting and calling as the Lord leads you.

There are thousands of ways to do this, either personally or together with a group or a church.

What Can I Do?

Reach at least ONE person with the Gospel on Global Outreach Day!

From a personal approach to unsaved friend or neighbours to sharing the Gospel on streets, campuses, public places or transportations to larger evangelistic events and outreaches, there are many, many options.

Reach out to the people, don't wait for them to come to you!

Create opportunities to:

- get in contact and start a conversation;
- share your testimony and the Gospel message;
- offer them prayer; and
- lead them to a decision

It is not so difficult as you might think!

Since G.O.D. began, Christians and churches from around the world have participated and

shared their experiences as Christians or as a member of a Christian church with people they meet and/or people they know.

Recent years have seen 25 million believers involved and over 10 million people gave their lives to Jesus on Global Outreach Day.

How Has God Used G.O.D.?

God continues to speak to thousands of people around the world through His children.

People can become involved on their own, or as part of a church or other Christian group, and sometimes there are countries that involve many of their churches on this special day.

Following are some of the Christians in many countries that have been involved with G.O.D.

1. Dominican Republic, Caribbean

In 2018, thousands and thousands of believers were mobilised to share the gospel in many creative ways from door to door, visiting hospitals, and jails, sharing in public places, giving breakfast and food, and sharing G.O.D.'s tracts and other Christian materials. We concluded the day with open air evangelistic services.

2. Germany, Europe

Whole churches participated and organised outreaches on the streets and in parks. In Frankfurt, there was a worship team performing on stage, other people did skits, and some shared their

personal stories about becoming a Christian. There was also a tent for Christians to pray for those in need.

Dominican Republic, the Caribbean



Germany, Europe





Ouagadougou, Africa



Japan



Also in Germany, Peter K., a passionate Christian musician, played a small worship concert at a nursing home in the east. He talked about Jesus in a language they could understand and about 28 elderly people invited Jesus into their hearts. A 101 years old lady played worship on her own harmonica for the first time in many years!

3. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Africa

After a time of prayer, we went out into the village, into the streets, to share the message of the Gospel with people through gospel tracts titled "Who Will Deliver Me." It was a fantastic experience for all of us, to approach people and share the message of God's love. All the glory be to God.

4. Japan

God's love was shared across Tokyo - the biggest city in the world. Thousands were reached and many hundreds were open to ask questions, receive prayer and even accept Jesus into their life. The day ended in celebrations with the Joy Festival in Shibuya.

Missions teams from many nations served together. Simultaneously campaigns were run online that reached hundreds of thousands of Japanese people.

5 Tanzania, Africa

In Tanzania more than 450,000 Christians from 10,000 churches participated in G.O.D..

6. Mexico, Central America

Around 6,000 churches and Christian organisations were involved with G.O.D. Approximately 3,000 pastors were trained with the "G.O.D. 3-Steps-Booklet" in personal evangelism.

Japan



Tanzania



Mexico



Kosovo, Europe*Sri Lanka**Kenya, Africa*

Those involved talked to people in parks, on the street and even from door to door.

7. Kosovo, Europe

"But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again." John 4:14a [ESV]

This was the message we spread in Kosovo to 3,500 people through distributing bottles of water in a hot day. Our expectations were that they would throw away the flyers, but God made it happen differently.

It was 30°C (86°F) and people accepted us, drank the water and read the message on it. It was a great opportunity to meet different kinds of people. We really hope and pray that God has already started working in their hearts.

8 Sri Lanka

We joined together for the upper room prayer and the following day as teams we had a prayer walk through all streets around city. In the evening we shared the gospel by distributing tracts with those we met.

9. Kenya, Africa

Many churches in over seventeen counties in Kenya worked together to reach the lost.

More than 5,500 pastors were trained and prepared for evangelism through the "3 Steps" course. This resulted in many evangelistic activities and outreaches and 17,918 souls were saved.

As our team went through the Kibera slum sharing the Gospel, a woman beckoned us and before we had shared much information with her, she asked to receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour - an

indication that the harvest was ready

10. Philippines

The Carissa Wesleyan Church from San Jose del Monte, Bulacan participated in the Global Outreach Day. Before we went out, we gathered at the Church to pray, and asked God to prepare our hearts and to direct us to people who needed hope in Him.

Though it was raining, it did not hinder us to share the love of Jesus. We distributed gospel tracts, did house to house evangelism and prayer evangelism. As a result, three youth attended the Sunday worship the following day! To God be the glory!

11. Guinea, Africa

Around 54,000 Christians from 447 churches participated in this BIG event!

As a result, over 160,000 peoples were reached and about 44,000 gave their heart to Jesus.

Philippines*Guinea, Africa*

Hong Kong, China



Samoa, Polynesia



Madagascar, Africa



12. Hong Kong, China

We distributed more than 1,000 invitations and tracts. We had a Pakistani pastor and his wife ministering to Muslims. One Hindu man asked to receive Jesus right there. We also had floating teams to interact with onlookers and passersby.

13. Samoa, Polynesia

Over 500 Christians turned up. We gathered in front of our government building in town at 7am and for one hour worshipped and listened to the Word together.

Then from 8am to 11am we dispersed all over our town of Apia. In three hours we reached 1,272 people. 779 gave their hearts to Jesus and 240 rededicated their lives back to Him.

14. Madagascar, Africa

Around 1,500 Pastors and Evangelists got together and worked out our strategy for reaching Madagascar with the gospel!

15. Venezuela, Central America

There were many outreaches throughout Venezuela that touched countless people. Evangelistic groups were visiting homes, passing out Gospel literature, praying for people and sharing Jesus with them. [END]

Venezuela, Central America



Biography:

[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.

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Global Outreach Day & Go 2020

Together We Can Reach the World!

G.O.D. Vision & Challenge

The vision of Global Outreach Day is of every believer sharing the Gospel on the **last Saturday of May every year.**

Every believer is a witness!

Millions of Christians in over 140 nations are already sharing the Gospel on that day. The goal is for every Christian on this day to reach at least one person with the Gospel message.

93% of church members never share the Gospel with others:

"If we can figure out a way to turn an audience into an army - it will change the world." Rick Warren

The Global Outreach Day (G.O.D.) is a catalyst to mobilise the church for evangelism. This day of action is the first step to a life-style evangelism.

Prayer

The Global Outreach Day combines prayer with action. That is why we are connected with many prayer movements like GDoP, IHOP or The Call. The night before the G.O.D. Christians around the world are praying, e.g. in Nigeria in the "Holy Ghost Service" with over 500,000 people for it.

Training

Christians worldwide are trained to spread the Gospel by being taught three simple steps:

- How to start a conversation;
- How to share the Gospel;
- How to lead somebody to Jesus

Register/subscribe to the newsletter here.

Download the 3 Steps Training here

During the entire month of May 2020, our goal is to **mobilise 100 million Christians** to share the Gospel.

Every Believer is a Witness!

Together we can reach one BILLION people with the Gospel!

For more information see the pdf **on this link.**

Soon there will be a dedicated website for this extraordinary project with further information.

You can register for GO 2020 now on our website via this link:

www.go2020.world

DIDUNO

Australian History and the Christian Connection

Safe Work Australia

~ Bob Mellows ~

**Mining Disaster at Mt Lyell,
Tasmania, October 1912**

A smouldering fire in a timber pump-house deep underground led to one of the greatest mine disasters in Australian history. It also led to one of the greatest rescues - a triumph of human determination and cooperation.

Just over a century ago, on 12 October 1912, the day's shift of copper miners headed deep into the bowels of Mt Lyell in Tasmania. Forty-two of the men would never make it topside again.

When the fire started, nearly a hundred workers were trapped below it. Unable to find a passage to the surface, they urgently needed breathing equipment to have any hope of surviving, and the nearest suitable gear was in the gold-mining towns of Bendigo and Ballarat on the far side of Bass Strait. Breaking all existing shipping and railway-speed records, the breathing apparatus reached Tasmania's West Coast in time to save over fifty miners who were finally brought to the surface four days later.

Many people across Australia who'd prayed for the men were grieved at the tragic losses. A Royal Commission was ordered into the safety practices at the mine.

Bob Mellows

Eighty years later, a mine manager on the other side of Tasmania came to the conclusion that Royal Commissions are not the answer to workplace health and safety. The law of the land is no match for the law of love and concern for other's wellbeing.

Bob Mellows, manager at the Cornwall coal mine in the Fingal Valley from 1991, convinced both his employers and his subordinates their dangerous workplace could be vastly safer - providing they treated each other differently. He looked to the teaching of Jesus:

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Luke 6:31

Exploring Jesus' teachings on love, Bob Mellows shared his understanding of Scripture with the mine-workers. In 1998, he said, "It is not because of legalism that Jesus Christ told us to love God and love one another. It was because He knew it was essential to our well-being in all aspects of life."

He went on to say, "The Foundation of Safety is loving one another (and ourselves)."

In the decade between 1980 and 1990, about 200 accidents a year had been reported at the Cornwall Mine. Management had annually made steep compensation payouts through-

out that time. But when Bob Mellows' Scripture-inspired values were taken on board, the accident rate plummeted. By 1993, it was almost zero. It remained there for well over a decade.

Stephen Baxter, another Tasmanian Christian, had this to say: "Here we see a clear picture of how the values of Jesus work in the real world and a result when one person takes Jesus seriously and becomes salt and light in the community." [END]

Notes:

Information provided by Associate Professor Stuart Piggan (R.C. Mellows, Cornwall Coal Company, 1998, Coal Operators Conference: Improving Relationships, University of Wollongong Research Online, Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences, available: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1275&context=coal>) This conference paper was originally published as Mellows, RC, Improving Relationships, in Aziz, N (ed), Coal 1998: Coal Operators' Conference, University of Wollongong & the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1998, 273-279.

¹Photo of Bob Mellows by Neil Richardson, 15 August 2008, The Examiner: The quest for coal in the Fingal Valley, available: www.examiner.com.au/story/518532/the-quest-for-coal-in-the-fingal-valley/, accessed 13/02/19

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Bob Mellows, former Cornwall Coal mine manager, at the South Sisters (Photo by Neil Richardson, The Examiner¹)

Note by Annie Hamilton, DIDUNO

Occupational health and safety is a deep concern of many employers - partly because of laws surrounding workplace safety. Partly too because accidents are costly to companies, both in terms of insurance increases, time lost, equipment damaged and workers hurt.

Bob Mellows was able to bring an entirely new perspective to this issue when he pointed out Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, knew about physical toil and manual labour, and He never suggested governments could legislate that we care about each other in the workplace - or anywhere else for that matter. Only His law of love can change our hearts to make that a reality.



Landscape as a result of mining, including open cut, near Queenstown, Tasmania, Australia

Photographer: Jimmy Harris, 10 August 2008, available under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license, no alterations made to image, available: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Landscape_near_Queenstown,_Tasmania.jpg, accessed 13/02/19

Christianity in China Today

FEATURE

Introduction by Vicki Nunn

With all that has been happening in China, particularly in recent months, and the increasing persecution against Christians there, I thought it appropriate that we share some articles about the struggles of our Christian brothers and sisters in that country. Note that the only approved Christian churches are those of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement which are strictly run by the Chinese Government and give little freedom to Christians. Most other churches are illegal. Following are just a few reports about what's been occurring there.

The final item is a letter by Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church which he'd written to be published should he disappear for 48 hours or more. He was arrested in December 2018 along with his wife and around 150 of their parishioners. Pastor Wang Yi, his wife and many of the parishioners have not yet returned. I think you'll find his letter insightful, and I ask that you pray for them, not to be rescued, but to be a beacon of God's light and love in that dark place.

In Chilling Move, Chinese Official Erases First Commandment

by Christian Today Australia

Chinese authorities have ordered a church to remove the First Commandment from a display on the grounds that it contradicts the policy of China's President Xi Jinping.

According to **Bitter Winter**, which reports on religious freedom in China, about 30 officials in Henan Province's Luoning country conducted an inspection at the church and wiped off the commandment from a display on the wall.

The commandment says:

"You shall have no other gods before me."

The church belongs to the state sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement. However, when its pastor protested he was told:

"Xi Jinping opposes this statement. Who dares not to cooperate? If anyone doesn't agree, they are fighting against the country."

The official said:

"This is a national policy. You should have a clear understanding

of the situation. Don't go against the government."

The move reflects China's policy of 'sinicization', which has seen religion coming under increased pressure to be subservient to the state in its teachings and practices. Christians have been harassed and arrested and churches have been closed.

The Vatican has struck a controversial deal with the Chinese government allowing it a say in the choice of bishops, though the final choice on their appointment will be made in Rome; the agreement's defenders say it will help protect believers.

Muslims have also suffered under the regime's determination to increase state control over religion.

Around 1 million Muslim Uighurs have been detained in 're-education camps' in an attempt to stamp out their unique culture. And according to the regime-friendly Global Times, China instigated a new plan with representatives from China's eight Islamic associations where participants agreed to 'guide Islam to be compatible with socialism and implement measures to sinicize the religion'. Hinting at



President Xi Jinping has said that "active efforts should be made to incorporate religions into socialist society." (<http://www.kremlin.ru/>)

an expansion of the programme to other religions, the article says:

"Governing religion is a common challenge faced by all modern countries. The main purpose of China's five-year plan to sinicize Islam is to seek governance that tallies with Chinese practice, and it is not only limited to Islam." [END]

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OpenDoors®

Open Doors: The Church in China

Thriving in the Midst of Persecution

by Emma Rogers

Open Doors Australia & New Zealand

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

"It is true that we all have to face persecution as disciples of Jesus Christ." Pastor Victor

Victor is an Open Doors partner, and has been a Chinese pastor for almost a decade.

His ministry began when he met his wife. He heard her story of conversion from Islam to Christ, and the persecution that came from within the Muslim community.

Now he ministers to church leaders who reach out to Muslims and new Christians. Grace is one of these leaders.

Grace is involved in churches full of Christians who have converted from Islam. She told us of the challenges she faces in holding church gatherings.

"Brothers and sisters are under much pressure and fear that they might lose their jobs or other freedoms," she says.

The local government's laws



A church in Xian, China

for illegal religious activities come with serious punishment, from unemployment to imprisonment, and Christian converts are suffering.

Believers rely on spiritual support from the body of Christ to endure. Grace is one of many leaders who minister to Christians suffering in this way.

She told us, "We are grateful that you make such an effort to come to us. You can't imagine how much encouragement you have brought us."



A woman reading her Bible in Xian, China

For further information about how you can support and strengthen Christians in China, contact Open Doors:

[link to Open Doors website](http://www.opendoors.org.au/persecuted-christians/blog/the-church-in-china-thriving-in-the-midst-of-persecution/)

[END]

"Brothers and sisters are under much pressure and fear that they might lose their jobs or other freedoms..."



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Bible Class Targeted in China Clampdown - Christians Interrogated -

by Christian Today
Australia

Chinese authorities have once again targeted the Early Rain Covenant Church with a police raid on a Bible class.

The flourishing church in Chengdu was repeatedly raided in December (2018), with 160 of its members detained including its pastor Wang Yi and his wife Jiang Rong.

According to China Aid, more than 30 students had gathered at a restaurant for an 'Introduction to Christianity' class and a meal. Around 20 police officers confiscated their phones and took them to a police station, where they were interrogated.

According to China Aid's source, the Christians were kept at

the police station for several hours without food or water, and it was very cold in the interrogation room.

Wang Yi and Jiang Rong are being held on charges of 'inciting subversion of state power'.

The moves against Early Rain are part of a wider Chinese clampdown on religion that has also seen around 1 million Uighur Muslims detained in 're-education camps'.

According to **Bitter Winter**, which reports on persecution in China, authorities are enforcing 'church-free zones' around schools, forcing churches to close if they are too near schools. It cites an official order stating:

'All private Christian

gathering sites around universities and colleges, as well as on-campus activity sites, are to be shut down in accordance with the law.

Criticism and (re)education of participating teachers and students is to be carried out by the school authorities.'

Bitter Winter also reports on a new electronic surveillance programme, 'Sharp Eyes', which monitors churches.

It quotes one rural Christian as saying:

'If they install any more surveillance cameras in the village, there will truly be nowhere left to go.

During the Cultural Revolution, some Christians were able to dig underground cellars for congregations, but I fear in the future we won't even have a chance to do that.' [END]

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'House Church' meeting in Shunyi, Beijing, China

Photographer: Huang Jinhui, Wikipedia, 5 April 2015, available under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license, photo has been altered to protect identity of individuals, available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:People_singing_chant.JPG, accessed 22/01/19

Hong Kong Christians Wear Black to Protest China Church Closures

by Christian Today
Australia

Christians in Hong Kong are coming to church dressed all in black as a protest against mainland China's crackdown on prominent congregations.

Church leaders at the **Early Rain Covenant Church** in Chengdu including its pastor Wang Yi are the latest to have been arrested by the authorities, who are particularly targeting 'underground' churches which are not part of official bodies.

According to **the South China Morning Post**, the movement has been started by five progressive Christian groups that have launched an internet campaign in support of the action.

Organisers said they had reached 47,000 people via Facebook. The Post visited one church in Tai Po where a third of the 500-strong congregation was dressed in black. Next week numbers are expected to rise.

Hong Kong, formerly a British colony, experiences greater freedom than mainland China and Christians are more able to voice dissent.

According to a prayer letter from Early Rain Covenant Church reported by China Aid, some of those still in custody have been denied access to their lawyers.

Around 160 people from the church have now been arrested,



A Church in Tai Po, Hong Kong

some of whom have now been released but some of whom face criminal charges.

According to China Aid, preventing prisoners meeting with lawyers is 'a tactic that violates Chinese law but is often employed during procedures targeting prisoners incarcerated for political or religious reasons'.

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Other Actions Against Christians in China



by Vicki Nunn

Christians across the world right now are more persecuted for their faith than any at other time in human history, particularly in China.¹

Christianity was introduced there a few times over the last 2,000 years,² though it was either suppressed or didn't become popular. There are also claims that it was introduced there by the Apostle Thomas around 68AD.

It wasn't until the early 1800s that it was reintroduced and Christian faith began to truly grow.

Persecution of Christians is nothing new to our brothers and sisters in China. As early as 1811,^{3,4,5} Christians were specifically targeted after the enactment of a law by the Daoguang Emperor, such that any Europeans who tried to spread their Christian beliefs to Manchus and Han Chinese, would be sentenced to death.

Added to this threat, any Chinese person who wouldn't repent of their conversion to Christianity, was to be sent to Muslim cities in Xinjiang^{3,5} (Turkistan) and submit to becoming slaves of their leaders.

Since then those old laws were relaxed, and a new 'freedom of religion' law was introduced into China's Constitution in the early 1980s, and updated in 2004. The law states:

"No State organization, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion."⁶

Despite this 'freedom,' the Chinese government persists in and has increased its persecution of Christians, particularly since the introduction of new laws in early 2018,^{7,8} which are often more focussed on mainland China.

As you will see in this article, the Chinese Government has continued to ignore its own laws which very clearly promise to protect church buildings and property, particularly that under chapter 5 "Religious Property."⁹

So What's Been Changing in China?

The Government has a no tolerance policy regarding 'illegal' publications. Following are examples of persecution due to possession of 'unacceptable materials':

- In 2004, the government found many printed Christian articles in the residence of Beijing Church leader Cai Zhuohua. He and his family were fined and jailed;
- Church leader Zhuo Heng from Xinjiang was caught and arrested in 2007 after accepting a shipment of around 2,700kg of Bibles.

One of the most popular and influential books for Christians is 'Zianan Shixuan' (Canaan Hymns⁸), a book of nearly 1,000



Shenzhen Christ Church, (Protestant)
Futian District, Shenzhen, Guangdong

hymns set to traditional style music.

These were written by Lǚ Xiǎo Mǐn (or Xiaomin also known as Sister Ruth), an uneducated woman from a farming family in rural China who became a Christian in her late teens.

Despite having no formal music training, nor the ability to write the songs down in musical notation, Xiaomin wrote over 700 songs in the first decade alone.

It was after her songs began to spread within her village and then to others, that someone taped her music, and her songs began to be transcribed.

Although naturally a shy person, Xiaomin's musical ability is attributed to the Holy Spirit, and she eventually spent much time travelling around and evangelising in the Henan area of China.

During that period, Xiaomin was arrested twice, first in late 1992 after which she was detained for 67 days. She wrote a further 14 songs whilst incarcerated and her



Christians.

The second arrest was around 1998 when the Government began a crackdown on illegal publications. The publishers and distributors of her book were punished as well.¹⁰

Despite the Government's efforts, copies of this hymnal can still be found in many house churches across China, and even in some of the government controlled Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches.

The government continues its efforts to suppress these illegal materials, jailing and fining offenders when possible, but nevertheless the black market for them is flourishing.

The 'Good Old Days'

In earlier times, communist propaganda was force-fed to the public through speeches and talks on loudspeakers erected everywhere, for just that purpose.

Prominently displayed communist quotes and signs appeared in public places, private organisations and even people's homes.

Most Chinese had little if any access to information or materials outside of their country that weren't written for and influenced by communism. Every moment of the day for the average person, was saturated with party-state propaganda.

While once the government was able to control many of its people through these techniques, particularly in rural areas where education was often more limited, in the last couple of decades, increasing access to the internet, and easy access to illegal copies of materials and so on, has given many Chinese citizens a thirst for

items and knowledge other than the sanctioned communist materials. Despite the Government's no tolerance policy regarding 'illegal' publications, cds, dvds etc, they, continue to flourish on the black market

For thirty years, news reports and media were carefully controlled by the government, but during the last twenty years, information that is suppressed through the normal controlled media channels, can now be found through the black market.¹¹

In addition, fiction and non-fiction books and media are available that aren't influenced in any by communism as they once were.

The Chinese people are gobbling up this new material and entertainment and because the government simply doesn't have the resources to deal with the flood of non-sanctioned material, they have reluctantly come to an agreement with publishers that any works are acceptable as long as it doesn't attack the country's political powers and policies.

While the government has grudgingly accepted these new developments and that their people now have access to non-communist views and concepts, their desire for control over their people has increased, particularly in relation to religion. They view it as dangerous to communism, especially because of the increasing number of their population turning away from communism and millions have instead embraced Christianity, with some statistics suggesting that the number of Christians in China may now outnumber those who believe in communism.¹²

Increasing Punishments and Persecution Towards Christians

Following are just a few examples of the many atrocities committed against Christians in the last decade.

Attacks on believers as well as on their buildings, home churches and related materials and equipment, even sometimes homes and businesses, continue unabated, and if anything, are escalating in China.

In 2009:

On 13 September 2009, around 400 police and Government officials, demolished a shoe factory that was being constructed by a local house church in the Fushan, Shanxi Province, and beat up dozens of people they found living there. The Government refused medical treatment for the injured.¹³

In the week after that incident, thousands of Christians turned up in the rain to pray about the attack. (NB: the online news report about this incident was recently removed from Youtube.)

This was followed up the next week with authorities harassing the church members who were seeking compensation for the destroyed factory and injured individuals.

Authorities spitefully targeted other local churches by turning off their water and power, likely to discourage them from supporting the Christians in the first church and perhaps to discourage rebellion. (NB: the online news report about this incident was recently removed from Youtube.)

Later that same month seven people from the destroyed church/factory were kidnapped by the police while on their way to submit a petition about the incident. All other church members were either placed under house arrest or were continually monitored.

On 11 October, nine church members were detained as criminals, and in late November the cases were taken to court at which five of them were sentenced to three to seven years of imprisonment.¹⁴ (Another news

report about this incident was recently removed from Youtube.)

In 2010:

In December 2008, the Chinese government organised the destruction of three buildings of the Chengnan Church in Tinghu District, Yancheng City, even though it was an approved and registered Three-Self Patriotic Movement church, and the documentation was in order.

Ten people from the church were injured when they tried to stop the demolition.

In June 2010, a group of people were sent by the authorities to disrupt the Sunday service being held amidst the rubble of the old buildings, and to beat members of the congregation. The government then sought to destroy any remaining structures.

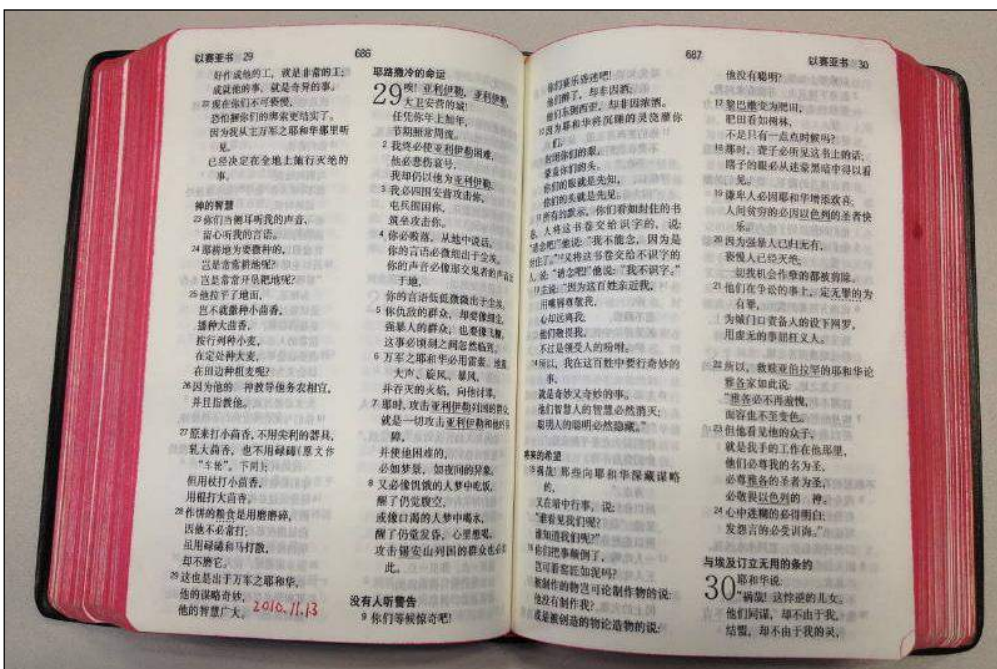
Despite this, members of the church continued to meet at the site and protested the demolition.¹⁵

The Government eventually ordered the church property to be destroyed in November 2010.¹⁶

In 2011:

On 14 November, a 125 year old church in Tai'an, Shandong province, was to be demolished, despite the fact that it was a registered and government approved Three-Self Patriotic Movement Church.

Four of the buildings were designated as protected national his-torical landmarks in 1994, and yet the Chinese government approved the plans of real estate developers to demolish the buildings. At the time, at least one wall of a building had been destroyed and congregation



Chinese Bible



members angrily demanded that the demolition cease.

A number of elderly members of the church attempted to stop the destruction and were beaten.¹⁷

In 2013:

In the Chinese province of Zhejiang alone, beginning in 2013, over one thousand two hundred Christian crosses were removed from church steeples over a couple of years.¹⁸

In 2014:

International Christian Concern (ICC) share a video online of Christians in Wenzhou City, China as they tried to stop the forcible demolition of a church's cross.

On 11 June 2014 at 5am, hundreds of government workers equipped with construction equipment forcibly broke into BaiXiang Guan Tou Church and attempted to remove the cross from the roof of the church. The Christians had been given no warning and the authorities provided no official paperwork.

In response, church members mounted a standoff for over three hours. On the video link following, you can see the police barricade blocking people from entering the church for morning worship at 8am, then more believers turned up to protect the cross. **Warning:** there is some footage of police violence. (Link to online video here.)¹⁹

Also in the same area in mid September, members of the Salvation Church barricaded themselves inside and were brutally attacked by police, and dragged away.²⁰

On 20 June, the cross of the Yahui Church, Pinyang Country, was removed by the government. (Link to online video here.)²¹

In 2015:

On 30 November authorities demolished the cross on top of Shizhu Church in Taizhou.

The local authority's requirement for crosses was that they be no larger than 1/10 of the size of the church wall, and be placed on the sides of the church but not the front. The Government though, planned to remove and destroy all crosses by the end of 2015.

When enquiries were made to the government about the destruction of the cross, they denied all knowledge or claimed that they weren't involved.²² (For more information about the Government's plans and churches that were affected until that time, you can access the document on this link.)

Also in November, the government continued its threats to demolish Xialing Christian Church in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, an

approved and registered Three-Self church.

The members hired a team of human rights lawyers, including the lawyer Zhang Kai, and they were successfully able to temporarily halt the demolition order.

Zhang Kai eventually became involved with around 100 churches each seeking protection from demolition. After that, he and his assistant disappeared. It was later discovered that he was detained by authorities and accused of threatening national security. He was sentenced to a six-month detention in a 'black jail,' which are known for their torture of prisoners.^{23,24}

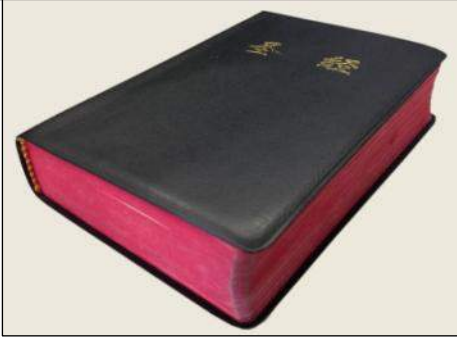
In 2016:

Early in 2016, churches in Zhejiang Province were threatened with destruction of their building's crosses unless their congregation chose to dismantle them voluntarily.

By early March at least 49 crosses had been removed and demolished, despite the protests of many churches.

The authorities took it further though when churches refused to remove their own crosses. Zhongchang Church, located in Wenzhou had its electricity and water cut off in February and were unable to hold any services because of interference by the government.

Guozhuang Church was notified in February that their building was erected without government approval and the Wenzhou Municipal Ministry of Land and Resources demanded that they return the illegally occupied land within three days.²⁵



On 20 May 2016, despite ongoing consultations between the Pastor of the Zhu Yáng Church in Wenzhou and local officials, the government arranged for the destruction of their church, because authorities wanted to use the site for a 'redevelopment plan.' Church staff were forcibly evicted as hundreds of personnel suddenly turned up to destroy the building, and security was set up to cordon the site and remove anyone who entered.

On Sunday, two days later, the congregation held its service amongst the ruins of the church, and still praised God.²⁶

In 2017:

An historic Catholic church in Wangcun, near Changzhi, in the south-eastern Shanxi province church was founded a century ago, and then in 1949 was confiscated by the government and set up as a factory that went bankrupt in 2005.

In 2007, authorities approved the restoration of the church. While ownership of it was hazy at that time, in 2012 the government decided that the church foundations and the old chapel really did belong to the Catholic church.

Then in 2017, after the congregation expended a considerable amount of money to begin the restoration, the Communist Party District

Committee, and district authorities changed their mind (again) due to the need for "urban planning." Instead they sent their people in with bulldozers and equipment to demolish the church so they could replace it with a public square to "...enrich the life of the people."

Thousands of believers including priests, surrounded the church and its wall and prayed as they stood in the rain. They asked God to make the the would-be destroyers' "...heart less hard and act in accordance with the law of the state that protects freedom of religion."

Several priests and laypeople were injured.^{27,28} (Link to first online video of this action & to second online video of this action.)^{29,30}

In 2018:

Another church was destroyed in early January. The Golden Lampstand Church in Linfen, Shanxi province had been erected only about ten years prior. (Link to online video here.)

In February, government authorities in Kashgar, commenced a propaganda campaign through their local police stations to discourage religion,³¹ which included police carrying banners with anti-religious slogans.

Since it's efforts intensified in 2013, the Government has now dismantled around 2,000 crosses.³²

On the night of 7 June, the only Catholic church in Ordos (Dongsheng Church), in China's portion of Inner Mongolia, was destroyed. Lay leader Yang Yizhi and pastor, Father Gao En, were woken by the sounds of a large

group of around 100 people who had turned up for the demolition. When they tried to stop the destruction, the two church leaders were placed in handcuffs, taken away and detained for about 20 hours.

The destroyed church was discovered by congregation members when they arrived the next morning for mass.

While the church was legally registered with the government, the local government decided to destroy it to make way for a new road.³³

What the Government Demands

The current President, Xi Jinping, emphasises that anyone in the Communist Party of China must be an "...unyielding Marxist atheist" and he also "...instituted a broad campaign to suppress all forms of dissent."^{34,35}

Many people, including children continue to be taken into custody and placed in internment camps, for example Chinese Muslims, where:

"Uighur Muslims are remade into atheist Chinese subjects."

Children have been forcibly taken from their parents and placed in Chinese 'orphanages,' likely in an attempt to convert these children and future generations into loyal subjects who embrace atheism and communism.

Just prior to Christmas in 2018, government officials carried out raids that forced churches to close and they removed Christmas trees and Santa Claus.³⁶

One of these churches was the Early Rain Covenant Church, a house church (illegal) in Chengdu



at which time Pastor Wang Yi, his wife Jiang Rong along with around 150 church members including children, were taken into custody.

As at 21 February 2019, both Pastor Wang Yi and his wife are still detained in an undisclosed location and have been charged with “inciting subversion of state power,”^{37,38} which if proven, could see them both serve up to 15 years in jail.

Whilst in custody, some of the church members reported that they’d suffered violent abuse.

Conclusion

It is difficult for those of us in freer countries to imagine or truly understand what it must be like for our fellow believers in countries like China, where persecution means that they must watch what they do and say every moment of the day, and to keep their churches and Christian practices and beliefs hidden from ruthless authorities.

Their stress levels must be enormous, wondering every day, “Is this the day they’ll arrest me?

Will my family and friends be safe? Is this the day they’ll beat me? Is today the day I meet my Heavenly Father?” [END]

Next Article

The next short article in this series provides some information about Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church who was discussed a little earlier.

Following that on page 29, is a letter written by Pastor Wang Yi:

“My Declaration of Faithful Disobedience” (on page 30)

He’d prepared this letter several months in advance, to be published should he disappear for 48 hours or more. His letter has now been made available, and has been translated into English and other languages, and shared across the world.

I strongly encourage you to read it and to pray for our Chinese brothers and sisters in Christ, not to be rescued but to be God’s light in that dark place.

Here is a link to the Early Rain Covenant Church's Facebook page, which sometimes provides translations of their posts in English.

Towards the bottom of this page is a table of links to talks by Pastor Wang Yi and other church

leaders, which can be found on Steve Childers’ website, in English. [END]

A number of videos and articles about ongoing persecution in China can be found in the notes section of this article which have been linked from within the text.

Following below are some extra video links about the persecution of Chinese Christians. There is considerable information available on many websites providing a further detailed picture of what is occurring in China should you wish to undertake more research:

- <https://youtu.be/CcCHInA6UMg>;
- <https://youtu.be/g3n0Sh8J438>;
- <https://youtu.be/V6s54GBmpg>;
- <https://youtu.be/-pqOrW5JvrQ>
- <https://youtu.be/i2b-HXHpa7s>
- <https://youtu.be/xqRE1WjUJK4>

The Pope calls on all Catholics to pray for the Church in China:

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The history of Christianity in China:

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	Church-State Conflict: 20 Ways Persecution is God’s Way to Shepherd Us (in English); and
	Reaffirming Our Stance On The House Churches (95 Theses) (in English);
458 Chinese Pastors	Joint Statement: “A Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith (11th edition)(in English)
Li Yingqiang (church elder and school headmaster)	How the Church Should Face Persecution_(in English)
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Other Actions Against Christians in China

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About Pastor Wang Yi



by Vicki Nunn

Born in 1973, Wang Yi attended Sichuan University and earned an undergraduate degree in law. After that he worked in Chengdu University until 2008, as a lecturer in law.

Wang became a prominent human rights activist and later, one of the few human rights attorneys who worked on behalf of Christians. He also published articles that were pro-democracy on his website, and was often critical of the communist regime.

Earlier in 2004, a current affairs style magazine, "Southern People Weekly" included him in a list of the "50 Most Influential Public Intellectuals of China." This led to the Communist Party blacklisting him from publishing, and taking down his website.

A Man of Faith

In 2005, Wang became a Christian and began to serve in his church.

In the following year he was one of a group of Chinese human rights attorneys who travelled to the USA to meet with President George W. Bush to discuss religious freedom.

He was a member of a group of six Chinese scholars that in 2007, signed an open letter to their communist government demanding that it comply with decent human rights principles, prior to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

A portion of the letter stated:

"A government that cannot safeguard its citizens' basic human rights has no [moral] right to sponsor the Olympics."

In 2008 he founded the Chengdu Early Rain Reformed Church (later the Early Rain Covenant Church).

In the same year he was awarded the "Prize for the Contribution to Promoting Religious Freedom" when he attended the "Conference for Global Christians in Law," in Washington DC.

In 2009 he became an ordained teaching elder, and just two years later (in 2011), Wang took on the role of Senior Pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church which eventually grew to around 700 members.

The Communist Party Begins to Pay More Attention

In 2015, Wang along with the Pastors in his church, wrote and posted the document:

"Reaffirming our Stance on the House Churches: 95 theses."

It challenged many of the Christian churches in China and even had an impact on churches in other parts of the world, to consider their church in relation to God and the government and whether it gave its sovereignty and authority to their government or to God.

The theses (which were written with a nod to Martin Luther's 95 theses to the Catholic Church in 1517) covered varying ethical questions such as who has authority over our conscience as Christians, and whether the Bible plays an integral role in the constitution of the church.

It also challenged them to consider whether there's a conflict between our Christian beliefs and ethics when we're required by an authority to conform to its own non-Biblical standards and demands on our conscience and rationality.

The Communist Party sat up and took notice. They were not happy.

The Events of 2018

In May, while preparing a prayer service to be held on the tenth anniversary of the Wenchuan earth-

quake, the Chinese police arrested Pastor Wang for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." Many other people who arrived to attend the service that morning, were also detained. At the same time, the police took away all of the publications they found in the church.

After this event, Pastor Wang warned his church members that it was the beginning of more trouble for them. His prediction proved accurate.

In December 2018, Pastor Wang Yi, his wife Jiang Rong along with around 150 church members including children, were taken into custody. Wang and his wife were eventually charged with "inciting subversion of state power," a common allegation that the communist regime claim, because they view religion as a threat to their own tenets and power.

The Pastor, his wife, and many others from their congregation are still in custody while those who were released are under house arrest. Should Pastor Wang and his wife be convicted, they may spend up to 15 years in jail.

Pastor Wang had earlier written the letter "My Declaration of Faithful Disobedience," to be released if he should be detained for 48 hours or more.

The letter was published and is shared on the following pages.

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*Pastor Wang Yi and
his wife Jiang Rong*

Over 100 members of Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, China, were arrested beginning Sunday, December 9, 2018. At the time of publication of this translation, arrests were still being made.

Among those taken away were Pastor Wang Yi, Senior Pastor of Early Rain (church), and his wife, Jiang Rong, who have not been heard from since Sunday (photo on left).

Foreseeing this circumstance, Pastor Wang Yi wrote the declaration below to be published by his church should he be detained for more than 48 hours. In it he explains the meaning and necessity of faithful disobedience, how it is distinct from political activism or civil disobedience, and how Christians should carry it out.

We thank Brent Pinkall and Amy Cheung for their contributions in translating this letter.

My Declaration of Faithful Disobedience

by Pastor Wang Yi

Senior Pastor

Early Rain Covenant Church
Chengdu, China

On the basis of the teachings of the Bible and the mission of the gospel, I respect the authorities God has established in China. For God deposes kings and raises up kings. This is why I submit to the historical and institutional arrangements of God in China.

As a pastor of a Christian church, I have my own understanding and views, based on the Bible, about what righteous order and good government is. At the same time, I am filled with anger and disgust at the persecution of the church by this Communist regime, at the wickedness of their depriving people of the freedoms of religion and of conscience.

But changing social and political institutions is not the mission I have been called to, and it is not the goal for which God has given his people the gospel.

For all hideous realities, unrighteous politics, and arbitrary laws manifest the cross of Jesus Christ, the only means by which

every Chinese person must be saved.

They also manifest the fact that true hope and a perfect society will never be found in the transformation of any earthly institution or culture but only in our sins being freely forgiven by Christ and in the hope of eternal life.

As a pastor, my firm belief in the gospel, my teaching, and my rebuking of all evil proceeds from Christ's command in the gospel and from the unfathomable love of that glorious King.

Every man's life is extremely short, and God fervently commands the church to lead and call any man to repentance who is willing to repent. Christ is eager and willing to forgive all who turn from their sins.

This is the goal of all the efforts of the church in China - to testify to the world about our Christ, to testify to the Middle Kingdom about the Kingdom of Heaven, to testify to earthly, momentary lives about heavenly, eternal life. This is also the pastoral calling that I have received.

For this reason, I accept and respect the fact that this Communist regime has been allowed by God to rule temporarily. As the Lord's servant John Calvin said, wicked rulers are the judgment of God on a wicked people, the goal being to urge God's people to repent and turn again toward Him.

For this reason, I am joyfully willing to submit myself to their enforcement of the law as though submitting to the discipline and training of the Lord.

At the same time, I believe that this Communist regime's persecution against the church is a greatly wicked, unlawful action.

As a pastor of a Christian church, I must denounce this wickedness open-ly and severely. The calling that I have received requires me to use non-violent methods to disobey those human laws that disobey the Bible and God. My Saviour Christ also requires me to joyfully bear all costs for disobeying wicked laws.

But this does not mean that my personal disobedience and the disobedience of the church is in any sense "fighting for rights" or

political activism in the form of civil dis-obedience, because I do not have the intention of changing any institutions or laws of China.

As a pastor, the only thing I care about is the disruption of man's sinful nature by this faithful disobedience and the testimony it bears for the cross of Christ.

As a pastor, my disobedience is one part of the gospel commission. Christ's great commission requires of us great disobedience. The goal of disobedience is not to change the world but to testify about another world.

For the mission of the church is only to be the church and not to become a part of any secular institution.

From a negative perspective, the church must separate itself from the world and keep itself from being institutionalized by the world.

From a positive perspective, all acts of the church are attempts to prove to the world the real existence of another world.

The Bible teaches us that, in all matters relating to the gospel and human conscience, we must obey God and not men. For this reason, spiritual disobedience and bodily suffering are both ways we testify to another eternal world and to another glorious King.

This is why I am not interested in changing any political or legal institutions in China. I'm not even interested in the question of when the Communist regime's policies per-se-cuting the church will change.

Regardless of which regime I live under now or in the future, as long as the secular government continues to persecute the church,

violating human consciences that belong to God alone, I will continue my faithful disobedience.

For the entire commission God has given me is to let more Chinese people know through my actions that the hope of humanity and society is only in the redemption of Christ, in the supernatural, gracious sovereignty of God.



...all acts of the church are attempts to prove to the world the real existence of another world.

If God decides to use the persecution of this Communist regime against the church to help more Chinese people to despair of their futures, to lead them through a wilderness of spiritual disillusionment and through this to make them know Jesus, if through this he continues disciplining and building up his church, then I am joyfully willing to submit to God's plans, for his plans are always benevolent and good.

Precisely because none of my words and actions are directed toward seeking and hoping for societal and political transformation, I have no fear of any social or political power. For the Bible teaches us that God establishes governmental authorities in order to terrorize evildoers,

not to terrorize doers of good. If believers in Jesus do no wrong then they should not be afraid of dark powers.

Even though I am often weak, I firmly believe this is the promise of the gospel. It is what I've devoted all of my energy to. It is the good news that I am spreading throughout Chinese society.

I also understand that this

happens to be the very reason why the Communist regime is filled with fear at a church that is no longer afraid of it.

If I am imprisoned for a long or short period of time, if I can help reduce the authorities' fear of my faith and of my Saviour, I am very joyfully willing to help them in this way.

But I know that only when I renounce all the wickedness of this persecution against the church and use peaceful means to disobey, will I truly be able to help the souls of the authorities and law enforcement.

I hope God uses me, by means of first losing my personal freedom, to tell those who have deprived me of my personal freedom that there is an authority

higher than their authority, and that there is a freedom that they cannot restrain, a freedom that fills the church of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.

Regardless of what crime the government charges me with, whatever filth they fling at me, as long as this charge is related to my faith, my writings, my comments, and my teachings, it is merely a lie and temptation of demons. I categorically deny it. I will serve my sentence, but I will not serve the law. I will be executed, but I will not plead guilty.

Moreover, I must point out that persecution against the Lord's church and against all Chinese people who believe in Jesus Christ is the most wicked and the most horrendous evil of Chinese society.

This is not only a sin against Christians, it is also a sin against all non-Christians. For the

government is brutally and ruthlessly threatening them and hindering them from coming to Jesus. There is no greater wickedness in the world than this.

If this regime is one day overthrown by God, it will be for no other reason than God's righteous punishment and revenge for this evil. For on earth, there has only ever been a thousand-year church. There has never been a thousand-year government. There is only eternal faith. There is no eternal power.

Those who lock me up will one day be locked up by angels. Those who interrogate me will finally be questioned and judged by Christ.

When I think of this, the Lord fills me with a natural compassion and grief toward those who are attempting to and actively imprisoning me. Pray that the Lord would use me, that he would grant me patience and wisdom,

that I might take the gospel to them.

Separate me from my wife and children, ruin my reputation, destroy my life and my family – the authorities are capable of doing all of these things. However, no one in this world can force me to renounce my faith; no one can make me change my life; and no one can raise me from the dead.

And so, respectable officers, stop committing evil. This is not for my benefit but rather for yours and your children's. I plead earnestly with you to stay your hands, for why should you be willing to pay the price of eternal damnation in hell for the sake of a lowly sinner such as I?

Jesus is the Christ, son of the eternal, living God. He died for sinners and rose to life for us.

He is my king and the king of the whole earth yesterday, today, and forever. I am his servant, and I am imprisoned because of this. I will resist in meekness those who resist God, and I will joyfully violate all laws that violate God's laws.

First draft on September 21st, 2018; revised on October 4th. To be published by the church after 48 hours of detention.

Appendix: What Constitutes Faithful Disobedience?

I firmly believe that the Bible has not given any branch of any government the authority to run the church or to interfere with the faith of Christians. Therefore, the Bible demands that I, through peaceable means, in meek resistance and active forbearance, filled with joy, resist all



"I plead earnestly with you to stay your hands, for why should you be willing to pay the price of eternal damnation in hell for the sake of a lowly sinner such as I?"

administrative policies and legal measures that oppress the church and interfere with the faith of Christians.

I firmly believe this is a spiritual act of disobedience. In modern authoritarian regimes that persecute the church and oppose the gospel, spiritual disobedience is an inevitable part of the gospel movement.

I firmly believe that spiritual disobedience is an act of the last times; it is a witness to God's eternal kingdom in the temporal kingdom of sin and evil.

Disobedient Christians follow the example of the crucified Christ by walking the path of the cross. Peaceful disobedience is the way in which we love the world as well as the way in which we avoid becoming part of the world.

I firmly believe that in carrying out spiritual disobedience, the Bible demands me to rely on the grace and resurrection power of Christ, that I must respect and not overstep two boundaries.

The first boundary is that of the heart. Love toward the soul, and not hatred toward the body, is the motivation of spiritual disobedience. Transformation of the soul, and not the changing of circumstances, is the aim of spiritual disobedience.

At any time, if external oppression and violence rob me of inner peace and endurance, so that my heart begins to breed hatred and bitterness toward those who persecute the church and abuse Christians, then spiritual disobedience fails at that point.

The second boundary is that of behaviour. The gospel demands

that disobedience of faith must be non-violent.

The mystery of the gospel lies in actively suffering, even being willing to endure unrighteous punishment, as a substitute for physical resistance.

Peaceful disobedience is the result of love and forgiveness. The cross means being willing to suffer when one does not have to suffer. For Christ had limitless ability to fight back, yet he endured all of the humility and hurt. The way that Christ resisted the world that resisted him was by extending an olive branch of peace on the cross to the world that crucified him.

I firmly believe that Christ has called me to carry out this faithful disobedience through a life of service, under this regime that opposes the gospel and persecutes the church. This is the means by which I preach the gospel, and it is the mystery of the gospel which I preach.

The Lord's servant,
Wang Yi

First draft on September 21st, 2018; revised on October 4th. To be circulated by the church after 48 hours of detention.

Other translations of Pastor Wang Yi's letter "My Declaration of Faithful Disobedience," can be found [on this link](#).

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Words of Wisdom

"Do you know what the Devil thinks when he sees men use violence to propagate the gospel? He sits with folded arms behind the fire of hell, and says with malignant looks and frightful grin:

"Ah, how wise these madmen are to play my game! Let them go on; I shall reap the benefit. I delight in it."

But when he sees the Word running and contending alone on the battlefield, then he shudders and shakes for fear.

The Word is almighty, and takes captive the heart."

Martin Luther 1522

(ibid., ch. 4, sec. 68)

Tantalising Trivia

The human body is truly amazing.

It consists of about 60 trillion cells and each one of these cells has about

10,000 times more molecules than the Milky Way has stars.

Is This the Greatest Easter

[Open up both pages together to see image in full]



by Michael
Frost

Is this the greatest Easter painting of all time?

It has the imposing title, “The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection.”

More often than not it’s just referred to by the shortened form, “The Disciples” or “Les Disciples.”

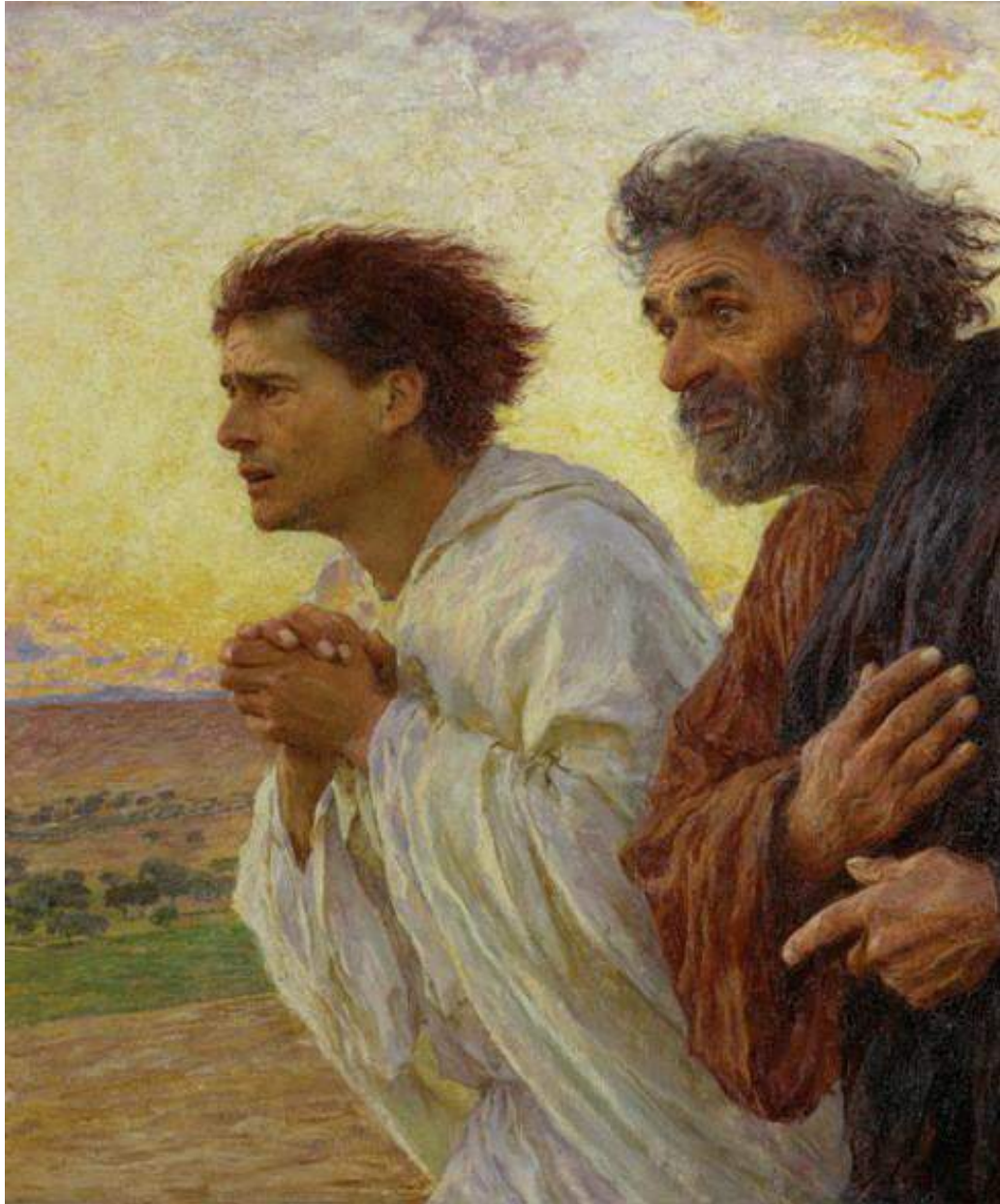
You won’t find it in the Louvre or the Met or the National Gallery. It hangs tucked away in an old railway station in Paris, now the Musée d’Orsay, on the left bank of the Seine.

It was painted in 1898 by a relatively little known Swiss artist named Eugène Burnand. He was something of an old-fashioned realist at a time when all the cool kids were embracing modernism. “The Disciples” didn’t make a splash when it was first hung. Burnand’s style was already considered passé by the 1890s.

But those who take the time to find it in the d’Orsay come away saying that viewing the canvas is akin to a spiritual experience. Some say it is the greatest Easter painting ever made.

Look again at the picture.

As the first blush of dawn is tinting the clouds, Peter and John are rushing to the tomb of Christ. They’ve just been told by Mary Magdalene that she and the other women found it empty, that Christ has risen. Her words are ringing in



their ears, but their faces and their bodies reveal they aren’t sure they can believe her.

John, the younger of the two, wrings his hands together anxiously. He was with Jesus when he died on the cross, the only disciple to stay by his side to the end. He looks as if he can barely bring himself to believe that Christ might be alive again.

Then there’s Peter. While John was Jesus’ only faithful disciple, Peter was his most faithless. He

was the only one to verbally deny even knowing Jesus in his darkest hour.

In this picture Peter looks terrified, hopeful, ashamed, desperate. He’s not sure whether he can believe the reports. But he wants to. Oh, how he wants to. How did Burnand capture such a variety of emotions in that one face?

Peter’s hand grasps his chest, as if feeling for courage, the courage

Painting of All Time?



that deserted him just nights earlier.

They both lean forward, walking briskly, readying themselves to break into a run.

The picture crackles with kinetic energy. It is a study in desperate anticipation. Surely this is also the posture with which we should approach Easter. Leaning in, wringing our hands, clutching our chests, desperate for it to be true.

Isn't that what Lent is about? Haven't we been bearing the burden of our brokenness, ashamed of our denials of Christ, and hoping against all hope that Jesus is alive? And that he loves us? And forgives us?

Burnand depicts no women, no tomb, no gardener. Only the promise of what's to come.

That's our experience of Resurrection too, isn't it? We take it by faith and we're desperate for it to be true. We rush headlong

into the future, holding ourselves in order to believe, trusting that Christ is alive and that he will return to vindicate our feeble faith and forgive us our trespasses.

May this overlooked masterpiece be a comfort to you this Easter, and may your faith increase and your brokenness be healed. May your eyes be filled with the same desperate hope that Peter's and John's were on that first Easter morning. [END]

Biography:

I'm a 20-year veteran of the academy, but I still don't call myself an academic. On my immigration forms I write 'teacher' in the occupation box.

I've taught at Morling College in Sydney (Australia) that whole time and I'm currently the head of the missiology department there.

My doctorate examined a mission-shaped approach to being and doing church, and I've written a bunch of books in that field. Some of them have even been popular. Thank you if you bought one.

I enjoy music by guys who can't sing that great (Dylan, Cohen, Cave), hiking the national parks of North America (15, so far), and reading Flannery O'Connor. I've seen every film made by the Cohen Brothers and Stanley Kubrick and I still hold out hope that Terrence Malick has one more masterpiece in him.

I helped launch the Small Boat Big Sea community in Manly. I co-founded the Forge mission training network. I have won camel races in Kazakhstan, cliff-diving competitions in Thailand, and chess tournaments at the Kremlin. And I have spoken with Elvis (not all this might be true).

And through it all I have been loved by an amazing woman who has stood by me for over 30 years and whose capacity for endurance seemingly knows no bounds, my wife, Caz (this part is definitely true!)

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Organisation Promotion

Return Unwanted Medicines™



What do you do with your unwanted medicines? Have you ever opened your medicines cabinet and discovered medicines there that you've no idea why you had them or perhaps they are expired (i.e. past the use by date)? Most people at some time have done this and then wondered what to do with these unwanted medicines.

In Australia there is a safe and simple solution close at hand – the Return Unwanted Medicines Project (link here) or as we generally call it, the RUM Project. (There may be a similar projects in other countries.) It is important to know that you should not put unwanted medicines into your garbage or tip down the drain or toilet as they may well end up in our water supply.

The RUM Project is an Australian Government funded program, that provides all Australian pharmacies with a collection bin for any unwanted medicines returned to the pharmacy for disposal.

All medicines collected are incinerated at high temperature by an EPA accredited incineration contractor. This method of disposal is the only EPA approved method for the disposal of unwanted medicines.

In the 20 years that the RUM Project has been established, over 10 million kilograms of unwanted medicines have been incinerated in an environmentally appropriate and safe manner.

RUM bins (the collection bins) are available to all community pharmacies in Australia. This program is not available in public or private hospitals though. You have probably never seen a RUM bin in your local pharmacy, but there will be one in the dispensary under the supervision of the pharmacist.

Pharmacists are required to keep the RUM bin in the dispensary, under their direct supervision at all times – it is for your safety, of course.

All you need to do is to take your medicines into the nearest pharmacy and hand them to the pharmacy staff, and the pharmacist will then place them into the RUM bin. Tablets, capsules, tubes of cream and ointment, eye and ear drops and nasal sprays can all be put into the RUM bin if no longer required.

If you have an Inhaler (e.g. Ventolin inhalers) that are no longer required, you can separate the cannister from the plastic device and only return the cannister to the pharmacy for disposal if there is still medicine in it. The plastic device can be placed into your recycling.

It is a completely confidential service. No records are kept of the returned medicines, unless the medicines are Schedule 8 medicines (examples are Endone and Oxycontin) and pharmacists are required by law to record them before they are destroyed (but these records are also confidential and do not leave the pharmacy).

There is some recycling that you can do though – all cardboard packaging, glass or plastic containers can be recycled in your household recycling. To maintain your privacy though, it is recommended that your black out your name on the labels placed on your dispensed items. It is completely safe to place these items into your recycling, and then take your medicines only along to the pharmacy for disposal.

The RUM Project does not accept sharps for disposal and any sharps will need to be disposed of separately and appropriately. Many local councils will be able to assist with the

correct disposal method, but it does vary from state to state and even region to region. Your local pharmacist may be able to help, so it is always worth asking the question if you have sharps for disposal but remember that sharps should never be placed in your garbage bin.

You may well ask, why is it important to remove any unwanted medicines from your home – perhaps you might need them again?

More than 1,000 people aged over 65 required hospitalisation due to medicine poisonings across Australia in 2010. As well as older Australians, unwanted medicines in homes also pose a health hazard for children, with more than 5,000 ending up in hospital due to medicine poisoning every year, according to the Australian Poisons Information Centre. It is definitely a safety issue keeping medicines that you do not need any longer.

And it is so simple:

- Check your medicines cup-board;
- Read the label – do you still need the medicine?
- Check expiry date – is it expired?
- Remove the unwanted medicines;
- Remove any packaging that could be recycled;
- Return the unwanted medicines to your local pharmacy for safe disposal

and of course, there is no charge to you when you return your unwanted medicines.

The RUM Project website (www.returnmed.com.au) contains lots of information but if your questions are not answered, please don't hesitate to call the Australian office on:

1300 650 835



I'm a Pediatrician: How Transgender Ideology Has Infiltrated My Field and Produced Large-Scale Child Abuse



by Dr Michelle
Cretella

First Appeared in *The Daily Signal*

Transgender politics have taken Americans by surprise, and caught some lawmakers off guard.

Just a few short years ago, not many could have imagined a high-profile showdown over transgender men and women's access to single-sex bathrooms in North Carolina.

But transgender ideology is not just infecting our laws. It is intruding into the lives of the most innocent among us - children - and with the apparent growing support of the professional medical community.

As explained in my 2016 peer reviewed article, "**Gender Dysphoria in Children and Suppression of Debate,**" professionals who dare to question the unscientific party line of supporting gender transition therapy will find themselves

maligned and out of a job.

I speak as someone intimately familiar with the pediatric and behavioral health communities and their practices. I am a mother of four who served 17 years as a board certified general pediatrician with a focus in child behavioral health prior to leaving clinical practice in 2012.

For the last 12 years, I have been a board member and researcher for the American College of Pediatricians, and for the last three years I have served as its president.

I also sat on the board of directors for the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity from 2010 to 2015. This organization of physicians and mental health professionals defends the right of patients to receive psychotherapy for sexual identity conflicts that is in line with their deeply held values based upon science and medical ethics.

I have witnessed an upending of the medical consensus on the nature of gender identity. What doctors once treated as a mental illness, the medical community now largely affirms and even promotes as normal.

Here's a look at some of the changes.

The New Normal

Pediatric "gender clinics" are considered elite centers for affirming children who are distressed by their biological sex. This distressful condition, once dubbed gender identity disorder, was renamed "gender dysphoria" in 2013.

In 2014, there were **24 of these gender clinics**, clustered chiefly along the east coast and in California. One year later, there were 40 across the nation.

With **215 pediatric residency programs** now training future pediatricians in a transition-affirming protocol and treating gender-dysphoric children accordingly, gender clinics are bound to proliferate further.

Last summer, the federal government stated that it would not require Medicare and Medicaid to cover

transition-affirming procedures for children or adults because medical experts at the Department of Health and Human Services found the risks were often too high, and the benefits too unclear.

Undeterred by these findings, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health has pressed ahead, claiming - without any evidence - that these procedures are "safe."

*The liberal
Left continue
to push their
radical
agenda
against
American
values. The
good news is
there is a
solution.*

(Find out more)



Two leading pediatric associations - the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Pediatric Endocrine Society - have followed in lockstep, endorsing the transition affirmation approach even as the latter organization concedes within its own guidelines that the transition-affirming protocol is based on low evidence.

They even admit that the only strong evidence regarding this approach is its potential health risks to children.

The transition-affirming view holds that children who "consistently and persistently insist" that they are not the gender associated with their biological sex are innately transgender.

(The fact that in normal life and in psychiatry, anyone who "consistently and persistently insists" on anything else contrary to physical reality is considered either confused or delusional is conveniently ignored.)

The transition-affirming protocol tells parents to treat their children as the gender they desire, and to place them on puberty blockers around age 11 or 12 if they are gender dysphoric.

If by age 16, the children still insist that they are trapped in the wrong body, they are placed on cross-sex hormones, and biological girls may obtain a double mastectomy.

So-called "bottom surgeries," or genital reassignment surgeries, are not recommended before age 18, though some surgeons have recently argued against this restriction.

The transition-affirming approach has been embraced by

public institutions in media, education, and our legal system, and is now recommended by most national medical organizations.

There are exceptions to this movement, however, in addition to the American College of Pediatricians and the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice. These include the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, the Catholic Medical Association, and the LGBT-affirming **Youth Gender Professionals**.

The transgender movement has gained legs in the medical community and in our culture by offering a deeply flawed narrative. The scientific research and facts tell a different story.

Here are some of those basic facts.

1. **Twin studies prove no one is born "trapped in the body of the wrong sex."**

Some brain studies have suggested that some are born with a transgendered brain. But these studies are **seriously flawed** and prove no such thing.

Virtually everything about human beings is influenced by our DNA, but very few traits are hardwired from birth. All human behavior is a composite of varying degrees for nature and nurture.

Researchers routinely conduct twin studies to discern which factors (biological or non-biological) contribute more to the expression of a particular trait.

The best designed twin studies are those with the greatest number of subjects.

Transition-affirming protocol tells parents to treat their children as the gender they desire, and to place them on puberty blockers at age 11 or 12 if they are gender dysphoric.

Identical twins contain 100 percent of the same DNA from conception and are exposed to the same prenatal hormones. So if genes and/or prenatal hormones contributed significantly to transgenderism, we should expect both twins to identify as transgender close to 100 percent of the time.

Skin color, for example, is determined by genes alone. Therefore, identical twins have the same skin color 100 percent of the time.

But in the **largest study of twin transgender adults**, published by Dr. Milton Diamond in 2013, only 28 percent of the identical twins both identified as transgender. Seventy-two percent of the time, they differed. (Diamond's study reported 20 percent identifying as transgender, but his actual data demonstrate a 28 percent figure, [as I note here](#) in footnote 19.)

That 28 percent of identical twins both identified as transgender suggests a minimal biological predisposition, which means transgenderism will not manifest itself without outside nonbiological factors also impacting the individual during his lifetime.

The fact that the identical twins differed 72 percent of the time is highly significant because it means

that at least 72 percent of what contributes to transgenderism in one twin consists of nonshared experiences after birth - that is, factors not rooted in biology.

Studies like this one prove that the belief in "innate gender identity" - the idea that "feminized" or "masculinized" brains can be trapped in the wrong body from before birth - is a myth that has no basis in science.

2. Gender identity is malleable, especially in young children.

Even the American Psychological Association's Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology admits that prior to the widespread promotion of transition affirmation, 75 to 95 percent of pre-pubertal children who were distressed by their biological sex eventually outgrew that distress. The vast majority came to accept their biological sex by late adolescence after passing naturally through puberty.

But with transition affirmation now increasing in Western society, the number of children claiming distress over their gender - and their persistence over time - has dramatically increased. For example, the Gender Identity Development Service in the United Kingdom alone has seen a **2,000 percent increase in referrals since 2009**.

3. Puberty blockers for gender dysphoria have not been proven safe.

Puberty blockers have been studied and found safe for the treatment of a medical disorder in children called precocious puberty (caused by the abnormal and unhealthy early secretion of a child's pubertal hormones).

However, as a **groundbreaking paper in The New Atlantis** points out, we cannot infer from these studies whether or not these blockers are safe in physiologically normal children with gender dysphoria.

The authors note that there is some evidence for decreased bone mineralization, meaning an increased risk of bone fractures as young adults, potential increased risk of obesity and testicular cancer in boys, and an unknown impact upon psychological and cognitive development.

With regard to the latter, while we currently don't have any extensive, long-term studies of children placed on blockers for gender dysphoria, studies conducted on adults from the past decade give cause for concern.

For example, in **2006 and 2007**, the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* reported brain abnormalities in the area of memory and executive functioning among adult women who received blockers for gynecologic reasons. Similarly, many studies of men treated for prostate cancer with blockers also suggest the possibility of significant cognitive decline.

4. There are no cases in the scientific literature of gender-dysphoric children discontinuing blockers.

Most, if not all, children on puberty blockers go on to take cross-sex hormones (estrogen for biological boys, testosterone for



biological girls). The **only study to date** to have followed pre-pubertal children who were socially affirmed and placed on blockers at a young age found that 100 percent of them claimed a transgender identity and chose cross-sex hormones.

This suggests that the medical protocol itself may lead children to identify as transgender.

There is an obvious self-fulfilling effect in helping children impersonate the opposite sex both biologically and socially. This is far from benign, since taking puberty blockers at age 12 or younger, followed by cross-sex hormones, sterilizes a child.

5. Cross-sex hormones are associated with dangerous health risks.

From **studies of adults** we know that the risks of cross-sex hormones include, but are not limited to, cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, strokes, diabetes, and cancers.

6. Neuroscience shows that adolescents lack the adult capacity needed for risk assessment.

Scientific data show that people under the age of 21 have less capacity to assess risks. There is a serious ethical problem in allowing irreversible, life-changing procedures to be performed on minors who are too young themselves to give valid consent.

7. There is no proof that affirmation prevents suicide in children.

Advocates of the transition-affirming protocol allege that suicide is the direct and inevitable consequence of withholding social affirmation and biological alterations from a gender-dysphoric child. In other words, those who do not endorse the transition-affirming protocol are essentially condemning gender-dysphoric children to suicide.

Yet as noted earlier, prior to the widespread promotion of tran-

sition affirmation, 75 to 95 percent of gender-dysphoric youth ended up happy with their biological sex after simply passing through puberty.

In addition, contrary to the claim of activists, there is no evidence that harassment and discrimination, let alone lack of affirmation, are the primary cause of suicide among any minority group. In fact, at least **one study from 2008** found perceived discrimination by LGBT-identified individuals not to be causative.

Over 90 percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosed mental disorder, and there is no evidence that gender-dysphoric children who commit suicide are any different. Many gender dysphoric children simply need therapy to get to the root of their depression, which very well may be the same problem triggering the gender dysphoria.

8. Transition-affirming protocol has not solved the problem of transgender suicide.

Adults who undergo sex reassignment - even in Sweden, which is among the most LGBT-affirming countries - have a suicide rate **nearly 20 times greater** than that of the general population. Clearly, sex reassignment is not the solution to gender dysphoria.

Bottom Line: Transition-Affirming Protocol Is Child Abuse

The crux of the matter is that while the transition-affirming movement purports to help children, it is inflicting a grave injustice on them and their nondysphoric peers.

These professionals are using the myth that people are born transgender to justify engaging in massive, uncontrolled, and unconsented experimentation on children who have a psychological condition that would otherwise resolve after puberty in the vast majority of cases.

Today's institutions that promote transition affirmation are pushing children to impersonate the opposite sex, sending many of them down the path of puberty blockers, sterilization, the removal of healthy body parts, and untold psychological damage.

These harms constitute nothing less than institutionalized child abuse. Sound ethics demand an immediate end to the use of pubertal suppression, cross-sex hormones, and sex reassignment surgeries in children and adolescents, as well as an end to promoting gender ideology via school curricula and legislative policies.

It is time for our nation's leaders and the silent majority of health professionals to learn exactly what is happening to our children, and unite to take action.

Biography:

Michelle Cretella, M.D., is executive director of the American College of Pediatricians, a national organization of pediatricians and other health care professionals dedicated to the health and well-being of children.

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Up Close & Personal with Wildlife:

Red Kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*)



by Vicki Nunn

The Red Kangaroo is the largest kangaroo still in existence. Males grow to a height of between 1.3m and 1.6m while the females are much smaller, growing to a height of between 0.8m and 1.05m. The largest confirmed red kangaroo stood at 2.1m in height and weighed a solid 91kg!

The sexes are different in colour and it's the males who are red, while the smaller females tend to be a softer grey/blue with a tinge of brown.

It is due to the elastic-type tendons that these marsupials have in their legs which enables them to leap so far, with males jumping up to 9m and to a height of up to 3m.

Found throughout central and western Australia, it's habitat includes grassland, desert areas and scrubland. The major part of their diet is grasses, though not all types are consumed, and while they prefer green grasses, they can often obtain sufficient nutrition from even dry, brown grass. During the dryer

periods they usually settle around creeks and waterways or in open grasslands, and oddly prefer to avoid more fertile regions.

Able to use its strong legs and fore-claws to defend itself, adults are rarely attacked by predators, though young joeys (babies) can be taken by eagles and dingoes.

They tend to congregate in small groups of up to four kangaroos, though larger groups of 1,500 have been seen.

Dominant males will fend off would-be interlopers by boxing with their opponents. Generally they tend to wrestle more than punch or hit, but if the fight intensifies, they will use their strong hind legs to kick, using their tail for support. Whoever wins becomes the alpha male. Other males live and remain alone.

When a female becomes pregnant, she can pause its development if there is an unweaned joey still in her pouch. Once that one leaves the pouch at about 235 days, she can resume her pregnancy. The older joey will remain outside the pouch but will continue to suckle until it reaches about one year.

The female red kangaroo will sometimes take on the young of another female if she is able.

While it is a protected species, the red kangaroo is so abundant, commercial harvesting is permitted under an approved plan which takes their numbers into consideration to ensure the species is managed properly. [END]

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Tantalising Trivia

~ Joseph Bramah ~



Although Joseph Bramah was brought up as a farmer's son in Yorkshire, he eventually became one of the 18th century's

most prolific inventors, patenting eighteen of his designs.

Together with his assistant Henry Maudslay, they fine-tuned a number of them that were innovative and have applications, even today.

Some of his innovations included a water closet, a machine to sequentially number banknotes, the hydraulic press, and a lock.

The hydraulic press has industrial applications even in the present time.

It was in 1784 that he patented the lock which was revolutionary in safety measures. Up until that time, any lock available could easily be picked. Bramah's lock was an incredible innovation as there were 494 million possible combinations of notches and was claimed to be totally burglar-proof.



Mr Bramah was so confident of his design that he offered a prize of 200 guineas to the first person who could pick it. That equates to almost £24,000 or AU\$44,150 (US\$31,574) today.

For 67 years nobody was able to pick that lock and even then, the gentlemen who opened it took over two weeks to do so. Mr Bramah's lock design was so effective that its modifications and designs are still being used today. [END]

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They Feared What Might Await Them



by Vicki Nunn

The Tamrazyan family were desperate. They'd fled Armenia nine years earlier due to death threats, and while they'd initially been granted asylum in The Netherlands by a judge there, now that country's government had overturned the judge's decision.

The family sought another option which permitted refugees to stay if they'd lived in The Netherlands for over five years, and had children, but that application too was refused.

They had to return to Armenia, and face hardship and possible death.

The situation had come about because of Sasun's political activism in his home country and so he'd fled with his wife Anousche and their three children, Seyran, Hayarpi and Warduhi.

In desperation, they asked for help from the Presbyterian churches in The Hague, and after

discussing the situation with their head office, Presbyterian Church leaders had a unique suggestion which might just allow the family to stay - but there was a catch - the family had to live in Bethel Church and not leave, perhaps for some considerable time.

There's an old law in The Netherlands which does not allow Police to enter religious buildings while a religious service is occurring. The Bethel Church elders were going to use that law to their advantage, if they could get enough Pastors and church leaders involved.

The plan was to hold a permanent ongoing service in Bethel Church, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, until the government changed its mind.

Presbyterian church leaders and Pastors from around the country were keen to help out, so with some considerable planning, the leaders took on the challenge of a continuous service in Bethel



Church, as if they were part of an enormous, long-term relay team, passing the baton of conducting a service onto the next church leader when they arrived. Instead of passing a baton though, they previous Pastor would pass a lighted candle onto the new person, as they switched places.

Relieved, the Tamrazyan family had moved into the church with some of their possessions. They knew they couldn't leave or they'd be sent back to Armenia, and they crossed their fingers and prayed, as did many thousands of Christians throughout The Netherlands.

People wrote to their government leaders asking and even demanding that the family be allowed to remain there, but there was no changing the government's decision.

The first twenty-four hours came and went, and the police were not able to enter the church, and so the situation continued. Sometimes the family sat in the chapel for a service, otherwise they spent time in another room in the church.

It was hard being cooped up like that, especially for the children who must have wanted to play outside.

The second day passed and then a week, and two weeks, and the story of the family's plight and the church's unique style of help began to trickle out until eventually it circulated around the



world. Hundreds of people attended services to show their support.

By late November 2018, the service had been running for over a month - more than 700 hours, and there was no indication that the government was going to change its mind.

On went the service, with Pastors coming and going, and volunteers helping out and then more weeks passed. Before long it was Christmas and then New Years, and then into January, and then it was late January and three months had elapsed.

Four days shy of the 100 day mark, the Dutch government finally relented and agreed to allow the Tamrazyan family to remain in The Netherlands. That decision would have wider implications for another 600 families who also sought asylum there.

The final service was held to a packed house, and then at last, the saga was over.

During their stay at the church, the eldest daughter Hayarpi (21) kept an online blog about their experiences. A student at Tilburg

University, Hayarpi said to The Guardian reporter,

"The church has become a home. We have had sad but also very beautiful moments.

The Bethelkerk (Bethel Church) is for me now a special building, but I am glad that I can get out of it and can continue to build on my future.¹" [END]

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International Awareness Days

March to May

March:

1. World Civil Defence Day | Zero Discrimination Day;
- 3 World Wildlife Day;
- 8 International Women's Day;
- 14 National Pi Day;
- 15 World Consumer Rights Day;
- 20 World Oral Health Day | International Day of Happiness | World Sparrow Day;
- 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | World Poetry Day | World Down Syndrome Day | International Day of Forests | World Puppetry Day;
- 22 World Water Day;
- 23 World Meteorological Day;
- 24 World Tuberculosis Day;
- 25 International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade;
- 27 World Theatre Day;
- 30 School Day of Non-violence and Peace

April:

- 2 International Children's Book Day | World Autism Awareness Day;
- 6 International Day of Sport for Development and Peace;
- 7 Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Rwanda Genocide | World Health Day;
- 12 International Day of Human Space Flight;
- 17 World Hemophilia Day;
- 21 World Creativity and Innovation Day;
- 22 International Mother Earth Day;
- 23 World Book and Copyright Day;
- 24 World Day for Laboratory Animals;
- 25 World Malaria Day;
- 26 World Intellectual Property Day | International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day;
- 28 World Day for Safety and Health at Work;
- 29 Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare | International Dance Day | International Bee Day;
- 30 International Jazz Day

May:

- 1 International Workers' Day;
- 2 World Tuna Day;
- 3 World Press Freedom Day;
- 4 International Firefighters' Day | Star Wars Day;
- 5 International Midwives Day;
- 8 World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day;
- 8-9 Time of Remembrance and Reconciliation for Those Who Lost Their Lives during the Second World War;
- 9 Europe Day (celebrating peace);
- 10 International Migratory Bird Day;
- 12 International Nurses Day;
- 15 International Day of Families;
- 17 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day;
- 18 World AIDS Vaccine Day | International Museum Day;
- 21 World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development;
- 22 International Day for Biological Diversity;
- 23 International Day to End Obstetric Fistula;
- 25 Geek Pride Day | Towel Day (to celebrate the author Douglas Adams);
- 26 Global Outreach Day
- 29 International Day of UN Peacekeepers;
- 31 World No-Tobacco Day.



How to Make Sure You Mess Up Your ^{First} Date



by Vicki Nunn

Introduction

Several issues back we shared a tongue-in-cheek article titled “*How to Make Sure You Mess Up Your Date.*” If you missed it, we’ve made it available on our website ([link here.](#))

I figured that perhaps it might be a good time for a sequel. In this article, we’ve done some extensive research so that you can know for certain how you can mess up your

very *first* date with someone new.

Let’s start by sharing how to make sure that your date knows how keen you are.

Taking Earnestness to a Whole New Level

1. Five minutes into the date, share with them “I never believed in fate until I met you, and now I know it’s true.” Stare meaningfully into their eyes and smile, for about fifteen seconds longer than is comfortable, and that way they’ll know for certain that you’re sincere.

2. Whenever possible use the words, ‘we’ and ‘us,’ so they’ll be in no doubt that you’re already a couple.
3. Mention a concert coming up in several months time, and assure them that you’ve already booked an extra ticket for them to go with you. If they tell you that they don’t like the band/artist or the style of music, reassure them that they’ll learn to love them as much as you do. To make sure they do, spend the next hour explaining why the group is the best band on the planet and that anyone who doesn’t agree needs to have an attitude adjustment and that you’re just the person who can do that.
4. Tell them that you’ve organised for them to meet your friends and/or family. If they hesitate, make them feel guilty by telling them that your grandparent/parent is on their last legs and would like to know that you’ve found someone that you could settle down with.

Taking Creepiness to a Whole New Level

5. Deflect any personal questions about yourself, and instead continue to ask only about your date, making sure you keep eye contact and try not to blink too much otherwise they won’t know how sincere you are. The reverse is equally as effective: talk non-stop about yourself.



Tell them you looked them up on the internet and you know where they live.



6. If they've ordered steak, once their meal arrives, offer to chew it for them to tenderise it.
7. If you're at a nice restaurant, once you've ordered your meals, ask the waiter if you could book the same table for a year's time for your first anniversary.
8. Ask your date if she'd like to adopt a dog from an animal shelter to share together.
9. When the date is coming to an end, tell them you looked them up on the internet and you know where they live. That way they'll know you cared enough to check them out. Tell them that if they looked you up too, those five arrests were a case of mistaken identity. Really ... they were.

10. Five minutes after the date has ended, text them. Tell them that you're sure you're going to dream about them tonight. Continue texting them every 15 to 30 minutes sharing the things you liked about them, until you fall asleep, or don't fall asleep so you can carry on sending them messages because you want them to realise how much you really, really, really liked them.

Taking Rudeness to a Whole New Level

11. During the date pretend to fall asleep and fake snore when your date starts to open up and reveal some personal information about themselves. Otherwise interrupt them often so you can share your own similar, but far more interesting

story and you know they'll be truly impressed.

12. Ask them "Aren't your parents disappointed in you?" If they ask what you mean, just shrug and ask, "You honestly don't know?" Then change the subject.
13. Laugh if they boast about their university education and then respond, "Learning isn't the most importantist thing in the world, you know."
14. Lie. Lie a lot and then forget what you lied about. If they catch you out in a lie, respond that they must have misheard you, or say that you don't appreciate that they're judging you, just because you had a terribly unhappy childhood. You didn't, but at least it might shut them up.
15. Make racist comments, or talk about the kinds of things you dislike about people, such as being overweight, or underweight, or how people style their hair or the colour of their teeth, or the fact that your date isn't white/black/Asian and you usually only date white/black/Asian people.
16. Take every call that comes through on your mobile, and talk loudly because they need to understand that you're an important person with lots of friends who value your friendship and you'd hate to disappoint them by not answering.
17. When your date orders their food, sneer at them and comment about their food choices, particularly if they're vegan or have sensitivities to certain foods.

- 18.If you're at a restaurant, order their food for them, and when it arrives, cut it up and start feeding it to them. Throw in baby stuff like, "Here comes the choo-choo train."
- 19.If you're out for a meal and they order their own food, interrupt them before they finish and question whether what they ordered was really a good choice, considering those extra kilos that they're already carrying.
- 20.Recommend a good dietician and/or gym who can "help them lose those love handles." Snigger and then with a shake of your head say, "Love handles? I think those are WAY past the point anyone could possibly call them 'love handles!'"
- 21.After the meal say, "Wow! You can really pack away your food!" or "Wow! Don't you ever worry about what the heck you're doing to your body?"
- 22.Go into a spiel about the necessity of taking supplements or consuming certain foods to build your immune system and fight cancer.
- 23.Forget their name or call them by the name of your last boyfriend/girlfriend, and explain that it's because your date reminds you so much of your ex.
- 24.Give them 30 minutes to impress you. If they don't, excuse yourself, saying you're going to the bathroom, but instead, just leave and go straight home. Don't leave any message - they don't deserve it.
- 25.Tell them about the time you caught a venereal disease and

laugh hysterically while you share excruciating details. Wait until they're really starting to enjoy their meal, before you spring it on them.

- 26.To save yourself time and inconvenience, arrange to meet with a second date at the same venue. Choose a large restaurant with different sections, then select and sit at tables where one can't see the other. Then every fifteen minutes, excuse yourself to go to the bathroom, and spend the time away with your other date. If necessary, bribe the staff not to tell either date what's going on. Spend half the night wondering if you could have managed to squeeze in a third date.
- 27.Once the date is over, send them inappropriate photos of your body bits and if they complain, lie by suggesting that someone must have hacked your phone.
- 28.The first date was terrible, but you said nothing because you didn't want to hurt your date's feelings. If they phone you later to see if you'd like to go out on a second date, pretend that they reached the wrong number, but don't try to disguise your voice, or simply pretend that they've reached your phone message bank, and do a really poor imitation of an electronic beep.

Taking Weirdness to a Whole New Level

- 29.Dress up as one of the most hated people in history eg Hitler, Idi Amin, Imelda Marcos, Vladimir Lenin, or if you're a man, turn up in a tutu or a bunny costume.



- 30.Show how obsessed you are with food, by taking along your own kitchen scales and weighing every single item on your plate.
- 31.Bring along your children and let them run riot.
- 32.Similar to above, but instead take your parents, or your ex.
- 33.Similar to above, but instead take along your parole officer.
- 34 If you're a woman, arrive heavily pregnant, and after the initial greeting say that you think your waters may have broken but you've got a good few hours yet before you need to get yourself to the hospital. Ask him to buy you an alcoholic drink - you've got a feeling you're going to need

more than one before the night is over.

37.If you're a man, look anxious and tell your date that you might have to leave early because, "My wife, uhm I mean, my ex-wife is in the hospital in labour, with my child."

38.Ask your date not to order any orange or red coloured foods because the government is using them to record people's thoughts.

Taking Emotionally Stunted to a Whole New Level

39.Talk about your ex throughout the entire date. Comment repeatedly about the things your date has in common with them.

40.After the first half hour, phone your mother on your phone at the table, while your date is sitting there, and say something like, "Hi Mum, even though he/she is a bit overweight and facially unfortunate, I think things are going well."

41.Start crying halfway through the date and tell them that you know they're going to dump you, no matter what.

Taking Annoying to a Whole New Level

42.Try to sign them up for the pyramid scheme or cult that your involved with.

43.Tell them that you forgot your wallet/purse and ask them to help out with the bill. Assure them that you'll pay them back on the second date, or at least by the third one.

44.Talk in the voice of a toddler.

45.If they disagree with something you say, completely change

your stance and say, "You know, I think you might be right." Change your mind as often as possible.

46.Every time your date asks your opinion about something, respond with, "Oh no. I really want to know what YOU think."

47.Whenever your date finishes speaking, respond condescendingly with, "Yes your Highness."

Finally, once the date is over...

48.After you get home from your date, text them and ask how many kids they'd like to have with you.

49.Phone them first thing the next morning and act all surprised like you must have accidentally pressed their number on your phone, and the fact that you're talking again so soon must mean that it's fate.

50.Ask your mother to phone your date the following day to see how things went and if you could improve in some way. Then your mother should emphasise that you're good marriageable material. [END]

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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:

Goldie Ambush
True Ralph Blue
Charles Butterfuss
Kidnorked Cinsotee
Calliroe Economu
Argyle Faith
Cleoletta Gee
Zuedora Hare
Karma Jukes
Ophelia McFashion
Mabel Nebel
Crouch Parrott
Goldie Pisk
Les Rainey
Odessa Spore

Organisation Promotion

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Club Solo is delighted to invite you to an outing or camp. Operating for more than 37 years, Club Solo is an inter-denominational ministry which serves Christian singles.

There are Club Solo groups in Melbourne, Adelaide, Geelong, Sydney and Brisbane.

Find out more about Club Solo groups in your area. Information is available on our website. Perhaps you might like to start one in your town and need a little help - 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

What is Your Worth?



by Michael
Hannett

I was driving to work one time and on the way the wind began picking up. It became so fierce that my car felt like it was being battered around, almost like a kitten with a ball of yarn.

Life Can Batter Us Around

I was thinking about how life can be like that with us sometimes. We can feel that everything is just battering us around, knocking us down like some mean bully.

We can get hit with unexpected bills from one direction, and pay cuts from the other. Perhaps we're

having relationship problems, and from another direction we're dealing with the loss of a loved one. Maybe we're doing our best to take care of a sick parent or child and somehow trying to find the time and energy to hold down our job.

The thing is, that battering around can take its toll on us. It can cause us to feel constantly stressed, perpetually frustrated, and we can feel drained all the time.

When those times come, how much more obvious is it that we need something more, or should I say 'someone' more? We really need Jesus, and sometimes in those most desperate or stressful

times, it can almost feel like it takes too much effort to pray about it, almost like we kind of expect Him to know what we're going through. Of course He does, but just as we all know, one-sided relationships don't work. He has to be an active participant in our life, in an active relationship with us.

We need to turn to Him in our weariness, for He is a source of strength, a source of hope and peace. Through Him we can have victory over the struggles that life can bring. It doesn't mean there'll be no more problems, but that **despite** our hardships, He's the one constant, unchanging thing in our lives - our anchor and our support whenever those battering winds come our way.

With Jesus at our side, life may still be a bully, but it cannot stand against the might and courage of our Lord. It cannot take us down nor beat us, no matter how we may be feeling at that moment.

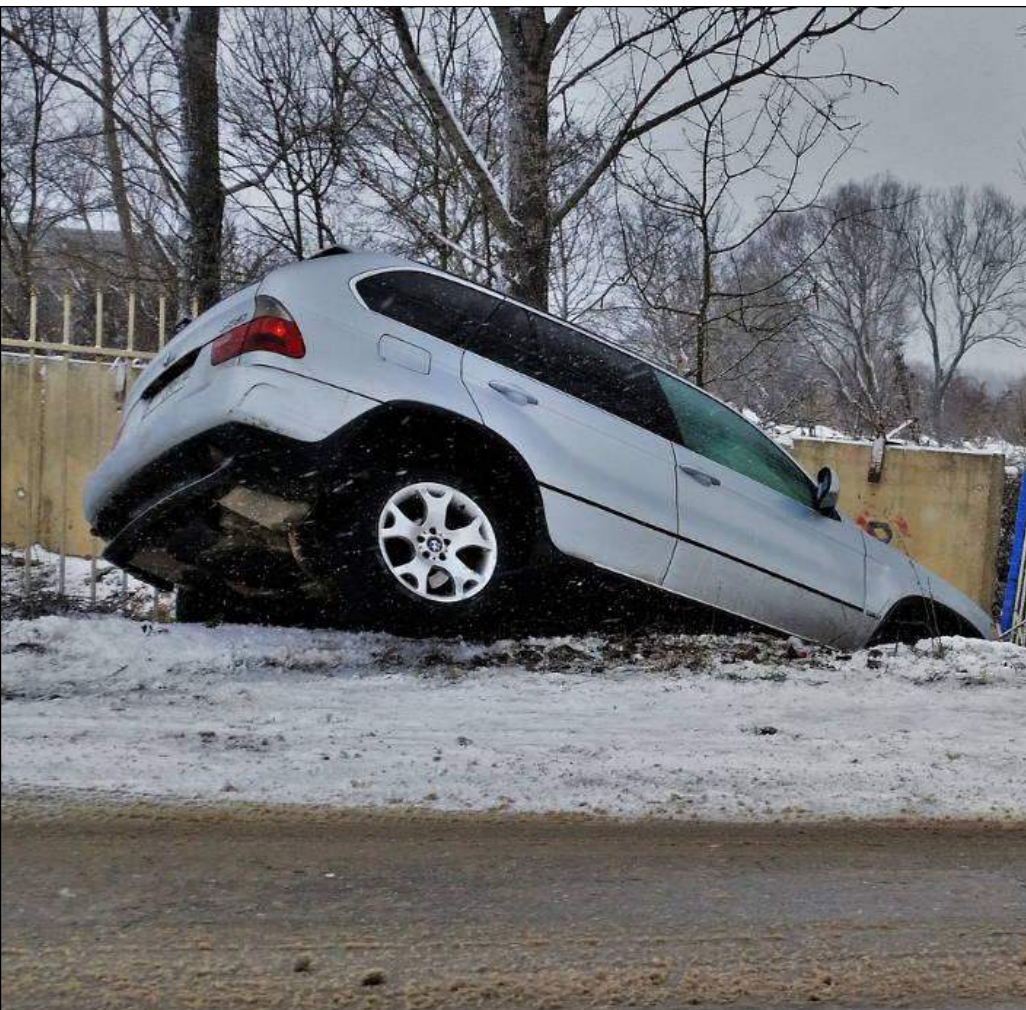
In Jesus, we'll get through. In Jesus there'll come a time, when we can know the peace and comfort of God's heart in Him. In Jesus, we can know His compassion and strength.

Romans 8:28 reminds us:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

[ESV]

God works ALL things together for good. Sometimes when we are going through trials we find it hard to imagine how any good can come out of it, but



we have to remind ourselves of this promise and hold God to it, even when we are walking through the darkest of valleys.

But I'm Not Anyone Special

Sometimes those hardships, or that horrible job or when nothing ever seems to be going right, our confidence can get shaken. The pressures of our life can press us flat and drain us of enthusiasm, of passion and of confidence and belief in ourselves. Our own upbringing can have long-term impacts upon our confidence and belief in ourselves.

Do you ever feel like that, that you're not special, or you're not valued? Those thoughts creep into our minds when we are feeling defenceless, particularly when we're not praying or spending time with God.

If you do believe you're not special or not of value, you are believing in a lie. Consider too

who is putting those negative thoughts into your head. What a creep Satan is. He waits until we are vulnerable, and then stabs our mind with those negative thoughts.

When those thoughts filter in, we must focus and remember who made us - who made **you**.

You were made by a God that loved you when you were just the spark of a thought in His mind.

You were made by a God who carefully hand-crafted a life for you, down to the tiniest detail, before you were born, and before your parents or even your grandparents were born.

You were made by a God that blesses you in ways you may not even realise, every day, simply because He wants you to have the most valuable things in life: a good heart, a growing compassion, a desire to help others; and day by day, little by

little you are growing more like Jesus.

You were made by a God that went so far as to step down from heaven and become a man who suffered for you and died for you, just so you, His beloved child, could come home to Him.

You are not only special, you not only matter, you are **treasured** by an almighty God above all the rest of creation! Remember that and be blessed.

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvellous - how well I know it."

"You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."

Psalm 139:13-16 [NLT]

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him."

John 3:16-17 [NLT]

In Luke 15:11-24, Jesus told the parable about the wealthy man with two sons. One son decided to take his inheritance and go out and enjoy the pleasures of the world.

Eventually, when he was flat broke, when the world had used him up and spat him out, and he was eating pig-food, he



decided to return home. He realised that his father's servants were living better than how he'd been getting by at that time. He didn't expect any fanfare, and realised his father would think he was a foolish young man for spending all of his money, but he hoped.

Imagine the thoughts going through his mind as he walked home. "Maybe Dad will turn me away, but I've got to take that risk that perhaps he'll let me come back and work for him as a servant. At least I'll have shelter, food and safety."

"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening.

We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was

lost, but now he is found.' So the party began." [NLT]

Can you see yourself the way God sees you? Perhaps you can try to imagine the joy He felt when you came home to Him and called Him Father for the first time.

Are there behaviours in your past that still embarrass you ... forget it! God has. God has long forgotten your past, and He doesn't expect you to wallow in your guilt. You can probably guess who's put those thoughts in your head.

What God wants more than anything is to be in a relationship with you, because He knows you are a valuable person to be treasured. Isn't that remarkable? Now since God believes it, perhaps it's about time you trust in His judgement, and work on that relationship some more.

[END]

Bibliography:

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

[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.



Positions Vacant - Urgent - Volunteer Accountant or Book-keeper

SPAG Magazine is seeking the assistance of a volunteer accountant or book-keeper. A knowledge of the Australian tax requirements is a necessity.

Presently the task for keeping the books up-to-date is undertaken by Vicki Nunn, our Editor. Vicki is not a trained accountant, and until the present time has struggled to maintain our books on top of her very heavy workload.

While it may only require half an hour to an hour each week for someone who's knowledgeable in this area, this means that Vicki has to take even more time out of her limited free time to undertake this duty and it takes her much longer to complete than a trained person. Unfortunately she knows very little about GST and even less about the required paperwork for businesses.

Do you have a half an hour or so to spare a week? Are you able to submit related tax paperwork including GST for any items sold through our online store? Could you follow up about the possibility of applying for charity and/or tax-free status?

With our tax year coming to end in June, it's vital that we have someone on board before that time.

If this is a position that interests you, and you have relevant experience in Australia, please contact, Vicki Nunn.

Contact details:

042 44 33 772 OR (07) 4961 1202

Email: spagmag@yahoo.com.au

**Your help would be
appreciated!**





FIRE!



by Liz Gill

Instagram

Beautiful; fierce; warm; mesmerising; terrifying; destructive; purifying; comforting; painful.

When you hear the word 'fire,' what is the first word that comes to your mind? Is it positive or negative? Does it make you feel happy or scared?

What mental picture do you associate with fire?

Maybe it's cooking over a camp fire: memories of stew and damper or toasted marshmallows have you almost licking your fingers right now.

Perhaps you're thinking about that awesome youth camp you went on years ago where you built the biggest bonfire you could, and everyone sat around telling stories or singing songs.

Instead, maybe this is bringing up painful memories of a house fire in which you lost practically everything.

Each of us has a different association with fire: some people love it; and others hate it.



Queensland's 2018 Fires

In late November through early December 2018, up to 200 large bush-fires simultaneously raged throughout the state of Queensland, Australia.

Thousands of properties were evacuated. Firefighters, both paid and volunteer, fought alongside property owners to save lives, homes, crops and livestock.

Reinforcements were flown in from interstate. Evacuation centres were opened where families waited anxiously until they could return to their homes and see what, if anything, had survived.

I imagine that for many of the people affected by these fires, the word fire now has some pretty negative word associations: fear; pain; destruction; loss; death; exhaustion; terror; injury; stress; sacrifice.

Perhaps, the experience also brought out some positives: community; help; friendship; support; and generosity.

In the midst of great tragedy, we often see the best of mankind.

Many individuals and organisations who were not directly affected by the fires gave generously to help those they could. Strangers fought side-by-side to stop fires from destroying the homes of people they'd never even met.

Pain and sorrow often go hand-in-hand with love and hope.

Beauty in Destruction

The thing that brings destruction may also bring beauty.

As I drove past many of the areas that had burnt, just a couple weeks after the fires had passed through, I was touched to see the new shoots already coming up through the blackened soil. These bright green blades were so vibrant in contrast to their surrounds.

This new life reminded me of the beautiful prophecy in Isaiah 61 that speaks of what Jesus has done:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord



has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor, ... to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

... and they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, ... I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant. ... For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." [NKJV]

Often, this world is a cruel and harsh place to live in. Sometimes, life feels like a series of setbacks that hit you hard, one after another, yet in the midst of heartache, pain, or fear, Christ offers hope.

Jesus experienced the greatest of sufferings. He lost everything. He understands pain, but He reminds us that pain is temporary.

God wants to give us new life.



He wants to give us the hope of a future free from pain, suffering and fear, and He wants to walk with us through the trials that we are facing today.

I don't want to downplay what might be threatening to overwhelm you today, but instead I'm hoping to encourage you to try to see the beauty in the ashes, to focus on that tiny hope of new life that can come through tragedies and painful experiences, and to turn always to the One who promises to be with you no matter what, and who can carry you through whatever experiences may come. [END]

Bibliography:

[NKJV] New King James Version, Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Tantalising Trivia

How would you feel if your home was broken into? How would you respond if the Police were unable to solve the case?

In 2004, a law was enacted which required Police in the town of Hangzhou in Zhejiang, China to apologise to victims of crime, if they were unable to solve the case.

Apparently, the law worked well, with an 18% increase in satisfaction by citizens who were the victims of crime, although there was no suggestion that there was a correlating increase in solving the crimes.

Whenever a case was unresolved, the officers responsible for not figuring out who was responsible, were required to personally visit the home of the victims, and apologise to them.

The law was even more severe if there were repeated unsolved offences or if it involved property worth over \$1,200. In those cases, the Police officers were required by the law to apologise to the victims at least twice over a period of six months.



Words of Wisdom

"We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails."

Anonymous

A Nation Called to Prayer



by **Mark Tronson**

Press Service
International

In my searches I was unable to find any reference to any Australian Prime Minister calling Australia to Prayer in a national crisis apart from 21 April 2007 when Prime Minister John Howard called the nation to pray for rain in an historic drought.

Recently, Prime Minister Scott Morrison once again called the nation to pray for rain in this current horrific drought.

A Google search provided innumerable instances where Australian Prime Ministers have said something along the lines of "the nation is praying for / with" such as former Prime Minister Tony Abbott's remarks on the loss of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370. We heard the former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull saying that we are praying for you

I found many similar 'documented statements' of similar ilk including Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd, Bob Hawke, Malcolm Fraser, Gough Whitlam, Bob Menzies, Ben Chifley, John Curtin and Billy Hughes. If memory serves me well Julia Gillard and Paul Keating spoke of such as well, but I was unable to find references to this.

I wondered about this topic of an Australian Prime Minister's calling the nation to prayer on a specific date having read Tremore Christian Fellowship, Tremore Manor, Bodmin's published account of either King George VI, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's WWII or Commanders on the ground - ten occasions on which they called the nation to prayer.

This article was republished in "Evangelicals Now" which was in



WWII troops waiting to be rescued at Dunkirk

turn was republished by The Canberra Declaration Team which in turn was distributed by Ramon Williams Religious Media. So it's got a good airing (as it should have) and I'm pleased here to simply summarise those ten calls for the nation to pray during WWII.

Dunkirk 1940

Sunday May 26 at the request of His Majesty King George VI, observed as a National Day of Prayer.

In a stirring broadcast, the King called the people of Britain and the empire to commit their cause to God. The whole nation was at prayer.

Three miracles then happened:

- (a) Hitler stopped his general advance;
- (b) a storm of extraordinary fury grounded the German Air Force on May 28; and
- (c) a great calm settled over the English Channel for several days. 335,000 men of the British army were evacuated from Dunkirk!



Sunday May 26 at the request of His Majesty King George VI, was Observed as a National Day of Prayer

The Battle of Britain

Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command, was asked: "What are your plans for defeating an overwhelming number of the German Air Force?"

He replied:

"I believe in God. And then there is radar."

On 30 August, 800 enemy aircraft darkened the skies of southern England, flying in to put key airfields out of action. By September 6 Fighter Command was in serious trouble.



Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding said, "I believe in God. And then there is radar."



The final prayer at Westminister Abbey began, "'Remember O God, for good, these watchmen, who by day and by night climb into the air..."

The King, as if gifted with some foreknowledge, had expressed the wish that Sunday September 8 should be fixed as a National Day of Prayer. There was a tremendous response.

At a crowded service in Westminster Abbey, the final prayer began:

"Remember O God, for good, these watchmen, who by day and by night climb into the air. Let Thy hand lead them, we beseech Thee, and Thy right hand hold them."

On September 17, a teletype message clacked out from the German High Command postponing the invasion of Britain, until further notice.

Malta

There were later divine over-rulings in the Mediterranean, the outstanding example being Malta, which lay in the path of Italy's vital supply lines to North Africa.

General Dobbie was appointed Governor of Malta. He was a Christian, a man of faith who testified to the power of prayer. He issued an Order of the Day to the garrison which included the following:

"I know that the courage and determination of all ranks will not falter, and that with God's help we will maintain the security of the fortress."

The Germans seemed strangely blind in failing to see that the key to all supply problems, and, indeed, the key to control of the Mediterranean, was the capture of Malta.

At the Gates of Cairo

Two dedicated Christian men were appointed to the most responsible positions in the Middle East on August 15 1942:

- Field Marshal Alexander as Commander-in-Chief; and
- General Montgomery as Commander of the Eighth Army.

On September 3, according to the wish of King George VI, there was another National Day of Prayer.



Sir William Dobbie, a man of faith who believed in the power of prayer.



Field Marshal Alexander (Commander in Chief)



General Montgomery (Commander of the Eighth Army)



National Day of Prayer



359th Fighter Group praying



Harvest Festival Thanksgiving Service



Women in the Land Army harvesting beets



Processing of sugar beet for sugar production

People flocked to the churches all over Britain.

On October 23 Montgomery issued this Order of the Day to the Eighth Army:

"Let us pray that the Lord, mighty in battle, will give us the victory."

A succession of remarkable occurrences followed:

- When the attack on the German forces was opened, Rommel was in Germany, sick for the first time in his life;
- General Stumme, appointed to take his place, died of a heart attack the next day, leaving the German High Command in a hopeless state of confusion;
- at the same time, Rommel's Chief of Staff was actually on leave; and
- due to faulty intelligence, the Afrika Korps was completely taken off its guard when the bombardment began.

Churchill said afterwards concerning the battle of Alamein:

"Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat."

A Bumper Harvest

During 1942 shipping normally used to bring food to these shores from overseas was urgently required for carrying men and munitions, yet Britain had to be fed.

A supreme effort was made by British agriculture and a degree of co-operation and united labour was achieved as never before in our history. Added to this were the prayers of innumerable people that God would bless their efforts.

There was a bumper harvest!

It had become apparent to R.S. Hudson, the Minister of Agriculture, that God had been with us, for in a postscript to the BBC nine o'clock news on Old Michaelmas Night 1942, he said:

"I believe we have a Higher Power to thank as well, and from the depths of our hearts."



British troops help with the harvest in wartime.



Three Land Girls harvest flax in Huntingdonshire



Making dredge corn, a mixture of oats and barley for stock feeding.



Women packing items for use in the war

"Some power has wrought a miracle in the English harvest fields this summer, for in this, our year of greatest need, the land has given us bread in greater abundance than we have ever known before."

D-Day 1944 Deliverance of a Continent

The deputy Chaplain-General, Canon Llewellyn Hughes, said:

"The consecration of our armies has not been a last-minute effort. We were asked, and strongly asked, to make our men as Christian as we could, to preach

the Word faithfully because it is true; to bring men to God that he might make them good.

Most of the men are not regular church-going men, but they are God-going men, and they have their picture of the King of Kings in the sanctuary of their hearts.

And when General Eisenhower and General Montgomery in their final Orders of the Day asked us all to pray that God would prosper us, that prayer went up, and went up from honest hearts, freely and fully convinced that the business in hand was a liberation according to the will of God."

The Decision When to Invade

The Supreme Commander, his Commander-in-Chief and their Chiefs of Staff met at 4.00am on Monday June 5 for the final and irrevocable decision. Messages went to all the vast forces concerned:

"The invasion of France would start on the morning of the next day."

General Eisenhower gave testimony to the effect this had on him, when he was speaking in Abilene, Kansas, his home town on June 4 1952¹.

"This day, eight years ago, I made the most agonising decision of my life. I had to decide to postpone, by at least 24 hours, the most formidable array of fighting ships and of fighting men that was ever launched across the sea against a hostile shore.

The consequences of that decision at that moment could not have been foreseen by anyone. If there was nothing else in my life to prove the existence of an Almighty and merciful God, the events of the next 24 hours did it.

The greatest break in a terrible outlay of weather occurred the next day and allowed that great invasion to proceed, with losses far



Winston Churchill showing his famous "V for Victory" sign

below those we had anticipated."

On VE Day the Prime Minister spoke from the balcony of Buckingham Palace. He was one who had always been conscious of that over-ruling providence, that guiding, guardian hand. He must have come straight from the Thanksgiving Service in St. Margaret's, Westminster.

His Majesty King George VI then stepped quietly to the microphone. He said with great emphasis:

"We give thanks to Almighty God for the victory He has granted us in Europe." [END]

Notes:

1. Time Magazine, June 16 1952

Biography:

Dr Mark Tronson is a Baptist minister (retired) who served as the Australian cricket team chaplain for 17 years (2000 ret) and established 'Life After Cricket' in 2001. He was recognised by the Olympic Ministry Medal in 2009 presented by Carl Lewis, Olympian of the Century. He mentors young writers and has written 24 books, and enjoys writing.

Mark is married to Delma, with four adult children and grand-children. Dr Tronson writes a daily article for Christian Today Australia (since 2008) and in November 2016 established Christian Today New Zealand.

Mark Tronson's archive of articles can be viewed at www.pressserviceinternational.org/mark-tronson.html

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Tronson, Mark, September 2018, Christian Today: A Nation Called to Prayer, available: www.christiantoday.com.au/news/a-nation-called-to-prayer.html, accessed 25/09/18



General Dwight D. Eisenhower spoke of God's hand which allowed the Allies to win the war



Churchill waves to crowds in Whitehall on the day he broadcast to the nation that the war with Germany had been won, 8 May 1945

It's Time for Revolution



by Kurt
Mahlburg

500th anniversaries don't come around too often. October 2017, though, was a big deal for western civilisation - or at least it should have been. 31 October 2017 marked the *quincentenary* of the Protestant Reformation.

October 31st, 1517 was the day Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the church door in Wittenberg, unleashing a revolution that transformed Europe and helped usher in the modern world.

It's a big deal for Western Civilisation. So much that we love and take for granted in the West is a legacy of this event. **Personal freedoms, universal education, modern science, global languages**, the nation state, and even **democracy** itself owe a massive debt to the reformers - radical followers of Jesus.

To us this sounds odd because we've been told that religion and reason are in conflict; that the world can only progress as **faith retreats**. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Today's world is dizzyingly advanced. But as I've **earlier written**, our Judeo-Christian heritage is being quickly abandoned, and rushing into the vacuum are anxieties, terrorism, widening inequality, slavery on a scale never seen in history, and alarming social polarisation.

It was also into a bleak situation (the Dark Ages no less) that the reformers spoke. *Post tenebras lux* - "After darkness, light" - was their rallying cry.

Three convictions drove them. These convictions turned their world upside down. I'm convinced they could do the same for ours. So what were they?

1. *Sola Scriptura*

In Luther's day, a corrupt church was selling heaven's forgiveness for cash. The construction of St. Peter's Basilica was being bankrolled by gullible peasants.

Medieval superstition had devoured truth. God's Word was hidden in monasteries, shrouded in tradition, and uttered only in Latin. The answer of the reformers was *Sola Scriptura* - back to the Word of God.

"I will cause a boy who drives a plow to know more of the Scriptures than the pope,"

said men like Tyndale, and true to their word, they translated the Bible into the languages of the people, reawakening the hearts and minds of a continent.

Today truth has been swallowed by *relativism*. Now, for example, we're told that something can be *true for you but not for me*; that *absolute truth doesn't exist*; and that we should *question everything*.

But why do so few stop to question *this*, or to ask if such nonsense is *absolutely true*? It's time we stood up and said



Martin Luther



Luther discovering the doctrine of
Justification by Faith

relativism isn't true for me even if the befuddled intelligentsia believe it.

Little wonder superstition has returned. Mysticism is in full flower once more in western nations. People are desperate for something real to anchor their lives to. And in this truth vacuum, too many are satisfied with the



Luther at the Diet of Worms where the Catholic Church tried him as a heretic

horoscopes of human speculation, and gimmick-spirituality imported for mass markets.

Today the Bible is more available than ever, but it's out of fashion and soiled by centuries of slung mud. Still it speaks. *God is there*, and He is not silent. He has spoken, and his Word remains a sure foundation we can build our lives on.

2. The Priesthood of All Believers

The reformers also rediscovered *the priesthood of all believers*: we no longer need priests to stand between us and God, mediating forgiveness and blessing. Jesus has opened the way for each of us to be *priests*, to know God for ourselves and relate to him personally, and that is possible because every person is made in his image.

Today we enjoy individual liberty and human rights, and they arose from these distinctly Christian beliefs. Now everyone cries

"equality!" But do they know where this idea came from? More to the point, do they actually mean it?

Many preach tolerance, but only tolerate **views they agree with**. They tell us *don't judge the morality of others*, but condemn anyone too puritanical for their liking. They say that all ethnicities, genders and orientations are equal, but then divide and rank us by who feels the most offended and deserves the biggest megaphone. That's not equality - and it's sowing division, not unity.

Here's the awkward truth: in our heads, we think of **evolution as true** and Genesis as a myth, so *survival of the fittest* must be largely to blame for the racial and gender inequality we have today.

But in our hearts we can't accept that. No one admits it in polite company, but deep down we still want to believe Genesis and the reformers: that male and female were made equally in

God's image; that no tribe or nation is any less qualified as priests unto God.

If our hearts and heads remain divided as they are, the door stays open to manipulation. When it's convenient, the culture-makers will preach equality, but when they don't get their way, they'll act like some people are *more equal than others*, and oppress anyone who dares dissent.

It's time to clear away the dust. The dignity and equality of every person is *truly true* - but only if the reformers were right. Can we, unashamed, share their convictions once more, or are we on our way back to tyranny?

3. Sola Fide

Luther's greatest discovery, the core idea that drove his revolution, was *Sola Fide* - by faith alone. God's approval doesn't come to us through good deeds or religious observance. Jesus won our forgiveness and freedom at

the cross. Now it's a free gift for everyone who believes.

This is dangerous. Fear and control, which religious leaders relied on for millennia to coerce good behaviour, are now powerless. The individual conscience is subject to God alone, and now we must trust that good deeds flow



The Schlosskirche in Wittenberg, where Luther posted his 95 Theses. (later this church became his gravesite)



Luther's room where he translated the Bible from Latin into German so that everyone could read it and the Bible was not just for the clergy of the Catholic church



The 1534 Luther Bible in German

from hearts of gratitude to Him, not external threats of judgment.

It's also offensive. In every religious system, humans ascend to God through strict obedience, sage insights, or single-minded devotion, and so we get the glory. In the gospel, people contribute nothing. God descends to us, clothes himself in flesh, and achieves salvation on our behalf. We get the gift, but God alone gets the glory.

Finally, it's liberating - the most liberating news in the world. No longer are we haunted by guilt, bound by addiction, or straining for perfection. God meets us in our weakness, and covers every failure with His grace and everlasting love.

Sola Scriptura, The Priesthood of All Believers, and Sola Fide could change the world once more.

The time has come for another revolution. [END]

Biography:

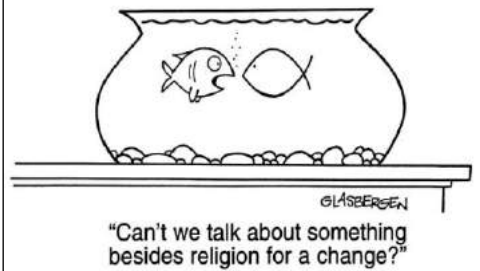
Out of high school Kurt studied architecture, lived on a remote island in Indonesia for two life-changing years, became a primary school teacher, and since the start of 2014 has been the Associate Pastor (Youth and Young Adults) at Aldgate Baptist in the Adelaide Hills, Australia.

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, 30 October 2017, Culture, Worldview and Life with Jesus: It's Time for Revolution, available: <https://kurtmahlburg.blog/2017/10/30/its-time-for-revolution/>, accessed 11/02/19

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



Answer on page 67

Why it's Good to be Single

Reason No. 77:

I really don't care what anyone thinks of me, unless they think I'm amazing, in which case they're right! So, carry on...

Organisation Promotion

Operation Christmas Child 2019



Have you thought about what you're going to do for the kids this year?

[Link to website to find out more](#)



The Agony of Waiting



by Vaneetha
Rendall Risner

www.danceintherain.com

Waiting can be agonising.

It's hardest to wait when I am uncertain about the outcome. When I'm trusting God for the best, while at the same time preparing for the worst.

It would be much easier if I had a guaranteed good outcome, or at least a promise from God to hold on to, or some reassurance to anchor my prayers, but God often seems silent when I'm waiting. I have no idea whether He'll ever answer my prayer, so it feels like I'm waiting in the dark.

I have read and reread Psalm 13: 1-2:

"O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way? How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day?"

[NLT]

How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? *O Lord, how long?*

I have asked that question many times. Waiting patiently. Waiting impatiently. Waiting well. Waiting badly. Waiting...

If I knew God would eventually answer my prayer with 'yes,' waiting would be easier, but when the wait seems endless and I'm not sure if there's any point to it anyway, it feels excruciating.

Even an answer of 'no' would be easier than 'wait.'

A Word; a Promise; an Assurance of Victory

Several years ago, I went through a period of torturous waiting.

At the beginning of my wait, I had searched the Bible to find a promise that related to my situation; a word

that I could 'claim;' an assurance of the victory I longed for.

As I was waiting, I read in Romans 4:20-21:

"Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises." [NLT]

While I admire Abraham's faith, this passage often frustrated me. Of course Abraham never wavered. He had a direct word from God. If I had a direct promise from God, an assurance of my answer, then I'd be content to wait too! Abraham could wait because he knew he'd get what he wanted in the end.

I wanted God to give me a promise like the one He had given Abraham, so I kept begging God for a sign.

None came: no verse; no confirmation; just silence on that issue, for years.

In the end, God's answer was 'no.'

At first it felt unfair, and purposeless. I struggled to make sense of those seemingly wasted years. While I had grown closer to God, somehow I felt that I had received a lesser gift.

I put it out of my mind after a while. It was senseless to keep dwelling on it, but whenever I read that passage in Romans, it stung. I spent so many years waiting, why didn't God tell me His answer from the beginning?

Abraham's Humanity

Somehow, I started reading Romans again in my quiet time. I hesitated as I began Romans 4. It painfully reminded me of that time of asking and waiting, when I didn't get what I had wanted; when I envied Abraham. True, his wait was long,



but Abraham knew what he was waiting for.

As I once again felt disconnected from Abraham, I decided to look at his life in Genesis. I saw Abraham's humanity as he sometimes doubted God's protection. He even tried to fulfil God's promise on his own through Hagar. Perhaps he thought God needed his help and ingenuity.

That part I can identify with. Abraham's struggle with impatience feels all too familiar. Too many times I've tried to help God fulfil His plans – that is, the plans *I'd* like Him to have - plans that would give me what I want and what I think I deserve.

As I studied Genesis, I saw that while Abraham was waiting, God was working; moulding his character; teaching him patience; and building their friendship. It was in that 25-year wait that Abraham got to know God intimately.

It was in those seemingly wasted years that God transformed him, and after decades of waiting, Abraham was ready for the supreme test of his faith when he was asked to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise - the son he had waited for.

Then I saw it. Why had I not noticed this before?

Abraham's faith wasn't rooted in the promise of descendants. If it was, he never would have taken Isaac to be sacrificed. He wouldn't have relinquished what God had promised him years earlier. He would have clung tightly to Isaac, feeling entitled to this son, for Isaac was the



fulfilment of God's long-awaited promise to Abraham.

Abraham wasn't clinging to his own understanding of the fulfilment of God's promise. God could fulfil His promise any way He chose, including raising Isaac from the dead if He needed (Hebrews 11:19). So ultimately Abraham's faith lay in the trustworthiness of God.

Abraham's faith wasn't in the promise alone - his faith was rooted in the Promiser.

Because his faith was not in what God would *do* for him, but rather in God Himself, Abraham could risk it all. He could do whatever God asked - it didn't matter. He wasn't holding on to a particular outcome - he was holding on to God. It was up to God to fulfil His promises.

Abraham's waiting had strengthened his faith, taught him God's ways, and showed him God's faithfulness.

Abraham knew that God would provide everything he needed.

I have the very same assurance that Abraham did - God will provide everything I need. Everything! He will take care of me - that is my promise.

God has delivered one hundred-fold on that promise. He waits with me. He tenderly cares for me. He pours Himself out for me. He sings songs over me. He gives me everything I need.

As I let that promise sink in, I see my waiting differently: **perhaps God is making me, and you, wait for the same reasons that He made Abraham**

wait - to forge our faith; to make us attentive to His voice; to deepen our relationship; to solidify our trust; to prepare us for ministry; and to transform us into His likeness.

In retrospect, when I see all that God does as we wait - 'wait' is the most precious answer He gives. Waiting draws us to God in ways that having answers cannot. It makes us rely on the Giver and not His gifts.

God knows what I need - I do not. He sees the future - I cannot. He will give me only what is best for me - *when* it is best for me.

As Paul Tripp says:

"Waiting is not just about what I get at the end of the wait, but about who I become as I wait."

[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."

Bibliography:

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Kooky Corner



Advertising Promotion

~ Miss Terry Woman ~

www.missterrywoman.com

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

- Clothing;
- Kitchenware;
- Phone covers;
- Clocks;
- Canvases;
- Stationery;
- and so much more!

There'll be something to please you at 'Miss Terry Woman.'

Links to the four different shops:

www.missterrywoman.com

(with over 25,000 items in the Australian shop alone)





Every Day Really is a Battle – In More Ways Than We Realise



by Lisa Copen

Fighting our illness is a daily battle, but ultimately we are fighting for our soul. Lisa shares.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 6:12 [NIV]

Ever since my son was young he loved the Bible's battle stories. Whether it was David versus Goliath or a battle against a storm, He wanted to hear how God entered the battle and defeated the enemy.

Many of us take comfort in Exodus 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Sounds simple, right? God will fight our battles. Yet, just as David had to find the courage to walk forward with a few rocks in His pocket we too must face the battle. We are still a player, not able to take the seat of a distant observer.

Multiple times a day Satan is fighting for our soul. If he can just chip away at our faith in the Lord, he will win. How does he do this?

Emotions: discouragement, hopelessness, negativity, anger, pity, and envy to name a few.

Separation from the Father: praying less, avoiding confession of our sins, justifying our actions due to pain, procrastinating reading His Word.

How we cope with pain: lashing out, using it as an excuse, negative self-talk, how we deal with side effects.

Each of these are ways Satan wins. A little at a time.

In a devotional by Joni Eareckson Tada she shared how a friend said that her wheelchair straps resembled bandoliers worn by soldiers who are prepared to go to battle.

We must remember that we are in a war and those of us with illness are given many extra burdens to carry through all the battles we will face. It is vital we never allow Satan those little wins without quickly going to the Father's feet with confession and begging for His help. He will fight our battles, but we must recognize them and ask for His victorious presence.

Prayer:

God, You are fighting for me! Satan has no power against You... unless I give it to him. I confess that when I am exhausted and weak, when my illness seems to take away everything, it is so easy to give Satan a 'little win' and just give into his battle for me. Help me be strong so that I can be more like You, able to resist his fight for me. Amen.

Song Link: This song is "Stand in the Rain" with SuperChick and the lyrics may touch your heart. (I know the line about being afraid to cry because you won't be able to stop is me!)

Listen, as I think you will find some lines you may relate to as well. Despite the battle we are facing every day, the fears, and more, we can stand firm and God will be beside us. –Lisa [END]

Biography:

Lisa Copen is the founder of Rest Ministries, a woman with rheumatoid arthritis, and at times a battle resistor. Who has the energy to fight? She hopes to choose her battles wisely and that involves being aware of her thoughts and actions so that Satan doesn't even get a little win. Lisa's book, **"REFRESH ME, LORD: Prayer for those with Illness"** is available and she is eager to get it into your hands, as it has been a spiritual warfare battle magnet.

When Satan attacks us, it is a very personal attack. Where or when do you find you are at your weakest? Let us encourage each other through prayer for one another so we can resist his temptations.

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Lisa Copen, 18 July 2014, Rest Ministries: Every Day Really is a Battle - In More Ways Than We Realize, available: www.chronicillnesspainedevotionals.wordpress.com/2014/07/18/every-day-really-is-a-battle-in-more-ways-than-we-realize/, accessed 25/01/18

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Jerusalem Journal



ירושלים יומן

Con Artist Claims to be Dead Leader



by Abel Lissnar

17 May 30AD

It's been almost six weeks since the miracle man, Jesus of Nazareth was executed, and yet there is more talk of him today than there was before his Sanhedrin sanctioned murder.

At first, his closest friends stayed hidden somewhere in or near Jerusalem, for fear that certain leaders would have them arrested and put to death as well.

A group of soldiers had been placed on duty near Jesus' burial tomb to ensure his body wasn't stolen by some of his crazy fanatics.

On the third day after the events at Golgotha, the well-known publican, Mary of Magdala is reported to have visited Jesus' tomb before sunrise, only to find the soldiers gone and the tomb opened.

When she entered, she found that Jesus' body was missing. She claimed two angels appeared saying that His body wasn't there as He'd come back to life. Suddenly, she found herself speaking directly with the now alive Jesus who gave her a message for the disciples.

A little later when a fresh squadron arrived to take over from the soldiers on sentry, the earlier group were indeed missing, and are now wanted for dereliction of duty.

Just one soldier was located, as he wandered aimlessly near his home, madly babbling about the appearance of a glowing, winged god who had simply touched the stone in front of the tomb with a finger-tip, and rolled it aside.

Believing that the creature was going to slay them and throw their

dead bodies inside with the deceased Nazarene carpenter, the men fled in terror. The physician who's caring for the soldier advises that he's suffering PSD.

After that, Jesus' followers spread wild rumours that the carpenter had indeed risen from the dead, claiming that they too had seen him.

The most unsettling thing about this whole debacle has been the mass hysteria gripping crowds of hundreds, even thousands who also claim to have seen the dead Jesus, alive and well. Apparently he's resumed teaching, but this new con-artist is unlikely to keep their attention for long.

I must admit to some confusion why his followers and others feel the need to make even more outlandish claims about the 'risen' Jesus, as they're calling him, such as his performance of further miracles. Surely rising from the dead would have been sufficient for the carpenter, but claimed miracles include disappearing and appearing at will, even within a locked room.

Earlier today the disciples were returning in their boat from a poor day of fishing, when Jesus appeared on the shore and told them to cast their net to the right-hand side. They obeyed and instantly their net was filled with so many fish (over 150), that they couldn't pull the catch onboard, and yet their net didn't break.

We all know how fishermen, are prone to exaggeration. Next they'll be telling us that the fish flung themselves wilfully into the boat and asked to be cooked and eaten.



[END]



Do you struggle with prayer? Do you find it hard to know what to say? 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.



by Michael Hannett

Prayer for friends and family; for those who are God's children, and those who don't yet know our Father.

Day 1: For those who are struggling

Father, I pray for my brothers and sisters who are struggling. Give them hope and peace Lord. Please remind them that, through the worst darkness, there will come a day when they will see Your light, and Your love, and that they're going to be ok. Show me how I may reach out a helping hand. In Jesus' name, amen.

Day 2: For those in financial need

Father I pray that you will help Your children in financial need, particularly those who struggle to make ends meet, that you will ease their burden. Help them to be courageous and bold, trusting in You to do the impossible. Amen.

Day 3: Help us to shine Your light

Father I pray for Your family, all of us that are Your children. Let Your light shine brightly through us into this dark world. Help us to spread Your joy and gracious love to the hearts of all we meet, so that they may be blessed with Your good news of hope and salvation, so they may know joy. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, amen.

Day 4: Help us to remember Your blessings

Father, thank You for Your love. Thank You for Your peace. Praise You Lord for blessing us each day with Your light and joy. Help us to always remember that those blessings You have for us Your children, go on forever. Amen.

Day 5: Help those who are lost to find You

God, I pray for those lost in the world's darkness - Lord, help them to find Your love. Help them to know how much greater Your love is than anything the world could possibly offer. Help them to come to recognise the limitless joy of your compassionate heart, and the everlasting hope that is in the name of Jesus, and to finally find the peace they have so long hoped for through Your Holy Spirit, amen.

Day 6: Help those who've been let-down by the world

God, please be with those that have trusted in the world and have been let down, time and again. Help them to know that, when that reliance is placed in You instead, disappointment will never follow, but instead each moment of trust, will lead to even greater blessing. Amen

Day 7: Help heal the hearts of Your lost children

God, heal the hearts of Your lost children. Bring healing to those with broken hearts. Restore and replenish the love that has been lacking in those whose hearts are angry, and help those that stumble in darkness, to find the path that leads to Your righteousness and Your love. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, amen.

"So who can separate us? What can come between us and the love of God's Anointed? Can troubles, hardships, persecution, hunger, poverty, danger or even death? The answer is, absolutely nothing. As the psalm says,

'On Your behalf, our lives are endangered constantly; we are like sheep awaiting slaughter.'

But no matter what comes, we will always taste victory through Him who loved us. For I have every confidence that nothing - not death, life, heavenly messengers, dark spirits, the present, the future, spiritual powers, height, depth, nor any created thing - can come between us and the love of God revealed in the Anointed, Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:35-39 [VOICE]

A-Musings



by Vicki Nunn

X-Appeal



When I was younger, I was a magnet when it came to the guys. Boasting to my girlfriends, I would point out a man in the room and say "That one there."

For some reason though, my companions did not seem particularly envious of my talent, which was probably due to the fact that I was referring to my innate ability to attract any old, sad men in the room who needed to tell someone about their terribly tragic lives, especially if they'd had too much to drink. If I was out with a large group of twenty or so friends, these sad, old geezers would only ever seem to want to latch onto me.

This was probably due to the fact that when I wore my glasses, I looked like a kindly, sympathetic school teacher.

I guess it could have been worse. I remember reading a true story about a bloke who decided after a few days holiday that he would continue with his scruffy, unshaven face, which was very fashionable in Hollywood at the time.

One day, he noticed the intent gaze of a female driver who had stopped to allow him to cross the road in front of her. Feeling quite chuffed at her attention, he stopped, turned to her and smiled. The woman held his gaze, then slowly reached across and locked her car-door. Suitably chastened, the man immediately returned home and shaved.

Fortunately I haven't managed to frighten off too many men over the

years, well, at least not with my looks, but when I was in my late forties, it was while I was out with a girlfriend at karaoke one night, that I discovered that there had been a profound shift in my life.

At one point in the evening, we began chatting with a rather nice-looking man in his early 20's and though I would never admit it, I may have been mildly flattered by his attentions.

After several minutes though, the man in question began telling me all about his terribly tragic life. That's when I realised that this young bloke saw me as a mother-figure with whom he could share all of his problems!

I'm not at all sure I like the idea that men thirty-five and under now look at me like I'm their mum! When did my transition from cute young thing to mother-figure occur and how come nobody warned me?

Obviously blokes still want to tell me all about their horribly sad lives, it's just that their ages have switched. If I give it another twenty years, will I get eight year olds coming up and telling me about their awfully dreadful lives as if I'm their nanna-substitute?

Frankly I am quite appalled, and a little miffed at this turn of events. If you happen to see my ego lying around anywhere, please pick it up and post it onto me. It's quite deflated and should easily slip into an envelope. [END]



Organisation Promotion

CHRISTIAN TODAY

Australia

Since its founding in 2002, Christian Today Australia has become the leading non-denominational Christian news website in the country. Christian Today Australia gains affiliation to the Christian Today network based in the UK, and is part of the CMCI Group, the world's largest Christian news company.

Christian Today Australia's vision stems from the calling to establish the kingdom of God on earth through media by serving as a platform from which Truth is presented according to Matthew 5:37, *"Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'"*

The publication aims to bring unity among Christians across all denominations and restore God as the centre of the nation.

Web: www.christiantoday.com.au

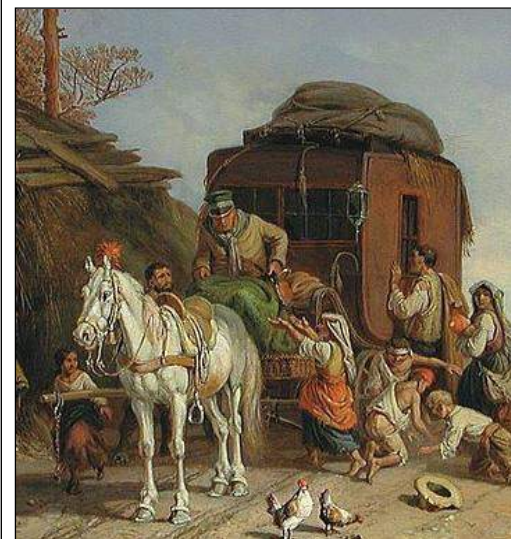
Contact us at:

www.christiantoday.com.au/contactus

Tantalising Trivia

Did you know...

A manned rocket can leave the earth and reach the moon in less time than it once took for a stage-coach to travel the length of England?





Puzzle Page

Spot the Difference

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 67.**





Low-Carb Recipes

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

MAIN COURSE: Kristie's Keto Burger

Ingredients: (serves 2)

Beef Patty:

230g minced beef
¼ medium onion, diced
1 tsp of diced capsicum
¼ tsp black pepper
½ tsp basil
½ tsp salt

Other Items:

2 tbsp butter
2 lettuce leaves (large)

Toppings:

2 pieces shortcut bacon
2 eggs
2 slices of cheese
1 tbsp LCHF mayo
½ Roma/egg tomato
1 tbsp sliced savoury pickled cucumber
1 cup of shredded cabbage

Instructions:

Thoroughly mix all the beef patty ingredients together and then shape into 2 patties. Put the cabbage into a microwave steam dish and cook until very tender. While that's cooking, melt the butter in a frying pan and fry the patties, along with the bacon until all are cooked through. Take the cooked items out and slice the bacon into strips. Add the eggs to the pan and cook to the consistency you prefer.

While that's cooking, wash the tomato and cut into slices, then wash the lettuce leaves. By this stage you should have drained the cabbage. Once the eggs are ready, Then it's time to begin stacking your burger. Begin with a layer of the steamed cabbage, then add the patty, followed by a slice of cheese, then the bacon strips, pickled cucumber slices and tomato slices, drizzle half of the mayo onto that, then add the fried egg on top and place the lettuce leaf on to finish.

If you're not a fan of cabbage, feel free to replace it with a fresh lettuce leaf on the bottom as well as the top, which will make it easier to pick up. Add different ingredients such as bean sprouts, some thinly sliced pepperoni or mushrooms.

This messy but delicious burger is sure to go on your list of favourites.



DESSERT: Jelly Lollies/Sweets

Ingredients:

1 sachet (approx 85g) of flavoured sugar-free jelly crystals
1 cup boiling water
1 tbsp of gelatine

Instructions:

Empty the gelatine and the jelly crystals into a heat-resistant jug and mix them together well.

As you pour in the hot water, stir/whisk the ingredients quickly and thoroughly, then once it's all dissolved, let it stand for ten minutes. This will allow most of the frothy bubbles to disappear.

On baking trays, place some silicon trays with small moulds. Gently pour in the hot liquid and fill each mould to just below the lip.

Place in the fridge for half an hour until they've set. After that, place the tray into the freezer for one hour, until they've frozen through.

After that, pop them out of their moulds, and let them thaw before serving. These unused jelly treats will keep in a container in the fridge for several days.

For different tastes, use different flavour sugar-free jelly crystals, then you can offer a mix of flavours.

This could prove a hit with young and old alike.

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Vicky (no surname), 26 September 2018, *tasteaholics: Keto Quarter Pounder*, available: www.tasteaholics.com/recipes/dinner/keto-quarter-pounder/, accessed 01/01/19

Chantal Walsh, 19 January 2017, *New Idea Food: Jelly Treats*, available: www.newideafood.com.au/jelly-treats, accessed 06/02/19.



Next quarter's issue:



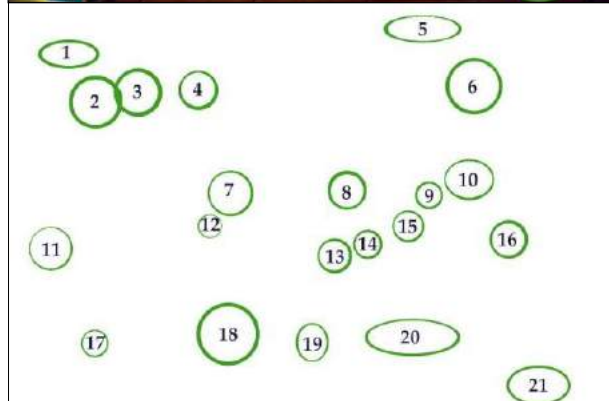
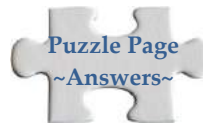
~ You can so easily help this ministry! ~

Priority One: please pray for this ministry - it is the most important thing we ask.

Another way you can support us is financially, eg our post office box annual rental of AU\$130 is due on 31 March. Perhaps you could get together with a few friends, church or family members and donate some of that cost. You could 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 various costs we encounter.

That would be amazing, and would reduce some of the financial stress currently placed on our Editor, Vicki Nunn, who pays all outstanding costs out of her own disability pension. At present we haven't applied for charity status in Australia, simply because we don't have any volunteer staff available to follow this through, let alone any funding to do so. We really need an accountant to help with our books, otherwise it's yet another duty that falls on Vicki's shoulders, and she just doesn't have enough time to do everything!

~ Thank you for considering how you can make a difference. ~



1. name change from Rathaus to Rathous; 2. image removed and stripes added; 3. flower colour changed; 4. product name enlarged; 5. product name on sign changed appearance; 6. name on product removed; 7. box colour changed to purple; 8. word changed; 9. word 'mop' changed to 'wob'; 10. tissue holder is taller; 11. extra spoon added; 12. product disappeared; 13. India logo changed colour; 14. grater has extra metal pieces on top; 15. product name changed to Octopus; 16. product name changed - some text reversed; 17. handle missing; 18. objects missing from bowl; 19. extra drawer and knob on grinder; 20. extra object added on top; and 21. drawer handle is wider.



Did you guess the identity of the item in the close-up image below, from page 56?

If you guessed the centre of a poppy-flower (seen below it), you should pop out and shout yourself an ice-cream! That was a tough one! Right at the very bottom is the enlarged image of a similar looking poppy in bloom.



Tantalising Trivia

As at 27 February 2019, more than half of the world's population (51.7%) dwell in just seven countries:

- China: 18.4%;
- India: 17.5%;
- USA: 4.3%;
- Indonesia: 3.4%
- Pakistan: 2.7%
- Brazil: 2.7%
- Nigeria: 2.7%

The remaining 48.3% of the population live in the remaining 180 or so countries.

China and India together have just under 36% of the world's population.

(NB: that statistics/data vary from site to site, some quite significantly, likely due to the lack of real data in poorer nations where a census is too expensive or too difficult and/or remote for its people to complete.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

[Voice] The Voice Bible Copyright © 2012 Thomas Nelson, Inc. The Voice™ translation © 2012 Ecclesia Bible Society All rights reserved.

^17 December, 1998, "What's in a Name: Reflections of an Irrepressible Name Collector" by Paul Dickson, Published by Merriam Webster, ISBN 13: 9780877796138

Empress Falls, New South
Wales, Australia

