

SPAG

Cost: FREE

A quarterly online
magazine for all
Christian adults.

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support this ministry:
www.spagmag.com*

Single Person Approved by God

A large ostrich with a dinosaur head is the central image of the cover. The ostrich's body is covered in brown, shaggy feathers, and its head is replaced by a dinosaur head with a long snout, yellow eyes, and sharp teeth. It is standing in a grassy field with a dense forest of tall evergreen trees in the background.

Fancy Flying from Advanced Aeronautics

- We are mad at God;
- Inspirational people;
- Lost in translation: unequally yoked;

- Status: adopted
- Remembering Dr Martin Luther King Jr.
- Christianity and mental health;
- and lots more

Regular Segments: ☪ Letters to Lou ☪ Puzzle Page ☪ Creation Ministries ☪
☪ Kristie's Kitchen ☪ It's a Weird World After All ☪ Open Doors ☪
☪ Up Close and Personal with Wildlife ☪ Diduno ☪ Thrifty Tips ☪ What is it? ☪

Editor's Letter



It's a BUMPER issue to celebrate our 5th birthday!

It was back in January 2015 that I was feeling very confused about what God wanted me to do with my life. Due to ongoing health issues I had given up children's ministry, foster care, and my 11 year ministry as a radio presenter. I was passionate about a local singles ministry which I'd created and co-ordinated for 15 years, but had taken a step back from that as well. Everything felt like a confused mess and additionally I was coming out the other side of several years of severe depression. I despaired that God could use me for anything ever again.

I spoke to a counsellor friend about it, and he went off and prayed for me, later coming back with the suggestion that I start a magazine for Christian singles. It was as if a light suddenly lit up the darkness in my mind. I had a good portion of the skills already and resources from my radio ministry that I knew would come in handy, and I had a passion for supporting singles - so that was the beginnings of SPAG Magazine which was first issued in June 2015.

It's been a steep learning curve for me, and we've grown from a Christian singles magazine to one that is suitable for **all** Christian adults, with at least one singles article in each issue.

Our subscribers continue to slowly grow with readers in Australia, USA, Philippines, Malaysia, Algeria and Nigeria! We have a small, growing team of eight members. We welcomed onboard Lori Yanez in late 2017, and were sad to lose her when she passed away. She was a keen writer who also struggled with health issues, and although I never met her face to face, I look forward to catching up with this special sister in heaven.

I'm so thankful for our contributors who happily share their insights. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of our terrific team and wonderful contributors during the past five years, especially those who are happy to continue providing us with their wisdom and insight, particularly on topics of which I

have limited understanding (which are too many to mention.)

I dare say that at least one of our articles in the past five years has upset someone, and you may think it strange of me to say, but I'm glad! I don't believe God wants any of us to be complacent, or too comfortable in our walk, so if we've challenged someone to consider a topic from a different perspective, or urged someone to spend time in prayer about it, then I'm pleased. I don't believe it's my job to make life cushy for anyone, and believe me when I say that I too have been challenged on various occasions.

Your Prayers Please

May I encourage you to earnestly pray for this ministry, particularly that we meet our aim which is:

to encourage, challenge and inspire Christians in their walk, and to honour and exalt God.

I would particularly appreciate your prayers for support for our ongoing financial costs which presently come out of my own pocket, and that can be challenging sometimes as I live on a limited disability pension. I worked out that if we could get 100 people to donate just \$2 a month, it would cover a good portion of our ongoing annual costs, though not replacement of equipment. I would like to personally thank everyone who has donated - your contribution is much appreciated. Please contact me if you would like banking details:

Email: spagemag@yahoo.com.au

Our Birthday Issue

We have a number of fresh articles, and have scoured all of our twenty issues to date, selecting some of the best articles to reshare in this issue, ... but wait, there's more. There are also two bonus booklets including "The Best of the Letters to Lou," our Counsellor, and another including some of our earlier humorous articles. You are welcome to share them with your church, family and friends.

We've broken up the main issue into sections including:

- Inspirational people;
- Christian singleness;
- Christianity and mental health;
- General articles; and
- Regular articles

with heaps to keep you reading for many hours.

Because of access problems due to the coronavirus and the size of this issue, we had to drop some of our regular articles, but they'll be back in issue 22 in September.

If you haven't taken advantage of the 'entertainment' booklets we shared a couple of months back as a source of entertainment and encouragement during the coronavirus and isolation, they're still available until the end of June on our website, though we may extend that till later. Here's the [link](#)

I think that's enough from me, and will let you go and explore this very special issue.

Warm regards

Vicki Nunn
Editor

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Tantalising Trivia









It has been suggested that an insect like the mealy bug may have been sent by God to provide food to the Israelites on their 40 year travels through the Sinai desert.

The mealy bug feeds on the evergreen tamarisk in the deserts of the Middle East and produces sticky honeydew through its intestines. The honeydew is eaten by nomadic tribes in the desert and looks like shining scales.

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 share SPAG Magazine with others.~

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

SUBMISSIONS:

Feel free to write to us via our email: spagmag@yahoo.com.au. Please 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're dealing with and would like a response from our Counsellor Lou, SPAG's Counsellor.

Please note that any item or photo for publication must be your own original work and not copied or extracted 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: spagmag@yahoo.com.au or phone (+61) 042 44 33 772. Information about advertising costs can be found on our website ([link here](#))

Community and non-profit groups are advertised free, though we cannot guarantee that there will always be sufficient space to do so. Please send your request no later than 6 weeks prior to publication dates, i.e. mid January, mid April, mid July, and mid October.

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Inspirational People

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Doctors Catherine & Reginald Hamlin

~ Healers and Hope Bringers ~



by Vicki Nunn

It's difficult to put yourself in this situation, but try and imagine that you're a heavily pregnant woman and you've spent hours or even days in labour in agony. Your child is eventually born dead. You have survived this difficult birth although there are many other women in your country who die in these same circumstances.

As a consequence of the problem birth, you've developed a condition known as obstetric fistula which has dire consequences that may include an inability to have children. You have no idea that you have this condition nor of its serious long-term consequences.

Obstetric fistula results in an open, unhealed hole directly from the bladder and/or bowels into the vagina which means that they now leak **directly** into the vagina.

Not only do you have to come to terms with the loss of a child, your

grief and depression as well as the terrible physical pain you endured, but as a result of the condition;

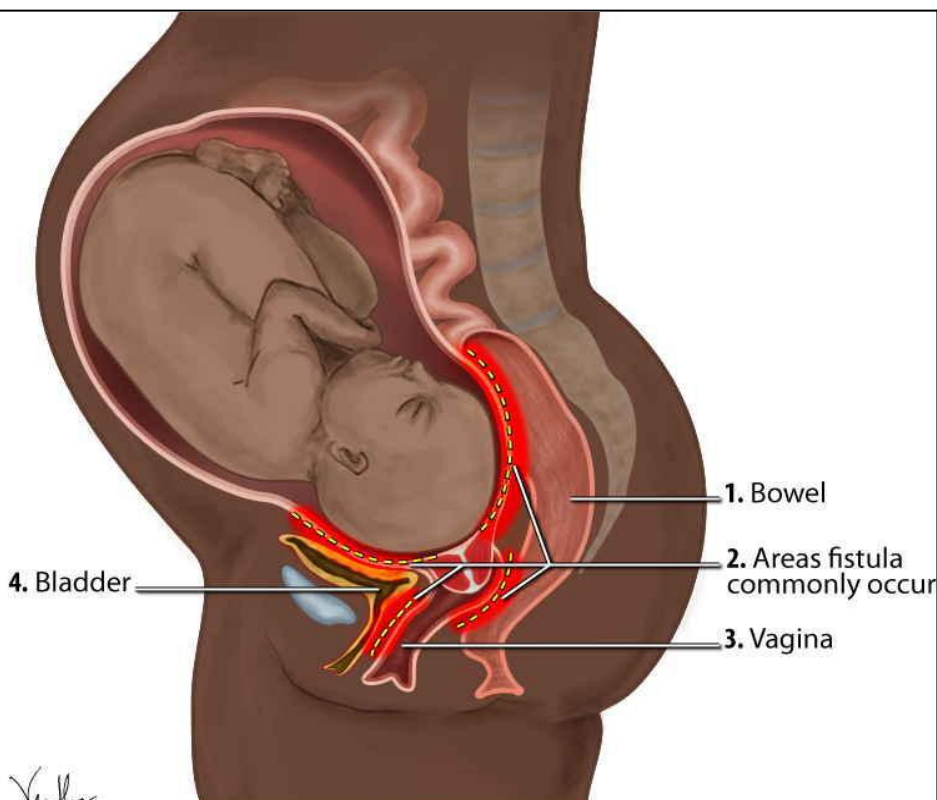
- you have a foul smelling leakage from your vagina;
- even if you can get pregnant again, the child is likely to die without a clean, safe caesarean and you may develop further complications including another fistula;
- you are ostracised;
- you're husband leaves you;
- you lose your family and friends;
- you can't find work and as a consequence, don't have money for medical assistance;
- your condition worsens and you develop ulcers from the waste that weeps from your vagina;
- you suffer enormous pain;
- You lose the ability to walk;
- you develop kidney damage as a result of infection;
- you suffer terrible incapacitation;
- in an attempt to stop the flow of waste, you may stop eating or drinking;
- after much agony, over months or

years, you eventually die from infections and long-term poor health, or lack of water or food as a consequence of the condition.

It's impossible to imagine isn't it? Instead, try to imagine that by pure chance you're born in a wealthy country with access to good medical facilities. This condition is quite rare in developed countries and medical interventions are put into place to stop it from even developing.

It hardly seems fair does it, that the circumstances of our birth can mean the difference between suffering so terribly or living a healthier and happier life. It's so difficult for us to really know the suffering of another person because it's not happening to us, or to someone we know, but we are talking about another human being here – someone who could even be our sister in Christ.

Obstetric fistulas are uncommon in developed countries but can occur after failed or severe problematic childbirth, especially when there is no



Obstetric Fistula Locations



Ethiopian Woman

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proper medical help available. It is estimated that around **two million women** in various poorer countries are presently living with this condition, and these numbers are increasing. It seems incredible that so many women are suffering this terrible condition right at this very moment. With good medical care, obstetric fistulas are easily preventable. It is just one of several medical conditions that can result from pregnancy and childbirth.

Catherine & Reginald Hamlin

In the 1950s, two Christian doctors, Australian Catherine Hamlin and her New Zealand husband Reginald Hamlin, (both obstetrician/gynaecologists), saw an advertisement published by the Ethiopian Government asking for a gynaecologist and an obstetrician to set up a midwifery school. Led by God, both doctors moved to Ethiopia with their six year old son in 1959.

Neither doctor had ever encountered obstetric fistula before and were shocked to find out how common it was in that country and in other poorer nations. By 1974 they'd founded the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to provide free surgery to

women to repair the condition. It is the only medical centre in the world which is exclusively focused on providing help for this particular condition.

With a success rate of 95%, the facility has now treated more than 45,000 women. It has become a global expertise centre on repair for obstetric fistula and surgeons from across the world travel to the Ethiopian facility to be trained.

After her husband's death in 1993, Dr Catherine Hamlin continued her work, including training many local medical professionals in the surgical procedures, and this has resulted in further centres opening in other Ethiopian cities. The Hamlin College of Midwives was set up in 2006 to help prevent obstetric fistula from developing in the first place.

Just recently, Dr Catherine Hamlin passed away (18 March 2020), but even into her nineties she lived in a cottage at the original hospital and remained very active there, though she no longer was involved in surgery.

Dr Hamlin received numerous awards including the Companion of the Order of Australia, and was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She wrote the best-selling book "The Hospital by the River: A Story of Hope."

In response to the acclaim she received, Dr Hamlin said, "I'm doing what I love doing and it's not a hardship for me to be working in Ethiopia with these women." She also said, "We have to eradicate Ethiopia of this awful thing that's happening to women: suffering, untold suffering, in the countryside."

At one of her earlier birthday celebrations, Dr Hamlin's son Richard said, "Catherine has only one son and she has 35,000 daughters."

Major Complications in Pregnancy

Across the world, there are more than 300,000 maternal deaths every year and for every death, there are at least twenty women who experience



Dr Catherine Hamlin with trainee midwives at the Hamlin Fistula Hospital, Ethiopia

Photo by Lucy Horodny, AusAID, available under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license, downloaded from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/106853342@N04/10693395255> accessed 27/04/20

major complications as a result of childbirth. Ninety-nine percent of the maternal deaths occur in poor countries, and it is pregnancy and childbirth which is the major cause of death in adolescent girls in these same countries. Consider that in Africa, the risk of a women dying from pregnancy or childbirth is one in sixteen. [END]

For more information, go to the Hamlin Fistula webpage at: <https://hamlinfistula.usa.org/> or view the Youtube one hour documentary "A Walk to Beautiful" at: <https://bit.ly/1LHNtJL>

You might also like to support this worthwhile organisation by donating or raising funds.

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"Put yourself completely under the influence of Jesus, so that he may think his thoughts in your mind, do his work through your hands, for you will be all-powerful with him to strengthen you."

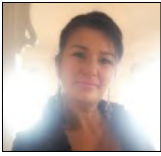
Mother Teresa



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Surely Not Everything?

~ Geoff and Gloria Parry ~



by Alik Whitfield
Square One Ministries
Australia

Jesus gave everything.... and that means nothing was left over or withheld. There was no reserve tucked away in a quiet corner; no back-up plan to escape the horrors of crucifixion. His life was turned over to the plans of God, completely, all for the purpose of bringing us closer to God.

"For the joy set before Jesus he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2 [NIV]



It's rare to find Christians who give everything for eternal rewards, and I mean **everything** as defined above.

In the past twenty years I've given some of my life and resources to God's purposes but not my home or retirement securities. Believers who give everything on earth, are rare and extraordinary....

Geoff and Gloria Parry

One such couple is Geoff and Gloria Parry.

Ten years ago they sold a home and business to give everything in supporting an organisation called JC Epidemic, who visited schools and public arena's with messages of hope for young people accompanied by a motocross stunt show!!

When that season was complete, they served my touring ministry sharing messages of hope and love across Australia.... and again asked for nothing.

The lettering on my Hyundai iLoad vehicle (pictured top left) was a surprise from them.... but they gave much more than this to see love spread far and wide.

Steve Grace is also a beneficiary of Geoff and Gloria's sacrificial giving, carrying his mission and team on a number of tours in "The Ark", including two months from the east, across the Nullarbor to Western Australia. Again, they simply gave.

Yes, thousands Australians have probably been touched by the giving of Geoff and Gloria and may not know it.



Nepal

Today and for the past 7 years they have continued GIVING, this time to the cause of poor and at risk children in Nepal through Transform the Nations.

Last December I went to Nepal with Geoff and Gloria travelling from west to east seeing first-hand the extensive work achieved. This includes border booths for the prevention of human trafficking, relationship building in Bardi Villages, the development of schools (available to the poorest of the poor), hostel/housing for at risk children and vocational/business training. It was staggering!!



In Kathmandu and Pokhara I was privileged to share in several situations including Sunday morning church and the hostels where many village children live safely and go to school. It was life changing in its revelations.

In Australia Geoff and Gloria tour extensively, generating awareness and giving encouragement to churches, organisations and communities. These are quiet servant hearted Aussies, who demonstrate faithfulness and personal sacrifice in absolutes... it's absolutely all for love. They have given every earthly asset to the purpose of rescuing and restoring innocent lives, without reserves tucked away or back up investments.

Now at this juncture of life, Geoff and Gloria are in need of a new vehicle for reaching more lives and relationships in Australia.

Their tours are what generate opportunities for rescue, prevention and education for Nepali children. The results of which I witnessed first hand... that children in the lowest cast group (Bardi) are now becoming educators (University trained) and champions of justice against Human Trafficking in Nepal. The details of this need is [HERE](#).

Please will you partner with me in giving, in returning a blessing, in ensuring their work and legacy continues? Perhaps while you are giving you can share this need with others....

For direct contributions:

G & G Parry

BSB: 034 177

Account No: 163855

Reference: Auto or 2886



Learn more at:
Transform the Nations

Bibliography:

Whitfield, Alik, 11 February 2020, available: <https://godswayactuallyworks.wordpress.com/2017/05/05/change-in-perspective-seeing-life-as-a-whole/>, accessed 31/04/20



Fanny Crosby

~ She Did What She Could ~



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

The Early Years

Fanny Crosby was born two hundred years ago in the USA on March 24, 1820, and as an infant at the age of just six weeks, she caught a cold which led to an inflammation in her eyes. Possibly as a result of the treatment she received, her optic nerves were damaged and she became completely blind. She never knew her father as he died when she was still an infant, and so she was raised by her mother and her maternal grandmother in a strong Christian environment.

She wrote her very first poem at the age of eight in which she shared about her blindness. When she was ten, her mother and grandmother encouraged her to memorise the Scriptures and she began with five chapters a week. By fifteen, Fanny could recite Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, the four gospels, the Pentateuch and many of the Psalms.



*Fanny
as a
young
woman*

When she was twelve, a music teacher came to their town twice a week, providing singing lessons to the local children including Fanny. Around this time the family attended the Presbyterian church in Ridgefield, where Fanny was especially delighted to discover the hymns they sang.

Fanny's Early Adult Life

At 23, she graduated from the New York Institution for the Blind, then joined with a group of lobbyists who urged the Government to provide education for the blind. Fanny became the first woman to speak in the US Senate.

During her early adult life, she taught at a blind school in North Reading for twelve years.

Later her four books were published and she wrote more than 1,000 secular poems. She also co-wrote more than sixty secular songs, some of which were huge hits in their day.

The very first American opera, a cantata called "The Flower Queen," was co-written with Fanny.

A strong believer in the abolition of slavery, Fanny wrote in support of Abraham Lincoln in his fight to end slavery, and composed a number of other political items as well.

Fanny is best remembered for her lyrics, around 9,000 of which were made into hymns.

Over 100 million copies of the music with her lyrics have been printed, but she took no credit for the melodies, explaining that "Spring Hymn" was the only hymn

for which she wrote both the words and the music.

By the end of the 1800s Fanny had become a household name in the USA, and was called the "Queen of Gospel Song Writers," and the "Mother of modern congregational singing in America."

Many hymn books contain hymns for which Fanny wrote the lyrics. Those of us who grew up singing the old-style hymns have likely sung Fanny's songs without knowing anything of her story.

As a young adult I began to notice certain songs which really spoke to my heart that were written by Fanny Crosby and it wasn't until later that I discovered that she had been blind.

Her words spoke to me of the struggles we face in our Christian walk, and holding fast in our faith to our loving Heavenly Father. She encouraged us to draw closer to Him, to open our hearts, minds and spirits to His compassionate and tender heart.

Blindness

Due to her disability, she struggled to write legibly and friends and family wrote her words down on paper for her. She said that oftentimes she would have several hymns floating about in her mind at the same time, and could sometimes write several in a day.

Fanny once wrote about her blindness:

"It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life,

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and I thank Him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me."

Her Marriage

On March 5, 1858 Crosby married Alexander Van Alstyne Jr., a man she'd met while teaching. In 1859 their baby daughter Frances died in infancy, possibly from SIDS.

Crosby never spoke publicly about being a mother, only mentioning it briefly in a few interviews toward the end of her life, when she said:

"I became a mother and knew a mother's love. God gave us a tender babe but the angels came down and took our infant up to God and to His throne."

It is understood that the marriage became unhappy after their daughter's death, and though they remained married, Fanny and her husband chose not to live together. The only comment that Fanny ever made about their marriage came after her husband died when she said:



Fanny in her final years.

"He had his faults - and so have I mine, but notwithstanding these, we loved each other to the last."

Missionary Work

Fanny was extremely passionate about supporting and helping the poor, living and working in the slums for the last couple of decades of her life, where she was known as Aunt Fanny.

Though Crosby had written the lyrics to thousands of hymns, many under different names, she often struggled financially, due to copyright rules at the time, which exploited poets and song-writers, especially women, and gave the rights to hymns and other music to the composer of the melody, rather than the lyricist. Crosby was paid a fee of just \$1 or \$2 per song or poem and nothing more.

In her 1906 autobiography she said that she wrote her hymns '*in a sanctified manner*', and never for financial or commercial considerations, and that she had donated her royalties to 'worthy causes.'

One of Crosby's goals was to win a million hearts to Christ through her hymns, and with every song, she prayed it would bring people to know Him.

Her Hymns

Fanny's more well known hymns include:

- All the Way My Savior Leads Me;
- Blessed Assurance;
- Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home;
- Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus, Our Blessed Redeemer!
- Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!
- Rescue the Perishing;
- To God Be the Glory; and
- He Hideth My Soul

Following are some of the words to the beloved hymn "He Hideth My Soul:"

Verse 1

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, a wonderful Savior to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, where rivers of pleasure I see.

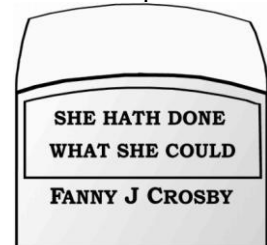
Chorus

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
He hideth my life with the depths of His love, and covers me there with His hand; and covers me there with His hand.

Conclusion

Even though Fanny Crosby is best remembered for her hymn-writing, she preferred to be remembered for her missionary work.

She died on 12 February 1915, and at her request, her family erected a small tombstone, which carried these simple words:



She wanted no great fanfare, instead she looked beyond. "When I get to heaven," she'd said at an earlier time, "the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!"

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Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay

~ Cross in the Snow ~

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by Joseph F.
Kolapudi
SPAG Journalist

Ten Years On

January 2018 marked ten years since Sir Edmund Hillary's death and May 2018 was thirty-two years since his Nepalese guide Tenzing Norgay passed away.

While the accomplishments of these two men will always be connected with the first ever successful climb to the top of Mt Everest, the highest mountain peak in the world in May 1953, their life achievements have provided us with much more than that.

Sir Edmund Hillary

In addition to the twelve books he published¹, Hillary also dedicated the last fifty years of his life to aiding the Sherpa people of Nepal by establishing the Himalayan Trust in 1960¹.

He was involved in several other mountain climbing expeditions, a jet-boat trek in 1977 from the mouth of the Ganges River to its source¹, and in 1958 reached the South Pole as a member of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic

Expedition¹.

In 1985 he flew with former astronaut Neil Armstrong in a twin-engine ski plane to the north pole¹. This meant Hillary was the first person ever to reach the highest peak in the world as well as reaching both the north and south poles¹.

During his life he was given several awards including Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire and the Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Medal in 1953¹. Fifty years after the historic climb, Hillary was bestowed with honorary Nepalese citizenship at the Golden Jubilee celebration and was the first foreign national to receive such an honour¹.

Hillary was involved with other charity work and was politically active, becoming New Zealand's High Commissioner to India in 1985¹ which also made him High Commissioner to Bangladesh and Ambassador to Nepal, during which time he lived for four and a half years in New Delhi¹.

Tenzing Norgay

In 1953 Norgay was awarded

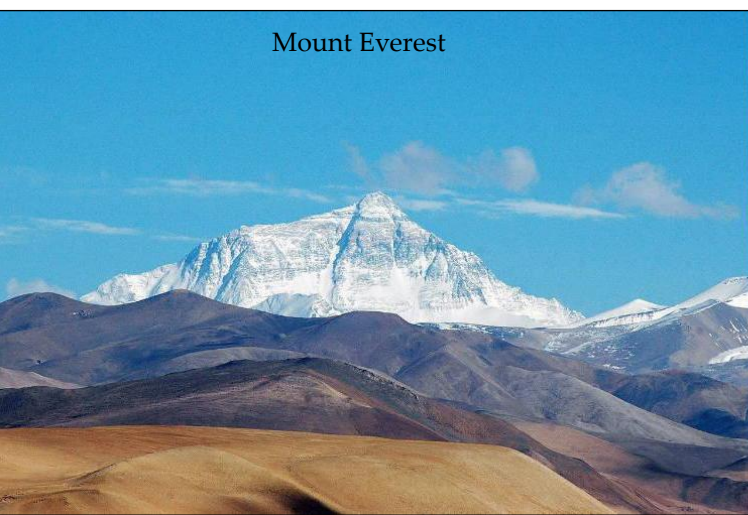
the British Empire's George Medal, the Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Medal, along with the Order of the Star of Nepal (1st Class)²

The Government of India gave Norgay the Padma Bhushan in 1959² which is the highest civilian award in that country. He received several other honours during his life.

He became involved in several other organisations and activities including further climbing expeditions. In 1954 he was the Director of Field Training of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling², and in 1978 he founded an adventure company which provided trekking tours in the Himalayas. The company continued after his death with his son in charge (Jamling Tenzing Norgay) who also climbed Mt Everest in 1996².

A Legacy

While these are achievements none of us will ever know in our lifetime, both Hillary and Norgay have left us a lasting legacy, particularly the inspiration to never to give up, no matter how many times we fail, and no matter



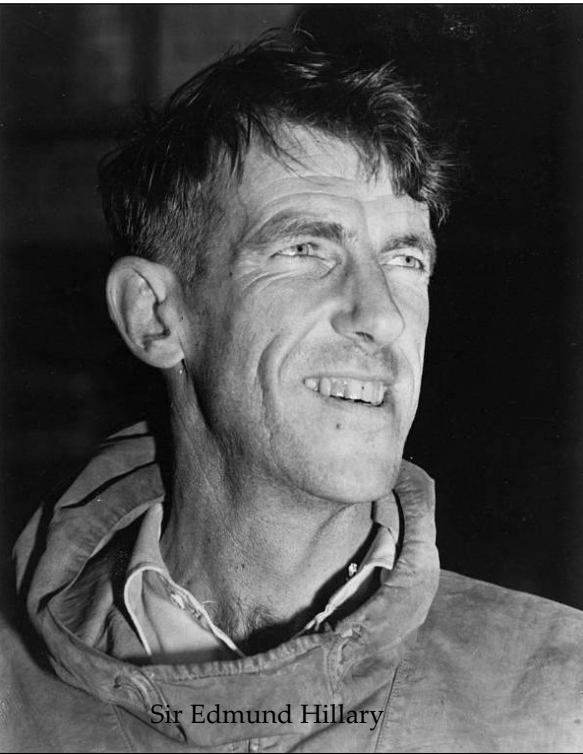
Mount Everest

Photographer: Joe Hastings, dated 13 May 2007, available under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license available: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount_Everest.jpg, accessed 23/11/17

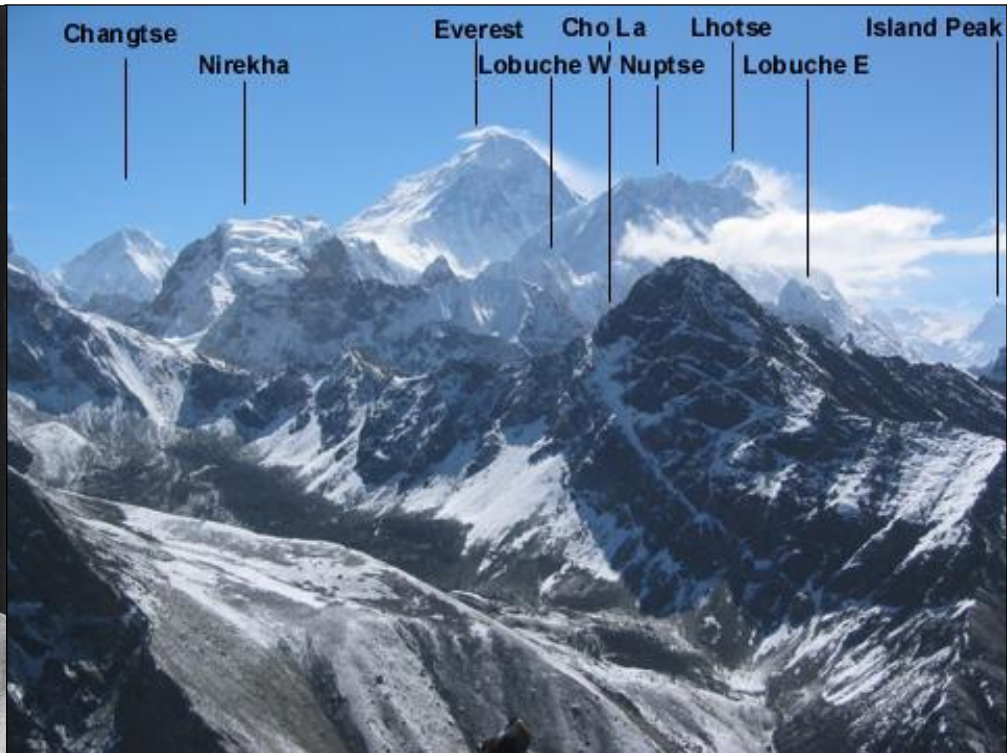


Tenzing Norgay with Edmund Hillary after successfully climbing Mt Everest at 11.30am on 29 May 1953

Photographer: Jamling Tenzing Norgay, undated, uploaded 22/08/2010, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edmund_Hillary_and_Tenzing_Norgay.jpg, accessed 13/09/17
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Sir Edmund Hillary



how insurmountable life's challenges may seem.

Mount Everest

Climbing Mount Everest is not something that many of us can do, but for Sir Edmund Hillary, it was something that he dreamed about for a long time.

Born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand, he was climbing mountains by the age of sixteen and became involved in the local mountaineering clubs until finally, after he joined the Royal Air New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF), he took part in a British reconnaissance expedition team to Mount Everest in 1952³.

Interestingly enough, Tenzing Norgay, his Sherpa Nepalese mountain guide who joined him later in the 1953 expedition, was part of a separate team led by the Swiss that attempted to scale the infamous mountain earlier in the same year as Edmund Hillary, but neither of these attempts were successful⁴.

Later, when the Joint Himalayan Committee invited Edmund

Hillary to attempt to scale the summit once again, he immediately accepted⁵. There were two teams: Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, and Tom Bourdillion and Charles Evans.

Both Bourdillion and Evans managed to make it within ninety-one metres of the summit, but unfortunately, had to turn back when Evans' oxygen tank failed⁶. Later, both Hillary and Norgay began their ascent of the mountain.

Setting out on 28 May, 1953, Hillary and Norgay made camp at 8,500m (27,900feet⁷). The morning of their final ascent, as Hillary and Norgay set out to scale the summit, Hillary discovered his climbing boots had frozen solid the night before; which took him two hours to warm before they could attempt the final ascent⁸.

Hillary and Norgay finally made their way up the last twelve metre rock face and stood upon the summit on 29 May, 1953. Hillary pulled out a cross that had been given to him by fellow friend

and expedition leader John Hunt, which he left in the snow at the summit as a reminder of his climb up the mountain, when both he and Norgay became the first men to scale Mount Everest.

As I look back on this amazing story, I find myself thinking more about Tenzing Norgay than Edmund Hillary. Of course, Norgay received many accolades and appreciations for his support and significant assistance to Edmund Hillary during the entire expedition, but he was never as famous as Hillary. Yet, his humble contribution to the historical landscape of the land of Nepal does not go unnoticed.

My Trip to Nepal

I had the opportunity and privilege of visiting Nepal in September 2018, and was in awe of how much the landscape of Nepal has changed since that historic date in May 1953, yet the simplicity of the people and the close-knit nature of the Nepali community, including their hospi-

tality and service, reminded me once again of the commitment of both Norgay and Hillary to the land of Nepal.

Hillary, later commenting on his experience, quoted those famous words:

"It is not the mountain that we conquer, but ourselves."

Thinking about those words made me realise that, as we are all on a journey, perhaps some further along than others, we experience things that many would readily describe as failures. When we fail though, it does not mean that we fail indefinitely.

When Martin Scorsese, the film director, was commenting recently in an interview at my alma mater about his film, *"Silence,"* he said:

"When we fail, when we fall, we are not damned for life; the idea is that we get up again and try our best, and when we fall again, we fall again, but we get up again and try our best."¹⁰

In other words, what he was saying is that the setbacks and struggles of life are not meant to be impediments to our survival, but rather reminders that our journey is never quite over.

We are meant to fail forward¹¹, in the words of John Maxwell, and as we move through life, to somehow understand our failures in light of the final goal.

Life is Like Climbing a Mountain

Much of life is an adventure; and can be compared to climbing a mountain. It has its peaks and ridges, its pitfalls and precipices, but there is always a summit at the end which is simply breathtaking in nature.



Photographer: Uwe Gille dated 25 April 2005, available under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license, available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Everest-fromKalarPatar.jpg>, accessed 23/11/17.

I remember mountain climbing for the first time in Southern California a few years ago. Thinking that my friends and I would go for one of the smaller mountains along the San Bernadino mountain range, we ended up at the foot of Mount Baldy, the highest mountain in the whole county.

We cautiously approached the mountain ranger on duty and asked him how long it would approximately take to reach the peak. After inquiring if we were first-time climbers, he calmly responded that it usually took most expert climbers three to four hours, sometimes five, to climb all the way. However, he pointed to the chairlift and suggested we ride up the mountain in less than ten minutes.

My friends and I had a choice to make: the easy way, or the hard way.

Having come up to half peak by that time, my friends suggested we climb all the way to the top, despite having no climbing gear or boots to get there. Against my better judgement, I agreed to accompany them.

Fifteen minutes into the climb, we were all out of breath. My friend then suddenly eyed a shortcut, that was actually a rock outcrop which went straight up the mountain adjacent to the chairlift cable we'd previously ignored.

Again, we had a choice to make; whether to take the traditional walking route, or climb up the rocky outcrop with no equipment and no guarantee we would make it all the way to the summit before sunset. We decided to go up the rocky outcrop, once again, against my better judgement.

Amazingly, we managed to reach the summit, but not before surmounting the last few treacherous metres where we had to climb straight up a dangerously slippery rock face. More than once, I felt the rocks slipping from underneath me.

With the helping hand of my friend, I managed to clamber over the rocks and reached the summit, where I joined my friends in surveying the indescribably refreshing views of rolling greenery

and ice-capped mountain outcrops.

In hindsight, if I was the only one who had stood at the base of Mount Baldy that day, looking up at a mountain 10,000 feet above sea level, I would have gladly taken the chairlift. What made it possible to scale that mountain that day, was a friend in need.

Perhaps Norgay felt the same way as they both trudged up the mountain that they had once failed to ascend in previous attempts, yet together, were able to climb due to their belief and their individual determination.

Are Obstacles Necessary for Victory?

The feeling of accomplishment is something that we all like to experience, but we rarely get to enjoy along the way due to our failures. It is easy enough to quote the saying:

"obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal"

but are obstacles a necessity for victory?

One of my favourite films is *"Transformers"* where young Sam Witwicky, encouraged by his father, is encouraged to believe in his grandfather's words:

"No sacrifice; no victory."

Although it sounds simple enough, these words are very profound in light of daily living. Each day, we encounter different circumstances in which it is easy to do what everyone else takes for granted, and yet, there are times when we are forced to make sacrifices in order to achieve something far greater. It makes all the difference in the world when we finally reach the goal for which we have been striving for so long.



Photographer: Debashish Biswas Kolkata, derivative work MagentaGreen, dated 17 May 2010, under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license, available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hillary_Step_near_Everest_Top_\(retouched\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hillary_Step_near_Everest_Top_(retouched).jpg), accessed 23/11/17

It often takes a simple decision to have such a lasting impact. Even for Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, they could have quit on their first respective unsuccessful attempts to scale Mount Everest. They could have turned back like their fellow companions on their climb to the summit on the second attempt. They could have even debated continuing the final journey to the summit when their boots froze solid, but they persevered to the end and were remembered for their persistence and grit.

Our Journey

Perhaps most of us won't have the opportunity of a lifetime to scale the highest mountain on planet Earth; but we are all on a journey in which God has placed us.

Each of us has choices to make that will forever shape the course of our lives; however, whatever we do has consequences. We need to be able to learn from our failures along the way for us to really be able to understand our purpose in life and to create a

legacy that lasts beyond our failures and forms our destiny.

When we leave our cross in the snow, it should be able to say, "we were here".

Will you take the road less travelled? [END]

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Words of Wisdom

"Too many people are praying for mountains of difficulty to be removed, when what they really need is the courage to climb them." Joyce Meyer

The Saviour of the Brooklyn Bridge

INSPIRATIONAL
PEOPLE



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

~ Emily Warren Roebling ~

One of the more well-known bridges in the world is the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. Once constructed, it became the world's first major steel-wire suspension bridge¹ and the largest suspension bridge in the world. It utilises a hybrid suspension / cable-stayed design.

The Brooklyn Bridge which was officially opened on 24 May 1883, joins together, the boroughs of Brooklyn and Manhattan in New York, the first bridge to do so.

It was the first permanent crossing over the East River and its main span is 486.3m long, while it's deck height is 38.7m above high water (average). Although it initially had other names, it's official name 'Brooklyn Bridge' was decided in 1915, some 32 years after its official opening.

The Roeblings

The Brooklyn Bridge owes its existence to the tenacity of one woman: Emily Warren Roebling.

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

father, John A. Roebling, was serving with the Corps as a Civil Engineer.

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

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

The East River's bottom had a considerable amount of soft sludge and they recognised the necessity of finding a foundation below that on which to secure the ties and foundations of the bridge.

Recognising the strength of a caisson and the necessity to employ the use of such a structure to establish a strong foundation, they decided to put forward the suggestion of using caisson's in its construction to Washington Roebling's father John A. Roebling

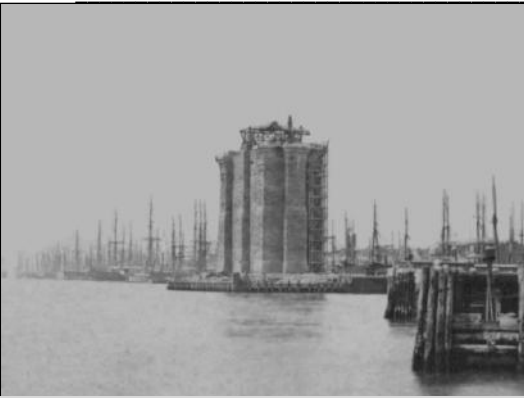
Caissons are water-tight structures used to build strong piers/foundations for bridges and other constructions. Both of the caissons had internal space where the workers could go down below



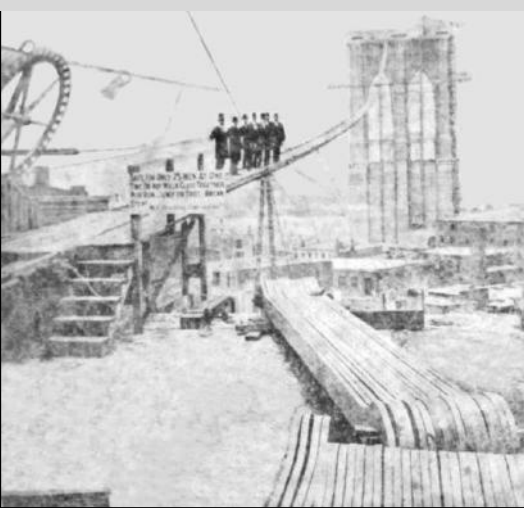
Emily Warren Roebling



The Brooklyn Bridge around 1900



During construction. [above and below]

Lashing the stays of the bridge
(Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1883)Celebration for the official opening of the
Brooklyn Bridge on May 24, 1883.

the water levels, to enable them to dig down through the soft silt on the bottom of the river, until they found a solid and natural base upon which to establish the piers for its bases.

Washington Roebling Takes Over the Reins

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

Air was pumped into the caissons to enable the workers to breathe while completing their tasks.

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

Working in increased air-pressure inside the caisson, below the level of the East River, and then quickly emerging into normal air pressure caused air bubbles to form in the bodies of those working there. The air bubbles could then move around, lodging in large joints, the skin, brain, spine, lungs, ears or even across the entire body and could cause permanent debilitating illness and even death.

Nowadays, after being under deep water, people are slowly depressurised so that the bubbles don't form, but at that time it wasn't understood and doctors were unsure of the **cause** of the illnesses that so many of the workers began experiencing.

Washington went into the caissons with the workers for hours at a time and quickly developed what came to be called

'Caisson's Disease' during construction of the bridge. He became so ill as a result that he was bedridden at first and was never able to return to the site, though he did oversee the project from his home, until its completion in 1883. The effects of the disease remained with him for life and he never returned to full health.

Realising that her husband could not go back to the worksite, Emily fought with those in charge, assuring them that with her husband's assistance, the construction could continue.

She took over most of Washington's duties as Chief Engineer, and in addition to nursing her husband, caring for their son and working on the bridge, she still found the time to study bridge construction.

The bridge was a remarkably difficult design, and whenever the couple were together, they continued their plans for the bridge's erection.

Washington taught his wife much about construction, and she gained knowledge of stress analysis and strength of materials, along with cable construction and much more. Her knowledge was quite extensive.

At a time when women were discouraged from completing anything more than a basic education, when society saw women as inferior, emotionally uncontrolled and lacking intelligence, Emily simply ignored normal conventions of the day.

She went to battle with politicians, workers and other competing engineers, challenging the prevailing sexist attitudes and condescension of the time, so that she and Washington could see the



bridge through to its completion which would eventually take around fourteen years.

It's to her credit that she was intelligent, educated and very persuasive, for she eventually won them over, even retaining good relations with the majority of them.

The Bridge is Finished

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

At the official opening, Abram Stevens Hewitt the Member of the US House of Representatives from New York's 10th district (who later would become the Mayor of New York) honoured Emily,

acknowledging her enormous contribution. Hewitt said that the bridge was,

"...an everlasting monument to the sacrificing devotion of a woman and of her capacity for that higher education from which she has been too long disbarred."

Not willing to live the life of a domestic wife of the time, after the Brooklyn Bridge was completed, Emily became involved with organisations that provided relief during the Spanish-American war, and she also continued to travel. Later she graduated from New York University with a law degree.

For the remainder of her life, Emily was never content unless she kept active both mentally and socially.

Although few may know her

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

View a movie from 1899: travelling by train over the Brooklyn Bridge: [LINK](#)

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Remembering Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

~ Strength to Love ~

INSPIRATIONAL
PEOPLE



by **Joseph F. Kolapudi**
SPAG Magazine
Journalist

Introduction

It's difficult to believe that it's been fifty years since the tragic assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Many remember him as a man of courage, strength and truth, yet few know what prompted Dr King, as he was known, to love those who hated his guts and wanted him dead.

How do you love your enemies? Why risk your life doing so? What makes the difference between self-assurance and confidence in the face of hate and bigotry? These questions point to a conviction that can be hard to find these days, but was demonstrated in Martin Luther King Jr., and through his deep trust in his Saviour.

Born in January 15, 1929, he grew up in the shadow of his father, Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr, a well-known Baptist preacher in Georgia, and his mother, Alberta Williams King, who was a famous choir singer in Atlanta¹. It was natural that King followed in his father's footsteps, and eventually became a preacher at the age of twenty-five.

From an early age, King noticed the way that African-Americans were treated differently to other members of society. It was through his father's example that

he learned to speak out against injustice.

However, it wasn't until December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a caucasian traveller on a city bus, in effect breaking the Jim Crow laws (which involved segregation of blacks and whites in the United States), that Dr King finally put his foot down.

In conjunction with other protest groups, most notably the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), as well as the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, he arranged for a bus strike that lasted 385 days, which eventually led to the desegregation of public transportation.

The incident launched Dr King into the national spotlight, although it took many more marches and public protests until finally, in 1964 and 1965, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were respectively signed into federal law².

Interview with Jim Zwerg

I had the amazing opportunity to interview a close friend of Dr King, a man by the name of Jim Zwerg, who many might not know had a big impact on the way caucasian members of society began to view segregation. He was one of the original 'Freedom Riders,' the thirteen member group that boarded a bus to Montgomery, Alabama in defiance of

segregation laws.

Jim Zwerg was the first off the bus and met the hostile crowd waiting to receive them.



Dr Martin Luther King Jr.



Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X waiting for press conference in 1964



Martin Luther King Jr. met with President Lyndon B Johnson and other Civil Rights leaders Whitney Young and James Farmer.

Jim recalled some of the experience with me:

“A mic had been set up by the media, when the mob seemed to come out of nowhere, screaming and brandishing weapons... I bowed my head and prayed, I asked God to be with me, to give me the strength to remain non-violent, and to forgive them... At that point, I was pulled into the mob and quickly rendered unconscious.”

To me, it was evident that sometimes showing courage can be costly, but it is definitely worth the fight. Jim was later awarded the Freedom Award in 1961 by Martin Luther King Jr., who encouraged him to finish his education and pursue his divinity degree. At the time of the Freedom Ride, Jim was only twenty-one years old.

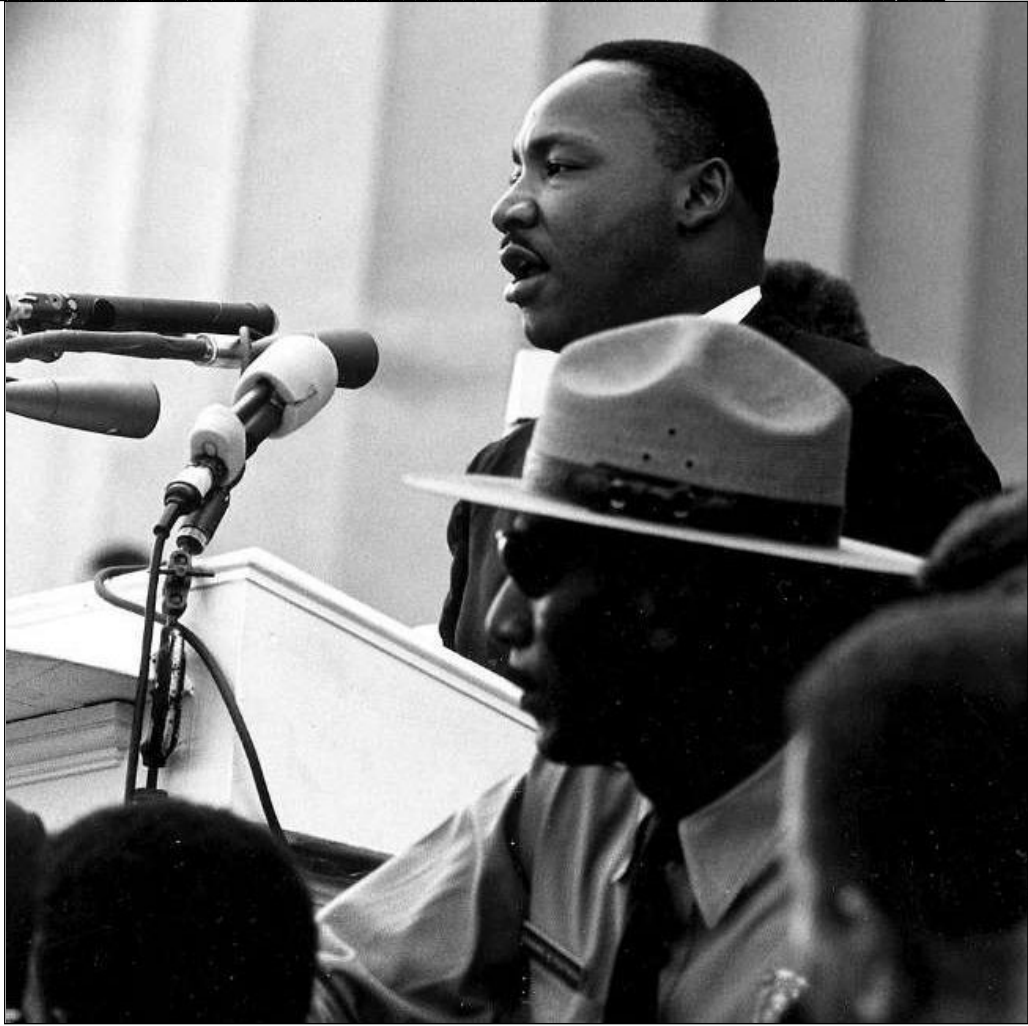
Courage that is Missing Today

Astounding as it is to hear of the bravery of so many who joined Dr King in his nonviolent fight against violence, racism and bigotry, I find this courage lacking in many of today's young people, including myself. How much easier it is for us to:

- choose the easy way out;
- fit in rather than stand out in a crowd; and
- allow our voices to be smothered into silence when asked our opinion on contentious, hot-button topics.

It is difficult to be different.

When I was in to high school and heard Dr King's famous speech, “I Have a Dream,” I wondered what was going through his mind when he delivered those inspirational



Dr Martin Luther King Jr. giving his 'I Have a Dream' speech during the March on Washington in Washington DC on 28 August 1963

words of wisdom. I wondered if he was thinking about what had led up to that moment, standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Later, when I myself stood in that same spot in Washington DC, on a family trip to the States in 2015, I understood the weight of that historical moment. The spectacular view of the Washington Monument reflected onto the National Mall around the Reflecting Pool surely draws one into deep reflection, on both the past, and the future.

Perhaps Dr King dug deep into his own experience of the burdensome journey for equality, that he was able to look forward with courage and hope that

freedom might yet be a few days away.

Dr King's Legacy

Despite being assassinated on April 4, 1968³, Dr King's legacy has lived on and stood firm through the test of time. Countless millions remember him on Martin Luther King Jr. Day every year, which is marked as a national holiday in the United States.

One of my favourite quotes of Dr King does not come from his “I Have A Dream” speech but from his letter that was written while in jail in Birmingham, Alabama. An excerpt reads:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny...”

whatever affects one, affects all indirectly.⁴

It was this commitment to his people, as a pastor first, and secondly as a political activist, that enabled that journey to freedom to endure and eventually provide a way for every person within his community, his state, and his nation to enjoy the freedom for which he had fought, until his dying breath.

Conclusion

We all have dreams and aspirations in life, just like Dr King. Perhaps we have yet to determine what our dreams are, or perhaps we are so close to fulfilling our purpose that we can almost taste the sweetness of freedom, but just need that gentle nudge to take that next step.

If you have ever wondered what your purpose is in life, you are not alone. Making a change by living differently can sound more challenging than it needs to be. Let us be encouraged by the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. who said,

“Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.”⁵

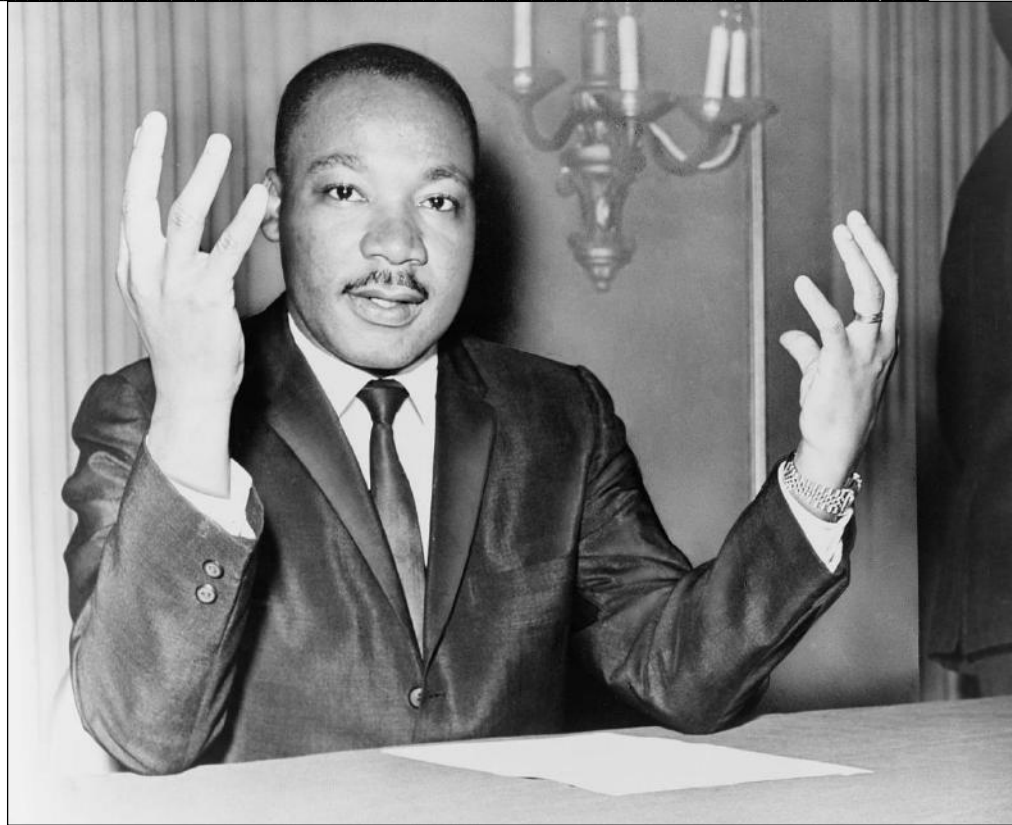
This is what gives us the courage and strength to fight for what is right and to love as we should. [END]

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Dr Martin Luther King Jr at a 1964 press conference



Dr King and his wife Coretta Scott King in 1964

Words of Wisdom

“I still believe that standing up for the truth of God is the greatest thing in the world. This is the end of life. The end of life is not to be happy. The end of life is not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. The end of life is to do the will of God, come what may.”

Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

God, the Bible and the Space Race

~ Can Space and Faith Mix? ~



by Vicki Nunn

Introduction

It was around sixty years ago on 4 October in 1957 that the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first man-made object placed into orbit around the earth.

While our Inspirational People segment usually concentrates on an individual or two people, we'll be looking at several astronauts and whether we know if their travel into space had an impact on their beliefs if any, about God, or if those who had a faith were affected by their venture into that mysterious territory.

I imagine that it must be a humbling experience to see oneself in that huge, cold emptiness and to recognise for the first

time, one's smallness in the face of it. For those astronauts who founded their belief and sense of self on something other than faith, it would surely have made them feel not only infinitesimally unimportant, but possibly completely irrelevant.

For the Christian adventurer though, their realisation could possibly have been a complete contrast.

Christian Today journalist Harriet Campbell said,

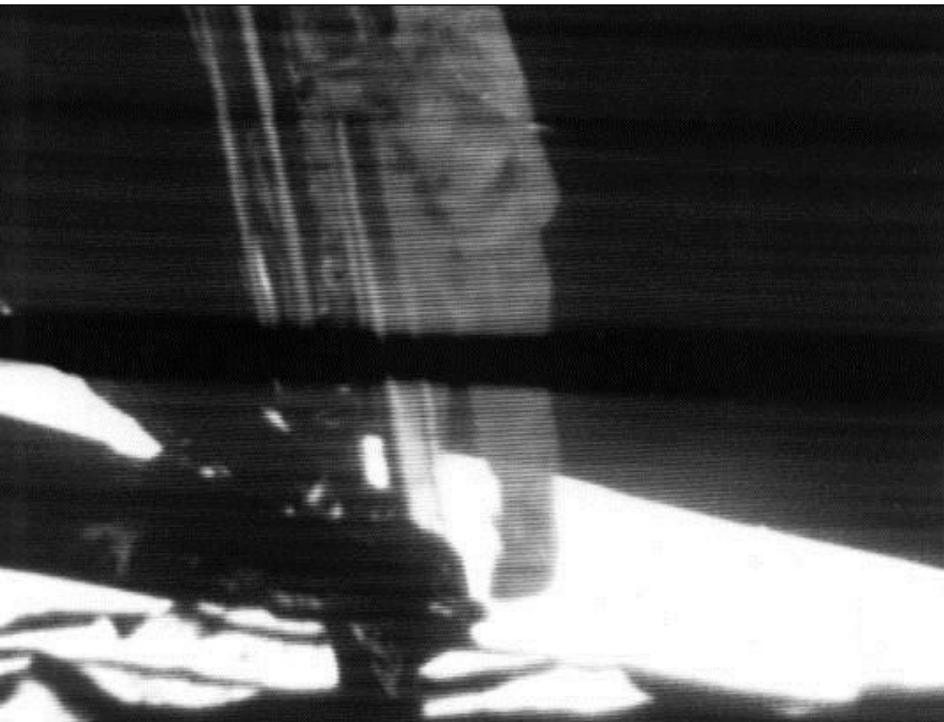
"There is something quite spectacular about realising how insignificant you are. Coming to understand that you are a speck of dust in this vast universe is nothing short of terrifying, humbling, and joyful."

For Christian astronauts who saw themselves for the speck they truly are in the face of God and His incredible creation, that knowledge might enable them to more fully comprehend how extraordinary it is that God should still choose to bestow His love on us and desire to forge an intimate relationship with us.

The Beginning of the Space Race

By the 1950s, the antagonism between the Soviet Union and the USA resulted in an unofficial 'space-race' with each striving to achieve 'firsts' and thus prove they were superior.

The successful launch of Russia's Sputnik and its orbit around the earth in 1957, caused escalating fervour in the USA. The government placed increasing



Astronaut Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon on 20 July 1969, the first time that man landed on the moon and walked on its surface.



Buzz Aldrin's footprint on the moon

pressure on its engineers and scientists to not only match the Soviet's accomplishment, but to exceed it.

Around one year later on 1 October 1958, NASA first began its operations, but it was to be a further eleven years before man would walk on the moon for the first time.

Aerospace technology in those early years was crude and highly dangerous for the early astronauts, with engineers and scientists having to develop completely new concepts and technologies to meet the rigorous requirements of space-travel and to ensure the safety of its people.

While the number of Russian cosmonauts is unknown, since its inception, NASA has sent 320 of its astronauts into space.

There have been suggestions that the number of Christians in the American space program over the years, was significant, but the statistics tell us otherwise. There have been around 17 Christian astronauts, and compared against the total number of NASA astronauts who have spent time in space, that makes it just of 17 out of 320, which is just over five percent.

What is significant though is that there have been a number of non-Christians and non-religious people, who have shared that they had a spiritual experience while in space.

If we consider the era in which the first American astronauts grew up who were sent into space (from 1940s to 1970s), it's not surprising that so many of them had a Christian faith or had their faith renewed by their space-faring

excursions. More people went to church in those eras then they do in the present day.

The First Christian on the Moon

On 21 July 1969, the second man to walk on the moon was Buzz Aldrin. Edwin Eugene Aldrin Jr., was a committed Christian.

A former US Air Force officer who held a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering, Aldrin had flown as a jet fighter in the Korean war.

By 1963, he'd gained a Sc.D. degree in astronautics. In his doctoral thesis, his dedication was:

"In the hopes that this work may in some way contribute to their exploration of space, this is dedicated to the crew members of this country's present and future manned space programs. If only I could join them in their exciting endeavors!"

Aldrin's Space Flights

In 1966, while training, Aldrin was confirmed as an astronaut on Gemini XXII (12), which was to be the last of the Gemini missions. Gemini XXII was the tenth manned flight and the eighteenth manned space-flight.

It was during that space flight that Aldrin first proved it was possible to work outside the spacecraft (EVA - extravehicular activity).

NASA began the next space-crafts, beginning with Apollo 1 which was a much more complex and advanced craft than the earlier Geminis.

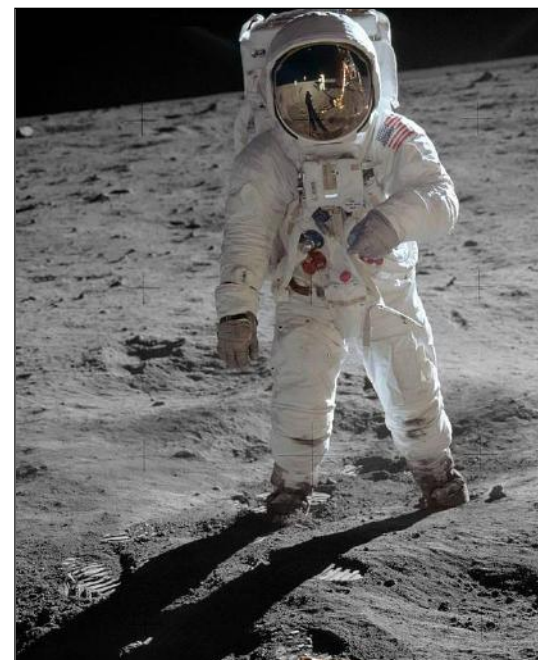
Unfortunately all three crew members died from a cabin fire onboard the Apollo 1, during a



Buzz Aldrin



Buzz Aldrin outside the Gemini 12 in 1966. The first man to prove working in space was possible (EVA - extra-vehicular activity.)



Buzz Aldrin in 1969, the second man to walk on the moon, was the first Christian to set foot on soil other than earth's.

launch rehearsal test. The heat and dense smoke from the fire, hindered all efforts to rescue the three men. Manned flights were suspended for around twenty months while NASA looked into the hazard problems.

There was no Apollo 2 or 3 launch, though the later Apollo 4, 5 and 6 were successful unmanned test flights to determine the craft's viability. This gave NASA the confidence to continue using a similar vehicle.

In October 1968, Apollo 7 took a crew into outer space. This successful mission encouraged NASA to undertake Apollo 8 in December 1968 which was to orbit around the moon and return to earth.

On Christmas eve, while in space, the crew members of Apollo 8 read the first ten verses from chapter one of Genesis which was broadcast to a then record TV viewing audience. (following is the ©Voice version):

"In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens above and the earth below.

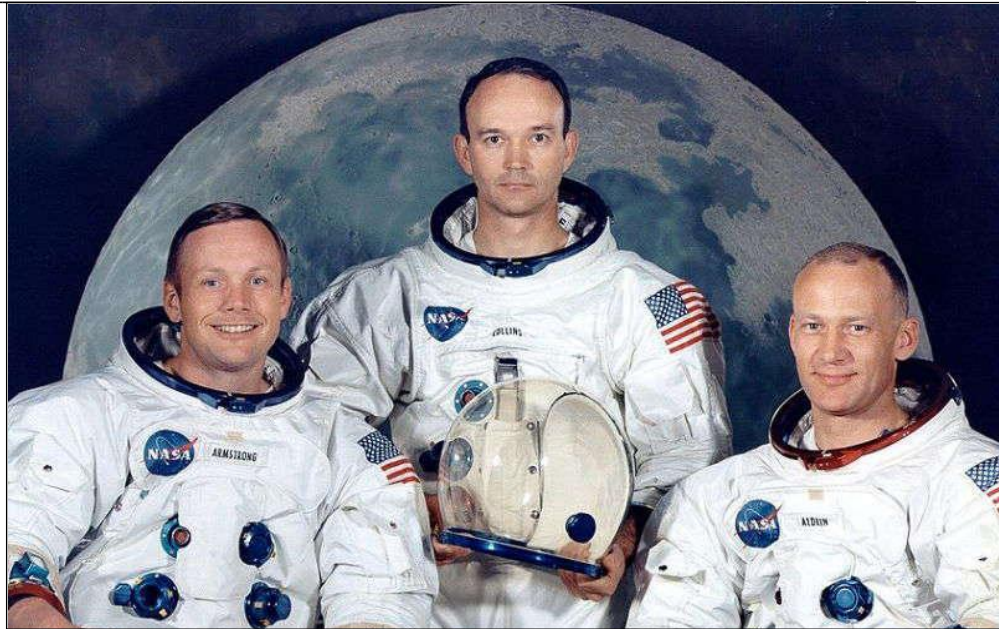
Here's what happened: at first the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark fog draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters.

Then there was the voice of God.

God: "Let there be light."

And light flashed into being.

God saw that the light was beautiful and good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God named the light 'day' and the darkness 'night.' Evening gave way to morning.



Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Buzz Aldrin, the first successful team to step on the moon

That was day one.

God: "Let there be a vast expanse in the middle of the waters. Let the waters above part from the waters below."

So God parted the waters and formed this expanse, separating the waters above from the waters below.

It happened just as God said. And God called the vast expanse 'sky.' Evening gave way to morning. That was day two.

God: "Let the waters below the heavens be collected into one place and congregate into one vast sea, so that dry land may appear."

It happened just as God said. God called the dry land 'earth' and the waters congregated below 'seas.'

And God saw that His new creation was beautiful and good."

It was that Bible reading on Apollo 8, which led to NASA being sued by atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair for NASA's



Docking of the Gemini 12 spacecraft



Above Armstrong on board Apollo 11, and below he works on the 'Eagle' on the moon.



2



Jeffery Nels Williams

religious use of the space program because they had allowed the astronauts to read the Bible during a space flight.

While O'Hair lost the case, from that time onwards, NASA sought to distance itself from promoting any particular religion, and specifically requested that the crews not make any religious quotes.

Apollo 9 and 10 did further tests in space to determine the viability of a moon landing, its engines, life support backpacks, docking man-oeuvres, navigation systems and more. Then it was time for the real thing - Apollo 11.

Walking on the Moon

The rocket was successfully launched, and three days later, while Michael Collins waited in the Apollo 11 command module, on 20 July 1969, Neil Armstrong (commander) and Buzz Aldrin (pilot) became the first two human beings to land atop and set foot on earth's moon.

While Buzz had initially desired to be the first out of the craft, NASA determined that it would be much easier for Armstrong to go first, due to their physical positioning within the craft, and also as Mission Commander, it was Armstrong's privilege to be the first.

What few people know (and certainly NASA doesn't promote it) is the fact that Buzz Aldrin, a Presbyterian held the first ever communion on the surface of the moon.

When he radioed back to earth he said,

"I'd like to take this opportunity to ask every person

3



James Irwin on the lunar rover - Apollo 15, 1971

4



Bill (William) Anders

3



Jim (James) Irwin

3



Jim Irwin salutes the American Flag on the moon 1971

4



Bill Anders, one of the crew on Apollo 8

5



Frank F. Borman II, Commander of Apollo 8, the first mission to fly around the Moon

listening in, whoever and wherever they may be, to pause for a moment and contemplate the events of the past few hours, and to give thanks in his or her own way."

He'd brought with him a tiny communion kit that had been given to him by his pastor Rev Dean Woodruff.

In the silence of outer space, Buzz read the passage from John 1 and took communion. Later he said:

"It was interesting to think that the very first liquid ever poured on the Moon, and the first food eaten there, were communion elements."

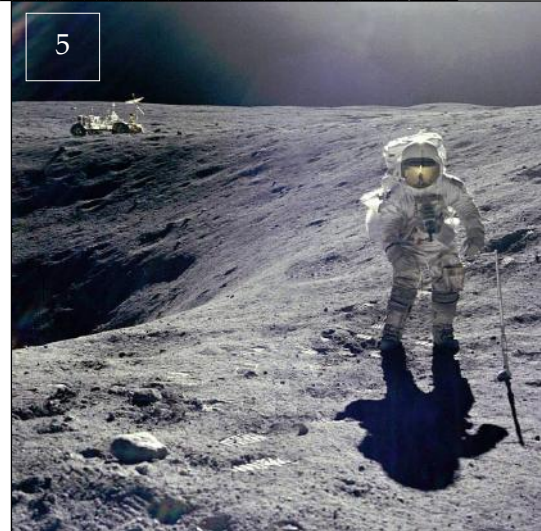
At a later time Aldrin said,

"Perhaps, if I had it to do over again, I would not choose to celebrate communion. Although it was a deeply meaningful experience for me, it was a Christian sacrament, and we had come to the Moon in the name of all mankind – be they Christians, Jews, Muslims, animists, agnostics, or atheists. But at the time I could think of no better way to acknowledge the enormity of the Apollo 11 experience than by giving thanks to God."

Despite NASA's earlier request to avoid making any religious comments, on Apollo 11's final TV broadcast as they returned home, Buzz Aldrin quoted from Psalm eight, verses three and four:

"I've been reflecting the events of the past several days and a verse from the Psalms comes to mind to me. *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and*

5



Charles Duke on lunar EVA during the Apollo 16 mission in April 1972

5



Frank Borman and Jim Lovell walking up the ramp to the elevator before the Gemini 7 mission

5



Duke left his family's photo on the moon in 1972

6



Charles Duke in 1971 was the tenth and youngest person to walk on the moon (in 1972)

7



Guy Gardner, flew as pilot on two Space Shuttle missions from 1988 - 1990



Jeffery Nels Williams



Jim (James) Irwin

Gerald P Carr was Commander of Skylab 4,
from 1973 - 1974.jpg

the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" [KJV]

Buzz's Later Years

After he left NASA in 1971, Buzz retired in 1972, but struggled with depression and alcoholism and eventually sought treatment which greatly helped him. He continues to promote the exploration of space. In 2016, at the age of 86, he gained the world record for being the oldest person to ever reach the South Pole. Aldrin has co-authored around nine books.

Other Christian Astronauts

A number of astronauts had religious or spiritual experiences when on the moon or in outer space:

1. John Glenn (1921 – 2016)

Glenn was not only the first man to orbit the earth, and later, the oldest astronaut in space after he travelled on the space shuttle; he was also a Presbyterian Elder.

He said:

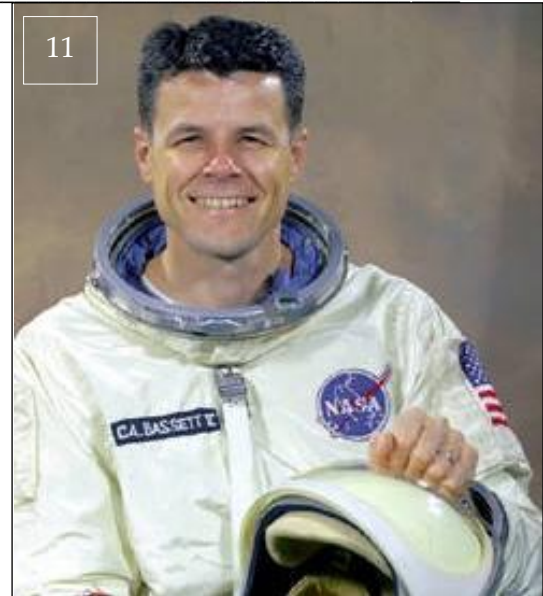
"To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible. It just strengthens my faith."

2. Jeffrey Williams (born 1958)

Jeffrey is a committed Christian. His first space flight was in 2000, and he has taken four space flights.

He holds the USA record for the most time spent in space and has taken more photographs in space than any other astronaut.

Jeffrey wrote the book "The Work of His Hands: A View of

Charles Bassett II was assigned to Gemini 9 in 1963
but died in an airplane crash in 1966 during
training for his first spaceflight.Roger Chaffee on far right, Gus Grissom left and
Ed White middle in front of Launch Complex 34
which housed their Saturn 1 launch. All three died
in a cabin fire in the rocket in 1967.Roger B. Chaffee died in a fire along with fellow
astronauts Virgil (Gus) Grissom and Edward H.
White II during a pre-launch test for the
Apollo 1 mission in 1967

13



William R. Pogue Pogue was the Pilot of Skylab 4, the third and final manned visit to the Skylab Orbital Workshop, 1973-1974

14



Michael P. Anderson was killed in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster when the craft disintegrated during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere in 2003

15



David M Brown died on his first spaceflight, when the Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated in 2003

God's Creation From Space" in which he shared about his experiences:

The "...vivid lessons about the meticulous goodness of divine providence, God's care for His creation, and His wisdom in ordering the universe."

3. Jim (James) Irwin (1930 – 1991)

Irwin was a lapsed Christian before he went into space and was on the fourth manned ship to reach the moon. His wife was a believer.

It was while he was on the moon that he encountered God in such a way, that it changed his life forever. After that, Jim felt God calling him to tell people about Jesus. Irwin said of his experience while on the Apollo 15 lunar mission:

"I felt the power of God as I'd never felt it before,"

One year later he quit his aerospace job and founded the High Flight Foundation (an interdenominational evangelical organisation) and later became an evangelical minister.

With his pastor, he set up "High Flight," a non-profit organisation which provides religious retreats as well as tours to the Holy Land.

He spent the next 20 years as a "Goodwill Ambassador for the Prince of Peace", stating:

"Jesus walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon."

He frequently spoke about how his experiences in space had made God more real to him than before.

16



Rick (Richard) Husband travelled into space twice: as Pilot of STS-96 and Commander of STS-107. He and the rest of the crew of STS-107 were killed aboard the shuttle Columbia disaster in 2003

17



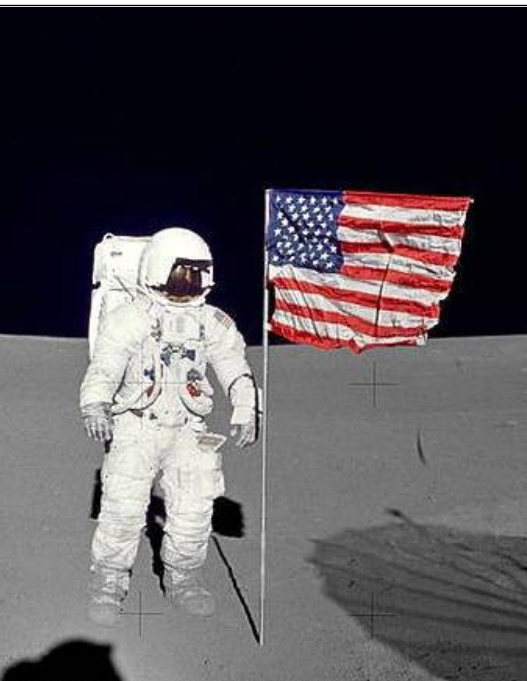
William C. McCool was the pilot of Space Shuttle Columbia mission STS-107. He and the rest of the crew of STS-107 were killed when Columbia disintegrated during re-entry into the atmosphere in 2003



Ilan Ramon was the space shuttle payload specialist aboard the fatal flight of Columbia, in which he was killed in 2003



Edgar Mitchell in 1970, the sixth person to walk on the moon



Edgar Mitchell on the moon in 1971



A navy diver helps Ed Mitchell into the recovery raft in 1971

Beginning in 1973, Irwin was the leader of a couple of expeditions to Mount Ararat, Turkey, in an attempt to find the remains of Noah's Ark.

In his book, "More Than Earthlings," Irwin shared that he believed the Genesis creation was real, literal history.

4. William Alison "Bill" Anders (born 1933).

During the Apollo 8 lunar orbit, on Christmas eve in 1968, the crew took turns reading the first ten verses of chapter one of Genesis, and Anders was the first to begin the recitation. It had been his choice to do that, not out of a sense of piety but because he thought it was a universal idea, that we were all created.

The reading of the Bible verses was recorded by NASA, but wasn't something that the space agency promoted.

Anders was touched deeply by his space experience, coming to recognise mankind's insignificance in the vast expanse of space.

5. Frank Borman (born 1928)

The commander of the first crew to fly beyond the earth's orbit, was Frank Borman. As he looked down towards the earth some 250,000 miles away (402,000km), he quoted Genesis chapter one on the radio.

Later he said:

"I had an enormous feeling that there had to be a power greater than any of us - that there was a God, that there was indeed a beginning."

6. Charles Moss "Charlie" Duke Jr. (born 1935),

Duke was the youngest astronaut ever on the moon, and in later life he took on work as a missionary.

As he explained:

"I make speeches about walking on the moon and walking with the Son (of God.)"

7. Guy Gardner (born 1948)

Guy is a former astronaut who shares in different churches about the reality of God.

8. Col. Michael Good (born 1962)

A Catholic man who through his experiences in space, and the remarkable views that he saw, had his faith in God further cemented.

9. Ronald Garan Jr (born 1961),

Ronald teaches Sunday School and is a Catholic.

Prior to his space flight, he put forward a request to a group of Carmelite nuns to pray for him. He asked if they had an item he could take into space, so the sisters provided a relic of St Thérèse of Lisieux.

Ronald is also the founder of the Manna Energy Foundation, which finds ways to assist villages in Rwanda to make potable water.

10. Gerald P. Carr (born 1932)

Commander of Skylab 4 from 1973 to 1974, Carr has been a regular church attendee.

11. Charles Arthur "Charlie" Bassett II (1931 – 1966)

What we know about Charlie was that he was a regular church attendee before his death in an airplane crash.

12. Roger Bruce Chaffee (1935 – 1967)

Chaffee was a regular attendant at his church before his death in a pre-launch test for the Apollo 1 mission.

13. William R Pogue (1930 - 2014)

A Christian man, though not much is mentioned in the media

about Pogue's faith, he listed studying Biblical history as one of his hobbies.

In 2011 he released his autobiography "But for the Grace of God: An Auto-biography of an Aviator and Astronaut."

14. Michael P. Anderson (1959 - 2003)

A conservative Christian, Anderson died in the Columbia shuttle disaster.

15. David M. Brown (1956 - 2003)

A Christian Episcopalian, David also died in the Columbia shuttle disaster, and was a lay volunteer at his church.

16. Rick Husband (1957 - 2003)

An active Christian in his church at Clear Lake, Husband died in the Columbia shuttle disaster.

17. William C. McCool (1961 - 2003)

After growing up in the Methodist church, William later became a Catholic and a devout Christian.

While in space he said:

"From our orbital vantage point, we observe an earth without borders, full of peace, beauty and magnificence, and we pray that humanity as a whole can imagine a borderless world as we see it and strive to live as one in peace."

McCool died in the Columbia shuttle disaster.

(Isn't it interesting that out of seven crew members on board the Columbia shuttle who perished in the disaster, 71.4% of them, i.e. four of the seven were Christians!)

Other Astronauts

According to Jomar Teves of

iTechPosts, Russian astronauts (Cosmonauts) have been known to take a Russian Bible into space with them, while stone relics (where Jesus appeared to some of his apostles just before being taken to heaven, claimed to have come from Mt Thabor), were also taken on board.

Several other astronauts have had spiritual experiences when in space though not necessarily Christian, including Gene Cernan, Anousheh Ansari, Nicole Stott, Jeff Hoffman, Shane Kimbrough as well as Edgar Mitchell, who was part of the Apollo 16 expedition.

Mitchell saw the earth and said:

"You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it.

From out there on the moon, international politics look so petty. You want to grab a politician by the scruff of the neck and drag him a quarter of a million miles out and say, "Look at that, you son of a bitch."

Later Mitchell said:

"What I do remember is the awesome experience of recognising the universe was not simply random happenstance ...that there was something more operating than just chance."

According to Huffington Post's Dominique Mosbergen. Canada's astronaut Chris Hadfield had such an intense spiritual experience that it changed his perspective on life.

Ilan Ramon, an Israeli astro-

naut, took a copy of the Torah on microfiche aboard the ill-fated space shuttle Columbia.

According to the Jerusalem Post he also took his diary into which he'd recorded the Jewish blessing 'Shabbat Kiddush' so he could broadcast the blessing back to earth.

Astonishingly, after the shuttle disaster, almost forty pages from Ramon's diary somehow survived the fiery explosion. These were later passed onto his wife.

Conclusion

When it came time for one small step for a man into the heavens, God was already there. He used opportunities not only for His children to share His message to the world, but to speak of Himself on a personal basis to many who ventured out there into the cold, unwelcoming endlessness of space. There He shared with them, the warm, loving embrace of His arms, particularly those who never made it back to earth, those who went from being in space in one moment and far beyond it the next. [END]

For your interest:

To view the recording of the first landing on the moon, go to: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/video11.html#Landing>.



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"Praise the Eternal! All you in the heavens, praise the Eternal; praise Him from the highest places! All you, His messengers and His armies in heaven: praise Him! Sun, moon, and all you brilliant stars above: praise Him! Highest heavens and all you waters above the heavens: praise Him!

Let all things join together in a concert of praise to the name of the Eternal, for He gave the command and they were created. He put them in their places to stay forever - He declared it so, and it is final."

Psalm 148:1-6 [VOICE]



Tantalising Trivia about NASA & Space Travel

- During the Apollo expeditions, it was discovered that the moon rings like a gong or a bell when struck. Parts of the second and third stages of Apollo rocket crashed onto the moon and caused the resonating sound. The echo lasted almost an hour on one occasion and up to four hours on another. The scientists were baffled as to why the moon should sound like a bell or a gong when struck.
- When astronauts were orbiting around the earth, they could see the wakes or paths of ships in the oceans.
- If you are ever able to visit the Washington Cathedral in the USA, be sure to take a good long look at the stained glass window that is dedicated to scientists and technicians. A tiny slice of moon rock that was brought back by the Apollo astronauts in 1969 is sealed in the window.
- A young girl by the name of Rebecca Shroeder created an invention and beat NASA to the punch. At the age of ten, Rebecca wanted to be able to write in the dark. She tried different methods including using bioluminescence which is what fireflies emit. Eventually she came to use phosphorescence, which is a substance that glows after being exposed to light. She patented her invention, and with time, continued to improve on it. By the time Rebecca had reached the ripe old age of twelve, she'd created the "Glo-Sheet", and both NASA and the US Navy became interested in buying her invention. NASA at first they thought that she'd been employed by them at the time when they had been working on a similar project, until they discovered her age.
- On 10 August 2003, a rather amazing thing happened in outer space. No, there wasn't a new planet discovered or a comet, rather, there was a wedding on the International Space Station! Yuri Malenchenko, a Russian cosmonaut arranged to wed his fiancé Ekaterina Dmitriev, who was in Texas. This was the very first ever space wedding! The two exchanged vows before 200 people via a satellite video hook-up through the Johnson Space Centre. A life-size cut-out of the cosmonaut was placed next to his bride as his stand-in during the ceremony, and as was permitted under Texan law, a friend was permitted to stand in as the cosmonaut's proxy. The bride wore a traditional white dress and the groom put on a bow-tie with his flight suit. The two had to wait for a further ten weeks for Yuri to return from space before they could start their married life together. So can we say that it was indeed a match made in heaven?

[END]

Dr Mary Edwards Walker

~ An Unconventional Woman ~



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

February 21st, 2019 marked one hundred years since the death of Mary Edwards Walker, a very unconventional woman of her time.

A surgeon, an abolitionist, feminist, prohibitionist, and a prisoner of war, and once she was even accused of being a spy. She is also the only woman to ever receive the Medal of Honor¹ (USA), and is just one of the eight civilians who've ever received it.

The youngest of seven children, Mary, was born in Oswega, New York in the USA.



Dr Edwards as a young woman, wearing masculine clothing.

Her parents, Alvah and Vesta had rather progressive views about raising their children which likely would have shocked their contemporaries. They encouraged both their sons and daughters to be independent, and to take on roles around the farm that were usually undertaken only by the opposite sex such as labouring for the women, and housework for the men.

Modern thinkers, the parents encouraged their children to question regulations and traditions, even within the church. They were also staunch supporters for the abolition of slavery.

They were universalists who believed in God, but whose views differed from traditional Christian churches in that they believed man is born without sin, and that instead it's our life choices which impact on our afterlife.

Resistant to Societal Demands for Woman

From an early age, Mary refused to wear restrictive clothing particularly when labouring at the farm, because women's clothing, including corsets and tight lacings were not only too constrictive but unhealthy, and her mother agreed with her views.

As a young adult she would wear trousers under her skirt, rather than the layers of undergarments that was expected of a young woman at that time.

Ignoring existing attitudes towards educating women, Mr and Mrs Walker believed that

their daughters should be as well educated as their sons, and set up a free school in the late 1830s, which their daughters attended.

Mary and her two older sisters later attended Falley Seminary in Fulton New York, which encouraged social reforms in education, hygiene and gender roles.

While studying there, Mary's determination to ignore typical roles for women was further cemented and contributed to her firmly held belief that the restrictions on women in their society were an injustice against her sex.

A Future in Medicine

Mary's fascination with medicine developed as she studied her father's medical books on physiology and anatomy in her spare time, so she decided to study medicine. After teaching at a school in Minetto, New York, she raised enough finances to attend Syracuse Medical College, and from there, she graduated with honours in 1855 as a medical doctor. She had been the only female in her class.

After marrying Albert Miller, a fellow medical school student in 1855, the couple set up a practice in Rome, New York, but due to the mistrust of women physicians that was prevalent at the time, their practice didn't do well, and after her husband was unfaithful they divorced.

For a short time she attended Bowen Collegiate Institute but was suspended because she refused to resign from the

INSPIRATIONAL
PEOPLE

previously all-male debating society.

When civil war broke out in the USA, Mary volunteered as a surgeon at a temporary hospital which had been set up in Washington DC, but was refused as the Union Army Examining Board wouldn't accept women as surgeons and were prejudiced also against some other ethnicities, claiming that they were 'unfit.' So, she signed up as a civilian nurse with the Union army.

She sewed a uniform based on the men's clothing and modified it to suit herself. Later in her position as nurse in the battlefield, she undertook the duties of a surgeon. Dr Walker carried two pistols with her wherever she went.

General George Henry Thomas promoted her to the position of (civilian) Contract Acting Assistant Surgeon in the US Army, in 1863. Later she gained the position of Assistant Surgeon with the 52nd Ohio Infantry. She was the first female surgeon in the US Army.

She dived into her work, choosing to see all injured people, even those viewed as the 'enemy,' as equally deserving of her medical care. She regularly crossed the line between the two to help the wounded.

On 10 April 1864, she was arrested as a spy after she once again crossed into enemy territory to treat civilians that had been wounded.

She was taken as a prisoner of war and sent to Castle Thunder in Richmond, Virginia, where she refused to wear clothing that was more "becoming of her sex."

She was one of a group of three dozen surgeons exchanged for other prisoners on 12 August, just four months later. Later she said she'd been delighted to have been part of a "man for man" swap.

After the US Civil War

She served in a woman's prison in Louisville, Kentucky as its supervisor as well as the director of a Tennessee orphanage.

When the war finally ended in 1865, she was awarded the Medal of Honor for her valour on the battlefield, the highest possible decoration from the United States Armed Forces, and to this day¹ she is the only woman to have received the award.

Unfortunately in 1917, two years before her death, the American Government chose to take the award back from her and several other civilians, when the requirements for awarding it were altered so that it would only be given to those who were involved in actual physical combat with the enemy.

Unsurprisingly, she refused to return the medal. Instead she began wearing it to every engagement or outing she attended.

While imprisoned, she suffered partial muscular atrophy and after the war, was given a disability pension due to its long-term effects on her health.

A Square Peg

After the war she resumed her work as a doctor, while at the same time continuing her fight in causes about which she was passionate. She also continued her resistance against a society which seemed to go out of its way to point out her eccentricities.



Dr Walker with her Medal of Honor

She believed that the way society expected its women to behave and dress was ridiculous. Logically she resisted codes that said she must put on a tight corset and wear full length, heavy dresses, with many petticoats.

Not only was it irrational in her work but in addition to the severe restraints placed upon a woman's body, the constrained clothing was unhealthy as well.

She wrote about this matter saying that all of those layers of clothing were hot to wear, collected dust and germs and trapped them in the many layers of clothing and were therefore unhygienic.

In 1871 she wrote, "The greatest sorrows from which women suffer today are those physical, moral, and mental ones, that are caused by their unhygienic manner of dressing!"

When she was a young woman, she began to experiment with different styles of clothing that would remove the impediments of the fashionable women's clothing that was expected at the time.



Dr Mary Walker in her later years

She attempted several outfits, each with trousers underneath to ensure she was modestly covered. Eventually she settled on a knee-length dress with a tight waist and full skirt, and trousers with suspenders underneath, despite the opposition she met by both men and women.

Dress reform for women became one of her passions, possibly as strong as her commitment to the abolition of slavery, and the women's suffrage movement, the latter which she supported up until her death.

She believed that a women's clothing should "protect the person, and allow freedom of motion and circulation, and not make the wearer a slave to it."

She was met with stares, sneers of contempt, criticism and ostracism and was physically assaulted on at least one occasion when a man and a number of young boys threw rocks at her, simply because of her attire

As she grew older, she chose to regularly wear masculine clothing and was repeatedly arrested for wearing men's clothes.

Later Years

In 1880 after her father passed away, she inherited his farm in New York, where she resided until her own death.

She spent much of her later years writing and lecturing, particularly on the issues about which she was passionate. She supported causes such as temperance, women's right, health care, and dress reform for women, and wrote two books on the subject of women's attire.

When criticised about her personal choice of clothing she responded, "I don't wear men's clothes, I wear my own clothes."

In 1890 she ran for Congress and in 1892, ran for the Senate.

Dr Walker provided testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives committees in both 1912 and 1914.

Though passionate about and heavily involved with the suffrage movement and attempts to give women the right to vote in America, and the rights to own property, she was eventually ostracised within the organisation for her particular method on how that fight should be waged, with which many of the women didn't agree. Her insistence on wearing men's clothes and a top-hat won her few allies, and she came to be more respected in the United Kingdom than in her own country.

In 1917 when she 85 years old, she travelled to Washington DC to once more argue for the rights of women. While at the capital, she slipped on some steps. The resulting injuries, forced her to return home, and she never quite recovered from it.

After a long illness, on 21

February 1919, Dr Mary Edwards Walker passed away.

Her request was that she be buried in a black suit and not a dress, and at her simple funeral, a US Flag was hung over her coffin.

In August of the following year, just eighteen months later, the United States finally changed their constitution and gave women the right to vote.

Dr Walker Honoured

Dr Mary Edwards Walker was not forgotten. A Liberty ship in World War II was named after her. Her Medal of Honor was reinstated in 1977. The US Postal Service issued a stamp marking the anniversary of her birth, in 1982.

Additionally, there's a clinic in Washington DC, a medical facility at SUNY Oswego, a US Army Reserve centre, a clinic at the National Training Centre in California, a Philadelphia Veterans centre for women veterans and for the homeless, all named after her.

In the year 2000, Dr Mary Walker was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

During her life she may have been criticised, mocked, ignored and even assaulted, but no-one can deny the impact that this unconventional woman had on her society and on the world in which Mary Walker, walked. [END]

Notes:

1. at the time this article was researched.

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Dr Louis Appia

~ Better Treatment for the War-Wounded ~

INSPIRATIONAL
PEOPLE

Introduction

October 13 2018 year marked two hundred years since Swiss surgeon Louis Paul Amédée Appia was born. He became a doctor specialising in military medicine.

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

Earlier Years

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

Ten years later during the February revolution in France as well as the revolution in March in the German states, he helped the wounded.

It was due to this experience



Dr Louis Appia

that Dr Appia's focus and specialty became about improving treatment of the war-wounded.

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

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

War-time Work

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

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

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

Upon returning to Geneva, he completed his treatise on the

the immobilisation of

broken limbs, with the help of his friend Dr Théodore Maunoir and they published it in book form. The book was distributed to important military personnel and political leaders in Europe.

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

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

Foundation of the Red Cross

Dr Appia was invited to join the "Committee of Five" in 1863 to consider Henry Dunant's concepts of a neutral organisation which would provide care for soldiers wounded in wars. It was Dr Appia who suggested that volunteers wear white armbands so that they were easier to identify on the battlefield, and later it was decided to place a red cross on the



Clara Barton

band which is the inverse symbol of the Swiss flag.

The group became the "International Committee for Relief to Wounded Soldiers" which in 1876 was renamed the "International Committee of the Red Cross" (ICRC).

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

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

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

The Formation of Other Red Cross Organisations

In August 1869, he met Clara



Henry Dunant

Barton, an American who had been a nurse during the American Civil War and he asked her why the United States had chosen not to sign the Geneva Convention¹ (about protections for people during war.)

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Note:

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

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Can you guess what the close-up image of this item is below? Go to page 143 for the answer - link



Thrifty Tip\$

Idea\$ on how to \$ave money.

- Save on your mobile phone -

For some people, there is a certain amount of prestige in owning the latest mobile phone, but is it really necessary? The answer is, of course not, but not everyone can be convinced otherwise. If you've been considering one particular type of phone, do a little research and check out the qualities of earlier versions of the same phone. Often by this stage you can find many reviews from users and learn which of the phones is the better choice and those to avoid, which is an advantage over the latest model because there'll be far fewer reviews, and no information about its longevity. This may save you much anguish and money later.

Do an online search for where to buy an earlier version which you can usually still buy brand new, and you may save hundreds of dollars. I suggest that sometimes saving money, is far better than saving one's pride. [END]

Christian Singleness

These articles may provide helpful insights for Christian singles, Pastors, church leaders and married couples, sharing information on the struggles and challenges that Christian singles in your congregation face. We hope these will prove beneficial to all.

- Every Person Who is Single has Value; 37
- Lost in Translation - Equally Yoked; 38
- Where is My Soul-mate? 40
- Have You Been Given the Gift of Singleness? 42
- Why Might We be Resisting Accepting Singleness? 45
- We are Mad at God; 50
- Josie and the Gift of Singleness 52



Every Person Who is Single has Value



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

There's an unconscious idea in our society and in many of our churches that to be successful, one has to be married. It's as if the act of marriage itself has somehow *proven* that a person has achieved or won something important. If they've found a partner it proved they were 'worthy' of love and marriage and are therefore more complete. Along with this concept is the belief that because a person is married, they are more trustworthy, reliable and mature and perhaps even more intelligent.

This of course suggests that by remaining unmarried, a single person must be lacking something vital because they were unable to find a partner, and therefore they must be less worthwhile, less able to contribute anything of value to our society (or church) and are possibly even less interesting or intelligent than a married person.

The longer a person remains single, the more people believe they are lacking that essential ingredient that makes them marriageable and thereby a

valuable person. When an older single person marries, there's almost a collective sigh of relief:

"Thank goodness! We thought they'd never make it!"

Suddenly they're seen as successful at last!

If a person divorces, their value can drop even lower than that of a single person. Here was someone who 'had it all' and failed miserably. To some people it doesn't matter what brought about the marriage breakdown, they've shown they lacked the important qualities to keep their marriage together or didn't fight hard enough, and are therefore a less worthwhile person. Some within the church treat divorced people with contempt or hostility because they believe they've committed an almost unforgivable sin.

Then there are the widows and widowers: if they're still young enough, there's a good chance they'll remarry and regain their good status. If they're old, well it won't be long before they shuffle off to heaven anyway, so until they do, they've got their

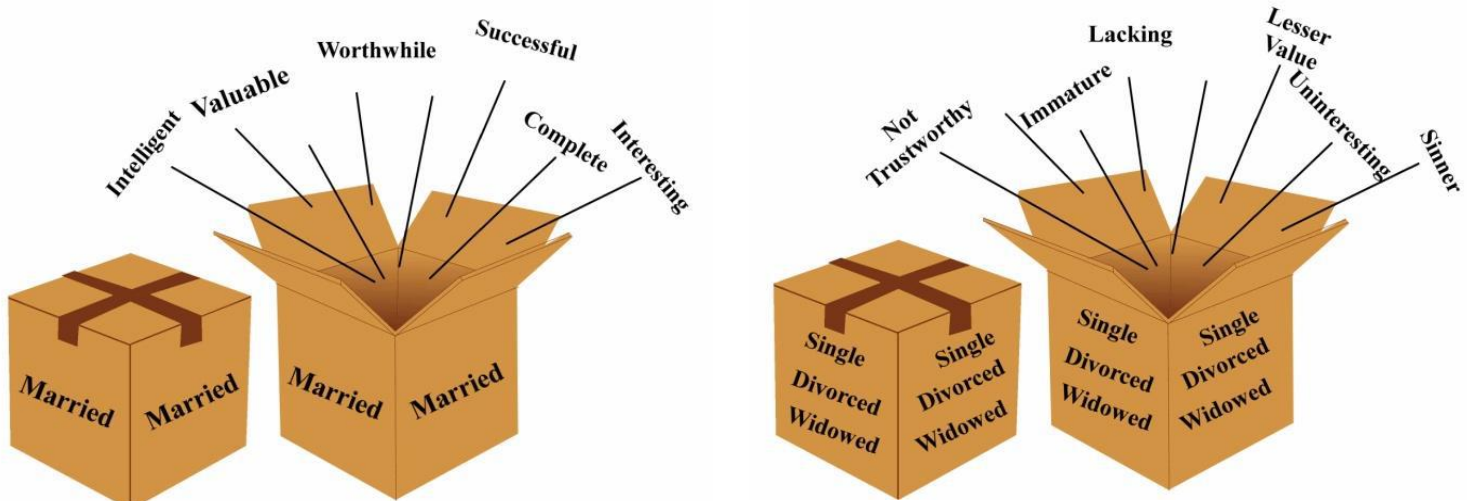
grandchildren to keep them occupied.

While these may sound like exaggerations, in many cases these responses are real. People are placed in boxes according to their marriage status and some married people are content to leave them in their boxes and interact with singles only on a superficial basis, or ignore them altogether. It's not just the parishioners who can behave like this, but some Pastors as well. It's possibly only in the Catholic church where this attitude is less likely to be as strong because their Pastor is a single person.

It's partially because of this mindset that many single, divorced and widowed people feel neglected or even invisible in their church, and one of the important reasons why they leave.

Another contributing factor is that many churches focus on families and give little consideration to the needs of anyone outside of the family unit.

Churches offer seminars that centre around families and ways to improve marriage relationships,



and offer functions that suit families. There are sermons on the qualities of a 'good wife' or 'good husband' or 'good parents.' I've never heard a sermon about the qualities of a good single person or how to help people going through divorce, or the needs of a widow or widower. It's almost as if people believe that single and single again people can't possibly have any problems and therefore don't require help or guidance, or they give into the prevailing fashion to wear blinkers so they can pretend they don't exist.

Singles, divorcees and widows/widowers are making up larger percentages of our church congregations than ever before, and Pastors and church board members need to open their eyes to this reality and to being more amenable to the needs of their singles and to teaching their congregations to do the same.

Until that happens (and I've seen little change in this area or in attitudes during the past twenty-five years), there is an enormous

need for singles ministries.

Consider the additional fact that the needs of a younger single are usually different to those of an older single, and different again to divorced or widowed persons.

This was the main purpose behind starting SPAG Magazine: to offer a resource to single and single again Christians, and to provide insights for Pastors and married couples within the church. While we have developed further since that time and most of our articles are suitable for all Christian adults, we include at least one article for singles in each issue.

SPAG stands for 'Single Person Approved by God,' because God has a purpose for every single and single again person and it's important they understand that God is on their side, that they are a valuable person in His eyes and that He has a plan for them which may include them remaining as a single person.

The articles in SPAG Magazine are designed to help singles and

married people deal with their issues or to recognise areas where they need to change. Other articles may be challenging, but at the very least, we hope to encourage Christians to want to draw closer to God, to grow as His children, and be willing to be available for whatever work in which He wishes for us to become involved.

SPAG Magazine's purpose is to encourage, challenge and inspire Christian adults in their walk, and to honour and exalt God.

My hope is that singles will feel that someone is finally listening and understands that their needs and issues are very real and that they at last, have a voice.

I also hope that married people, Pastors and church leaders in particular will be encouraged to find ways to help make singles feel valued by providing them with the same kind of teaching and resources that are generally offered mainly or only to the married people and the family in their church. [END]



Lost in Translation – Unequally Yoked



**by Kandima
Awendila**
Press Service
International

The marriage equality debate somehow took our eyes off another issue, that is the Christian's perspective on what is commonly referred to from the Scriptures as being "unequally yoked."

For years I had never really understood why the bible counsels us not to be involved in a relationship with a person that is not of the same Christian faith. I always questioned why and didn't quite understand the reasons behind this request.

Even if my partner hadn't surrendered his life to Christ and chosen to live by God's principles, indeed if I continued to attend church, read my bible, attended bible study and simply continued to do all that I always did to remain close to God, then why couldn't I be in a relationship with a person that does not share in my Christian faith (i.e. a non-believer)?

Possible Consequences from Being Unequally Yoked

Some years ago now a Christian friend found herself involved in a relationship with a non-believer. She longed so much to be married, that in her quest for a partner, she met a non-Christian man. She was of age and was worried that if she didn't form any meaningful relationship at that time, that she would never be married and have children of her own.

Her argument for being with him was that he was willing to come to church with her, and that she hoped that one day, he would become a Christian too and in any case, he was such a good person so why not give him a chance? So they began to date.

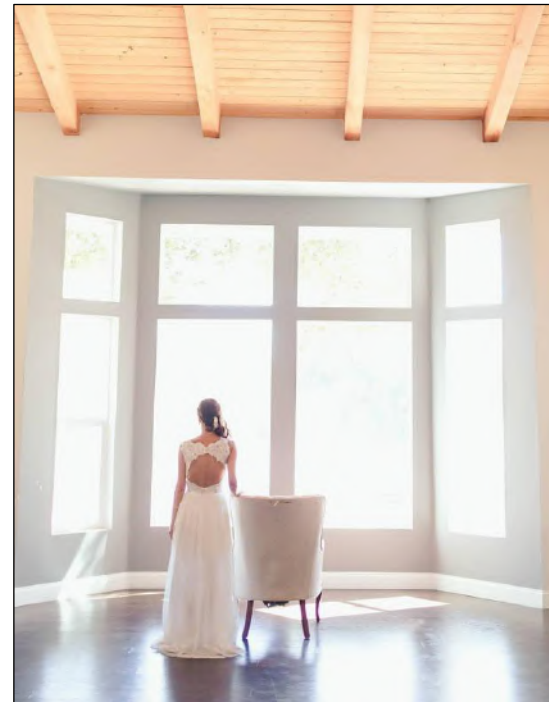
Things seemed to be going well the first few months. She continued to attend church and bible study, but soon I began to notice that I didn't see her at church as much as I used to, and if I did see her, she would come to the church service on her own.

She didn't seem interested in as many church activities as she previously did and her small group study attendance began to dwindle. When I asked her about her scarce Sunday service attendance, she always seemed to have an excuse for her absence.

She came to me one day and revealed that she had been recently praying about her relationship with her partner. She had been battling many questions in her head and needed some answers. She felt that the relationship wasn't heading in the right direction, and she had to end it. She sat me down and began to explain her reasons for her actions.

Different Sources of Guidance

She said, "I came to realise that it would be difficult to make the relationship work. How could we both head in a similar direction and do life together if we had different sources of guidance? I in God, and he essentially in - nothing. If I base my life principles on the living word of God, and he doesn't, how do we share in our



life principles? If one day in our marriage, we were blessed with children and I would like to bring them up with the same Christian convictions I have, how can we bring up our children in a way that does not cause division, with such conflicting views of God?"

She thought that the only reason why her partner had offered to attend church earlier in the relationship was just to win her over. Now all she wanted was to be with someone that is a committed Christian and will encourage her in her walk with God.

A popular verse that comes to mind in this situation is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14-15:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers... what harmony is there between Christ and Belial? ... what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" [NIV]

This verse is not exclusively referring to marriage, but I would

like to suggest that it applies in this situation as well.

So often we can be rush to make foolish decisions because of our impatience and failure to wait on God. You see, my friend became so caught up in her desire to be married, that in her trying to fulfil her own desire, she didn't seek God's guidance and made the inappropriate choice.

She thought that while together with the non-believer, she would still be strong enough to resist the temptation of omitting the things

of God in her life, but was so easily led astray without even realising it.

Seeking God's Wisdom

Through her experience I came to understand that it is imperative that with the word of God, we prayerfully consider and ask God for wisdom (James chapter 1 verse 5), and understanding and direction in choosing a life partner.

I think it is important that the person I choose to marry understands that God is first and foremost in our lives and is willing

to live by His principles alone.

Now the possibility of never being able to share in my passion for God with the person I choose to spend the rest of my life with, has become an unbearable thought.

There are probably a number of examples out there of a union between a Christian and non-believer that have followed a completely different pattern to my friend's, and have turned out well and I acknowledge that, but I would much rather make a choice in obedience to God (just as Peter and other apostles did in Acts chapter 5 verse 29), than make a choice that displeases God; isn't clear in my conscience; and comes with unpleasant consequences.

I believe that a wife or a husband is a blessing from God. I pray that just as I seek God's guidance in my life, that if God wills for me to be in a life union with someone, that I would choose to be with a committed Christian that loves God and seeks Him first above all else. [END]

Biography:

Kandima Awendila was born in Mozambique and lives and works as an IT Service Desk Engineer on the Gold Coast. Kandima Awendila's archive of articles may be viewed at www.pressserviceinternational.org/kandima-awendila.html

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Where is My Soul-Mate?



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

I detest the suggestion that we each have a 'soul-mate,' as if God in His infinite wisdom decided that in all of the billions of people in the world, that only one person should suit me.

So what happens if I somehow walked by and missed them ... Whoops! That's just too bad!

According to the movies, it's my responsibility to somehow track them down if I'm going to live 'happily ever-after.' If that's true, then isn't it about time that someone developed a special tracking device to make it easier to

find my elusive 'soul-mate?' Perhaps they could adapt a metal detector into a 'soul-mate' detector.

In response to the topic's question, "Where is my soul-mate," the answer is:

there's no such thing - the idea of a 'soul-mate' was made-up.

Perhaps we can blame Hollywood for that silly idea.

The concept of a 'soul-mate' suggests that there is a perfect 'someone' out there for each of us, when that's not even remotely possible. Just as none of us are perfect, so no potential partner can be a perfect person or suit us

perfectly. In fact, there may be several people with whom we come in contact, that suit each of us well, but we've got to let go of that silly notion that another human being can complete us as we are encouraged to believe.

If God has a person in mind for us, then He'll provide them - we don't have to do the chasing. What sometimes happens is we look at every new unattached person of the opposite sex and think, "I wonder if that's them?" Instead, if we're continually working on our relationship with God we may choose to resist actively looking and instead rely on the Holy Spirit's prompting to recognise "Hey, look over there! There's Jesus in that potential partner."

In all honesty, in my case, I don't know if God wants me to marry, but I'm sure that I could find someone if I was desperate enough, but I'm not willing to settle for just anyone, especially when I'm not even sure if marriage is part of God's plan for me.

When I was in my twenties, that concept was tough for me to come to terms with: that perhaps God didn't want me to marry until later in life, or maybe not at all.

For many people, the idea of being alone is not acceptable, and they utterly believe society's ideology that to be a whole or worthwhile person, we must have a partner. Sometimes people rush into relationships and marriage simply because they're not willing to accept God's will or to wait for His timing, and they usually live



"...the idea of a 'soul-mate' was made-up."

to regret their decision. In fact, I've never known anyone who has 'settled' who has ended up with a happy marriage.

Wouldn't it be better to be on our own and happy, then be with somebody and feel miserable? Besides our life doesn't begin the moment we get married. Our life is already here, so we've to get off our bum now and live it!

I remember feeling quite frustrated in my twenties when well-meaning relatives and friends repeatedly asked me about my love-life. At one point I said to my mother, "Right now I don't have a boyfriend, and if that changes, I'll let you know. Meantime, could you please stop asking."

I'm sure people meant well, but asking those questions just made me feel like a failure and continually reminded me of my *alone-ness*. It also made me conscious of society's attitude towards people on their own, as if we are somehow lacking some important quality.

Another thing I came to loathe were the well-meaning responses about my lack of a love-life, such as:

- 'I'm sure God has someone special in mind for you;' *or*
- 'Just be patient and when you least expect it, he'll suddenly appear.'

Sometimes there were suggestions that I was simply being too picky and that my basic requirements for a partner were too unreasonable. I've since come to understand that just because we're not attracted to someone, it doesn't mean our standards are unrealistic nor that we're incapable of having a healthy, loving relationship.

If that wasn't enough, there were also reminders about my childless-ness and that '*it was a shame, because I'd make such a great mother.*' Ouch!

Advice givers would have us believe that everything is black and white and that singleness is a 'problem' that is easy to solve. The reality is much more complex, so it is our right to ignore those who mean well, because often they don't know what they're talking about.

As I grew in my Christian walk, I began to focus less on myself and my own desire for a husband and a family, which then freed me up to concentrate more on God's purpose for my life.

When I allowed God to take control of my life's direction, He provided compensations in ways that I could never have imagined:

- My loneliness and desire for children began to ease;
- I gained a sense of peace and purposefulness;
- I developed new skills and grew in areas that I would probably never had the opportunity to do so if I'd married; and

- My confidence and my contentment grew.

Biblical Singles

Having lived as a single men who remained unmarried, both Jesus and Paul show us that marriage is not essential to the wholeness of a person. A Christian disciple might be called upon to forget parents, partners and possessions for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Ultimately, if we are truly God's children then we have to consider what we are going to say when we finally face God in heaven:

"God, my focus was on finding a partner and satisfying my own desires;" or

"God, although I struggled with my singleness, I tried to obey your calling on my life."

There's a phrase that I heard when I was younger, that I admit scared the heck out of me when I first read about it:

"The gift of singleness"

It suggested that singleness was something good or even wonderful from God; something that God **intentionally** gives to certain Christians.

I questioned such a radical idea: How could singleness be a gift? Wasn't it more of a curse? Didn't I deserve to be loved? Was I being punished? Did that mean that I was to remain single for the rest of my life?

Those are very good questions, so I'll follow up this topic in the next article and share more about the gift of singleness, and the possibility that it may not be quite as awful or as scary as you might think. [END]



The gift of singleness may not be as awful or scary as you think.

***Take the Quiz →**



THE GIFT OF SINGLENESSE QUIZ

1. Are you a Christian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Are you:

(a) Single (never married) ☐ Yes ☐ No

(b) Divorced (& now single) ☐ Yes ☐ No

(c) Widowed (& now single) ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered 'Yes' to both questions 1 and 2, then
YOU have been given the 'Gift of singleness.'

Have You Been Given the Gift of Singleness?



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Let me start this article with a statement which may shock you:

If you are a single person, it's because it's God's **BEST** choice for you.

Let me clarify that statement:

It's not God's second-best choice for you. It's not an accident or a punishment. The reason you are single is because God wants the *best* for you.

At this point, there may be an angry or hurt voice in your head shouting "No way! That isn't right! How can being alone be the best for me?" I understand because I felt the same way when I was younger. So let's jump into first Corinthians chapter two, verse nine and see what Paul says about God's plan for us:

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

So in other words, you don't know what God's plan is for you, and it's rare that anyone is told what God's plans are for us. So if God has planned for you to be single you have a choice to accept it, or not, but if you choose NOT to accept it, then you have to be ready to face the consequences that may well result from ignoring God's direction.

Perhaps you are trying to justify your rejection of your singleness by telling yourself something like, "This doesn't have anything to do with me, because eventually I'm going to get married."

So let me shock you a little further:

if you are single **right now** it's because you are called to be single **right now**. In fact, you have been given the 'gift of singleness' **right now** by the simple fact that you are single, even if you're dating or engaged.

While it's true that at some point in the future you may marry, or if you are presently married, consider that there may

come a time when you become single, e.g. the death of your spouse, so while you are single, and whether you want to be single or not, it is a gift from God and He has given it to you for a reason.

In first Corinthians, chapter seven, Paul talked a little about the gift of singleness:

"Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband... But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another." [NLT]

There it is in plain words:

"... each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another."

...marriage is a gift.

...singleness is a gift.

As I shared in the previous article, I was shocked when I first heard the term 'gift of singleness.' It suggested that singleness was a gift from God: something that God

intentionally gives to certain Christians.

At the time, I thought to myself, "How can singleness be a gift? Wasn't it more of a curse? Didn't I deserve to be loved? Was I being punished? Did that mean that I was to remain single for the rest of my life?"

Isn't Being Single Wrong?

I grew up believing society's standards that happiness, success and completeness required that I marry, and I never doubted that it would happen to me... but it didn't happen, and it continued not happening into my twenties and thirties right through to my present age (fifties).

In my twenties I stopped asking "for how long," and instead began asking, "so what do I do with this gift?" I came to understand that God wasn't going to provide a definitive answer to me – not because He didn't love me or because He thought I didn't deserve to be loved, but because He had something in mind for me that required my full attention which I couldn't give if I was married.

In my case, part of my journey was to become a Christian singles co-ordinator, a presenter on Christian radio with two associated weekly newspaper columns, and eventually developed this Christian magazine.

The fact that I'm still unmarried makes more sense now.

Sure, I could have resisted God's call on my life and settled for someone, but if that wasn't part of God's plan, then it was likely to leave me unsatisfied and impact on my relationship with God. Added to the fact that I'd have settled for a marriage with

someone who wasn't in God's plans for me, which was also likely to lead to marital problems. It meant too that God would have to find someone else to do the work for which I was no longer available.

I came to recognise and to accept that the gift of singleness wasn't a curse but in fact was an incredible blessing in ways that I could never have imagined when I was younger.

I developed skills and confidence that I might never had the chance to do had I married. For someone who had very little self-confidence and who was as extremely introverted as I was, I have been blessed and gained skills and experiences that have developed my belief in myself, and enabled me to grow closer to God in faith and wisdom.

Another of my blessings are two women that have become my best friends who continue to support and encourage me. They have been a Godsend during times of great difficulty (thanks Robyn and Adrianna.)

God has provided freedom and opportunities for me to develop in areas that I would not have had the opportunity to do so had I married, including my writing and creative arts, and many other areas.

While Paul said that singleness is a gift from God, it is not included in the list of spiritual gifts in first Corinthians chapter twelve, so therefore it must be a different type of gift other than spiritual.

For some Christians, singleness is a personal choice, while for others it is a state in which God places us, sometimes even kicking

and screaming! For Christians in both of these circumstances, singleness is a gift.

So what does the 'gift of singleness' mean in reality?

Further along in first Corinthians chapter seven (verses 32-35) Paul stated:

"I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided.

In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband.

I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible." [NLT]

It's seems quite clear to me that Paul was saying here that marriage can distract us from serving the Lord. As a Christian our first requirement is that we love God and part of loving Him, is obeying Him, therefore if God has given us the gift of singleness, we have to face that doing anything other than embracing our singleness, is an act of defiance. That's a scary thought isn't it?

If we decide to ignore this gift and run off and find someone to marry, we're likely to find that it leads to all sorts of problems that

will ultimately be much more difficult to live with than accepting God's gift of singleness in the first place, because:

- we'll be choosing someone that is not approved by God;
- we're likely to be settling for someone that is less suited to us and will probably lead to high levels of conflict;
- we're unlikely to be able to complete God's purpose for our life; and
- we're less likely to find the satisfaction and contentment in our marriage relationship than we would have in our single state.

Accepting the Gift

For some of us, as the years pass there may be some disappointment that we'll never know the closeness of a loving marriage relationship, or have the support of a loving partner. We also may never know the love of our own children.

From my own experience I can tell you that the worst of my heart-pangs and desires eased over time until all that remained was the smallest spark of an ache. While there are still some days when it hurts a little more than usual, I remind myself that the ache will pass, as it has always done in the past. Instead I try to focus on my many blessings.



...hang on for the ride of your life!

Sure, I could indulge in a pity party and think of all that God has kept from me. Instead I choose to focus on what God has provided me in its place, such as a sense of satisfaction and purposefulness, and contentment and I've grown in my confidence and skills.

When I was young I was such an extreme introvert that I was nervous talking to strangers and had very little belief in myself. In the last thirty years I've grown and developed to the point where I became a radio presenter, wrote regular columns in local newspapers, sang in a church and in a regional choir at the annual town Christmas carnival, preached in a church, and created and co-ordinated a Christian singles group for fifteen years. I've developed creative arts skills and have opened several on-line stores and I'm presently working towards having the first two of three of my books published.

If somebody had told me when I was in my early twenties that I was going to benefit so much from committing myself to God and His gift of singleness, I would have laughed derisively. I would not have conceived of the possibility of possessing such skills and confidence nor the opportunity to do all of those things - isn't God amazing!?

Let's revisit first Corinthians chapter two and see what it says again about God's plan for us:

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

This came about because of one thing: my willingness to trust and follow God, no matter what.

Living the Gift

So let me ask you a question: are you willing to accept the Gift of Singleness that God is offering you right now?

I honestly don't know what plans God has in mind for you. May I encourage you to forget about that, but focus instead on following God's lead and be willing to do what He asks of you, no matter how scary or even improbable it may sound.

Keep in mind that with God, anything is possible. May I encourage you to read Psalms 139 which talks about our relationship with God and how well He knows us and prepares for us ahead of time.

If it helps you for the present time, just focus on getting through one day at a time, and committing yourself to God afresh each day. Ask God to ease the ache of emptiness or loneliness in your heart and fill it with something else, and be open to change.

Ask Him to build your confidence, your skills and your courage, and to grow you in areas where you are at your weakest.

Conclusion

Your life has already begun – quit waiting for marriage and instead, eagerly receive the gift of singleness that God has given you.

Yes, God may have marriage in store for you, but not right at this present time, so quit twiddling your thumbs while you wait. Ask God to show you the joys and sense of completeness that can come with this gift, and to help you to live the life of purpose that He has planned for you...

...Then hang on for the ride of your life! [END]

Why Might We Be Resisting Accepting Singleness?



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

In the previous articles we explored the 'Gift of Singleness,' and who is given this gift. The conclusion was that the gift of singleness is given to every Christian who is currently without a partner, no matter if they're dating or even engaged, including widows, widowers and divorced people. We determined that God has a purpose for us while we are in this state of singleness, which is why He gives it to us.

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

The Gift of Singleness means

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

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

Some Christians prefer to remain single for various reasons, but for others it is a concept with which we struggle, even though Paul clearly stated that this gift is given to some. Some Christians

are so resistant to the idea of remaining single, that they deliberately ignore the possibility that singleness is from God, and some people may even rush out and jump into relationships so they won't be on their own.

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

1. Bitterness

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

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

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

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

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



idol? First we ask ourselves this question:

“Am I saying that God is not enough?”

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

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

That’s a pretty scary question if we’ve never seriously considered it before. God sometimes calls on us to give up things that may hinder our walk with Him, or that distract us from His goals for our life. If we do remain

unmarried, do we understand that God wouldn’t be doing that purposely to hurt us or to make us miserable?

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

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

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

While it’s true that a good Christian partner may encourage us in our walk with God, we are

deluding ourselves if we believe that it will improve our relationship or bring us closer to God. The fact is, the only door by which we have closer access to God is through Jesus. If we are desiring a closer relationship with God, no-one else is going to be able to do that for us. **WE** are the only ones who can improve our relationship with God, and finding a partner will not alter that for us.

In fact, if we get into a relationship with someone who urges us to focus on God and spend more time with Him than we want, it may cause us to feel resentful towards our partner.

Consider also that if there’s a problem with intimacy with God to begin, then intimacy with a human partner is likely to take our thoughts and our heart further away from God, rather than closer.

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

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

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

If we are determined to find a partner because we have a need to

prove we’re worthy of love, then consider that perhaps we need to look at our own upbringing/background. Did we have a tough or loveless upbringing? Did someone that we trust in our past say horrible or negative things about us that made us doubt our value? Was there someone who physically, sexually and/or mentally abused us?

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

Coming from a home where there was abuse will have taught us the wrong thing about what love is, and unconsciously we can often end up in a relationship with someone who treats us the same way as our past abuser.

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

5. We’re Slack in Our Christian Walk

If we are slack in our walk with God, why would He want to distract us with a partner that will take us further from Him? I’m not saying that if we are close to God that He’ll automatically send us a

partner as if it's some kind of reward for good work!

If God was waving His hands in front of our face right now, whistling or shouting madly, we've become too focussed on looking around at all the possible human partners in our view, to even notice Him.

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

- Do our daily habits include spending time in prayer and reading His word?
- Other than church, is there a group with which we meet, where we can gain a deeper understanding of God, such as a Bible study or small group?
- Do we put aside some time each week to do our work for Him?

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

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

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

to be associated with **them**!?

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

Ouch!

While some of this may seem a little extreme, in my years in the singles ministry, I've come across single people who've rejected others for some of the dumbest reasons, for example:

- If you're fat, you're probably not worthwhile talking to!

What? This is seriously true! I received a phone one time about the singles group I used to coordinate. We chatted for a little while and then the caller asked if there were any fat people in the group. I responded that I was fat, and they responded, "Yes, but I can talk to you."

This 'Christian' didn't want to have to put up with fat people because they couldn't or wouldn't talk to them, and possibly they were more interested in finding a partner and didn't want to have to put up with someone who wasn't 'marriage material.' Awful isn't it?

We may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable with the idea that

others think that we're losers just because we're still single, which may be why we resist the idea of remaining single, but consider that there are others who think married people are losers as well.

I struggled with the idea when I was in my twenties, that people would judge me because I was single, and make assumptions about why I was still on my own. Thankfully, God helped me to get over my ego, and eventually I was able to work through it.

Honestly, who cares what other people think? Aren't we supposed to leave this childish thinking behind us at some point, particularly as we mature as Christians? There are many, **many** reasons why people are single that have nothing whatsoever to do with them being unlovable, ugly or strange!

For Christian women, one of the most logical reasons why they're single is the mere fact that there are more available Christian women than there are available Christian men. Logically it's therefore more difficult for a single woman to find a Christian partner than it is for a man.

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

Additionally, we also need to be conscious about how we treat other singles - so what if they're a little slow, strange, odd-looking or socially awkward? So what if they're not marriage material? I've developed some great friendships over the years with incredibly diverse people, and many have been a wonderful source of



encouragement to me. C'mon! Let's all give those weirdos a go – we never know what terrific friendships may develop as a result.

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

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

That's nice, and how are we doing in our relationship with God? Have we put Him on the back-burner in favour of our partner?

We must be honest with ourselves and ask that question again:

- have we gotten slack with our relationship with God?
- have we been concentrating on our partner?
- has God been given the appropriate status and attention He deserves in our life?

Are you squirming going on right now because this article is hitting a little too close to home?

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

Many years ago, a good friend of mine suddenly disappeared off my radar. She stopped returning my calls, and after a few weeks,

when I tried to phone her, I discovered that her phone was disconnected. Then I found out that she'd moved house. Following about ten months of complete silence, I suddenly received an envelope in the mail from her - it was an invitation to her wedding! I was very hurt and angry. That's not the way we should behave towards a friend: we shouldn't drop them the instant we find a partner, and treat them like they're no longer important!

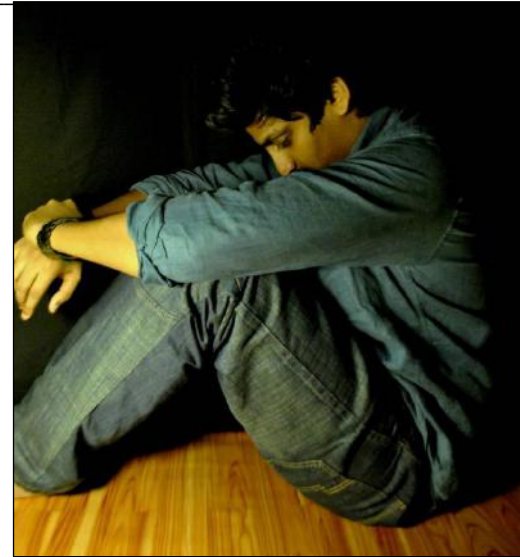
How much more true is this with God! We're talking creator of the universe, Almighty God, King of Kings here, and yet some Christians react the same, selfish way towards God, and treat Him as if He's of secondary importance.

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

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

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

It can be much more difficult for divorced or widowed people to come to terms with their singleness. This is especially true of those who lost a partner after a wonderful, loving marriage. Children (and grandchildren) can be a constant reminder of their partner and what they lost and remind them of their aloneness.



For widows or widowers, the loss of a partner will never leave them, and while the pain of loss usually eases over time, they can be so conscious of their partner's absence that their loneliness may encourage them to run out to find someone, focussing on filling that void.

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

In this situation, singleness may seem either like a curse or a blessing to them, and for those suffering loneliness, this difficult time on our own may seem like it's only temporary while we look for another partner. For others, having gone through a painful divorce, we can be confused in our emotional state:

- on the one hand we assumed that we'd be delighted to be single and free of the earlier unhappiness;
- on the other hand, we're struggling with being alone and having to make all the decisions on our own, and perhaps taking on more of a responsibility with our children.

If there's a moment when our minds and hearts are clearer, we need to have a conversation with God which perhaps could be something like this:

"Help me to come to terms with this new stage in my life. Help me to accept that I've been given the gift of singleness and what that means for me. What is that you want for me?"

We can choose to resist the very alien idea that we're now single, or we can come to terms with the reality that God has given us the gift of singleness as a result of the divorce, not as a punishment but as a blessing.

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

One of the things I've come to understand is that most people have at least one burden they have to deal with as part of their Christian walk. Many have several challenges: from a difficult upbringing to health issues and physical restrictions, mental illness to children with disabilities, financial strife to horrible workplaces, difficult marriages right through to being alone. None of us finds life easy, so being alone may well be part of our journey.

I could focus on my health issues and feel upset that God has forced them on me, but I have come to accept that these are just

part of my 'package deal.' When I was younger, I couldn't understand why God allowed me to be born a little crooked and to develop a bad back, hips and knee problems and now live with constant pain. Additionally these health issues impacted on me, until I could no longer continue with my earlier ministries, which lead to some confusion for me:

- why would God give me the gifts for these ministries and then take the ministries away due to my physical restraints?

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

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

Conclusion

While for some, the gift of singleness may seem more like a curse, Paul made it clear that

when God gives us this gift, He has a purpose in mind for us that may require that we give up the idea of finding a partner, or at least put our desires on hold temporarily while we focus on Him.

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

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

Finally though, I do encourage you to earnestly seek God's guidance and clarity. Let me remind you that you're single because God loves you and has given this gift to you. Crazy though that may sound, it is part of His plan for you and you've just got to be willing to let go of your own desires and say:

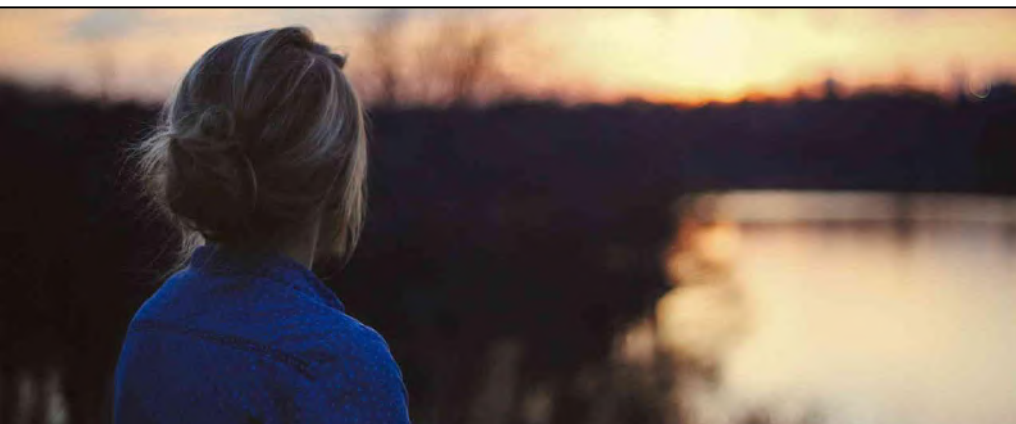
"Here I am God - let's see where the next part of our journey together takes us." [END]

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We are Mad at God



by Justin Campbell
More than Don't Have
Sex

When I was in college and right out of college, ok until I was 32 or so, I spent a lot of time (and I mean a lot of time) praying to God about getting a spouse. It was a focus, I would now say was an idol. I wrote songs about it. The songs were about hurt, pain and angst. Haha! I can laugh now but it's what I felt.

I think it's really easy as a single to become bitter. You watch others have something that you want and you don't have it. It's in your face - especially in the Christian culture. We desire to be with someone and we aren't. That seems like grounds to be upset.

For me I feel like my anger really started as a teenager. I just wasn't good with the ladies, but I never saw what I did wrong, what I saw was that I couldn't get the whatever girl I was currently obsessed with.

College was ok, but then after college I fell into the trap of bitterness again. It's understandable, but it's not a very good path.

I want to focus on the main person we are mad at:

God

That's right. We might not say it, but really that is where a lot of our bitterness and anger comes from.

"Why God?! Why can't you bring me someone?!"

I remember one day in my late twenties walking out of my office on a beautiful fall afternoon. I looked at the day, my work

(which was going extremely well), the opportunities I had in ministry. I looked at the car I was driving and I thought about all God has provided for me, but I also felt confused. Why could God bring me all of that but not a wife? I would think, "Come on God, I'm trying to follow you. I'm doing your work. I'm trying to live a pure life - when is it my turn."

Can you hear the entitlement? Does God owe you a spouse?

Look I think it is good to be real. If you are frustrated then you might as well take that to God, but it's dangerous as a single to stay there.

It's so easy to let our focus slide to what we don't have, what we want so much and what we think we are missing out on.

It's one thing to share my frustration but it's another to live in bitterness.

It's bad because I begin to view the world around me through that lens. It changes how I view my married friends. It gives the enemy a foothold to work with.

Can you just hear the enemy's voice, "See, God doesn't deliver on the stuff that you really want." or, "God could do it but He doesn't want to."

In one sense it puts the focus squarely on me. It becomes all about what I want, what I don't have and I'm mad about it. It's all about me.

It also affects me because it makes me way less attractive to the opposite sex. No one wants to date the mad, bitter, feeling sorry for themselves person. I see this in



my single friends a lot. I know it because I've lived it.

Ladies, no guy wants to date the girl who is whining about being single. We are scared of the desperate chick. Trust me.

Gentlemen, no girl, and I mean NO girl, wants to date an angry, depressed, focussed on what's wrong guy.

This leads me to another key problem:

when we make it all God's fault we tend not to deal with the parts that are our fault.

I wish I would have had less people who fed me spiritual platitudes about God's timing, God's preparing someone for me, and God's got stuff to teach me, and more people who would have told me how I was doing it all wrong.

- We all have wounds that mess us up in this area, are we working on those?
- Maybe we date all the wrong people - is that God's fault of something from inside me that I need to figure out?

- Maybe I need to work on my appearance or my approach - is that God's fault?
- Maybe I want every girl to like me too much and have a huge approval idol. Is that God's fault?

There's a flip side here and it's important - it's not all my fault. I'm going to get to being mad at ourselves later, but the first person we are usually mad at is God and we need to get that worked out.

So are you mad at God that He doesn't have you married yet? Have you spent time being bitter? How has that affected you and your relationship with friends, the opposite sex, and most of all God?

[END]



Biography:

I am not here to say that all my ideas are right. I'm simply trying to have the conversation. The truth is I was single until I was 41 and I've done it all wrong. All of it!

I've dated wrong, I've pursued wrong, I've lived wrong. I've been in every cycle of bitterness, righteous indignation, anger, sadness, loneliness, etc. I've done every one of those wrong. I've hurt people and I've been hurt. I've held marriage as an idol. I mean I've done **everything** wrong.

So I'm not here to share because I've figured it all out, but I know we need to. The reality is that 49% of adults in the U.S. are unmarried, and if the Church is going to take care of its own as well as be on-mission it had better wake up to this. It's time to talk about the many issues with which Christian singles struggle - for real.

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Organisation Promotion

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Josie* and the Gift of Singleness



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

Some time back, I corresponded with Josie* who had some questions about the gift of singleness.

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

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

Their issues are often different to married people but for whatever reason, this group can often be treated as unimportant, inferior or even invisible by their church, sometimes because there is the ridiculous idea that once they get married, then they'll be 'cured' or finally a 'grown-up' and are now finally acceptable.

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

I hope that this article will encourage churches to seek out

the singles in their midst and to engage with them in order to ensure that they more fully understand the struggles with which many singles struggle.

Following now is the correspondence between Josie and me.



Hi

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

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

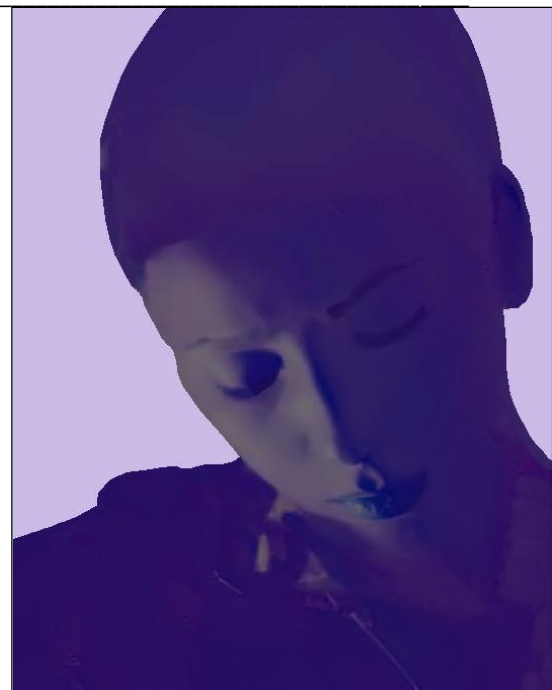
Last year God gave me a dream to serve in a missionary field. I have a burden to share the gospel to places where people don't know God, and I strongly believe that sharing God's salvation is far more important than wanting marriage for myself.

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

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

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

Sometimes I have feelings of envy, but I find that I can conquer it by



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

turning back to God in prayer and remember that He has a special plan for me.

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

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

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

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

*Name has been changed to protect identity.

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

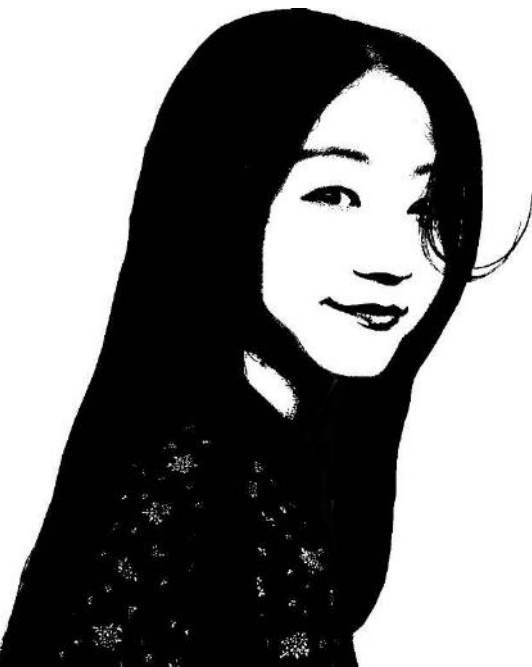
When the service ended, and I was driving my home, I began crying out to God about how I felt, and while I knew He was with me, comforting me, those confusing, aching feelings stayed in my heart.

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

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

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

Best regards, Josie



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

Dear Josie

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When it feels sometimes that the pain is too much, I pray about it. I also do something called "self-

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

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

Sometimes I remember dumb mistakes and things I did when I was younger. Satan likes to make us feel bad about ourselves, and whenever those negative thoughts and feelings come up, I do the self-talk, "Yes, that was a dumb thing

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

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

Churches and Their Leaders

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We hope also that they'll come to understand that God wants to use singles and to stop suggesting that single people need to get married, or that they are not important unless they are married, or even to ignore them simply because they're unmarried.

On the other hand, as single



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

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

Your Struggles

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

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

Those struggles and emotions don't stop happening, but they do get easier. That is part of the work that God is doing in my life, and



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

what He does in the lives of many other singles who willingly offer themselves to Him. As we grow and willingly give ourselves to God's purposes, He strengthens and grows us a little more each day. Through our commitment to Him, we gain skills and wisdom and grow in confidence both in ourselves and in Him.

Will envy come up again in your life? Probably.

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

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

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

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

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

Josie, I hope that you will keep this letter and reread it every now

and then. You may find things will become clearer.

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

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

God bless you Josie.

Warm regards, Vicki



Dear Vicki,

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

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

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

Thanks for your help ☺

Regards, Josie



Dear Josie

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

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

Every Christian who is single has been given the gift of singleness/celibacy - this may be a short-term, long-term or a permanent gift. For some, this gift

remains with them for life, while for others God may eventually take away the gift of singleness/ celibacy and give them the gift of marriage in its place.

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

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

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

In our modern world, in music, movies, TV, magazines, advertising etc, much of the media is highly focused on sex, which means that many of us are exposed to images and ideas that stimulate our sexual urges, more so than at any other time in

human history. It makes it much more difficult for Christians to deal with those thoughts and feelings when they arise, because we are repeatedly exposed to sexualised concepts.

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

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

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

or are they asking you:

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

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

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

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

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

Before you can

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

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

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

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

Kind regards, Vicki



Hi Vicki,

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

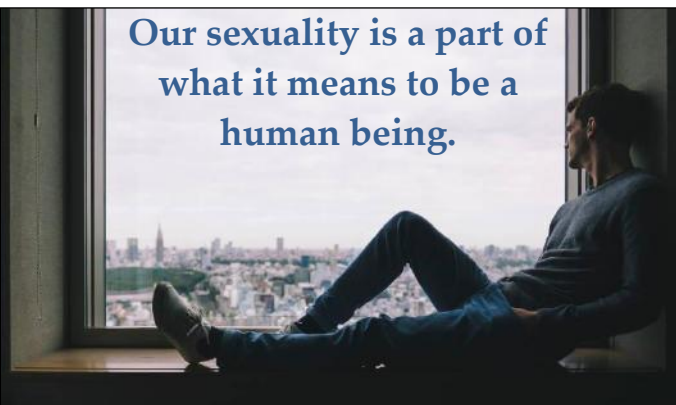
Thanks, Josie



Hi Josie,

Sometimes God may ask a person to make a lifetime commitment to singleness/ celibacy. For most of us though,

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

I've honestly never met any person that God has asked to make a lifetime commitment to singleness/celibacy. I think it

would be far too difficult for 99.9% of us. As I said, it would take a rare individual to make such an enormous commitment, and I think it is rare that God asks such a lifetime commitment.

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

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

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

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

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

That doesn't mean that our life has been without challenges or difficulties, but that as we've been more willing to give ourselves to God, to give over to Him all of our personal desires and wishes, He

has gently, firmly and lovingly guided us to a place where we can more easily accept His purposes and His desires for us.

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

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

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

Warm regards, Vicki



Dear Vicki,

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

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

Thanks, Josie



Christianity and Mental Health

- *Happiness Habits: Understanding Yourself;* 59
- Can Christians Have a Mental Illness? 61
- *Good Grief: Dementia and Mental Illness;* 64
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Happiness Habits: Understanding Yourself



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

I very clearly remember the night in my mid twenties, when a friend of mine asked me to complete a personality questionnaire. Once he'd tallied all of my responses, he presented me with my 'personality type' and as I read it, for the first time in my life I felt normal, and the strange behaviours of other people and some of the craziness of the world, finally began to make sense.

I understood at last, that the reason other people acted in ways that I didn't comprehend, wasn't because there was something wrong with them or with me, but simply that other people often felt, thought and reacted very differently to me because of their personality type.

The strangeness of other people finally made sense to me.

The revelation was astounding, and as I grasped it, it also filled me with a sense of freedom and acceptance.

This began a thirst in me to understand other people and myself. It was a hugely significant event, because it was my first major step towards self-acceptance which contributed in positive ways to my growth as a Christian, both in the past and right through to today.

God wants us to learn to understand ourselves so that we can learn to love ourselves in healthy ways.

Once we learn to love ourselves, it then becomes much easier to love and understand others, especially with the Holy Spirit's insight and guidance.

Why Are People So Weird?

I'm sure you have come across

people in your life that are annoying, difficult to understand, or just weird! From the moment of conception we develop in the womb with a tendency towards a particular personality type.

The fact is, we all feel, think and respond differently to different circumstances, but there are consistent and logical behaviour patterns and thought processes behind people's responses because of our personality type.

Extroversion vs Introversion

Let's examine one of the simplest things that we can understand about people:

extroversion and introversion.

Extroverted people tend to be the life of the party kind of people.

Introverts can be fun-loving, but when they're around people they don't know, they're often more quiet and may even seem withdrawn.

The difference between the two is **energy**. Here's an example:

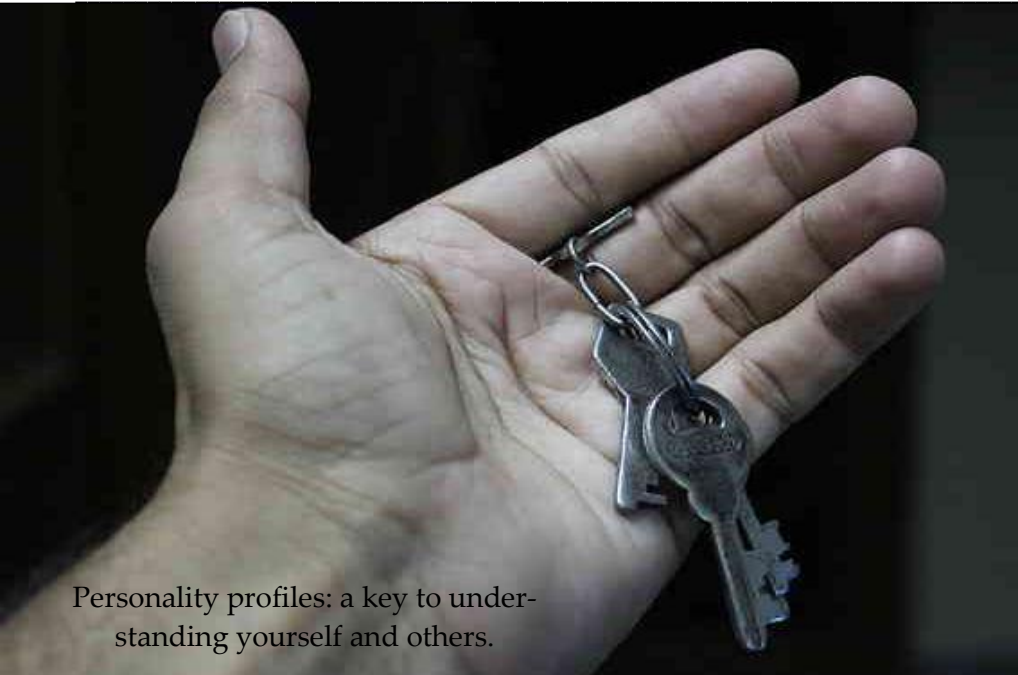
Max: is an extrovert

Ian: is an introvert

When Max the extrovert, is with a group of people, he becomes more energised as the event goes on. On the other hand, while Ian the introvert, can be outgoing and have fun with others, by the end of the function, he can't wait to get home and unwind to regain his energy.

While Ian may sometimes seem shy or quiet, it may simply be exhausting for him to socialise with other people for too long. On the other hand, Max may sometimes come across as too loud and even obnoxious to someone like





Personality profiles: a key to understanding yourself and others.

Ian, and by the end of the evening, extroverts like Max are often full of energy and are still keen to party.

Obviously these are very simplistic examples, and people are more complex than that, but we should understand that each person is perfectly acceptable as they are.

Just as we cannot force a blue-eyed person to have brown eyes and vice-versa, we cannot force an introvert to love socialising, nor can we force an extrovert to love extended time on their own – it's not natural for them, but both *can* develop in these areas.

Other Differences

There are three other areas in which people are different:

1. People *see* the world in two different ways:
 - through things they can understand via their senses; or
 - through the impressions, patterns and meanings they see in the world around them
2. People make *decisions* based in two ways:

- on basic truths and principles; or
- by weighing their values and other people's points of views.

3. People *live* their lives outwardly in two ways:

- decided and structured; or
- flexible and adaptable.

When we combine these four different areas (according to Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Briggs), we then have sixteen different personality types.

Finding Out More

There are many different personality tests available, and the most basic ones have just four different personality types. While these simpler ones can be good, they are fairly general and don't really get into the truly complex way that people's minds and feelings work.

One of the best tests are the Myers Briggs personality profiles which are much more in-depth. They have broken the personality types up into sixteen types, and can help us to understand ourselves and others more clearly, even providing insight into what jobs we are better at, and what

partners better suit us (and which ones to avoid!)

There are many different Christian books based on the Myers Briggs personality types that can provide further insight into things like our spiritual gifts and even ways for us to interact with and pray to God, based on our personalities.

While the profiles for the different personalities can never be 100% accurate (because we all have different backgrounds and experiences), they are often uncannily accurate. It can be wonderful to read more and discover that at last, someone understands us!

I urge you to find out more, but be aware that there are websites that will charge money for the full results of the testing, while there are many others where the results are free.

Conclusion

Some people thrive on approval and affection; others value harmony and respect; while some desire peace and quiet, and kindness; and there are other people who need loyalty and appreciation to make life worth living.

Each of the different personality types are important and can contribute positively to our society in different ways – no **one** type is better than any other.

Finally, let's not forget that God made us just the way we are for a reason. [END]

Biography:

Lerner, Hanny, 5 March 2013, Forbes: Understanding People's Personalities, available: www.forbes.com/sites/hannylerner/2013/03/05/understand-peoples-personalities-and-become-successful/#e641e336a8b2, accessed March 2016.

No name, undated, The Myers & Briggs Foundation: MBTI Basics, available: www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/, accessed March 2016.



Can Christians Have a Mental Illness?



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

Introduction

Over the centuries, people with mental illnesses were locked away in institutions or jails and subjected to the most appalling treatments and conditions. Some were killed out of fear, or (as happened in various countries early in the 20th century including Australia and the USA), were sterilised or euthanized as a

means of 'improving' the genetic human stock, or to remove them as a burden on our society.

When I was growing up, people never talked about mental illness other than just to make fun of the 'crazies.' Television programs and comedians mocked people with mental illness, and many people were so afraid of the mentally ill that they took care to avoid them and to ostracise them, and preferred they were locked away.

As an adult, I've been fortunate

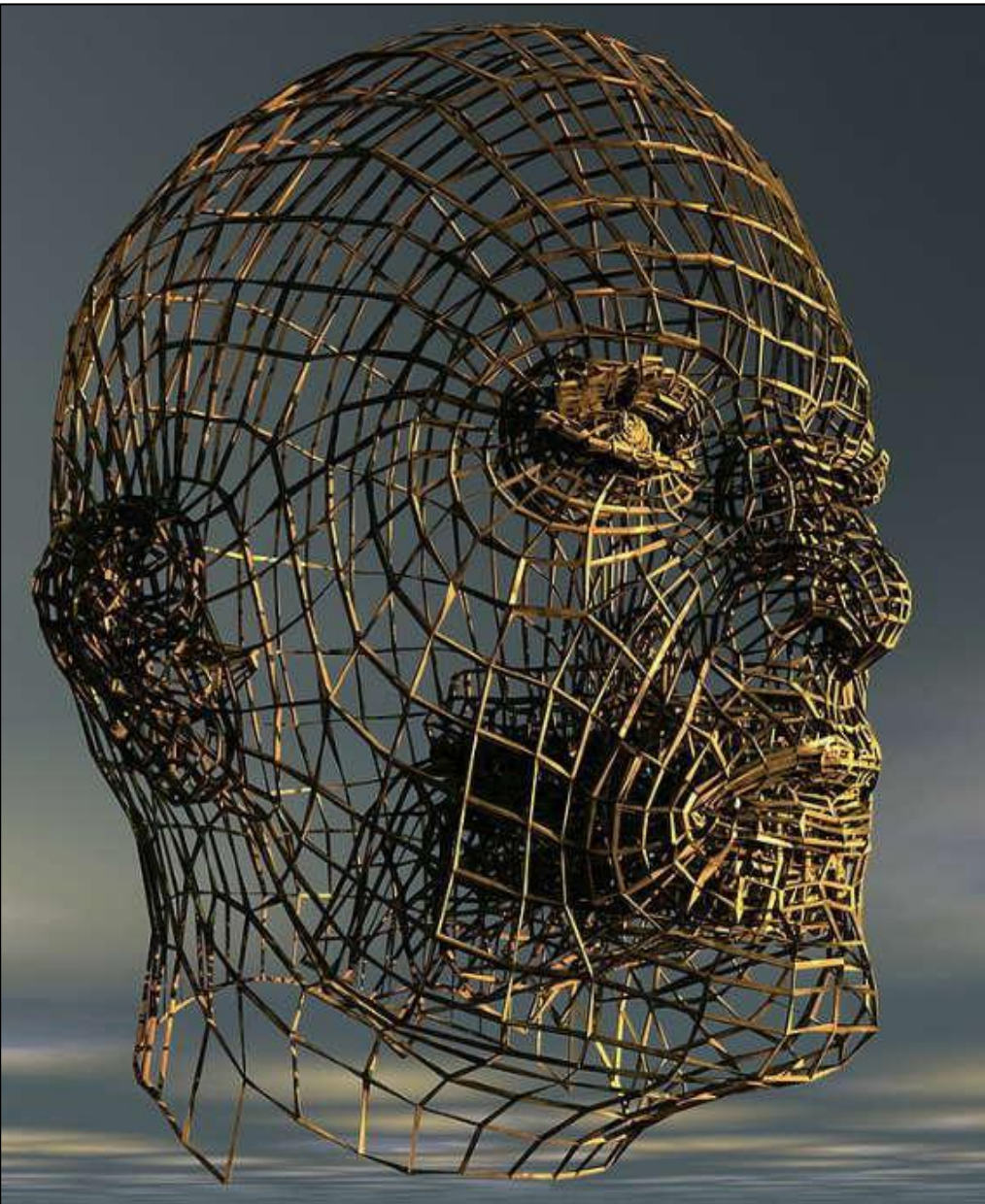
to have personally known people who have suffered various mental illnesses including schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, depression and more. I say fortunate, because it's given me more of an understanding of the problems and issues with which mentally ill people struggle, and also because I came to value them as individuals, and to admire them for their resolve in living as normally as possible while struggling with their illness.

As someone who has suffered depression and panic attacks, I personally know that mental illness can have a profound and life-changing impact upon us.

It is really only up until recently in our society, that mental illness has been more openly discussed, and we are becoming more accepting and compassionate towards those with mental illness. Rather than just locking them up and treating them as 'unfixable' or as inferior human beings, we are at last finding some medical treatments and psychotherapy to help them as best as possible.

Within the church though, it is an area that has been slow to change. In some churches there is still the belief that Christians simply do not suffer mental illness, unless they're committing sin or lacking in faith and are being punished for their actions, or possibly even as a result of a curse.

Other churches run with the concept that the person needs to be freed from demonic possession.



Some still treat the afflicted as if they are carrying an infectious disease, or arrogantly look down their noses at the poor unfortunate, offering them indifference or condescension instead of solace and compassion.

Those then that suffer from mental illness while they are Christians, are usually forced to hide their condition in shame and embarrassment, as if they are disgusting failures. As a consequence, many Christians who struggle with this, do not seek out help from within their own churches or they feel that they can't discuss their situation with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Many struggle on alone, for fear of being judged and shunned.

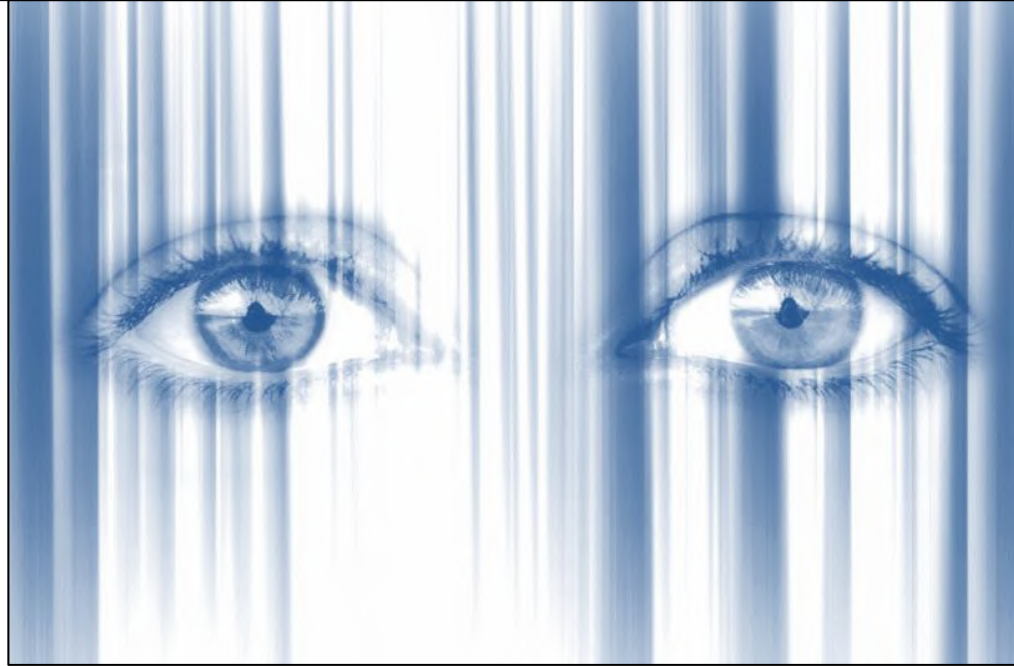
Thankfully this is changing, and more churches are recognising that Christians can suffer a mental illness and it's not because they're sinning, possessed or cursed. More are offering support and help.

What Causes Mental Illness?

In most cases, the causes of mental illness are still unknown. Research suggests that they are caused by physical, biological and environmental factors or a combination of these.

The illness can come about from a disruption in the unborn infant's brain development or caused by injury at birth. Sometimes neurological pathways in the brain function incorrectly. It can develop through a physical injury to the brain as a result of an accident or it may be caused by chemical imbalances.

It may result from a brain infection, exposure to toxins or



lack of good nutrition, particularly in one's developmental years.

Some families are born with genetic abnormalities that make them more susceptible to mental illness which may be triggered by trauma, abuse or other factors.

Other mental illnesses can be brought on by the use of drugs such as marijuana or long-term alcohol and drug abuse.

How Should We Treat Mental Illness?

A combination of medication and psychotherapy can assist, though the person may still continue to struggle with the illnesses effects throughout their life, particularly its impacts on their personal and social functioning.

While these therapies assist in many cases, not every person is able to find a successful treatment and some people will need to remain in the care of their families or in institutions for the remainder of their life.

There are many families who struggle daily with caring for a loved one with a mental illness. (See our other article - "Good

Grief: Mental Illness" in this issue on page 34.)

Can Christians Have a Mental Illness?

Yes, many Christians do have a mental illness, although few make it known.

As a result of misinformation and lack of compassion within some churches, Christians with a mental illness come to believe that they're lacking in faith if they're not healed, and may be actively discouraged from seeking medical and psycho-therapeutic help. Others unsuccessfully try to have the demon removed, or they may simply suffer through it because they've been lead to believe that because of their sins, they're being judged and punished by God. Many suffer in silence because they don't want to be judged and shunned by their fellow Christians.

All illnesses in the believer, whether mental or physical, are not the result of our sin or because we are cursed. By Christ's death on the cross and resurrection, our former, present and future sins are forgiven. We don't have to *prove*

ourselves worthy of forgiveness - we already are forgiven by our faith in Jesus and God's promise for the forgiveness of our sins.

Why would our loving heavenly Father on the one hand promise forgiveness of sins, and with the other punish us for them through mental or physical illness?

Thankfully there are churches which offer compassion and understanding to Christian sufferers, and hopefully more churches will learn to accept that those with a mental illness should be allowed to seek appropriate medical treatment without fear of condemnation.

Just as we treat people with physical illnesses with proper medication and treatments, why shouldn't we also treat people with mental illnesses with compassion and allow them to seek the medical and psychological treatments available to them?

Would we deny medical help to a person with diabetes or heart disease? Why then should we deny treatment to those with a mental illness?

Perhaps the reason we don't treat those with a mental illness the same way we treat people with physical illnesses comes from our long history of superstition and fear in connection with mental illness, and because we don't understand its cause or know how to treat it properly. Perhaps even, we shun sufferers out of a sense of superiority and pride.

Conclusion

While mental illness may be a sign of demonic possession, once a person becomes a Christian there is no way that a demon would be



allowed to remain inside someone who is occupied by God through His Holy Spirit. God abhors evil, and so He would not allow evil to reside alongside Him in a believer's heart.

We cannot make the assumption either that mental illness is caused by demonic possession in every non-believer, although it's possible in some cases.

Aside from demonic possession, we've discussed that mental illness can spring from various physical, biological and environmental causes, or a combination of these.

Modern medication and psycho-therapy can be a tremendous assistance to those with a mental illness, although not everyone can be helped. Hopefully as our medical knowledge increases, we will be able to improve our treatments.

As Christians, we need to be mindful that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering

from a mental illness. Statistics suggest that as many as 45% of the Australian population will suffer a mental health condition in their lifetime. In any one year, around one million adults have depression, and more than two million suffer anxiety. Depression is claimed to be the leading cause of disability worldwide¹.

We should ask God to help us to become more compassionate towards those who are afflicted, rather than add to their already heavy burden by our own intolerance, fear or indifference. If we are judgemental, perhaps the mental illness is actually our own by way of our own intolerance.

[END]

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Good Grief: Dementia and Mental Illness



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

If you're thinking about skipping over this article, consider that in your life there's a high possibility that you will experience a mental illness yourself, or have friends or family members who will go through it.

We had a series on grief in several issues of SPAG Magazine as it's something that is rarely discussed, and the more we understand, the more we will be better able to cope with it when it strikes or to provide comfort to someone that is grieving.

This is only a brief article covering the basics of emotional responses we may feel when we receive a diagnosis of dementia or mental illness, or when it affects someone we know. I would encourage anyone going through this experience to seek guidance and counselling as soon as possible.

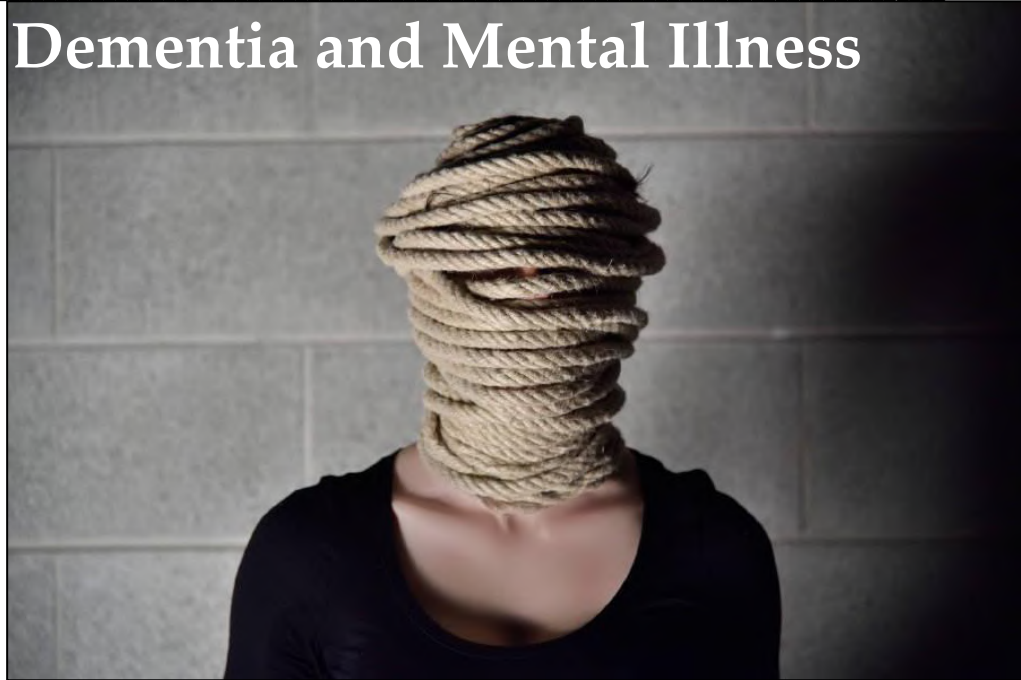
There are also many wonderful websites that discuss common reactions and emotional responses while coping with dementia and mental illness that may be a great source of help.

Introduction

When it comes to dementia and other mental illnesses, anyone who either experiences these personally or knows someone with these conditions, will go through two troubling feelings beginning with G:

grief and guilt.

Often we equate grief with death, so it may seem odd that we



can face grief while the sufferer is still alive. Families, spouses and friends of someone who suffers a mental illness may grieve for several reasons and experience feelings of guilt. For someone who personally experiences a mental illness, they are also likely to grieve and feel guilt.

This is called 'ambiguous grief,' which is the grief we feel while the person is still alive.

It's difficult for those of us who have never experienced dementia or a mental illness to really understand the emotional turmoil that can result.

When a Loved One Suffers Dementia or Mental Illness (a) Grief

Dementia or mental illness can affect the sufferer to the extent that while they often still look like the person we care about, their personality and their actions can be very different to how they used to be when they were well.

The sufferer may treat us differently, forget who we are, act aggressively, lose the ability to function normally including eating and toileting, or be unable

to focus on the people and things around them, and so on.

If it's a spouse, a close friend or family member, we may experience grief because we feel that we've lost the person we love, and we miss them. With dementia we have to come to terms with the fact that they will never get better, even though they may still have moments of lucidity.

If it's someone with a mental illness, while in many cases medication may be able to bring them back closer to normality, in other instances there may be very little that the medical profession can do.

If a young person is suffering, we may grieve for the life they'll never live and worry about their future, particularly if they're relying on us for support.

Our relationship with the sufferer changes, particularly if they're a spouse, because the dynamics of our relationship have altered, and so we grieve for the loss of the love and bond we had before.

We may feel isolated and lonely when we lose a close

relationship, especially when others don't understand what we are experiencing. They may be confused why we're grieving when the person is still alive.

There are times when we'll feel angry because it's all so terribly unfair or when the burdens of being a carer overwhelm us.

(b) Guilt

When we care about someone with dementia or a mental illness, we may feel guilt that we should have gotten them medical care earlier, or wondered why it took us so long to recognise what was happening. We'll feel guilt and worry that the illness was perhaps caused by us, or that we should have handled things differently.

If we get frustrated or angry with them, we may feel guilt that we've allowed ourselves to feel such strong emotions when they have no control over what is happening, especially if we lashed out in frustration, anger, confusion or loss.

If we have to put them into care, we'll suffer terrible guilt that we were unable to cope or that

others will think we're just lazy or hopeless. While they're in care, we'll feel guilty and worry that they won't get the proper treatment that they deserve.

We may feel guilt if we have to have a break from being their carer or when we feel resentful of the pressure and burdens placed upon us.

These responses are perfectly normal, so we shouldn't beat ourselves up about them.

Personally Suffering Dementia or Mental Illness

(a) Grief

When we suffer with dementia or mental illness, grief is a common reaction. We grieve for what we have lost: perhaps it was the capacity to marry and have children, to have a normal job, to live like everyone else, to pursue dreams we may have had, or to remain in a loving marriage.

We may experience anger and frustration with our limitations. We'll grieve if our condition causes us to lose the capacity to care for ourselves or when we forget things, or when we realise

that we've treated people around us poorly. We'll grieve if the diagnosis is that our condition will worsen, because we know that who we are, may disappear as the mental illness progresses.

(b) Guilt

There are times when we'll feel guilt that we've become a burden to others, or when we recognise that we've behaved poorly. We may experience guilt because we're unable to control what is happening to us or perhaps that we brought it on ourselves by our lifestyle choices, e.g. drugs and alcohol.

We may feel guilt for not being a better person to others before the illness, particularly our spouse or children, and wish that we had the chance to do things differently. We may worry about how our behaviour will deteriorate and if we'll hurt our loved ones, or if we'll embarrass ourselves or those we care about.

Things to Remember

(a) When a Loved One Suffers Dementia or Mental Illness

When someone we care about changes due to a mental illness, it may help to remember who they were and how our relationship used to be. We can write down precious memories or even make a special book with photos to remind us of our love, and share the book with our loved one.

When we begin to feel lonely or isolated, or experience anger, depression or unhealthy or overwhelming emotions, it's important that we seek help such as counselling. Mental health professionals can assist us through the pain, to enable us to see things more clearly, to recognise that we aren't alone and to understand





that our responses are perfectly normal.

There may be a local group that we can attend with others who are going through a similar experience, where we can share our struggles.

Everyone in these situations will experience feelings of grief and guilt, anger and frustration, and myriad feelings that will take us on an almost terrifying emotional roller-coaster ride. With time, we will come to terms with the situation, and while we may still experience these emotions, we must recognise that we aren't responsible for what is happening to our loved one. As long as we continue to love them, and do what we can for them, that is enough.

(b)When Personally Suffering Dementia or Mental Illness

Sharing good memories with those we care about can help us reconnect with them. Keeping a photo album or book can be helpful when we're feeling stressed, lonely, or grieving, as it can help us to remember good times and special moments and those we care about.

There may be a local group that we can attend with others who are

going through a similar experience where we can share our struggles.

Conclusion

Everyone in these situations will experience feelings of grief and guilt, anger and frustration, etc. Hopefully with time, we will come to terms with the situation although we are unlikely to ever 'get over it.' Grief usually stays with us, although it can alter as the years pass. We usually never stop hurting, or thinking about how things have changed, or how we miss someone, or how things used to be, but there may come a point when we can accept the grief as part of our life.

Our relationship with God and with others will go through changes as we process our emotional turmoil and related experiences. There may be times when we'll feel angry with God, or wonder how we can ever trust Him again, and we may even be tempted to just walk away. We may find moments when it's easy to talk with God, and yet on other occasions, we may feel so upset with Him that it's too difficult to open up.

If it helps, we should try to remember that our feelings of guilt and grief, anger, frustration, uncertainty and even fear are perfectly normal, although every situation is unique. As long as we're doing the best we can, following the doctor's advice, seeking counselling and finding support, particularly Christian friendship and guidance, we must remind ourselves that we're doing what we can.

While guilt is rarely a helpful emotion at this time, grief is the

only way we can cope with severe loss. Whatever emotions we feel, even if it's related to unbelief, or anger with God, it will never dent or alter God's unchanging love and compassion for us. We are reminded of this in Hebrews 13:8:

"Jesus the Anointed One is always the same: yesterday, today, and forever." [VOICE]

I like Billy Graham's quote which at difficult times in my life has reminded me of God's immutability and that I can always trust Him:

"Almighty God, to know You are unchanging gives me peace in a frighteningly changing world."

[END]

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Believers Who Suffered Depression



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

"A pearl is a beautiful thing that is produced by an injured life. It is the tear [that results] from the injury of the oyster. The treasure of our being in this world is also produced by an injured life. If we had not been wounded, if we had not been injured, then we will not produce the pearl."

Stephan Hoeller

Introduction

As discussed previously, some Christians and churches claim that depression comes from demonic possession, or from sin, perhaps a curse, or because God is punishing us for a wrong-doing. While on some occasions it may be the result of an ongoing sin, for most believers though, depression doesn't usually arise from these things.

We've looked at possible physical causes of depression as well as circumstances which may cause it. It can be the result of drug and alcohol abuse, physical injury or as part of an illness, or even as a side effect of certain medications.

Seeking help for depression is not sinful, nor is taking anti-depressants. Getting over depression isn't about "having more faith," or "looking on the bright side," or "just getting over it." There is no pithy quote, Bible verse or inspirational saying that will snap us out of it. In fact, there are quite a number of Bible verses that speak about depression, and share about Biblical people who struggled with it.

Depression is not a new thing – it's been around almost since day one!

A good-sized proportion of the population will experience depression at some time in their life, and therefore it's likely that many Christians will also go through it.

Being a Christian doesn't automatically make us immune to physical illness, so nor should we expect it to make us immune to mental illness. Would we say that someone with dementia brought it upon themselves because of sin, or due to their lack of faith, as a consequence of a curse or being demon depressed? Of course not. We know that it is the result of an illness which slowly causes physical damage to the brain which affects their responses, memories and actions. So why should we consider those as a possible reason behind depression?

Depression does not mean that a person is lacking in faith or is immature in their Christian walk. Do you need reassurance on that? Then hopefully this article will provide enough evidence to demonstrate that some of the strongest, most faithful believers have suffered depression – and God still loved them and used them in His divine plan.



Depression

In this article we'll be sharing a little about the lives of inspirational believers from the Bible, who suffered depression, believers from history and also those in more recent times. This is by no means a comprehensive list, and I encourage you to find out more.

If you've ever suffered depression, it may ease your burden to know that profound Christian thinkers, passionate champions of the persecuted and down-trodden, God-inspired prophets, and those who reached great pinnacles of wisdom

and strength in their Christian walk, have also shared the trials and torments of depression.

If those with such resounding faith, profound knowledge and deep compassion can experience the same depths of sorrow, anguish, and moments of doubt;

**"Character
cannot be
developed in
ease and quiet.
Only through
experience of
trial and
suffering can the
soul be
strengthened,
ambition
inspired, and
success
achieved."**

Helen Keller

times when God seemed silent to their urgent, tortured pleas for help or for answers; then we, the more common, ordinary Christians are not alone – we aren't wrong or broken or in need of deliverance. For some of us, it is part of the demanding journey of what it means to be a Christian.

It's almost freeing to know that these exceptional Christians share such a bond with us. Perhaps it is those who have never known depression and those dark, tormented nights of the soul, who miss out on this distinctive experience. Perhaps we who have known depression, are the chosen ones who God deems worthy of undergoing such an ordeal. Perhaps our journey will be all the better for it.

As bizarre and unreasonable as it sounds, perhaps there'll come a day when we'll be able to look back and say "Thank you Lord."

Whatever the circumstances, depression is very real, and can have a profound and long-lasting impact on us. Those who have never suffered depression usually can't understand the terrible pain and suffering it causes.

Biblical Believers Who Suffered Depression

(a) Adam and Eve

While there is no Biblical evidence to confirm it, I believe it's very likely that both Adam and Eve suffered depression after they sinned and were cast out of the garden of Eden.

Having previously been so intimate with God, it must have been devastating for them to lose that close and loving relationship with our Creator and Heavenly Father. No longer did they know that kindred closeness of spirit,

soul and purpose. Adam and Eve knew without a doubt that they were no longer Holy - that purity of their holy relationship with God had ceased to exist.

I've heard hell described as the absolute and complete awareness of our aloneness and separation from God. Perhaps in a way, it was similar to how Adam and Eve felt.

Their daily lives of toil to grow food, and build shelter to survive, along with the struggles of bringing up the first family, with no-one else there to support them or give them guidance and wisdom, would have been a constant reminder of the repercussions of their sin, and their unending loss.

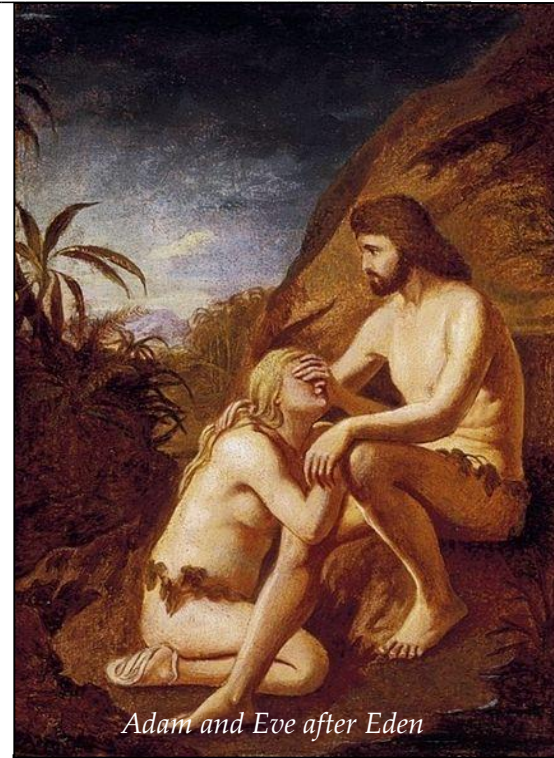
The consequences of their sin were later brought home to them, when their own son Cain killed his brother Abel.

(b) King David

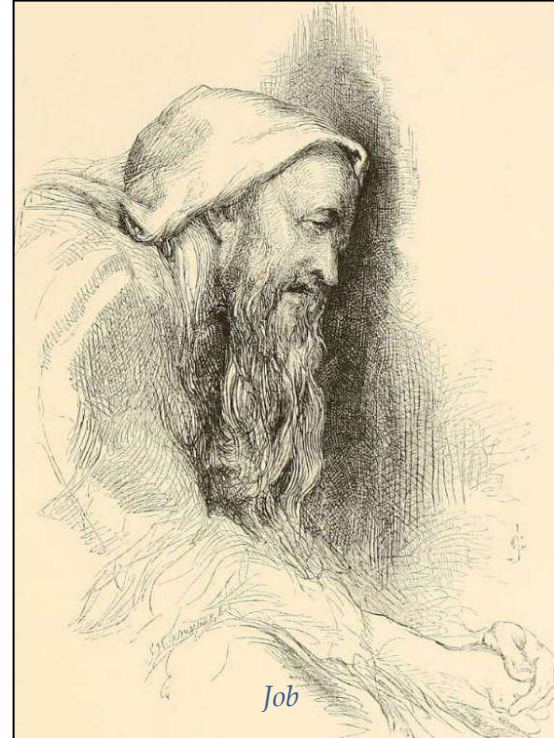
There are more than three dozen examples of David's experiences with depression which he shared in the Psalms. In Psalm 6:2-7 we read words that sound similar to what we might say when experiencing deep depression. Along with the anguish, his words seem to be touched with frustration and even anger towards God:

"Show me grace, Eternal God. I am completely undone. Bring me back together, Eternal One. Mend my shattered bones. My soul is drowning in darkness. How long can You, the Eternal, let things go on like this?"

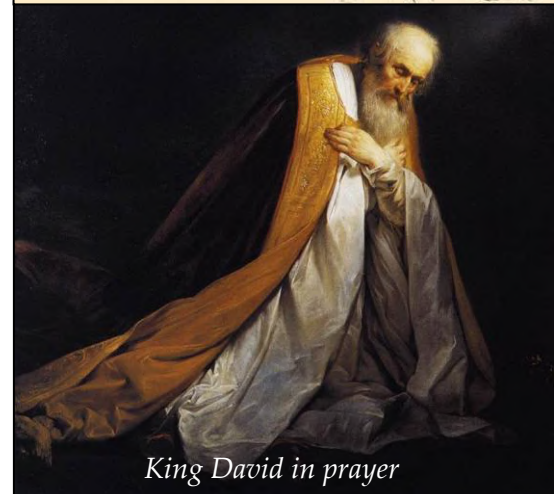
Come back, Eternal One, and lead me to Your saving light. Rescue me because I know You are truly com-



Adam and Eve after Eden



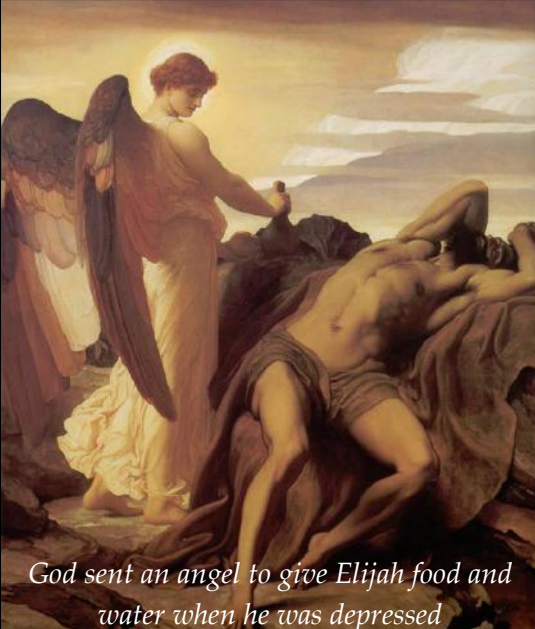
Job



King David in prayer



Jeremiah in the ruins of Jerusalem



God sent an angel to give Elijah food and water when he was depressed



Jesus Christ and the crown of thorns

passionate.

I'm alive for a reason - I can't worship You if I'm dead. If I'm six feet under, how can I thank You?

I'm exhausted. I cannot even speak, my voice fading as sighs. Every day ends in the same place - lying in bed, covered in tears, my pillow wet with sorrow. My eyes burn, devoured with grief; they grow weak as I constantly watch for my enemies." [VOICE]

(c) Job

We can more clearly understand why Job would have suffered depression, after he lost all he had including his children and his wealth. While he must have grieved for his children, he was able to accept that loss was part of life - he'd come into the world with nothing, and would leave the world with nothing.

When Satan was allowed to afflict Job further with a terrible illness that not only caused him awful physical pain, he also lost the affections and closeness of his wife, the comforts of his home, contact with friends and loved ones in his community, and was cast out of his home town because of his disease.

Here was a different sort of trauma to the losses he'd suffered earlier. This next step meant that he'd lost everything else including his dignity, his health, and his position within society - he was even mocked by low-life people because people perceived that he'd fallen far from God's grace.

Additionally, Job was constantly in pain which would have affected every physical movement and would likely have plagued his sleep. Lack of sleep and relentless

pain alone can cause depression, but the added losses and indignities would have piled up upon his already low spirits.

He'd lived a good life and had tried to be obedient to God. When he was suffering so terribly, he questioned God, demanding a response from Him about what he'd done to deserve such harsh treatment. Doesn't that sound a lot like what most of us would probably do in Job's situation?

We can almost hear the anger and perhaps even a little touch of rebuke in his voice in Job 6:8-10:

"If only my one request were answered, if only God would grant me the fulfilment of my only hope: That God would be willing to crush me, to kill me, that God would release His hand and cut me off.

At least then I would have a crumb of consolation, one source of joy in the midst of this relentless agony: I never denied the words of the Holy One in my pain." [VOICE]

We can hardly blame or judge Job for feeling angry with God. In fact, that kind of a reaction has been around since the time of Cain and Abel, when Cain became angry after God asked where his brother was.

We can still love God and feel angry and upset with Him. In fact, it really isn't a surprising response when we're obedient and go through difficulties and pain and don't understand why we're being put through such suffering.

Eventually God healed Job and restored his blessings including more children and wealth, and a long, healthy life.

For most of us though, restoration of good health, the

return of our wealth, or a child or a partner to replace one we've lost, don't usually happen, and our pain and suffering may remain with us.

(d) Elijah

Elijah was one of several people in the Bible who suffered depression. Here was a man that saw some incredible miracles including ravens sent by God to feed him when he was hungry; provision of food for himself, a widow and her son during a famine; and then Elijah raised the woman's son from the dead after he passed away.

On another occasion he called upon God to send fire down from heaven to burn up his sacrifice, to show His power to Baal's prophets and to the Israelite people. The Israelites saw God's power and were filled with fear, awe and wonder.

In the same chapter we read that he was able to supernaturally run faster than Ahab who'd left earlier in his chariot!

Despite all of those amazing miracles, he knew and trusted God, and yet Elijah sunk into a terrible depression, even seeking to die.

In 1 Kings 19:4 we read:

"He journeyed into the desert for one day and then decided to rest beneath the limbs of a broom tree. There he prayed that his life would be over quickly and that he would die there beneath the tree."

Elijah: *I'm finished, Eternal One. Please end my life here and now, even though I have failed, and I am no better than my ancestors."* [VOICE]

After he overcame his depression, Elijah continued in his

work for God, and took on Elisha as his apprentice. Later, as his time on earth drew to a close we read in 2 Kings 2:11b:

"A blazing chariot pulled by blazing horses stormed down from the heavens and came between Elijah and Elisha. Then Elijah was swept up into heaven by the fiery storm."

[VOICE]

God favoured Elijah so highly, that he took him straight up to heaven! Surely then we must consider that depression is no hindrance to drawing close to God, or for God to accept each of us completely, or for us to be able to do His work.

(e) Other Bible People

You may like to read about other Bible people who suffered depression, such as: Jeremiah; Hannah; Jonah; and Jesus - yes, Jesus.

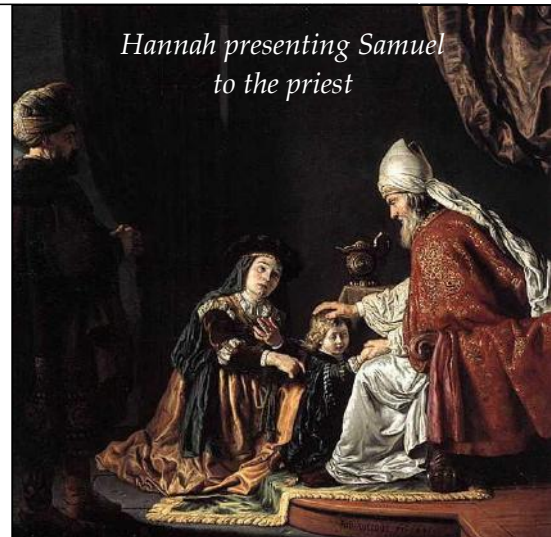
The night before His crucifixion, Jesus spent time in prayer, His spirit in distress. While not necessarily depression, He was in extreme anguish so great, that he sweated drops of blood.

Christians in History Who Suffered Depression

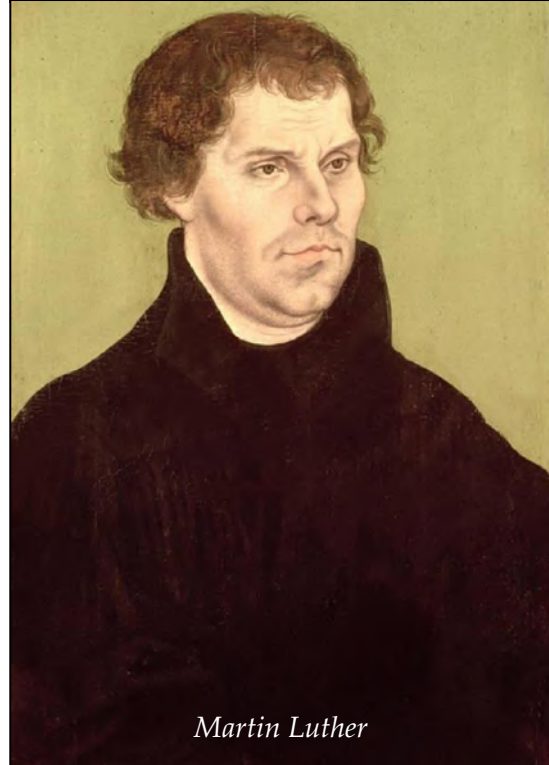
(a) C.S. Lewis

Most of us know Lewis' work from his beloved Narnia series. Lewis, was a great Christian thinker, and educated and very intelligent man who also wrote books on theology, and yet for such an intellectual who understood God so well, he suffered depression.

After his wife died of cancer, just three years after they married, he wrote of his experience, when he desired an answer or some kind of sign from God.



Hannah presenting Samuel to the priest



Martin Luther



Sir Isaac Newton

In his book, "A Grief Observed" he wrote:

"...But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become."

Lewis struggled to connect with God during his difficult days, to focus his heart and mind on God, just as many of us do. In the same book, he said of his suffering:

"God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realise the fact was to knock it down."

When it seemed to him that God wasn't responding:

"'Knock and it shall be opened.' But does knocking mean hammering and kicking the door like a maniac?"

(b) Mother Teresa

The compassionate and caring nun, Mother Teresa is often presented to the world as an iconic image of supreme Christian service, of one who was content in her work, faithful in her service and unwavering in her devotion to God.

There was the Mother Teresa though, that few of us know, who suffered depression and struggled

to find God, especially during periods of dark despair, but her soul hungered for Him even when she didn't sense His presence.

In her book "Come Be My Light," (edited by Brian Kolodiejchuk, MC) she said:

"I want to smile even at Jesus and so hide if possible the pain and the darkness of my soul even from Him."

And later she wrote:

"With regard to the feeling of loneliness, of abandonment, of not being wanted, of darkness of the soul, it is a state well known by spiritual writers and directors of conscience.

This is willed by God in order to attach us to Him alone, an antidote to our external activities, and also, like temptation, a way of keeping us humble in the midst of applauses, publicity, praises, appreciation, etc. and success."

(c) Other Christians in History Who Suffered Depression

Other well-known Christians who suffered depression included: Charles Dickens; Martin Luther; John Calvin; John Wesley; Handel; Emily Dickinson; Sir Isaac Newton; Charles Spurgeon; Pope Francis; Florence Nightingale; and many more.

Well-known Christians of Modern Times Who Suffered Depression

(a) Barbara Bush

The former first lady of the USA suffered terrible depression in the 1970s.

According to a New York Times article, she shared that she sometimes had to stop her car on shoulders of the highway because



Charles Spurgeon



Mother Teresa

Author: Túrelío (Wikipedia) dated 13 July 1986, under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Germany Licence. No change was made to the photograph. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MotherTeresa_090.jpg

she feared that:

“...she might deliberately crash the vehicle into a tree or an oncoming auto.”

(b) Joyce Meyer

Joyce was abused as a child which impacted on her emotional and mental development enormously, and led to her depression. In her article “Is it Really Possible to Beat Depression?” she said:

“I know what it’s like to be depressed. For many years I was unstable emotionally because of abuse that I experienced during most of my childhood.

It caused me to be negative, critical, and easily discouraged. I used to believe that it was better not to expect anything good to happen to me because if nothing good happened, I wouldn’t be disappointed. But I was still miserable and had no peace.”

Joyce believes that we can allow depression to take hold of us, and that there are ways to stop it. She said:

“Depression begins with disappointment. When disappointment festers in our soul, it leads to discouragement.”

(c) Other Well-known Christians of Modern Times Who Have Suffered Depression

Jim Caviezel, the actor who played Jesus Christ in Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of Christ” has suffered depression.

Others in this group include: John James (Newsboys); Sheila Walsh (singer and talk-show host); Tina Campbell (Mary Mary); Richard Smallwood (gospel music artist); Buzz Aldrin (astronaut); Lecrae (hip hop artist, record

producer and actor); Kevin Sorbo (actor); Mel Gibson (actor, director and producer); and Ashley Judd (actor).

Conclusion

For each of us who suffer depression or other mental illness, our journey and our experiences may be different, but we are bonded together in a unified Christian experience.

We aren’t alone in our suffering. The similarities of our anguish, the deep depths of our depressions, the struggles of our condition, the unanswered, perplexing questions and even at times, a resounding silence from God show us by their similarity to the experiences of others, that God has found a way to stretch us and shape us, even sometimes agonisingly, but always purposefully into something more than what we were before.

We may not see that we’ve changed for the better, or understand that the suffering that we bore began a transformation within us.

While in the midst of our struggles, sometimes we feel torn, broken, battered and weak with trembling, God isn’t unaware of the battle we are waging, even though at times He may be silent, nevertheless He is still there, waiting for the right moment.

These troubling experiences and depression are another part of our journey. Perhaps we undergo this pain and suffering because there was something deep in us which God needed to change or to remove from us, which required such a forceful and intense experience.

When we take those final steps at the end of our human journey

and find ourselves standing before God, instead of asking Him “Why?” our minds, hearts and soul will grasp it at last why it was necessary for us to suffer, and we will say, “I understand.” [END]

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Why Do I Have Trouble Making Friends?



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

This is a complex issue and the answer depends on a number of factors:

1. You may be shy;
2. You may lack confidence;
3. You may lack social skills; or
4. All of the above

Just because you're shy or lack confidence or social skills right now, doesn't mean that you're stuck that way forever, but it does mean you need to face up to a hard truth and make a choice about it because, simply put:

YOU need to change

and the world is not going to change to accommodate you. That's a tough truth you need to come to terms with.

Being willing to admit we need to change, can be difficult for many of us and some people throw themselves into work, volunteering or hiding out and keep ourselves so busy that we fool ourselves into believing that we simply don't have the time to make friends. Alternately if we do pluck up the courage to attend social functions, we may leave early or hide if we can, e.g. if we're at a party we may spend most of their time in the kitchen or go where we're likely to connect with as few people as possible, e.g. on the patio.

I don't wish to make light of the situation, because I know from

personal experience, that for some people, social anxiety can be quite crippling and can affect our need to socialise. Note there that I used the word 'need' rather than 'want' to socialise. We were created to **need** connection with others and is essential to our well-being.

As a young adult, I would become physically ill for hours before going out on a date, then I'd spend most of the evening desperately wishing that I didn't feel so uncomfortable and feeling like a complete idiot.

For days afterwards I would relentlessly pick fault with every little thing I did or said that I thought was wrong.

After several unsuccessful dates, at least 'unsuccessful' in my own mind, I began to unconsciously sabotage any potential relationships. As soon as it looked like a boy wanted to get closer to me, I'd unconsciously convince myself that things wouldn't work out, and I'd simply turn my attention to another young man and begin the cycle again.

As a result, my early relationships were extremely superficial and as a result, my emotional and social development faltered while my anxiety remained.

Those of us who suffer this anxiety know how easy it is to find fault with our own actions when in social situations. We often become quite adept at critiquing our performance harshly afterwards and to see poor quality interactions when in reality, often there were none or very few. We trust the hypercritical voice in our head that tells us we're worthless and that our failings actually proved it.

We assume that people are being critical of our words and actions, which usually isn't true. The majority of people we meet, have no interest in judging us and are genuinely interested in what we have to say. Sure there are going to be people with whom we come in contact that aren't particularly nice, but **most** people are not.

I wish someone told me when I was young that the **voice** in my head was the idiot and not me! I wish someone told me that I had the right turn the inner critique's volume down so that I didn't have to listen to it or believe it anymore and that I could tell it to 'Get lost!'

Overcoming Fear and Shyness

There are several things that we can like to try, to help overcome our social difficulties:

1. Practice Deep Breathing:

Therapists suggest that daily practicing deep breathing can help us in social situations, because when anxiety threatens to overwhelm us, we can automatically go into your deep breathing technique without



anyone else being aware of it, and it will still allow us to focus on the ongoing conversation as we regain control of your stress levels.

2. Set Some Achievable Goals Before We Attend an Outing:

- Remind ourselves that we have no control over sweating, blushing and feeling anxious, but instead we can focus on goals for the event which we can control, e.g. set a goal to greet three strangers at a party; or at work, put forward an idea or make a specific comment at a work-place meeting; or say 'no' when someone asks us to help out, particularly if we're already very busy.

We can try to avoid thinking about other people's responses to our actions, because we have no control over how people will react. It's true! To be able to go forward in this area, we have to recognise that we don't owe anything to anyone who thinks negatively about us. Instead afterwards, we should congratulate ourselves that we were brave enough to interact.

- Read a self-help book and/or see a therapist;

Take advice from the self-help book or therapist and make our mind up to follow the advice, no matter how scary or even silly it may seem. Perhaps we could join an online website that offers help, or enables other anxious people to interact.

If we feel unsure about what book to read or which website to go to, then consider seeing a therapist in person. They can often put things in perspective and give helpful suggestions.

3. Self-Talk in a Positive, Realistic Way

As mentioned earlier, our own inner voice can often be ridiculously critical, so it's important that we counteract it with positive and realistic inner-dialogue.

An example of this could be when having to speak in public. Our hyper-critical voice may try and sabotage us by saying something like how terrible we'll be.

Instead of listening to it, we should ensure we're well prepared, then remind ourselves that when we spoke in public in the past - we survived it, and since this time we're well prepared, we'll just aim to do our best.

In social settings if you want to talk to someone or ask them out on a date, consider what is the worst possible outcome and prepare yourself for that. Remind yourself that they may even surprise you and say 'yes.' When you feel the anxiety rise, your heart pound and you begin to sweat, remind yourself, "Yes, I am feeling anxious, but it will eventually pass."

4. Create an Exposure Ladder

An exposure ladder is a list of social situations that make you feel very anxious or exposed. Write down a list of ten situations in order of difficulty and rate them out of 100 with zero being no stress at all and one hundred being the most extreme anxiety.

Challenge yourself to perform the least difficult of the tasks and work your way up the ladder to the most difficult. Set yourself a goal to complete the list in a set period of time, e.g. three months (no longer than six months) and reward yourself with something



special when the list has been completed.

5. Improving Social Interactions

You may have heard of the phrases 'an open-ended question,' or 'a closed question.' If you want to improve your communications skills with others, then one very helpful way is to train yourself to use open-ended questions.

- **open-ended question:**

is one which usually **can't** be answered with a simple yes or no but requires the other person to provide a more detailed response;

- **closed question:**

is one that requires only a simple response such as 'yes' or 'no.'

An example of an open ended question is, "What do you like most about your work?" An example of a closed question is, "Did you have a good day at work

today?"

If you would like to develop a friendship or a romantic relationship with someone and you know that you'll meet up with them at another function in the near future, try to find out a little about their workplace or their hobbies. Then before the next meeting, obtain some information related to their work or hobbies from your local library or look up details on the internet. That way you can be prepared with some open-ended questions before you go.

This will show the other person that you know a little about what matters to them, and may provide a platform upon which you share a common interest.

Being prepared will make it easier for you to communicate with them, and help you to feel more in control.

6. Coping with Nasty Comments

The fear of rejection and negative comments can often discourage us in our social interactions. If you do come across nasty people who make fun of you, you can use a wonderful 'power phrase' which I learned many years ago:

"Did you mean to make me feel [.....]"

If somebody makes fun of you, or is rude, you can respond with:

"Did you mean to make me feel [.....] when you said that?"

and add in the appropriate reaction or emotion that you felt, such as:

"Did you mean to make me feel embarrassed when you said that?"

It puts the other person in their place without you having to resort to being nasty or negative in



response and makes you look like the bigger person in the situation.

If they reply with “No,” then it will appear to be almost an admission of their guilt or childishness. Sometimes it will force the other person to apologise or at the very least, encourage them to back off.

On rare occasions you may come across a moron who may say, ‘yes’ to your power phrase, which will just make them look like a bit of a goose in front of everyone. Ignore them or move away.

On even rarer occasions, you may interact with some who continues their nastiness, in which case, respond calmly with:

“Since you’re choosing to act this way, I’m choosing to walk away from you.”

Then physically remove yourself from that situation and join another group. Try to ignore them after that.

In extremely rare cases, you may stumble across an obnoxious twit who insists on following you and trying to belittle you even after you responded appropriately. Remind yourself that if you react to them, you are giving them all of the power in the silly little game they are playing. Don’t play their dumb game. They’ve played it long enough to be good

at it. Say nothing more. Just walk away and join another group.

In these extreme situations, it’s best not to react to them. Bullies don’t know what to do when people don’t behave like they are supposed to.

Remember, you have nothing to prove to that bully. Their behaviour is a clear indication that they’re a contemptible human being and unworthy of your time or emotions. Remind yourself that there are people who will value your friendship, so focus your efforts on those people, and don’t allow the bullies or the idiots to ruin your day or your belief in yourself.

Conclusion

It’s amazing how God can grow us and stretch us.

From my early beginnings of feeling extremely socially awkward and lacking in confidence, I grew to a point where I took on a number of leadership roles including becoming a volunteer radio presenter on Christian radio for around eleven years. That’s almost 3,000 hours talking to people on the air! I can honestly say that I’m amazed how much God grew me over the years.

I didn’t start out with the confidence to do those things, let alone naturally have those skills -

that was a result of God working slowly in me, because of my willingness to overcome my fears, and to grow personally and to develop the skills that I needed.

May I encourage you to pray about your development. Ask God to help you to become a stronger person. Tell Him about your fears and struggles; and scary though it may seem, be willing to change and grow. [END]



Organisation Promotion



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jerrycan of fuel for
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A Little Brown Bird



by Laurie
Parkinson

My story is a simple but surprising little tale. It had been just four days since the funeral service of my beloved wife Jeanette, and as you would understand, I was very raw with deep feelings of loss, loneliness, heartbreak and pain. After forty-seven amazing years, my Jeanette had been taken from me.

I was staying with relatives on their acreage in the Sunshine Coast hinterland (Australia) and had awoken quite early that morning before the others had arisen. The outdoors beckoned to me and I sat on the veranda, drinking in the natural beauty, lost in my thoughts and taking a little time to read the Bible and a beloved devotional book called, 'Streams in the Desert.'

About an hour had passed and I sat relaxed on the seat, with one leg crossed over the other, when suddenly, a small, wild brown bird darted in and alighted on my right shoe. It remained there for several minutes, chattering away to me. Placing my books on my lap, I carefully lifted up my empty hands and apologised to the bird. "No food," I told it.



Undeterred, it continued with its chattering as it looked up into my face. A few moments later, it flicked its wings and flew closer, landing on my knee, talking all the while. I let it sit for a minute before raising my empty hands again, telling the little fellow, "Still no food!" My hands were just thirty centimetres from him, but the little bird seemed completely unafraid.

I was aware that something quite extraordinary was happening, and I was astonished at the bird's audacity, and then suddenly, with a flurry of wings, he was gone.

My heart lifted with delight at the miraculous interlude and I was still marvelling about it twenty minutes later when he returned and landed atop of my toe. This time his visit was brief. He looked into my face, chirped a few times as if to say goodbye, and then he flew away.

By this time, my relatives had stirred and I went inside to share the remarkable incident with them. They said that none of the local birds were tame and that

they didn't feed them. In fact, they'd never experienced anything like it themselves in the more than twenty years they'd lived there.

I realised at that moment, that this special little visitor had been sent to me personally by God.

It reassured me of His ongoing comforting presence during that great trauma and in my deep sadness. This unexpected and amazing interlude reminded me of the reality of a loving God, and of the assurance of the resurrection that is at the heart of the Christian faith.

To this day the memory of that incident continues to give me such joy and comfort, especially the reminder that Jeanette's spirit is already there in God's loving care.

— [END]

Words of Wisdom

"Grief, I've learned is just love. It's all the love you want to give but cannot. All of that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

Jamie Anderson



Modern Day Slavery:

~ What Can We Do? ~



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

Let me start this article by making a statement that may shock you:

You've probably contributed to slavery without being aware of it.

It hardly seems possible doesn't it? Perhaps that idea has sparked a few horrified questions in your own mind. *How could that have happened? Where could it happen? How can I make sure it doesn't happen again?*

With so many manufacturers making their products in poorer countries nowadays, it is extremely difficult to know whether the items we buy in the stores in our own country or overseas, are produced using the labour of slaves, or are legitimately made.

A few years back, a renowned chocolate manufacturer was accused of using slave labour in the manufacture of their products. When it was brought to the public's attention, droves of buyers boycotted their products and some wrote to the company to question the accuracy of the

accusation. It seemed that only after it seriously affected the company's sales, was there finally a response from them. While they never admitted that they'd actually used slave labour, the company made an announcement that they were looking into the practices in their overseas plants to ensure that everything was above board.

The fact is, there are companies that we think are reputable who care more about their profit-margin than about the welfare of human beings. Outside of slavery, there have been countless instances of this kind of uncaring attitude in many countries around the world, which is reflected in some of the following ways:

- terrible and downright dangerous working conditions;
- poisoning of waterways and soil; and
- production of deadly chemicals and products that harm their workers and those that purchase their products

These are just the tip of the iceberg. This kind of mindset has been around since the dawn of time, so it shouldn't surprise us that people today who run companies without regard for safety, will of course be happy to use cheap slave labour.

Forms of Slavery

As mentioned, there are slaves who are used as workers in manufacturing companies, and there are many others used as cheap manual labour.

It is estimated that there are around 250,000 child soldiers across the world taken either by the forces of their own government or by rebels. Some are kidnapped, while at other times

villagers are forced to hand over a certain number of children, to protect their remaining family or village. Girls are often used as sex slaves of the older male soldiers.

One common form of slavery is the sex trade where young children right through to adults are imprisoned and used for sex.

Many are beaten, mis-treated, starved, and some are even forced into drug addiction

The conditions in which slaves live and the brutality and hopelessness they endure are unimaginable.

Where Can We Find Slavery?

The disturbing answer is that it's likely that we can find slavery in our own country - in even the most advanced, civilised of nations, though obviously hidden there. Even the most vigilant of authorities will struggle to eradicate slavery completely, though they must always strive to do so.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead



It is not a problem that should be left just to the authorities, but as a community and as individuals, we have a responsibility to ensure that other human beings are treated with decency and respect.

There are a number of countries where slavery is a major problem, and there are various anti-slavery organisations working across the world to free people.

We can't assume that because we live in a wealthier nation, that it doesn't exist here, as there will always be people willing to exploit someone else for their own gain. While sin exists, selfishness and the desire for power and money will override consideration of and compassion for others.

We Can Help

Can we really make a difference? The answer thankfully is, yes we certainly can. Following are some suggestions about what we can do to help.

- **Donations**

We can choose to contribute financially to a cause. While we may feel overwhelmed by so many worthwhile charities from which to choose, we can pray for guidance and narrow down the many thousands of charity choices to ones that are close to our heart.

We don't have to specifically choose a Christian organisation, as there are many worthwhile organisations, but there are some where the money isn't always wisely used, so prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit should help us to discern which are better options. Narrow those down to five or less and then choose one or two to which we might donate on a regular basis.

Katy's Story

by Jerram Watts
(Destiny Rescue Volunteer)

The children of Laos are forced to move away from their homes to find work. Some families sell some of them so they can eat for the next two weeks, while others are trafficked into the darkest places we can imagine, to be abused over and over again for financial gain and personal pleasure.

Poverty is so prevalent in Laos that it does not look out of the ordinary for a child to be working behind a bar, or selling merchandise on the street. These kids are doing what their culture has been telling them to do for years: do whatever it takes to provide for one's family. What these communities and most tourists don't realise, is that behind each child is someone pushing them to do so much more than we could even imagine.

These girls have little to no education which means they very few options to find work in a safe environment. Instead they are preyed upon by people who see them as dollar signs instead of the precious children that they are. Girls as young as nine years have experienced things that no human being should ever have to endure. My heart breaks every day as I meet with these girls.

Our rescue agent brought a 12-year-old girl named Katy* into our home. She had come from three months of forced sexual slavery which was happening behind the doors of a popular karaoke bar in Laos. Katy thought she'd found a good job serving food and drinks to customers, and was happy to be able to provide for her family.

After one night as a waitress, her boss told her to go to a room upstairs, take a shower, and wait for further instructions. She had no idea what was awaiting her. A strange man entered the room and forced himself onto her, Katy fought him, but was met with blows that left her beaten and weak. Her innocence was taken from her that night. After repeated abuse, she was left broken physically and mentally and that was just the beginning.

Katy is one of many such girls. When girls like Katy fight back, their punishment may be days locked up in dirty bathrooms or basements without food or water. Others have had to defend themselves against three or more abusers at one time. It's sickening. These same people who promised them a bright future and should be protecting them, instead betray them. And yet, these girls still have the guts to say 'yes' to the Destiny Rescue agents that come into their workplaces and offer them an escape. These girls are strong. They have resilience.

They're not just survivors - these girls are warriors!

There are over 180 girls in our care with more coming into our homes every week. They're healing, learning, and growing every day through counselling, life skills classes, vocational training, public school, and traineeship programs that will ensure each child is equipped to reintegrate safely back into their community in the future. Our house parents who live with the girls in each of our four houses pour their love and care into the lives of these children every day.

The husbands that work as house parents during the day double as our rescue agents through the night. These men work tirelessly to see each girl they meet in the darkness of sexual slavery to be brought into the light so they can become whole again. Our small but strong and passionate team love showing these children how to be kids again. Hearing the laughter and joyful screams of these children as they play is what drives us to do more.

We have the opportunity to give these girls the tools they need to rise up and be who they were created to be before wickedness tried to consume them. These girls won't be girls for long. They are quickly becoming the mighty women they were created to be.

The future of Laos is bright because a fire in the hearts of these girls is being ignited by the stand you and I make to say that the sexual slavery of children will not be tolerated. What we do right now will affect the hearts and minds of these children, and will create ripple effects that will spread throughout communities and cultures worldwide.

Destiny Rescue is making a tangible difference in the lives of thousands of children from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, India and the Philippines. Since 2011 we have rescued over 1400 children from sexual slavery. We need help to keep rescuing and restoring those kids.

May I encourage you to tell someone about what you've read here. Share this article with your friends and family and challenge them to do the same. Spread the story of the kids who took with them.



(*Name changed to protect child's identity. Note: this photo is not "Katy")

Most Christians find their finances stretched by a multitude of pressures to contribute money to many worthwhile causes.

I was encouraged by a group of everyday Christian mothers who found themselves in just those circumstances and wanted to help a group of young girls. Although they were already financially stretched, they chose to pool their smaller contributions and put that towards helping to free girls that are used as sex slaves in Nepal. These little girls of the Badi 'caste' of Nepal are designated from birth as sex slaves.

(www.facebook.com/SettingTheBadiGirlsFree/)

- *Fundraise and Raise Awareness*

We can fundraise within our church or community and bring this problem to the attention of others. We can encourage and inspire people to feel that they can make a difference. Various organisations provide resources on their websites, and may even make other suggestions about how to raise funds.

- *Refuse to purchase products made by companies that use slaves*

We can make a conscious choice to do without something if slaves are used in its production or we can pay a little extra for products from companies that don't use slaves. For example, reconsider those \$2 shirts in the department store. They may not be produced using slavery, but how can they be that cheap? If in doubt, leave it out. Pay a little extra for ones that don't exploit slaves or are made in our own country and will help families

who work for companies that struggle to compete against overseas organisations that use slaves..

- *Write to companies*

We can keep an eye out for organisations that use slaves in their production who sell their goods in our own country. Write to those companies about their use of slaves, stating why we are choosing to boycott their products. We can bring this company to the attention of friends and family and encourage them not to buy their products and ask them to write to the company as well.

- *Pray:*

- for individuals caught up in slavery;
- for countries who permit slavery, to change their laws and actively work towards eradicating it;
- for wisdom and discernment when it comes to buying products or supporting companies that may not be doing the right thing;
- for individuals who use slaves or sell products made by slaves, to develop a conscience and for God to impact their lives; and
- that our governments veto countries and companies that encourage or use slavery.

**"I alone
cannot
change the
world, but I
can cast a
stone across
the waters to
create many
ripples."**

Mother Teresa

It's a Huge Problem Worldwide

The sheer size of the problem of slavery world-wide is staggering. The actual number of people in slavery isn't known, but it's estimated to be between 21 and 36 million people. When we focus on such huge numbers, it can encourage us forget that they are

individuals, just like you and me who are suffering.

We shouldn't allow ourselves to feel discouraged by the enormity of the problem, nor fall into the trap of believing that one person can't make a difference. As Mother Teresa said:

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."

Perhaps we could bring this topic to the attention of our friends, study group or church and discuss ways that as a group we can make a difference.

To imagine that we are powerless is suggesting that God Himself is powerless or ineffective. We **can** make a difference. **YOU** can make a difference.

Anti-Slavery Organisations

There are a number of organisations across the world that are working towards eradicating slavery and many help rescue those who are caught up in it. They may provide opportunities to assist ex-slaves begin new lives, train them to find work so they can have a home and have a life and do things that we take for granted.

To finish, I've compiled a list of anti-slavery organisations with a little information about what each of them do. You may like to read more about them and consider ways that you may be able to help.



Agape International Missions

Agape International Missions (AIM) was founded on the ground in Cambodia in 1988 as a humanitarian aid and church planting organisation.



Since 2005, we've been innovating and focusing our efforts to end the evil of child sexual slavery in Cambodia. AIM's anti-trafficking work began with our first Restoration Home for 20 rescued girls. We've now successfully reintegrated over 300 young survivors of trafficking.

With 12 projects currently on the ground that impact over 10,000 people every year, AIM's programs are stopping the cycle of exploitation by preventing trafficking and rescuing, restoring and reintegrating survivors through our holistic strategy.

In addition to our strategy, our reliance on Jesus Christ and partnership with His Church and His people have been the hammer breaking through impossible obstacles.

<http://agapewebsite.org/>

Abolish Slavery Coalition

Abolish Slavery is an agency that forms task forces to prevent victims of human trafficking from happening, and work to prosecute the criminals, so these victims can have a safe transition out of slavery and into a joyous life.

We are a coalescing force that brings people and organisations together while strengthening and building task forces. We help coordinate and mobilise in order to improve effectiveness in various contexts around the world, whether it is Burma, Haiti or New York City.

www.abolishslavery.org



Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International, founded in 1839, is the oldest international human rights organisation in the world. It is committed to eradicating all forms of slavery throughout the world including forced labour, bonded labour, trafficking of human beings, descent-based slavery,

forced marriage and the worst forms of child labour.

It works at local, national and international levels. Current approaches used by Anti-Slavery include:

- Enabling people to leave slavery - through exemplar frontline projects with local partner organisations
- Helping people to recover from slavery, ensuring they make lasting successful lives free from slavery
- Supporting the empowerment of people to be better protected from slavery, to help people and communities demand respect for their human rights
- Demonstrating how our frontline work empowers individuals and communities to sustainably leave, or obtain protection from, slavery and using this knowledge base to inform, influence and inspire change through advocacy, lobbying, international policy work, campaigning, raising the profile and understanding of modern slavery through media work and supporter campaigns.

www.antislavery.org/



Destiny Rescue

Destiny Rescue is an international Christian based non-profit organisation dedicated to rescuing children from human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Our vision is to rescue the sexually exploited and enslaved, restore the abused, protect the vulnerable, empower the poor and be a voice for those who can't speak up for themselves.

We currently operate our various programs in five nations: Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, and India. We also have offices in three donor nations: Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

We've rescued over 1400 children from exploitation and trafficking since 2011, helped keep hundreds more from entering the sex-trade through our various prevention programs, ensured justice for those that have been wronged and have raised awareness to untold numbers. And, we'll continue to expand to help reach even more children in the days ahead!

Destiny Rescue realises that human trafficking is a big problem globally with up to 27 million men, women and children enslaved in its deadly grip today. With that said, we're determined to set captives free worldwide. As long as children are being sold into the sex-trade, and poverty that drives at-risk children into prostitution exists, Destiny Rescue will be fully committed to fighting for their freedom, restoration and offering them a chance to dream again.

www.destinyrescue.org/



Free the Slaves

Free the Slaves liberates slaves, helps them rebuild their lives, and transforms the social, economic and political conditions that allow slavery to

persist.

We support community driven interventions in partnership with local groups that help people to sustainable freedom and dismantle a region's system of slavery.

We convince governments, international development organisations and businesses to implement key changes required for global eradication.

We document and disseminate leading-edge practices to help the antislavery movement work more effectively.

We raise awareness and promote action by opinion leaders, decision makers and the public.

Free the Slaves is showing the world that ending slavery is possible.

www.freetheslaves.net/



Polaris

While Polaris is based in the USA with a number of facets in its anti-slavery and anti-human-trafficking workings, it also has a global program. Polaris is connecting with hundreds of anti-trafficking and related-issue hotlines and organisations from around the world.

We have worked closely with the Freedom Fund, the Walk Free Foundation, and partner organisations to establish the Global Modern Slavery Directory - a first-of-its-kind publicly searchable database of over 770 organisations and hotlines working on human trafficking and forced labour.

By enabling actors in the anti-human trafficking field to better locate, identify, and connect with each other, the tool will help connect victims of human trafficking and at-risk populations to the help they need.

www.polarisproject.org/



Hope for Justice

Hope for Justice identifies and rescues victims, advocates on their behalf, provides restorative care which rebuilds lives and trains frontline professionals to tackle slavery. We work in the UK, USA, Norway and Cambodia.

We use the word 'rescue' when the intervention of our specialist staff directly removes a victim of human trafficking from a situation of exploitation or from a profound vulnerability to exploitation.

Rescues range from month-long surveillance operations, which develop into contacting a victim and safely removing them from exploitation, to attending homeless shelters to meet victims referred to us by shelter staff who have been trained by Hope for Justice and then arranging that victim's entry into safe-house accommodation.

No matter how we get to the point of meeting that victim, we celebrate their rescue once it's happened. Our expert intervention means a life changed and another step taken toward ending slavery for good.

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"You and I know the law is good (if used in the right way), and we also know the law was not designed for law-abiding people but for lawbreakers and criminals... slave dealers... and anyone else who acts against the sound doctrine laid out in the glorious, holy, and pure good news of the blessed God that has been entrusted to me."

1 Timothy 1:8-11 [VOICE]

Divorce: the Unforgiveable Sin?



by Vicki Nunn

Editor

Divorce Was Never Part of God's Original Plan

It's true that divorce was never part of God's original plan, but then neither was sin. Once sin entered the world, along with it came corruption of our once perfect natures and in crept selfishness, greed and unforgiveness etc. As no individual person is perfect, so no marriage can be without conflict or problems. Since we are all prone to selfishness and egotism, it is ultimately going to impact on every marriage relationship. Marriage is therefore going to be hard ... really, really hard.

Does that mean we should never marry because it's too difficult and we'll end up hating each other and then have to divorce? No. It means that Christians who marry must enter the marriage commitment soberly, with their eyes fully opened to the difficulties and being willing to work hard at making their relationship work. They must truly understand that the marriage commitment is not about 'being in love' or 'staying in love' or believing that marriage is just an emotional connection. Marriage is so much more than that.

Just as God continued to love and forgive the Jewish people time

and time again and His relationship with His people was a solemn marriage-type commitment, so too should we be willing to repeatedly forgive our partners for their failings, despite the times when we do not feel an emotional love for them, a connection with them, or sometimes not even a liking for them.

What is Marriage?

Before we can delve further into this topic of divorce, we must first be clear about marriage. What is it?

Marriage is not about ceremonies, pieces of paper, pretty dresses, flowers, churches nor even the vows we speak aloud. We should recognise that the foundation of the marriage commitment is not about an emotional connection, but it's about a promised obligation that is far more intimate than physical sex or any kind of emotional bond.

When God created man and then made woman from man, He established the foundation for a committed relationship so that between the two of them they become a whole person. The part of man that was taken from him to make woman, means that both man and woman coming together, become a whole, and a stronger entity.

As one has weaknesses and strengths, so the partner often has



weaknesses and strengths in other areas and they therefore complement each other. In a marriage, we must remain mindful of the strengths that our partner brings into the relationship, and not focus on things that we perceive as their weaknesses, which so often happens in marriages. When we focus on a partner's weaknesses, it can lead to contempt and a breakdown in that marriage bond.

While there is a physical unity during the sexual act, marriage is more than just a temporary coming together physically, but is a commitment to a union in all areas of marriage. While both are individuals, the marriage is to become a blending of the two into a commitment of one.

In western cultures, the word 'love' is tossed about and treated far too lightly. The word 'love' as we use it, bears little resemblance to the love that God would wish between a man and a woman, or for that matter, the love we should have between our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In our human weakness and selfishness, our concept of love is a

**...our
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Love is not about emotions or feeling good or having affection for another, nor simply wishing the best for the other person, though that is often how relationships can begin. Most people experience these emotions at some time in their lives, but in the long-term they are as fleeting and insubstantial as a cloud.

Marriage is not even about being half of a relationship but is a sober commitment to work at being part of a whole. It's a conscious **forcing of our will** to committing our loyalty, obedience and our service to the other, and to making the relationship work. It is daily putting the needs of our partner and our marriage above our own.

When we read it like that, it sounds extremely challenging if not impossible doesn't it? This is a concept that is omitted from most marriage vows. The fact is, few of us are willing to give such incredible dedication to marriage and instead we settle for that pale and flimsy imitation which the world tells us is acceptable or is 'real love.'

Is it any wonder then that so many relationships, including Christians marriages fail, since the foundation upon which they are built has so little substance?

Why Do Some Churches Treat Divorce as Unforgivable?

Some churches base their approach to divorce on verses which are found in the Bible:

- (a) "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts.

So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." Malachi 2:16 [ESV]

- (b) "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him (Jesus), "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Matthew 19:6b-9 [ESV]

- (c) "And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Mark 10:11-12 [ESV]

- (d) "To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him."

1 Corinthians 7:12-13 [ESV]

We'll review the previous Bible verses in connection with the concept of divorce, and put them into their proper context.

- (a) "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

Malachi 2:16 [ESV]

Context: after their return from exile, the Jewish people failed to understand the seriousness of their rebellion against God, nor had they accepted that it was because of their sin that they'd been exiled.

Though upon their return many Jews had initially been zealous in their enthusiasm to rebuild the temple, they eventually became lazy and spiritually apathetic once more and came to doubt God's love. They didn't respect nor honour their marriages and were marrying people from other nations who knew nothing of God, and were divorcing and remarrying frequently.

Additionally, the priests became corrupt and they dishonoured God by contemptuously offering Him sub-par sacrifices, i.e. animals that were blemished, blind and lame etc.

Despite the centuries of evidence of God's continued faithfulness to His people and His love for them, the Israelites repeatedly rebelled against God, and still did not trust Him nor obey His laws.

If divorce is an unforgivable sin, then consider that if it's true, then God Himself is not forgiven.

In Jeremiah 3:6-8 God clearly tells us that **He divorced Israel**:

"Then the Eternal who rules over all of history reminded me of a lesson my people, Judah, should have learned from Israel a century ago. He spoke these words to Judah early in my career, during the days of Josiah the king."

"Eternal One: Have you not learned anything from Israel's unfaithful ways? How she turned away from Me, went up every high hill and under every

green tree to worship another. She acted like a prostitute and broke our covenant there.

I thought, "After she's done all this, she'll return home to Me," but it never happened. She didn't come back. And her deceitful sister, Judah, saw all of this and learned nothing. She saw that I sent unfaithful Israel away with a decree of divorce for these acts of adultery. But it didn't matter to her deceitful sister, Judah. She wasn't afraid or moved by any of this. She went her own way and played the prostitute as well." [Voice]

Through the prophets Jeremiah and Malachi, God gave a message to Israel that He was divorcing them as His people (except for the tribe of Judah, even though He acknowledged that they weren't much better.)

He stated that though He had earlier made a binding and holy covenant with His people, because of their continued rejection and rebellion over more than a thousand years, it had finally resulted in His divorce from them, and a severing of His commitment to them as His people.



It is also in Malachi that we hear of God's promise that He would send someone who would bring a new covenant and a new promise. This new covenant (who we find out later comes about through Jesus and His sacrifice), would be between God and his new bride, the church.

While God appeared to be very unhappy with the rampant divorce going on in Israel as described in Malachi, the message in this book was focussed more on

God's relationship with His people rather than the Jews slack attitudes towards their marriage vows.

Even though God Himself had made a 'marriage' commitment to the Israelites which began with Abraham, ultimately He was choosing to divorce all of Israel except for the tribe of Judah.

Consider that this is perhaps an acknowledgement that sometimes, despite the best efforts to keep a marriage going, that divorce may be allowable, particularly if one party is unwilling to change their behaviours? I'm sure it must have broken God's heart to see His beloved people rebel and sin, time and time again.

Let's consider also the following Bible passages which some churches use in their condemnation of divorce:

(b) "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to

"Love is a commitment that will be tested in the most vulnerable areas of spirituality, a commitment that will force you to make some very difficult choices. It is a commitment that demands that you deal with your lust, your greed, your pride, your power, your desire to control, your temper, your patience, and every area of temptation that the Bible clearly talks about. It demands the quality of commitment that Jesus demonstrates in His relationship to us."

Ravi Zacharias

them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." Matthew 19:6b-9 [ESV]

and Mark 10:11-12

(c) "And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." [ESV]

Context: some religious leaders like to hold these up as the ultimate and most sacred commitment and law about marriage. Oddly enough, if the marriage vow is so sacred, why is it not mentioned as one of the ten commandments which form the foundation of our Christian faith?

Let's look at these verses in context both Biblically and culturally to gain a better understanding.

In the hope they could trap Him, the Pharisees came over to Jesus and asked if a man could divorce his wife for **any** reason whatsoever. Jesus replied:

"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Again the Pharisees tried to trick him:

"They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning

it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Jesus was saying that what God had intended for marriage between a man and a woman had become corrupted, i.e. initially it had been intended to be an equal partnership. The Jewish Pharisees though were asking if Jewish men could use any pathetic excuse they liked to divorce their wife.

We know though that over the centuries, the Israelite's own concepts about women and marriage had been affected by other cultures that had infiltrated their own. It had become common then for Jewish men to treat women as second-class citizens, even sometimes as their possessions.

Jesus understood that as a result of divorce, in the Jewish culture at that time, a divorced woman would likely be sent away with no money, possessions or home to call her own and little if any opportunity for an income.

With marriage and divorce being taken so lightly by the Jewish people, and particularly the men, Jesus was pointing out the seriousness of their attitude when it came to marriage and how differently God saw the marriage commitment.

If the Jews could grow so tired of their spouse so easily and then jumped into another marriage with little thought, then their marriage commitment was not done so with any concept of God at its core, but was based on mere selfishness and fickleness.

This kind of marriage was completely opposite to that which

God had intended the marriage relationship to be. Flitting from one marriage to another on a whim, or out of lust was committing adultery, and they couldn't excuse their sin with the flimsy claim of divorce, because in many cases, the former wife hadn't done anything wrong.

Let's look at another passage which the church sometimes uses to claim that divorce isn't acceptable:

(d) "To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him."

1 Corinthians 7:12-13 [ESV]

Context: In Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, he is responding to a **specific** question about whether a believer and a non-believer should remain married.

This question was put to Paul because believers wanted to be sure they weren't committing a sin or disobeying God by remaining married to a non-believer. Paul clarified this question and encouraged them to remain married. There was no references here to sinfulness or disobedience to God through divorce.

If we look earlier at 1 Corinthians 7:6, Paul made it clear that this was his own personal opinion, and **not** a command from God.

This passage therefore is not really relevant when it comes to the question of whether divorce is an unforgiveable sin because it was a thought and a response

from Paul about a particular situation in this specific church in Corinth, and wasn't a direct command from God.

Finally, let us consider that Jesus made it clear that there is only one unforgiveable sin, i.e. blaspheming of the Holy Spirit which we find in Mark 3:28-29:

"Listen, the truth is that people can be forgiven of almost anything. God has been known to forgive many things, even blasphemy. But speaking evil of the Spirit of God is an unforgiveable sin that will follow you into eternity."

[VOICE]

This one and only unforgiveable sin is when a person attributes the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan, and has nothing whatsoever to do with divorce. Any person or church that states otherwise or is suggesting that divorce is unforgiveable is claiming that they know better than Jesus, and perhaps that their wisdom is above God's!

If we look at the punishment for adultery and fornication in Biblical times, the guilty parties were stoned to death and the innocent were allowed to remarry.

When Jesus came, the New Testament gave us those wonderful terms: forgiveness and reconciliation. This same forgiveness and reconciliation to Him is relevant today. **Divorce doesn't change that offer.**

Instead of being punished in the old way, according to the old laws, today the guilty parties should be given instructions on how to correct their sin and repent, after which the innocent parties are free to remarry when the divorce has settled.



The Catholic Church and Divorce

The Catholic church looks upon divorce more sternly than most protestant churches nowadays. While divorced people may be welcomed into a Catholic church, they are no longer allowed to be full participants in the church e.g., they are not allowed to receive Eucharist at mass.

The reason for not allowing divorce is that the Catholic church agrees to marry people with the understanding that a covenant agreement has been made between the couple **and** God to remain married, no matter what circumstances or difficulties arise.

Additionally, the agreement means that the couple has entered into a relationship that will permanently change and transform them both together as a couple. The bond is indissoluble and therefore cannot be entered into lightly because the commitment is permanent. It is not therefore just a contract to simply **try** to make a marriage work.

The Catholic church sees marriage as a holy and binding agreement between the couple and God which cannot be broken except in extreme circumstances such as dishonesty at the time when the couple made their marriage vows.

I imagine that there are few couples in the Catholic church who truly understood the solemnity of their marriage commitment at the time they made it. Statistically, divorce rates are at a similar level in the Catholic church as they are in protestant churches.

Couples grow apart through immaturity and/or selfishness, and many divorce and may even remarry (outside of the church) and find that they are no longer able to fully participate in the Catholic church.

After a breakup, many divorced/remarried Catholics feel on the outer, confused, and rejected, and some walk away from the church.

So, Is Divorce an Unforgiveable Sin?

Perhaps we should start by asking the question:

“Why should we regard divorce as a **worse** sin than say sexual assault, paedophilia, blasphemy, murder or genocide?”

If we look at the people that Jesus accepted and forgave, they were some of the worst sinners!

If Jesus was willing to accept people who were truly contrite and willing to change and desiring to be forgiven, then shouldn't we also be willing to do the same for divorcees if they are truly contrite and willing to change and desiring

to be forgiven? Isn't Jesus supposed to be the example to which we aspire?

We could ask another difficult question:

“Does a church's ruling on divorce supersede Jesus for-giveness of sinners and their sin?”

If we are going to place human restrictions on what sins are forgivable, are we suggesting that our authority is superior to that of Jesus?

I don't wish to suggest that anyone should rebel against their church's laws, but I urge you to consider whether your own personal beliefs about divorce are based on your church's rules or have you personally considered Jesus' approach to the sinners that He encountered, as written in the New Testament?

I encourage you to reflect on the following questions:

- Is God's forgiveness and love able to be measured?
- Is there any sin that God cannot overcome?
- Did Jesus restrict His acceptance of sinners to only a select few?
- Was Jesus' purpose in dying on the cross to save only the perfect, or those with less sin or those who remain married?

If we reject divorcees or any sinners and claim they are unacceptable in God's church, what then can we claim is the Good News – that God's message has limitations?

But I'm the One Who Committed Adultery

That's a tough one for people to come to terms with or to forgive, but while people may regard you as the failure or the sinner that led to the marriage break-up, it still doesn't mean that you cannot be forgiven.

I would suggest first that if there is any chance of reconciliation, to work at that if possible. Either way, you need to be doing some serious talking with God about the situation and seeking His forgiveness.

This is a very complex issue, so I urge you to find a good Christian counsellor, preferably not your own pastor or someone from within your church, but someone who is impartial and doesn't personally know you or your ex-partner. There are likely to be many things that you need to work through before you can move forward.

If you and your partner do decide to try reconcile, then marriage counselling for both of you is going to be vital in this process.

So Can I Get a Divorce Now?

Whoa! Please don't assume that I am encouraging anyone to seek a divorce if their marriage is difficult. In particular, please don't make that kind of a decision on a whim, or because your marriage is too much hard work, or because your partner is not a Christian.

This article is by no means provided as a way to justify seeking a means to divorce your partner. In fact, those previous excuses are really quite flimsy.

While divorce is never claimed to be an unforgivable sin, the Bible urges Christians first of all not to rush into marriage without recognising the seriousness of the commitment, and then to earnestly work at the marriage by placing their relationship and their partner's needs above their own.

Marriage is a relationship of equals with both sharing the burdens, depending upon each other in their own strengths and weaknesses. Man and woman were made to counter-balance, support, and encourage each other in marriage.

Under Which Circumstances Then Can I Divorce?

During the centuries that the Bible was written, domestic violence, paedophilia, and emotional and sexual abuse were uncommon amongst the Israelites. Today they seem to be becoming much more prevalent across the world.

This is certainly at least one circumstance in which it is acceptable to leave a marriage. As God is a god of love and peace

Was Jesus' purpose in dying on the cross to save only the perfect, or those with less sin or those who remain married?



and not a god of pain or chaos, He would not desire that anyone stay in a marriage where they or their children may be harmed.

While God would prefer us to stay in a marriage, particularly when a partner is ill, on the other hand, abuse should never be tolerated. How often in the Bible does God speak against those who hurt the vulnerable?

Why Do Christians Treat Divorcees So Poorly?

Perhaps the main reason many people in the church treat divorcees so poorly, comes down to the one sin which God hates the most, and repeatedly mentions how much He hates it, in His word:

* the sin of pride *

There is something inherent in human nature which encourages us to want to indulge in arrogance and one-upmanship. Divorcees and other perceived 'sinners' are a great source upon which we can foist our moral superiority and self-righteousness!

"Look at that failure!"

"There's that sinner who divorced his wife!"

"How can she call herself a Christian?"

"Can you believe they had the audacity to remarry? Adulterer!"

How dare we judge other Christians! How dare we put ourselves on a pedestal and claim we are less of a sinner! Are we really better or superior just because we aren't divorced?

Philippians 2:3 reminds us:

"Don't let selfishness and prideful agendas take over. Embrace true humility, and lift your heads to extend love to others." [VOICE]

It takes a lot of work for us to let go of our own ego and to be loving towards sinners. In fact I would suggest (from my personal experience) that it is a lifelong process.

The Holy Spirit wants to work with us to rid ourselves of our natural selfishness and pride. It is a battle with ourselves and our own innate nature though, that is well worth fighting.

Divorcees and the Church

People going through divorce will usually experience an emotional, spiritual, mental and

financial roller-coaster ride. The relationships between the couple, friends, family and children can cause enormous pain and suffering for those involved.

Unfortunately, the church can add hugely to these struggles at a time when the divorcee needs a high level of support. Attitudes from Pastors, Elders and the Church Board towards divorcees can include the arrogance we discussed earlier through to mistrust, contempt and outright rejection.

If either of the couple had earlier been given positions of authority within the church, after the break-up, the church may seek to remove them from those positions, as if the divorce itself had somehow proven their unworthiness by their inadequacy in maintaining a marriage.

This is both hurtful, confusing and distressing to the divorcee, particularly at a time when they need more support from their church. It can often appear as if their own church wishes to punish them and treat them as if they are disgustingly sinful failures.

If the divorcee seeks out another church family, they may encounter similar attitudes and remain on the outer within what is supposed to be a loving and supportive church family.

Thankfully this does not happen in all churches, but where it does occur, the church needs to seriously reconsider their approach, and their unloving and unchristian attitude towards divorcees.

In fact I would suggest that if a church is wondering why it's losing members as its congregation is shrinking, it may need to

consider its own actions towards its members, particularly those it regards as unforgivable sinners.

Conclusion

In a struggling marriage, one or both of the partners may think it would be easier to separate than to continue trying to work through the pain and the struggles. We must understand that staying together or divorcing are going to be equally as difficult and painful a choice.

Divorce often has far-reaching consequences of which people outside of the relationship are often unaware. It usually impacts negatively upon the children which arise from the marriage, on friends and also family members. Emotionally, mentally, financially and spiritually it can be devastating for the couple who have broken up and can leave each with long-term pain and emotional issues that remain with them for life.

There is also the fact that as a divorcee, others will see them as failures or if they've remarried, as active sinners because they are living in sin and committing adultery.

Divorcees may be shunned, treated as contemptible or worthless, and may even lose trusted Christian friends and their church

family.

While divorce should never be undertaken lightly, it is **not** an unforgivable sin.

Pastors and church members should recognise the difficult decisions involved in divorce and the terrible pain and suffering that goes with it.

Rather than allowing themselves to indulge in feelings of superiority or deliberately treating the divorcee as failures, church leaders and other Christians should acknowledge that they need to leave their own ego out of the equation, and face divorcees with compassion and love.

Let's acknowledge that Jesus never asked us to be punishers of our fellow sinners. Each of us should recognise that we need to be both the heart and the hands of Christ to our suffering and hurting brothers and sisters and help them along their journey. [END]

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When asked if she'd ever thought about divorcing her husband Billy Graham, Ruth Graham replied, "No, I've never thought of divorce in all these 35 years of marriage, but, I did think of murder a few times."

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How to Help Your Persecuted Brothers and Sisters in Christ

OpenDoors[®]

by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

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

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

For those without God as the

foundation of their lives, life must seem to have little meaning or purpose or even hope.

We Have a Hope

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

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

God reminds us that we should pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are being persecuted for their faith, and to help them if possible:

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

Proverbs: 31:8 [CEB]

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

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

There are a number of organisations who help the persecuted in a variety of ways. In this article I'm sharing information on two such organisations.

Persecution.org and Open Doors

Advocacy

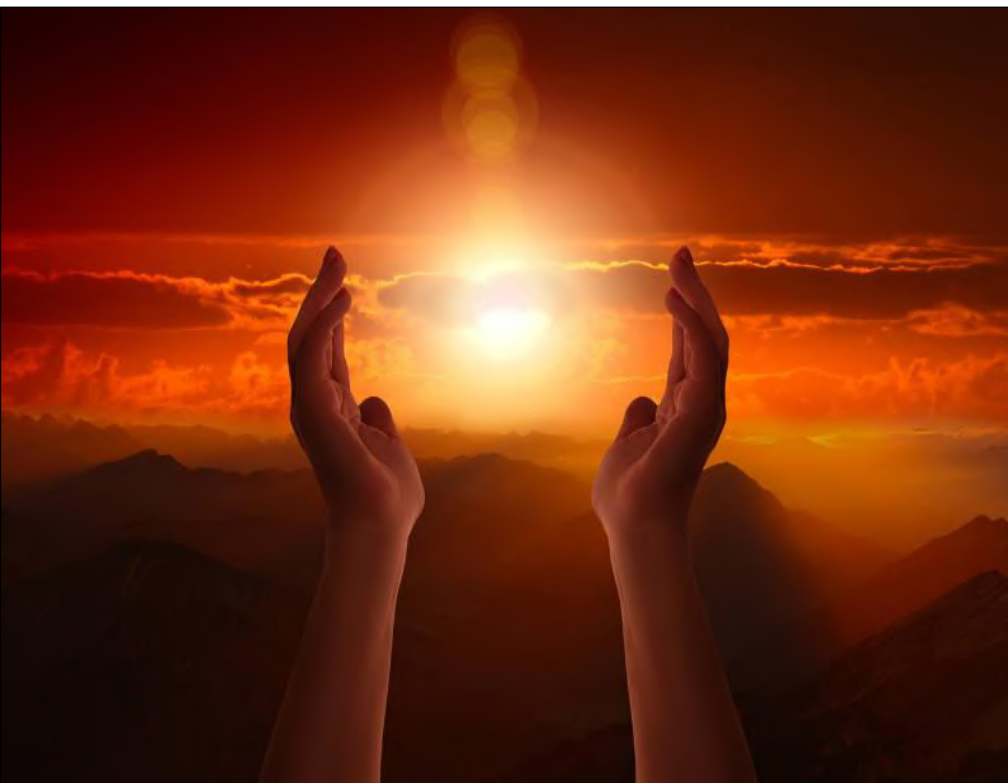
These organisations advocate for the persecuted by working towards changing legal legislation. We can ask our own government leaders to do the same, or bring these needs to their attention and ask them to help.

Awareness

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

Assistance

They seek to strengthen the church by giving financial assistance to the persecuted sometimes including micro loans



and business development. Education is provided to the poor and they are assisted to step out and help support their own churches.

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

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

They help to rebuild

communities when possible.

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

How We Can Make a Difference

Pray ... pray ... pray!

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

While many stories are heart-breaking, I personally find that it's

very helpful in my prayer time to focus on the needs of my brothers and sisters, and it provides me with a real perspective to my own, small problems.

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

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

Websites Links:

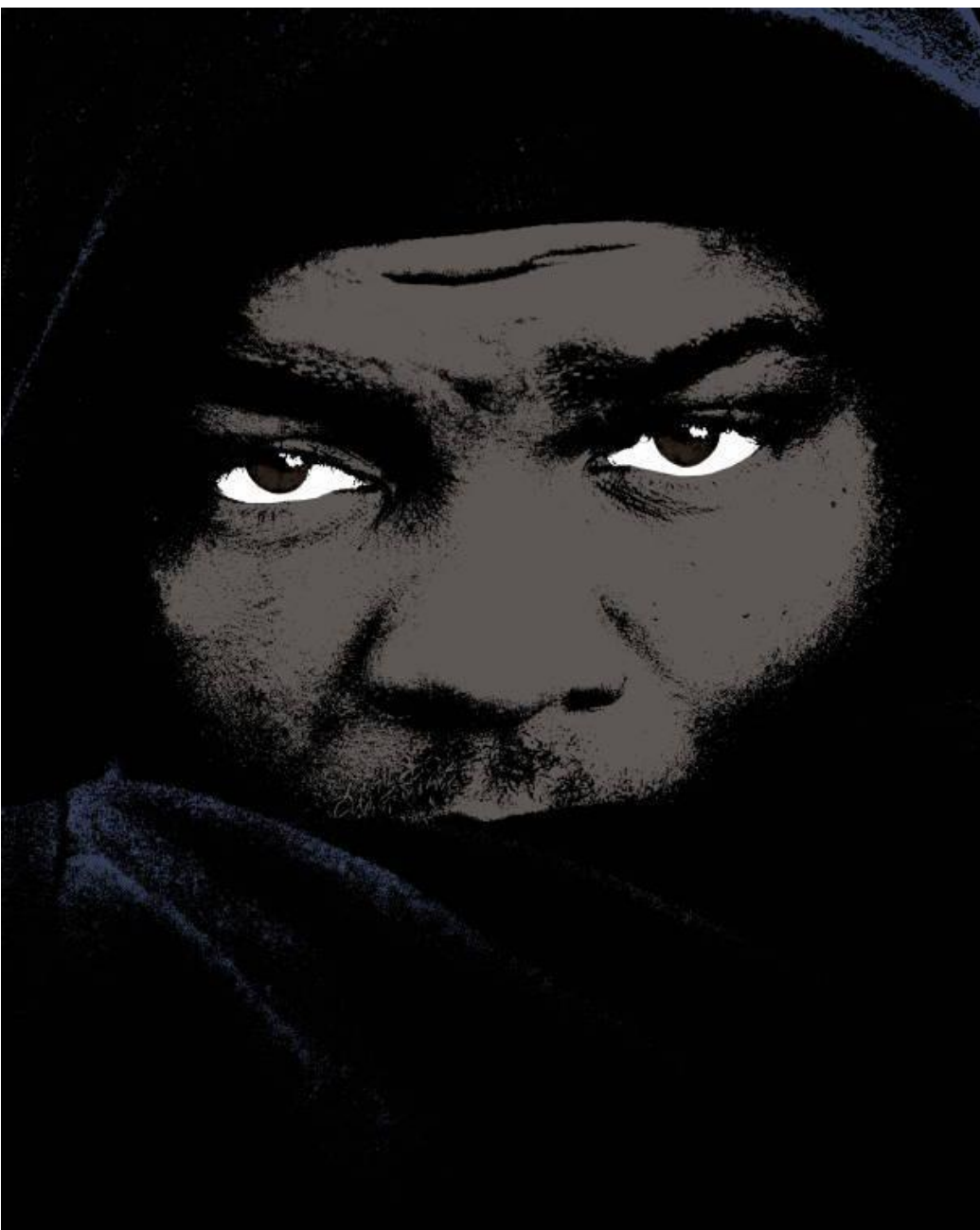
www.persecution.org
www.opendoors.org.au



Words of Wisdom

"When you suffer, you are being conformed to the image of Jesus. When you pray, you are being made holy in the image of Jesus. When you quietly serve a person in need, you are being shaped into the image of Jesus. When you generously give, your heart is being remade into the image of Jesus, our Lord and Savior."

Allen R. Hunt



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



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

Introduction

Let me begin with a provocative statement:

if you have to ask the question in the title of this article, then perhaps you don't really understand the purpose of prayer.

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

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

1. THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

(a) It's Part of the Way We Serve God.

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

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

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

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

(b) It's a Way to Obtain God's Help

- Strength to resist temptation: Matthew 26:41

"Now maybe you're learning: the spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Watch and pray and take care that you are not pulled down during a time of testing." [VOICE]

- Wisdom in making important decisions: Luke 6:12-13

"Around this time, Jesus went outside the city to a nearby mountain, along with a large crowd of His disciples.

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

- To spiritually strengthen others: Ephesians 6:18-19

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

- To obtain more Christian workers: Luke 10:2

"There's a great harvest waiting in the fields, but there aren't many good workers to harvest it. Pray that the Harvest Master will send out good workers to the fields." [VOICE]

- To overcome demons: Matthew 17:14-21

"...Later, when they were away from the crowds, the disciples asked Jesus why they hadn't been able to drive out the demon themselves. Jesus: Because you have so little faith. I tell you this: if you had even a faint spark of faith, even faith as tiny as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and because of your faith, the mountain would move. If you had just a sliver of faith, you would find nothing impossible. But this kind [demon] is not realized except through much prayer and fasting." [voice]

(c) God Says That We Should Pray:

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 it says:

"Celebrate always, pray constantly, and give thanks to God

no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. (This is God's will for all of you in Jesus the Anointed.)" [VOICE]

In Matthew 6:5-13 it Jesus said:

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

Your prayers, rather, should be simple, like this: Our Father in heaven, let Your name remain holy. Bring about Your

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

(d) We should Pray Because Jesus Prayed:

Luke 19:16-17

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

Matthew 26:36-42

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

(e) It's a Way That We Draw Closer to God:

In Psalm 19:14 shares:

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

So what have we learned so far? In all of our relationships, communication is vital and this is





especially true in our relationship with God.

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

(f) It's a Way to Strengthen Our Faith:

As shared earlier in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Celebrate always, pray constantly, and give thanks to God no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. (This is God's will for all of you in Jesus the Anointed.)"
[VOICE]

When we connect with God through prayer and make it a regular part of our routine, we grow in wisdom, and we grow closer to God which strengthens our faith in Him. When we give thanks to God, we learn to

appreciate how God blesses us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. As we mature too, we can reflect back and thank God for His guidance, love and power on our lives.

(g) God will always hear our prayers:

Psalm 5:3

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

Psalm 145:18

"The Eternal stays close to those who call on Him, those who pray sincerely."

Jeremiah 29:12

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

Hebrews 4:16

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

1 John 5:14

"We live in the bold confidence that God hears our voices when we

ask for things that fit His plan."

[VOICE]

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

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

2. WHO IS GOD?

(a) God Knows Everything and Understands Us Completely

Psalm 44: 21 says that He understands our hearts, even those parts we try to hide from Him:

"Would not the True God have known it? For He can see the hidden places of our hearts." [VOICE]

Matthew 6:8 says that He knows what we need before we ask it:

"Do not be like them. Your prayers need not be laboured or lengthy or grandiose - for your Father knows what you need before you ever ask Him."
[VOICE]

I John 3:20 says that God knows everything:

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

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

(b) God is All Powerful.

In Job 42:2, Job says:

"I know You can do everything; nothing You do can be foiled or frustrated." [VOICE]

Since God is all powerful, our prayer doesn't provide Him with

extra strength, wisdom or guidance. That means that our prayer doesn't increase God's power or make any kind of difference to His power or His wisdom.

(c) God is in Control.

In Hebrews 1:3a we know that God is in control of the universe and everything that happens within the universe, so therefore God's purpose is already happening according to His plan. So how then can our prayer have any kind of an impact on the plan He already has in place?

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

(d) God is love. 1 John 4 verses 8 and verse 16 shows us that God is love and that His love is unchanging. Our prayers cannot improve or increase His love for us:

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love... We have experienced and we have entrusted our lives to the love of God in us. God is love. Anyone who lives faithfully in love also lives faithfully in God, and God lives in him." [VOICE]

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

overarching purpose for the world and its people?

3. DOES GOD CHANGE HIS MIND BECAUSE WE PRAY?

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

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

I've seen relationships and marriages where one person expects their partner to read their minds. As a result, their partner's decisions and choices must be based around the first person's unspoken preferences. What a crazy way to run a relationship! Forget the mind-reading!

Similarly, we should be doing the same with God.

The first person in that relationship should be clear about what they want and why, and ask nicely. Even if their partner may be able to guess what they want (after many years of living with

them), the first person shows respect to their partner by asking, rather than *expecting* them to know or guess what they want.

Isn't this the same with God? By *expecting* God to know what we want without us asking, it suggests that doing so would be disrespectful to Him.

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

Perhaps the question here should be "**will** God change His mind through prayer," rather than "**does** God change His mind through prayer."

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

One of the earliest Biblical examples of someone trying to change God's mind can be found in Genesis when Abraham learned that God was going to wipe out the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Perhaps fearing that God might take the lives of innocent people in those cities, or fearing his nephew Lot and his family would perish, in Genesis 18:23-25 Abraham asked God:

**Sometimes
what we ask
isn't part of His
plan, or is not
good for us...**

"God, would You really sweep away the people who do what is right along with those who are wicked? What if there were 50 upright people within the city? Would You still wipe the place out and not spare it on behalf of the 50 upright people who live there?"

Surely it can't be Your nature to do something like that - to kill the right-living along with those who act wickedly, to consign the innocent to the same fate as the guilty. It is inconceivable to me that You, my God, would do anything like that! Will not the "Merciful and Loving Judge" of all the earth do what is just?"

[VOICE]

Abraham continued further several times, appealing to God's sense of justice and mercy until he'd narrowed down the possible number of good people to just ten. In Genesis 18:32 we read:

"Please don't be angry, Lord, at my boldness. Let me ask this just once more: suppose only 10 are found?"

[VOICE]

God had been willing to change His mind. He listened to Abraham and agreed upon Abraham's conditions several times. If God had found even ten innocent

people in the cities, I believe He would have changed His mind and allowed the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to live. So great was the sin of the people of these cities though, that not even ten good people could be found amongst the thousands residing there.

Did God know that Abraham was going to ask him for mercy for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Yes, of course He knew, which I believe is evidenced by the fact that God visited Abraham prior to destroying the two cities. When Abraham was resting outside of his tent, he suddenly spied three men, and he knew that one of them was God but he didn't identify the two others. So Abraham invited them to stop for a rest and have something to eat.

God's purpose was two-fold on this occasion including informing Abraham that he and Sarah would have a child in their old age.

After God and the two men arose and began walking towards Sodom, Abraham accompanied them. God spoke aloud so that Abraham could hear, about the terrible sins he'd heard were being committed by those in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Even though it's not clear if God explained about his plans for those wicked people, Abraham seemed to understand that God was planning to destroy the two cities if what He'd heard was true.

After the two men continued walking, God stayed behind with Abraham. He remained with Abraham for a moment, giving him the opportunity to ask Him to spare the cities. I believe that because God knew that Abraham was a good man, He provided him with an opportunity to ask for the innocents to be saved.

Abraham never assumed that God would know what was on his heart and mind, nor did he expect Him just to do what he wanted unless he specifically asked for God's justice for the innocent people.

Isn't this an indication that God allows us and provides us with opportunities to pray? He allows us to use our free will to pray and ask for what is needed.

There are other Biblical examples of God honouring the prayers of others, particularly those which would result in a fulfilment of His overall plan.

One example is from 1 Kings during the drought which had come to Israel for three years as a result of Ahab and Jezebel's wickedness in serving Baal, in killing many of God's prophets, as well as encouraging their people to worship idols. Elijah had warned Ahab that God was going to punish them with a drought where there would be no rain nor even dew.

God sent Elijah to a place where birds would feed him, and there was water to drink. When Elijah's food and water ran out,



God told the prophet to go to a widow in Zarephath, who would give him food and water.

The starving woman was about to use the last bit of flour and oil to make final meal for her and her son before they died, when Elijah arrived. In 1 Kings 17:14, he asked for the bread for himself and promised the widow:

"This is the message of the Eternal God of Israel: the flour and the oil will not run out until the moment when the Eternal showers the earth with rain." [VOICE]

The woman trusted God to do what Elijah requested, possibly because she recognised Elijah was a man of the one true God and because she was also a believer.

From that time onwards, anyone who lived in the household, never went hungry. As you'll likely remember, that small bit of flour and oil never ran out, just as God had promised.

I wonder if God used this miracle as a means to aid others in Zarephath who were also starving due to the drought. What an incredible demonstration that would have been both of God's power and compassion, and also as a way to prove that Elijah really was a prophet of the one true God.

When the widow's son grew ill and died, Elijah prayed for the boy to be healed, taking the youngster's body up to his own bed and laying over him three times as he called out to God. In verses 22 to 24 we read:

"The Eternal heard Elijah's plea, and the boy was brought back to life. Elijah brought the boy back down to his mother who was waiting anxiously in the house."

Elijah: Your son lives again.

Woman (rejoicing): I now fully trust that you are a man of God and that the truth of the word of the Eternal dwells in your mouth." [VOICE]

She had worried that God was punishing her for her past sins, but God's answer to Elijah's prayer to restore the boy, strengthened the woman's faith in God and her belief that Elijah was His prophet.

Elijah's prayer and God's answer brought about more than the saving of the child's life. Others in the town would have heard about the miraculous oil and flour that never ran out. Those who came to live with the widow never went hungry during the severe drought. Then a final miracle was bringing the widow's son back from death, which would have encouraged the townsfolk to turn back to their one true God.

4. IS PRAYER LAYING HOLD OF GOD'S UTMOST WILLINGNESS?

I remember hearing someone say this phrase in response to a similar question that this article is asking. Though at the time, I couldn't really quite agree with their response. To me it suggests that God is sometimes unwilling to consider our requests, even when they are put to Him with a good and obedient heart.

Just as a good parent is always, willing to hear his child's requests, so God is always willing to hear us, although we may not receive the response we think we would like, just as children don't always receive what they ask.

Conclusion

If God literally knows everything; has control over the universe and has a plan under

which everything is working; and He knows what we're going to ask; then how does our prayer make any kind of difference?

It makes a difference because God wants a relationship with us. God has placed our requirements and prayers into the purposes and individual portions of His overall plan for each of us as well as the plan for all of mankind.

Although He foreknows what we are going to ask before we do, He has already taken our request into consideration before we ask it, but we still need to pray about it and submit our petitions and requests to Him.

Praying to God shows Him respect and it also means we are regularly communicating with Him and making Him a part of our everyday lives. Prayer is about keeping our relationship with God alive and growing, and increasing our understanding of Him.

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

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

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What a Near Death Experience Taught Me



by Vicki Nunn
Editor

When I was in hospital after major thyroid surgery in 1994, the doctor and staff were unaware that my parathyroids had stopped working due to the trauma of the surgery. These glands near the thyroid govern the calcium levels in one's body.

About 2am I woke up feeling quite strange as unbeknownst to me, my calcium levels had bottomed out. I was in the ICU and advised the nurses that I was experiencing tingling and quite painful tightening of my muscles, and that the sensations were worsening.

They must have recognised what was happening, though nobody explained anything to me, before they hurried out of the room, and I could see the two of them on the phone at the nurse's station.

Unfortunately the doctor had gone home hours before and there was no-one to provide proper treatment. The nurses left me alone in the semi-dark, as they frantically tried to contact the doctor and find the correct medi-

cation to help me.

Although I didn't know it for several years after this operation, I was suffering from Hypocalcemia.^{1,2} Symptoms can include muscle spasms, numbness, seizures, and even cardiac arrest.

In extreme cases (as with mine) the entire body goes into severe spasm as every muscle in the body contracts tighter and tighter. This means that both externally and internally, every single muscle in the body grows extremely taut, including those in the throat and chest, which can restrict air-flow and in extreme cases like mine, can lead to death.

I remember not being able to move as the muscles agonisingly stiffened more and more and I soon realised that I was having difficulty breathing.

Meantime the nurses were still outside on the phone in the nurses station, trying to contact the doctor for approval for intravenous calcium to be administered. That meant that no-one was checking on me to see if I was in distress and I was physically unable to move or call out to them for help. It was a truly terrifying



experience.

I discovered that the body's response to not getting enough air is to enter into a state of utter panic, and there was absolutely nothing I could do about what was happening to me. It was a dreadful feeling - overwhelmed by panic, being powerless to move or call for help and not being able to get sufficient air.

It was then that I realised that I might just be dying.

Throughout the entire experience I was completely lucid and conscious. Possibly ten minutes had passed by that time, and once I realised that perhaps I was going to die, it was if my mind just somehow came to terms with it, and the feeling of panic evaporated.

Somehow, I was still managing to get enough air through shallow breathing to stay alive,³ but I wasn't sure how long it would last.

I remember being disappointed, at the thought of dying because I still had so much that I wanted to do, and I was only thirty years old.

Once the disappointment passed, I grew excited upon realising that I was going to heaven! Woohoo! I immediately let go of my concerns about what I was leaving incomplete and basically called out to God in my mind, saying "I'm ready - let's go!"

At that instant I sensed someone standing at the foot of my hospital bed, their hands resting on the rail near my feet.

Though I couldn't really see anyone in the half-light, I could still make out a kind of a vague outline of what appeared to be a male figure. I'm not sure who he was, but if he





was an angel, he didn't seem to have any wings.

I could hear him as he began to speak to me, but I was also aware that there was no sound, yet somehow I knew exactly what he was saying.

He spoke words of reassurance that everything would be fine, and a feeling of peace and calm enveloped me. Then He said that I wasn't going to die because God still had a purpose for me, and that there were things yet for me to do.

Oh, the overwhelming and utter, crushing disappointment I felt when I realised that I wasn't going to heaven after all!

Moments before my mind had been blazing with an intensity of excitement that I'd never experienced before, and I'd been ready to drop everything and go!

Just a few moments later, the nurses returned to the room and

switched on the lights, and I realised that the figure had disappeared.

The nurses administered the calcium through my drip and I was eventually able to breathe more normally again as the excruciating pain of my stiffened muscles slowly eased.

As much as I wanted to share with the nurses about my experience, I realised that they were unlikely to appreciate what had happened and were likely to simply dismiss it as a side effect or my imagination.

The main reason though that I didn't share it with them, was that it was so intensely personal and such an incredible, supernatural experience that I was still feeling quite overcome and in awe of what had occurred.

How it Changed Me

The experience was so sobering and life-changing, that it affected the way I viewed my life as a Christian. Although before that time I'd usually tried to be obedient and do what God asked me, the near-death experience really took my commitment to a new level.

I've never forgotten that He asked me to stay for a reason, and I've always tried to remain conscious about whether I was fulfilling the purpose for which God had asked me to remain behind.

Am I Fulfilling God's Purpose for Me?

After that time I continued working in children's ministry until physical restrictions led me to giving that up.

Around that time I became a volunteer radio presenter on the local Christian radio station which I continued for around eleven years. Whilst doing that, I formed a Christian singles ministries that I co-ordinated for fifteen years. After a time, due to health issues amongst other things, I eventually had to give those up, as well as my paid job.

Now I'm both journalist and editor of SPAG Magazine, a project which

was instigated in 2015 after God's guidance for this new period of my life.

My next aim is to have two books edited and published and then complete the third book in the Christian series that I'm writing.

I hope this doesn't sound like I'm boasting - I certainly don't mean it to appear that way, but I can't help but wonder if I would have achieved all of that without that supernatural and near-death experience which compelled me to strive harder to complete the work to which God called me.

Surprise! How an Earlier Health Condition Saved Me

It wasn't until recently that I discovered something else about this experience that has made me even more conscious that God plans things for reasons that we don't always understand.

As I mentioned, I've had some ongoing health issues. When I was a teenager I was diagnosed with Scheuermann's disease,³ which led to curvature of my spine and a moderate hunchback. This has caused continuing back problems for me which has led to ongoing pain, limited movement and consequently affects other parts of my body.

Amazingly, I lived through the later thyroid surgery because of this very disease which was diagnosed in my teens!

One of the various effects of Scheuermann's disease and the resulting hunchback is an expanded chest area which means I now have much more space for my lungs than the average person. This gives me a much larger lung capacity than most people have and explains why I've always been able to swim underwater for longer than anyone else I know, even though I'm a slow swimmer.

In hospital, while I was experiencing those severe and excruciating muscle spasms internally and externally, my increased lung capacity was sufficient for me to obtain just enough air to live.

Isn't that remarkable? God had planned all of that out for me, fifteen years earlier, or perhaps even further back when I was still developing in my mum's womb! God knew that one day, I would go through this experience and would need access to a good air supply. As I mentioned earlier, the average person experiencing as severe a case as mine in hospital, likely would have died.

Conclusion

My experience is not something that I would wish upon anyone, but it has certainly placed me in a rather unusual position: I can never doubt about where I am going and that God is very, very real.

I also know that He is a personal God, not a vague, uncaring entity who has just left the world to run on its own, but He is someone who genuinely cares for every single one of us and has a plan worked out for each of us, if only we would be willing to let go of our fears, our stubbornness and our pride and let God take control of our life journey.

More on God's Planning

While I strive to obey God's lead, my obedience hasn't resulted in me living a wonderful, carefree life without any problems. Instead, part of my "package deal" as I call it, has been ongoing health issues, pain and physical restrictions, problems with my sleep and sometimes debilitating tiredness. This means that I am unable work in children's ministry nor continue as a foster carer, both of which I loved, but then I recognise that if I'd been physically well, I would have continued with children's ministry and foster care, and wouldn't have had the time to put into SPAG Magazine.

Additionally, while I'm, no longer able to work in secure, paid employment, if I was still working, I wouldn't be available to put together and publish SPAG Magazine!

While my financial situation has on occasion been quite dire, and trying to live on a disability pension

can often be challenging, I know that God has my back. He has blessed me in many ways, and provided me with opportunities to develop my skills so that I was ready to take on SPAG Magazine.

While there are still times when I struggle, I know that I'm exactly where God wants me to be, and I'm in no doubt that He orchestrated all of this.

How About You?

Where is your focus? Is financial or job security high up on your priority list? A relationship or fame? Would you be willing to give them up if God asked you? Isn't that a scary thought?

Are you willing to drop your own personal goals if they clash with God's purpose for you?

Do you need to go through a near death experience to get your priorities right? I hope not!

May I encourage you to sincerely seek God's clarity and purpose for your life. Would you be willing to share with God about your fears, or if you struggle with letting go of what you think is important? Will you seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and open up your heart and your mind to wherever or whatever God wants for your life?

Be brave – take the risk - after all, God has already prepared everything in advance for you, as He did for me. Though it may mean a challenging experience or even facing difficulties, are you willing to say "Yes," to God's plan and purpose for you?

While I can't guarantee any angelic visitors, I can promise that the outcome will be worth it, and the promised retirement plan is out of this world! [END]

Notes:

1. Hypocalcemia: <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/241893-overview>
2. Hypocalcemia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypocalcaemia>;
3. Scheuermann's disease: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheuermann%27s_disease



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:

Broadus Arrowhead;
Dionioush Blackshear;
Burgooone Carnes;
Ed Ek;
Effie Fogg;
Rudo S Globus;
Elizabeth Hogg Ironmonger;
Velvet LaSane;
Esterline McKnuckles;
Olney W Nicewonger;
Blondina Pee;
Hillious Rather;
Rollin Stone;
Randy Turtle;
Jot Zed Zillion

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Dickson, Paul, 17 December 1998, What's in a Name? Reflections of an Irrepressible Name Collector, Publisher: Merriam-Webster Incorporated, Springfield, Massachusetts, ISBN 10: 0877796130

Words of Wisdom

"Don't try to understand everything. Take on board as much as you can, and with God's help, try to make it work for you. Be patient, and then the things that are hidden will be made clear for you."

Abba Macarius, an ancient solitary monk

Putting Off Procrastination



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

“Procrastination is opportunity's assassin.” Victor Kiam

=====

Introduction

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

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

Laziness vs Procrastination

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

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

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

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

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

In What Ways Do We Procrastinate?

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

- at home: two things that are high on most people's procrastination list include housework and particularly clutter;
- health: getting exercise, eating more healthily, taking medication or going to the doctor;
- our education: we may delay study or courses because it takes up so much time and we understand that it will require a commitment and effort of will;
- careers: being willing to try new tasks, learning new things or completing courses may seem a little scary or sounds like it's just too hard;

- relationships: we can put off trying to resolve broken relationships, particularly those with family members and people that are difficult to get along with; and
- as Christians: we may also be guilty of procrastinating putting more effort into our relationship with God, reading the Bible, prayer time or getting involved with our church, and we may even put off consciously listening to God's leading or teaching in our lives.

How Can Procrastination Cause Us Unhappiness?

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





like housework – and we can only turn a blind eye to mess and dirtiness for so long.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bob's procrastination impacted on other areas in his life as a consequence: he never had a successful career and simply flitted from one short-term, dead-end job to another and he rarely stayed in one place for more than a few years at a time. Though he

was desperate to find someone to love, he struggled to maintain healthy relationships. It was if he believed he didn't deserve happiness or perhaps even that he deserved to be punished for his failure.

How Do We Overcome It?

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

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

Tackling Procrastination

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

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

this issue one small step at a time.

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

3. Try to make it interesting. What can we do to make the task a little more fun? When I'm at home, I find that playing music helps to pass the time and I sing along, or perhaps we can throw in some dance moves! If we lack imagination on how to make it more interesting, perhaps we could ask a friend for suggestions.
4. Be aware of distractions. What are the things that distract us from completing our tasks? Do we put computer games, phone calls or social media ahead of our tasks? We can switch that around – we can compensate ourselves with these as a reward once the task is complete, and allow ourselves just a short time of five minutes to enjoy it.
5. Focus on one thing at a time. While I may be able to watch TV and knit at the same time, I know that I can't give my full attention to both. Most individual tasks require our undivided attention so we should just focus on one thing at a time.

If we're feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the tasks, we can tackle the

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

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

I love that sense of freedom I feel when I've completed my washing and then later have put it away, because I know that I won't have to think about it for another week, and I'll have plenty of clean clothes to last me for seven days,

including my favourite shirts.

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

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

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

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

When I recognised I was lying to myself about those annoying little tasks, I started timing how long it actually took to complete them. I now know that making my bed takes me less than one minute and whenever I want to make an excuse **not** to do it, I cannot



justify NOT doing it. Thirty-seven seconds to make my bed? Of course I can manage that! In fact, sometimes I try to set a new record just to make it a little more interesting for myself.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

If we are disorganised with our time and miss appointments, it can encourage us to procrastinate in the future. I'm so grateful for

modern technology and the fact that I can easily add my appointments, birthdays and other important reminders into my phone. I know of other people who prefer using an old-fashioned pocket calendar. Whatever way you prefer, don't delay in beginning this very helpful habit.

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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The God Who Sees Me



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

"You are the God who sees me..."

Genesis 16:13b [NLT]

In Genesis chapter 16 we read about Hagar who obeyed her mistress Sarai and conceived a child by her master, Abram. Suddenly Hagar the lowly Egyptian servant who had been someone of no consequence, was somebody important - she was to be the mother of her Master's only child.

On learning of her pregnancy, Hagar grew arrogant towards the barren Sarai. The situation went to Hagar's head and she allowed her pride to overwhelm her. While we may not agree with Hagar's reaction, it is understandably, a very human response.

Sarai would not allow such disrespect from her servant, and reacted by treating Hagar so appallingly that the servant fled into the wilderness. (Abram had removed himself from the argument between the two women, by advising Sarai to handle it as she saw fit.)

Sarai's mistreatment must have been truly terrible for Hagar to leave the security of her home while she was pregnant, and then attempt to survive in the hostile wilderness with no ready source of shelter, food, water or security.

While she was there, alone and struggling, Hagar likely would have felt absolutely distraught and realised that she had nowhere to go. She'd hit rock-bottom and may have been wondering if she was going to die.

I imagine she was probably crying in desperation as she realised the hopelessness of her predicament.

What thoughts went through her mind? Perhaps she was considering her actions and came to recognise how proud and inappropriate her behaviour had been towards Sarai. Realising that she'd be treated badly again if she chose to return to her mistress, her desperation was almost palpable.

God's angel found her beside the only source of water, and Hagar understood, possibly for the first time in her life, that God was real and that He cared, for her.

In chapter 16 we read:

"The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. The angel said to her, 'Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?'"

"I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied.

The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress.

...Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, **"You are the God who sees me*."** She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?"

...So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born." [NLT]

"You are the God who sees me," she said.

Perhaps her face lit up in wonder as she recognised, "He sees me - an



Sarai presenting Hagar to Abram

unimportant Egyptian servant. He sent a message to me!"

She'd likely have heard Abram and Sarai talking about God on various occasions, and may have assumed that their God was the same as all of the uncaring Egyptian gods she'd grown up with. God proved her wrong by showing her compassion.

Perhaps Hagar didn't know that she had been made in His image, and that every single person is important to Him. She discovered not only that God loved her, but He wasn't some impersonal, distant Being, but someone who involved Himself in the lives of the people He created.

Hagar's Second Message from God

This wasn't the only time that God spoke to Hagar. Several years later after Isaac was born, Sarai (now Sarah) saw Hagar's son Ishmael making fun of her son Isaac and demanded that Abram (now Abraham) send both Hagar and Ishmael away.

Although he was very unhappy about sending his son away, Abraham was reassured by God that a great nation would come from him (Genesis chapter 21:14-21), and he accepted and trusted that God would look after the child:

"So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar's shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and they

* [Hebrew: El-Roi]

wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

When the water was gone, she put her son in the shade of a bush. Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears.

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants."

Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skilful archer, and he settled in the wilderness of Paran." [NLT]

Imagine Hagar's thoughts the second time she was in the wilderness. Perhaps she thought "Oh no, not again! What will become of us? Are we going to die?"

Soon her hope began to fade when their water ran out and it seemed that all was lost. It was almost as if God was pushing Hagar to her absolute limits so that she would remember Him and call out to Him for help.

I wonder why she remained silent. We know that she hadn't forgotten God for earlier in chapter 16 it said, "Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her."

Was Hagar angry with God for allowing it to happen again? Perhaps she felt the terrible injustice of Abraham and Sarah's rejection and thought that God was unfairly punishing her and her son.

How often do we react in a similar kind of way when things don't go as they should, especially when we are treated unjustly?

My Story

Whenever we have struggles, wherever we strive to overcome sin or personal problems, we can become so focussed on the situation or the struggle that we may find it difficult to rest in God and to trust that He has everything under control.

From personal experience I understand how we can become so swallowed up by a difficult situation. After a serious injury at a former workplace, I suffered excruciating pain. While the surgery to reattach two shoulder tendons a month after the work injury was mostly successful, I still suffered agonising pain which affected my sleep and

work and lead to mild depression.

My depression deepened when some workmates continually suggested that I'd made the whole thing up or that I was faking my pain and disability. This added to my stress and increased my depression.

During that time, I prayed and read God's word, but I was in such physical, emotional and mental pain that it affected every area of my life. I cried out to God to ease my suffering but it seemed that God was silent. I never doubted that He was still there, but to me it felt like God was adding to my punishment by remaining silent. I cried out for help and said, "I trust you Lord, even though I can't see a way out of this situation. You know my needs."

When workmates began bullying me and deliberately made negative comments about me to others within earshot, I was filled with emotional pain and anger at their betrayal. I sought help from a psychologist who, rather than helping me, told me that I was *imagining* their poor behaviour simply because I was in pain.

Several months passed before my physical pain slowly began to ease a little, but my depression deepened as the bullying increased, particularly as I clung to the psychologist's suggestion that I was simply over-reacting and the bullying was all in my head.

Though I continued trusting God, He continued remaining silent.

After ten months, their harassment became so bad, that I had to take stress leave from my place of employment where I'd worked for 14 years. There was no support from management, and from what I know now, some senior staff may actually have encouraged the awful bullying behaviour in their subordinate staff.

After His months of silence, God spoke to me – strangely enough, He spoke to me through a joke/pun.

I was talking to a good friend about my workplace and about the chief bully who'd encouraged other

Sarai sent pregnant Hagar away





The angel came to Hagar in the desert.

staff to treat me poorly. At that moment, the foster child I had in my care asked me a question. He was completing a crossword and couldn't figure out the answer.

"What's the word for 'the sound of an ass,'" he asked.

I burst into laughter when I recognised that God was telling me something about the nature of the chief bully.

"Bray," I replied. "The sound of an ass is bray."

God was telling me that the person was of no consequence as they were simply the empty braying of an ass, and that they themselves were simply an ass!

But there was another reason that I'd found it so humorous - there was also a link between the answer and that person's name.

Unfortunately, my depression continued, and within several months, while still on stress leave, I was illegally fired. Then my foster child's behaviour worsened and soon left my home. I suffered panic attacks

and it became difficult for me to leave my home.

One by one I dropped activities and limited my social activities because I couldn't cope.

As a consequence of my physical and psychological injury and subsequent inability to work, I soon found myself in a dire financial situation, and was in danger of losing my home. From month to month, I wondered where I was going to find enough money to pay my home-loan and insurance and still live on \$50 a week for everything else. It came to a head when my rates were due and I had no money to pay the several thousand dollars required.

"Lord, I trust You that somehow I'll get enough money. I'm leaving this in your hands because this situation is so far out of my reach to manage, that it's ridiculous," I said with a laugh, recognising the futility of worrying.

Once again, God was silent.

My financial situation worsened, but then at last, money came through - just enough to pay the rates and just in the nick of time!

The stress of the situation along with my deteriorating health deepened my depression. This went on for another year and then I eventually had to sell my house and move to a new town 400km away because it was the only place where I could afford to live and cope with the repayments of a cheaper home. The move away from the support of family and friends added to my depression. It felt like I'd been exiled and punished for something that I didn't do.

Then slowly, things began to improve.

It took just over six years before I was able to come to terms with what had happened, even though because of my poor health, I now have to live on a disability pension. I've been able to forgive the bullies, and in a way, to forgive God for allowing me to go through such an awful time.

Then house-prices came down back home where my friends and family were, and I recognised that I could finally return after my exile.

At last it felt like I could rest. Although there are still some lingering psychological and emotional issues, I trust that God will help me to work through them.

As I was coming towards the end of that period, God reminded me of the law that He'd set in place for the Israelites regarding their fields (Leviticus 25:3-5). On the seventh year, the land was to remain fallow and untouched so that it could rest and regain its vigour.

In a way, this was similar to my own situation - in my seventh year, I could rest and regain my strength when I was able to return home to the support of my friends and family.

The God Who Sees Me

When we are going through terrible trials; when we are tempted by sin or about to make another dumb choice, rather than struggling with the situation, is it possible for us to turn our focus to God; on the fact that despite our repeated failures or ongoing difficult situations - God's love for us doesn't falter?

We may not always sense His presence, and sometimes all we can do is hold on for the gut-wrenching roller-coaster ride we can sometimes find ourselves in our life, but we are reassured time and time again in the Bible, that His love for us remains unchanged. Psalm 139 verses 1 to 18 wonderfully reminds us how well God knows and cares for us:

"O Eternal One, You have explored my heart and know exactly who I am; You even know the small details like when I take a seat and when I stand up again. Even when I am far away, You know what I'm thinking.

You observe my wanderings and my sleeping, my waking and my dreaming, and You know everything I do in more detail than even I know. You know what I'm

going to say long before I say it. It is true, Eternal One, that You know everything and every-one.

You have surrounded me on every side, behind me and before me, and You have placed Your hand gently on my shoulder.

It is the most amazing feeling to know how deeply You know me, inside and out; the realisation of it is so great that I cannot comprehend it.

Can I go anywhere apart from Your Spirit? Is there anywhere I can go to escape Your watchful presence? If I go up into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in the realm of the dead, You are there. If I ride on the wings of morning, if I make my home in the most isolated part of the ocean, even then You will be there to guide me; Your right hand will embrace me, for You are always there.

Even if I am afraid and think to myself, "There is no doubt that the darkness will swallow me, the light around me will soon be turned to night," You can see in the dark, for it is not dark to Your eyes. For You the night is just as bright as the day. Darkness and light are the same to Your eyes.

For You shaped me, inside and out. You knitted me together in my mother's womb long before I took my first breath. I will offer You my grateful heart, for I am Your unique creation, filled with wonder and awe. You have approached even the smallest details with excellence; Your works are wonderful; I carry this knowledge deep within my soul.

You see all things; nothing about me was hidden from You. As I took shape in secret, carefully crafted in the heart of the earth before I was born from its womb. You see all things; You saw me growing, changing in my mother's womb; every detail of my life was already written in Your book; You

Hagar and Ishmael in the desert, before the angel appeared.



established the length of my life before I ever tasted the sweetness of it.

Your thoughts and plans are treasures to me, O God! I cherish each and every one of them! How grand in scope! How many in number! If I could count each one of them, they would be more than all the grains of sand on earth. Their number is inconceivable!

Even when I wake up, I am still near to You." [VOICE]

Conclusion

When it seems that our world is falling apart, and even when it feels like God is keeping His distance, we can hold fast to His promise that He doesn't love us any less because of our failures or our circumstances.

- His love is big enough for you;
- His strength is big enough for you;
- His plans include you;
- His eyes are upon you - He sees you - You are precious to Him!

Remember:

"He is the God who sees me."

[END]

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Fruits of the Spirit



by **Ziri Dafranchi**
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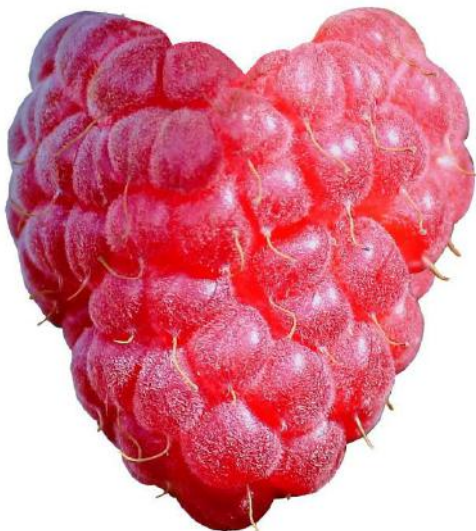
"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Matthew 7:20 [KJV]

Trees are known by the fruits they bring forth: an orange tree is identified by the orange fruits hanging on it. Thus fruits are markers by which even the untrained eyes can identify as a tree type.

Like trees, we are known by our characters: a person is often described as shady if his character is dubious; friendly if he is amiable; bad-tempered if he is prone to irritability; or honest if he is known for speaking the truth.

Underlying the importance of character is the saying: action speaks louder than words. We are more likely to be identified not by the things we say or write but by the things we do. Therefore our greatest preaching and teaching will be in our doings more than our sayings.



If we desire to make a solid impact through our walk with God then we must live in such ways that allows others to see Him in and through us. We must live in Godly ways and our lives displayed as written epistles of the Gospel of Truth.

The Character of God

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Galatians 5:22-23 [KJV]

The first fruit, or character, listed is love. What is love? Contrary to popular concepts, love is not just an emotion (a feeling), it is a spirit; which when we are filled with it, causes us to act in certain ways towards God, ourselves, and others.

Love is more than a verb (an action), more than a noun (a specific thing), and God Himself is that Spirit of love: God is love. (See 1 John 4:8; 16)

To love is to relate with everyone with no exception, as God would relate to them. In other words, doing unto those who hate, despise, irritate, offend, fight, belittle, hurt, etc., we should respond as God does, i.e. gracious, merciful, forgiving, blessing, etc.

That's easier said than done, I know, but not impossible if we rely not on ourselves but on God. When we become born of the spirit, we are born with love inherent in us, we only need to deliberately nurture it, painstakingly ensuring it doesn't die

through negligence, laziness or frustration.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

John 13:34-35 [KJV]

Therefore if we want the world to know we are disciples of Yeshua the Messiah, we have to love everyone. If we desire for more people to embrace the gospel of the Kingdom, we have to love all, always. Note that loving isn't the same as condoning lawlessness or wrongdoings, but is the ability to separate the actions from the individual: so that while we condemn the action we also extend the hand of fellowship and hope to the individual involved.

God alone is able to empower us to bear the fruit of love because God is love.

Joy and Peace

Joy and peace follows on in the list of the fruits of the spirit. While joy can be a feeling of happiness, it is more than that, such as finding contentment and delight in our lives and throughout our journey.

Happiness is a permanent characteristic of the Divine nature. It is not based on circumstances, feelings, events or possessions but is inborn as a result of the indwelling of the Spirit in a person. Hence those filled with the Holy Spirit can rejoice evermore:

"Pray with ceasing."

1 Thessalonians 5:17 [KJV]

and always:

**"Rejoice in the Lord always:
and again I say, Rejoice."**

Philippians 4:4 [KJV]

We are able to rejoice always when the source of our joy is our Lord and Saviour, Yeshua. Those who try to derive their happiness in others ways cannot rejoice always because no condition is permanent: circumstances, feelings, possessions all come and go, sometimes without prior notice.

On the other hand, Yeshua never changes but is the same yesterday, today and forever:

**"Jesus Christ the same
yesterday, and today, and
forever."** Hebrews 13:8 [KJV]

With Yeshua as the source and reason for our joy we can rejoice no matter the situation. This joy (of the Lord) is also empowering and gives us our strength:

**"Then he said unto them, Go
your way, eat the fat, and drink
the sweet, and send portions
unto them for whom nothing is
prepared: for this day is holy
unto our Lord: neither be ye
sorry; for the joy of the Lord is
your strength."**

Nehemiah 8:10 [KJV]

When we strive to keep an attitude of joy, the people around us recognise that our behaviour and attitudes are different to their

own. Out of curiosity they may approach us to know why, which provides us the opportunity to share our testimony and to minister the gospel.

Peace Beyond Comprehension

We have peace which the world can neither give nor understand:

**"Peace I leave with you, my
peace I give unto you: not as
the world giveth, give I unto
you. Let not your heart be
troubled, neither let it be
afraid."** John 14:27 [KJV]

"My peace" is pivotal in the foregoing reference. The peace available to us is the peace of Yeshua, the Prince of Peace. It is a peace the world cannot have and cannot give. It is the peace that can overcome every storm of life, which no other circumstance can overshadow or overcome.

It is there within us through the changing scenes of life: birth, death, successes, failures, famine, surplus, healthy, sickness, hurt, wounded, etc. We only lose it when we take our eyes off our Lord and Saviour.

It is this peace inside us that compels us to follow peace with all men:

**"Follow peace with all men,
and holiness, without which no
man shall see the Lord."**

Hebrews 12:14 8 [KJV]

It is simply impossible to have peace and yet seek 'war' with another. It is this peace within us that makes us peacemakers, with others, whereby we are known as children of God:

**"Blessed are the peace-
makers: for they shall be called
the children of God."**

Matthew 5:9 [KJV]

It is amazing to consider that we have access to a joy and peace which no circumstance can take away from us. May we therefore make the conscious decision not to allow anything to diminish or depreciate joy and peace within us but to maintain both no matter what may come our way. It is only through Christ and the Holy Spirit that we can.

Long-suffering and Gentleness

Other fruits include long-suffering and gentleness.

The strength of a man is revealed not in what he is able to do but by what he is able to endure.

Long-suffering can simply be defined as the ability to endure suffering for a long period of time. Comparatively, long-suffering is senior to endurance which is senior to patience. So in dealing with longsuffering we are also dealing with endurance and patience, which are all fruits of the Spirit.

Patience is defined as the ability or capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious. Patience therefore is contingent on not becoming annoyed or anxious while experiencing a delay, problem or suffering.

So patience is not the ability to wait but how we act while we are been made to wait.

Endurance, on the other hand, is defined as the ability to endure, or to suffer patiently, whether it is an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving up, i.e. not quitting or surrendering.

Patience, endurance and long-suffering are distinguishing characters which separate true



children of God from the rest of humanity, and there's a reason behind our long-suffering:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 [KJV]

Keeping this knowledge always at the forefront of our mind will enable us to wait, meekly wait and murmur not till the end of every ordeal.

Gentle as a Lamb

Our Lord and Saviour, Yeshua is described as a lamb, the Lamb of God. At other times He is also described as a lion, the Lion of Judah.

This gentle nature was revealed during His trial and crucifixion:

"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth." Isaiah 53:7 [KJV]

Yeshua himself taught:

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Matthew 10:16 [KJV]

Gentleness is defined as the quality of being kind, tender or mild-mannered, qualities which

perfectly describe our Lord. We must therefore aspire to be more like Him, since no servant is greater than the master. We do this by endeavouring to deliberately die to self so that we might decrease and He increase in and through us.

Through Yeshua we are able to treat others kindly even in the face of intense provocation or aggression. We are able to remain mild-mannered regardless of the situation. Remember, the world is watching us more than we know.

While we acknowledge that these qualities, although admirable, go contrary to the fallen human nature and thus don't come easily or naturally to us. We are not required or expected to bear these fruits by our natural power or might. We are only able to bear these and other right fruits by abiding in Him and He in us:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:4 [KJV]

This in turn we do by being spiritually minded:

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the

Spirit of Christ, He is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8: 5-14 [KJV]

Goodness and Faith

Goodness is defined as the quality of being morally good or virtuous. Amongst its synonyms are: righteousness, uprightness, integrity, dignity, respectability, principle, nobility.

These all help to broaden our understanding of what goodness means. Interestingly, when someone addressed Yeshua as 'Good Master,' He replied that no one is good, except God:

"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God." Luke 18:18,19 [KJV]

This helps to explain that the goodness which is a fruit of the Spirit is not of a self-righteous type. It is not merely being morally good or wilfully prin-



cipld, this goodness is the righteousness which comes from God through His Spirit in us. It is not by self.

Faith in God

Faith is a fundamental prerequisite for our relationship with God. Through faith we receive forgiveness of sins; obtain answers to our prayers; trust God through difficulties; hope in hopelessness; believe the impossible; and expect eternity in heaven.

None of us has ever seen God with our natural eyes but we've all beheld His power and glory through our spirits, by faith.

We daily converse with the invisible God speaking directly to Him and hearing Him speak back to us, by faith.

We hold on to God's promises with great expectancy, even when their fulfilment seem very unlikely or delayed, by faith.

We look forward to a new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth only righteousness with unwavering certainty, by faith.

Without faith it is impossible to please God:

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Hebrews 11:6 [KJV]

Without faith there's no living for the righteous, because the just shall live by his faith:

"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

Habakkuk 2:4 [KJV]

It means then that we live by faith not by sight, we don't need to figure it out first before we believe it will happen. We don't need to know how it will happen before we believe it will happen. It doesn't need to have happened before for us to believe that it will happen again.

Faith often generates 'firsts,' i.e. first time scenarios. Our faith is helped when we consider who God is: all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, ever-present, the Creator of heaven and earth. What in the world created by Him can be difficult for God?

Our faith is also strengthened by testimonies, ours and others, including the many supernatural accomplishments in the Bible undertaken by God through humans like us. God did it then and will do it again, and again, and again.

Our faith is also fortified through imbibing, and not just reading, the Word, and also through praying in the Holy Spirit, which is not necessarily speaking in unknown tongues.

Spirit-led prayers, sometimes with groaning which don't make sense to our ears, we can through Him: the Messiah in us.

Meekness and Temperance

Meekness and Temperance are the last fruits based on the anchor scripture. To be meek is defined as to be quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on; to be submissive.

While quietness and gentleness are widely accepted virtues, to be easily imposed on or submissive might be regarded as a weakness, by worldly standards. Nobody wants to be a pushover. Yeshua, however, described Himself as meek and lowly:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Matthew 11:29 [KJV]

He even encourages us to emulate Him. Meekness, as a fruit of the Spirit, is not to be a pushover, gullible or prone to manipulation by others but to be humble enough to willingly submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit for guidance, and teaching in our daily living.

It is to count ourselves (knowledge, abilities, possessions, beauty, etc.) as nothing but dung and to rely wholly on God for everything, in both our spiritual and secular ministries. It means we don't do things simply because we can but only because God requires us to: we are not eager to sing in a meeting simply because we have the best voice, we don't aspire to teach or preach simply because we're so gifted but we do whatever we do because the Spirit requires us to, and we do all not to be recognised, appreciated or complimented but for the glory of

Our faith is helped when we consider who God is.



God through whom alone we're able to do such things.

Meekness also translates to being teachable: regardless of how much we already know, there are more things we don't know and can learn. A humble heart is always learning and willing to be taught; is willing to accept correction; is willing to admit he erred.

Control of Self

Another word for temperance is self-control: the ability to exercise restraint over ourselves or to keep one's self, our thoughts and actions in check when and where necessary.

Underlining the importance of temperance is the damage caused when temperance is lacking:

- people become alcoholics not because of drinking alcohol but for failing to control how much of alcohol they drink, or suffer

a critical addiction;

- people may commit murder because of anger but because they couldn't control their anger;
- people embezzle public funds not because they had access to such monies but because they couldn't control their greed.

The point here is that without self control we render ourselves very susceptible to influences which on their own are powerless over us but may become very powerful as a result of yielding our power to them through our failing to restrain ourselves.

The lack of temperance is behind many casualties in life, literally and figuratively. For example, we know of some great ministers and ministries who were brought down by one vice or another such as drugs, sexual immorality, and fraud, to name a few, simply because they let go of self.

We can learn to control ourselves if we choose to put away our bodily desires or cravings, preferring instead to give our spiritual selves over to the subjugation of the Holy Spirit. It starts with a personal choice (Daniel purposed in his heart): where there's the willingness, a way out will be found.

To be Like God

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the

vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

John 15:1&4 [KJV]

Having explored the various types of the fruits of the Spirit, let us now consider in practical terms how to ensure we bear these and more fruits of the Spirit.

Although apple trees, for instance, are known by their fruit, it is possible to see an apple tree barren of apple fruits. Why? There may be a number of reasons, chief amongst which is neglect. When a plant is not nurtured with the right nutritional and other care, growth is usually stunted. In a worst case scenario, the plant dies.

Helping us better understand our true position in this regard is the comparison of us as the branches of the True Vine, in which our Lord and Saviour Yeshua the Messiah is the True Vine.

No tree branch can either exist or survive on its own independent of the mother tree. It's simply impossible. While a branch may be cultivated on its own in a laboratory environment, it would still need to be grafted onto a tree before it can bear fruit. Moreover, even the success of such an experiment depends heavily on the isolated branch being supplied artificially with the same nutrients it would've received if it had remained attached to the original tree.

The point here is that we simply cannot bear the fruits of the Spirit on our own (strength or ability), and it only possible to do so through Yeshua.

Abide in Me

How do we abide in Yeshua? First, we have to make a conscious decision to do so. Perhaps having



realised that without Him we can't do anything good.

This decision will then motivate us to do the things needed in order to abide in Him. We abide in Him by surrendering our all to Him, so that we no longer live for self but only for Him.

It means that our daily decisions and living will be driven by His will and purpose for us. In a manner of speaking, we no longer exist but for Him in and through us. Putting it succinctly, we die to self. That's not the easiest thing to do but when it is our true desire, the power to do so is given from above.

When we abide in Yeshua we also need to let Him abide in us. How? By ensuring His word is becomes ingrained in us:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:7 [KJV]

Remember, He is the Word:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:1 [KJV]

This doesn't happen automatically once we're born anew but through deliberately ingesting

and imbibing the words of the Holy Scripture under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, having pre-determined to do so.

This is more than merely memorising scriptural text in the head but having it embedded in our spirit, and deep within our heart and mind.

This happens through carefully meditating on the Word, not merely reading through, perhaps to fulfil daily quotas or habitual routine.

This is serious business embarked upon as a matter of life or death, perhaps a little similar to a student studying for a crucial examination, or a desperate job seeker preparing for an important interview, or a new army recruit being trained and equipped for his first war engagement. For us, this is imperative.

We know The Word abides in us when our actions are driven by The Word such that all we do correspond with what The Word says. Do you recall was the Bible says: the word of God contains God's Spirit, which is both life and alive, and so is able to 'quicken' or cause to 'come alive' the things in us which would assist us bear the right fruit:

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63 [KJV]

Praise be to our Heavenly Father Who has provided us with everything we need to be His true children. **Amen**

Bibliography:

[KJV] this version of the Bible is in the public domain.



Positions Vacant 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?

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

Email: spagmag@yahoo.com.au

Your help would be appreciated!



Tantalising Trivia

Despite the fact that the brain accounts for only about 3% of our body weight, it uses 20% of the kilojoules in the food we eat, about 15% of the body's blood supply and about 20% of all of the oxygen we breathe.





The God of War VS the God of Love

Is God in the Old Testament less loving than God in the New Testament?



by **Vicki Nunn**
Editor

Introduction

For some people there can seem to be a disparity between God as we read about Him in the Old Testament and the God we hear about in the New Testament.

First, we must recognise that many of us have grown up in a society that has deliberately tried to mislead us about who God is. It's an insidious deception designed to steer people away from God, by providing half truths and lies and creating doubt in our minds.

This specific deceit is one that we may hear about from an early age:

The God in the Old Testament is violent and is always killing people or asking the Israelites to kill people. That's not a God of love!

AND

Jesus in the New Testament is a softly spoken, kindly teacher who loves everyone and would certainly never harm anyone physically. That's not a God of war!

If the person of God in the Bible seems to be inconsistent, it's certainly likely to encourage people to doubt the Bible's authenticity and authority. As a consequence, this is likely to encourage them to doubt the validity of Christianity, and to feel justified in mocking our faith.

This idea has permeated our society and makes it easier for non-believers to dismiss God.

This is not the first of the lies that we hear about God and Christianity. Another is that the Bible is full of errors, and yet, if we were to ask someone to point out those errors, they're unlikely to know the specifics, because they prefer to believe the lie, and to find out it's a lie would mean that have to give Christianity a second look. Most non-believers grasp hold of anything they can use to condemn and criticise Christians and our faith.

Another common deception is the watering down of sin. Society today places a higher value on tolerance than it does on morality. Is it any wonder then that newer generations are growing up without any clear guidelines about what God says is good and what is not?

In movies, in the media, and sometimes even in our churches, Jesus is presented as a mild, even meek God, and it's not often that pastors want to tackle the subject of Jesus Christ hating evil.

While He mixed with sinners and some who were considered the lowest in His society, Jesus loved them, but at no time did He condone or encourage them in their sins – quite the opposite. He spoke to them in love, but told them to go and sin no more.

Consider the holy rage that Jesus demonstrated in the temple when He overturned tables, is one that may not be explained well or

even shared from the pulpit. As a consequence, we often don't equate the meek and mild Jesus we've heard about, with the angry God in the Old Testament who had to punish sin.

There are many other lies too, but these particular ones are important to consider in connection with this article.

Israel Commanded to Destroy Nations

When the Israelites were freed from Egypt, God reminded them of His promise that He would give them a land to call their own, if they worshipped only Him, and followed His laws.

After Israel's disobedience and their lack of trust in God during the trip to their promised land, the older generations were punished by wandering in the desert for forty years. After the older Israelites died, God reminded the younger generation of His promise to give them a land of their own, a promise he had made to their ancestor Abraham.

Moses relayed God's message to them which made it clear that the Israelites would have to rid the land of its ungodly people so that they could safely live there.

God's purpose for wiping out the inhabitants was two-fold:

1. To punish the inhabitants for their sinfulness; and
2. To ensure that the Israelites would not be corrupted by the sinful and extreme wickedness of the nations residing there. Destroying the wicked people would encourage the Israelites



to focus on and remain in relationship with their one true God.

“Moses: As the Eternal, your True God, is bringing you into the land where you’re going to live when you cross the Jordan, He’ll drive out many nations ahead of you...

The Eternal your God will put them in your power. You must crush them; destroy them completely! Don’t make any treaties with them, and don’t show them any mercy. Above all, don’t intermarry with them! Don’t marry your daughters to any of their sons, and don’t marry your sons to any of their daughters.

Eternal One: This would cause your enemies to turn your children away from Me to worship other gods.

Moses: So this is what you must do to these nations instead: tear down their altars, smash their monoliths, chop down their sacred poles, and throw the idols they’ve carved into the fire!

Remember: you’re a people set apart for the Eternal your God; He is your God and has chosen you to be His own possession - His special people - out of all the peoples on the earth...

He brought you out of Egypt with overwhelming power and liberated you from slavery to Pharaoh the king because He loved you and was keeping the oath He swore to your ancestors.

I want you to know that the Eternal your God is the only true God. He’s the faithful God who keeps His covenants and shows loyal love for a thousand generations to those who in return love Him and keep His commands.

But He holds personally accountable those who hate Him, and He destroys them; He does not delay when anyone hates Him, but He holds them personally accountable. Therefore, be very careful to obey the commands and rules and judgments I’m giving you today.

If you pay attention to these judgments and keep them carefully, the Eternal your God will keep the covenant He made with your ancestors and show you His loyal love. He’ll love you and bless you and increase your population. He’ll bless your children, and He’ll bless your agriculture.”

Deuteronomy 7:1-13a [VOICE]

Note the section which refers to those who hate God:

“He holds personally accountable those who hate Him, and He destroys them; He does not delay when anyone hates Him, but He holds them personally accountable.”

Verse 16 says:

“You are to destroy all the nations the Eternal, your True God, puts in your power. Don’t show them any pity! You must not worship their gods - that behaviour is a deadly trap!”

[VOICE]

These two passages demonstrate the reason why God ‘goes to war’ against ungodly people (as mentioned earlier): to both punish the inhabitants for their sinfulness; and to ensure that the Israelites would not be corrupted by the sinful and abhorrent behaviours of the nations residing there.

By doing so, the Israelites would more easily remain within God’s acceptable guidelines to be His holy people, and to keep their focus on Him, and to worship Him, their one true God.

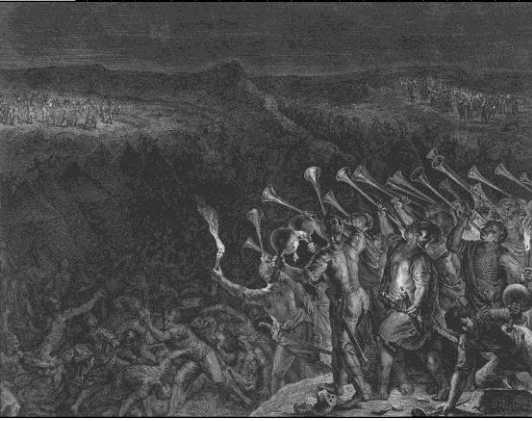
What Nations Did God Promise to Destroy and Why?

In Deuteronomy 7:1, God gave the command to destroy seven nations when they entered the promised land:

“...Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.”

In the case of the Amorites for example, God had much earlier made a vow to destroy them for their sins.

Back in Genesis 15:16, God promised Abraham that his descendents would be a great people, though they would be



Gideon and his men attack and
kill the Midianites

enslaved in a foreign land for four hundred years.

He vowed that after that time, the Amorites would be destroyed:

“After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.” [NLT]

It's apparent that while the Amorites were sinful at the time of Abraham, their sinfulness would eventually worsen to the degree that they would eventually warrant complete destruction.

While this may seem to suggest that God intended to destroy them all along, as with the citizens of Nineveh during Jonah's time, God gave them ample opportunity to turn away from their wickedness, but unlike the Ninevites, they did not change their ways.

It is likely then, that God gave each of these nations an opportunity to turn from evil, but instead they continued on a downward spiral to utter wickedness.

In What Way Were These Nations Sinful?

There are many ways in which the other peoples were sinful. While to many non-Christians and non-Jews, it may seem ridiculous that worshipping other gods could possibly be that

harmful. If we understand that the gods these people worshipped were immoral and corrupt, then we can begin to understand why their own behaviour was also wicked. In addition to their violence:

- prostitution in the temples was a common practice;
- gang rape was normal;
- incest and adultery were typical;
- children as well as adults were sacrificed to their gods;
- bestiality was accepted;
- worshiping of idols and its practices was widespread, and
- barbarity and immorality were common and accepted,

There was no such thing as sanctity of life, no compassion, and no concept of decency etc.

God knew how contagious this evil could become and how vulnerable the Israelites would be if they were repeatedly exposed to it. He understood that they were unlikely to be strong enough to resist it in their human weakness.

History clearly demonstrates that our world has rarely been free of wars and conflicts, and so too were the times in which Israel lived. Nations around them often came against them in war in an attempt to destroy them, to take their land and possessions, to enslave them and to treat them cruelly and wickedly.

Recent history is a good indication of how little man's nature has changed. While the concept of pacifism is a lovely idea, and some people espouse the belief that man has evolved into better beings, the reality is that wars are inevitable because we live in a broken world and without God, we cannot escape

our sinful nature and its repercussions.

Consequences of Failing to Obey God's Command to Destroy the Evil Nations

The consequences of not ridding their promised land of its inhabitants became apparent during the period of the judges:

1. There were ongoing conflicts with other nations; and
2. The Israelites turned away from God

1. Ongoing conflicts with other nations

At different times in the four hundred years leading to King Saul's reign, the Canaanites, Midianites and the Philistines sent raiding and warring parties against the Israelites.

During that period, under the guidance of the prophet Deborah, the Israelites defeated the Canaanites.

Later, Gideon defeated the Midianites, and we know that Samson attacked the Philistines several times. One of the Israelites bigger threats, the Philistines, maintained a long-term aggression towards them.

During the reign of King Saul, the Israelites battled against the Ammonites, the Philistines and the Amalekites, and it was in battle against the Philistines that King Saul and his sons were killed.

In the time of King David, he recaptured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, forced the Philistines out of Israel and subdued several surrounding nations including Edom, Ammon and Moab, and the Aramean kingdoms of Damascus and Zobah.

It's quite evident then that there were ongoing dangers both from those who had originally resided in the land and from nearby nations, and so it was necessary to remove the danger to the Jewish people.

2. Israelites Turned Away from God

During the four hundred year period after Joshua had died and before King Saul came to power, the Bible says that the Israelites stopped worshipping God, which was likely as a direct consequence of being influenced by other ungodly people remaining in their land. In Judges 21:25 it reads:

"In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." [NLT]

It is clear even from this single verse, that the Israelites were no longer putting their faith and trust in God, but allowed themselves to be

influenced by other nations and also led by their own sinful natures.

We can confirm the behaviour of the Israelites towards God simply by reading more of the Old Testament, where we learn that they allowed themselves to be swayed by the behaviours of other nations, time and time again. In fact, their third king, the once remarkably wise King Solomon, was induced by his wives to worship other gods in his later years.

It is in these same books of the Old Testament that we read about how the Israelites repeatedly turned their backs on God and succumbed to the temptation to worship other gods.

Perhaps if the Israelites had succeeded in completely ridding their land of foreigners, they may have remained more faithful to God.

Why No Wars in the New Testament?

Why didn't God also command Israel to destroy other nations in the New Testament? In fact, why didn't God command the Jewish people to go to war against the Romans who had taken control of their country?

Anyone who has studied the Bible will know that over the centuries, God repeatedly forgave the Jewish people for their rebellion and sin. Time and time again He forgave them when they disobeyed His laws, worshiped idols, sinned and intermarried with other nations; and yet He continued to love them.

In addition to worshipping other gods, the Israelites came to

embrace many of the customs of neighbouring evil nations and were strongly influenced by them, and as a result, easily fell away from worshipping the one true God.

Despite the many times God sent prophets to warn His people, they continued their rebellion and sin.

Eventually God came to the point when He gave up on the Israelites as His people and 'divorced them.' In Jeremiah 3:8 we read:

"...I sent unfaithful Israel away with a decree of divorce for these acts of adultery..." [VOICE]

Before the New Testament we see that a change had come about in God's relationship with the Israelites. While He still loved them, He was no longer leading them as their God nor giving them direct commands as His people. This is one reason why we do not read that God commanded His people to go to war in the New Testament – even though He still had relationship with particular individuals, the Israelites were no longer His people, as a nation.

Additionally, when the Israelites had been allowed to rebuild their temple under Nehemiah, and to return to their religious routines, there came about a significant shift in the way they did that. Their worship became legalistic and incorporated as a part of their traditions, rather than worshipping God as an act of love.

Even though in the New Testament times there were individuals and small groups who chose to resist the Roman occupiers, the majority of the Israelites were happy to keep the status quo and to remain under



Roman soldiers

Roman rule, as long as they could maintain their religious practices.

Another more obvious reason is that Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection brought about a cessation in the need for adherence to God's laws and the requirement for sacrifice.

Also, as people of all nations, were then incorporated into the new plan for reconciliation with God, this meant that the original requirement to destroy and remove gentiles from Israel's land, was no longer relevant.

Change to God's Laws

We should recognise that God has not changed from day one to today. He is still a holy God who rejects evil people, yet still remains a God of love, who wants relationship with us.

We know that Jesus' purpose was ultimately so that every person, regardless of race, could be reconciled with God, and we understand that the old sacrificial system and its laws were insufficient and were no longer needed after Jesus.

Consider that the Jewish laws and rules by that time had become ridiculously complex and the Jewish leaders were focused on the need for strict adherence to the law above all else, including loving God.

In Matthew 5:38-45 Jesus says:

"You know that Hebrew Scripture sets this standard of justice and punishment: take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say this, don't fight against the one who is working evil against you. If someone strikes you on the right cheek,

you are to turn and offer him your left cheek. If someone connives to get your shirt, give him your jacket as well. If someone forces you to walk with him for a mile, walk with him for two instead. If someone asks you for something, give it to him. If someone wants to borrow something from you, do not turn away.

You have been taught to love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you this: love your enemies. Pray for those who torment you and persecute you - in so doing, you become children of your Father in heaven. He, after all, loves each of us - good and evil, kind and cruel." [VOICE]

Jesus wasn't saying that the evil that people did was acceptable to God, or that He approved of their evil nature, rather that God wants to have relationship with each of us.

He was also trying to point out that adherence to the law was not to be our ultimate goal, but that we were supposed to love our neighbours

and to love God, just as God loves everyone equally.

The War Against Evil Began in Eden and Continues Today

God's plan to do away with sin and evil was put into place with Adam and Eve as they left the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 3:15 He gave a promise, even back at that early time, that someone would come who would strike against Satan - this was the first promise of the Messiah.

Throughout the Old Testament, God tried repeatedly to reconcile with His people after they rebelled. One of many examples can be found in Ezekiel 18:25-32 where God spoke through the prophet and explained that He hated evil but would rather that people turned to Him for forgiveness and to change their ways.

This is not the speech of a hateful, vengeful God, but One of love; One who wanted to bring His people into a loving relationship with Him:

"You say, 'The Lord's way is not fair at all!' Hear Me, people of Israel: You think My way is unfair? You are the ones with unjust ways!

If a righteous person turns away from the right path and chooses to act wickedly, he will die for it. He will die because of the sin he committed.

But if a wicked person turns from the wicked path and chooses to be honest and live a righteous life, he will end up saving his life! Because he thought about his wrongs and turned away from the wicked things he'd done, putting them behind him, then he will surely live. He will not die!

Yet the people of Israel continue to complain, "The Lord's way is not fair at all!" You think My way is unfair, people of Israel? Don't you think you are the ones with perverted ways?

Therefore, people of Israel, I will judge each of you according to what you have done. Repent! Turn from your wicked ways so that your sins do not trip you up! Get rid of all your wicked ways! Acquire a new heart and a new spirit!

**God has not
changed...
He is still a
holy and just
God.**

Why would you choose to die, people of Israel? I don't enjoy watching anyone die, so turn back to Me and live!"

[VOICE]

The war against evil continues into the New Testament where we discover that Jesus did not come to be an avenging Messiah for Israel, to destroy their oppressors, but as a new means of reconciling people to God.

While the war against evil remained, the method for doing battle with it would change with Jesus' death and resurrection, and the means of reconciling with God would also be altered forever.

No More Command For War Today?

The war against evil itself, continues today. Perhaps at no other time in history has evil been so allowed to flourish:

- The concept of 'me above all others' is actively encouraged in many countries. This selfishness is contributing to the fracturing of our societies, and will perhaps play a major role in its eventual destruction.
- Fame and fortune are promoted as the ultimate aim for individuals, while moral decency, and love and compassion for others is being left by the wayside as a casualty of selfishness.
- In once Christian countries, our religious freedoms are being

taken from us, often in subtle ways, one piece at a time, under the banner of 'tolerance,' meaning tolerance of any behaviour deemed as acceptable, which is oftentimes enabled by the media.

- Crimes of genocide and the murder of Christians and other religious minorities are being repeatedly ignored by western media. Instead the media sells us lies, rather than tells us truths.

They deliberately mock good moral ethics and Christianity and actively drive increasing hostility towards the very people who work for the betterment of our society through their compassion, love and christian action.

- In the media and most teaching establishments, evolution is taught as fact rather than as a theory, and creationism and Christians are ridiculed; and
- Government leaders and those in authority are increasingly given immunity when they commit crimes. In addition, they are encouraged to rule while possessing secret, selfish, and sometimes quite frightening agendas.
- Abortion has become commonplace, disguised under the claim of 'my body: my choice,' rather than the reality of selfishness. Around one million babies (if not more) in the US alone, are being aborted annually.

Evidence that Man has Not Changed

Possibly the best evidence to demonstrate how little man has changed since Adam and Eve, is the way each of our 'civilised'

societies deliberately choose to ignore and trivialise the taking of human life when it comes to abortion, particularly the life of an innocent, helpless baby.

God makes it clear in the Bible that murder is not acceptable, so are there some instances in which we as Christians can seriously consider abortion as an option? Perhaps when the mother's life is in danger due to the pregnancy it may be considered, but these cases are so scarce that it can rarely be legitimately used as an excuse.

The Guttmacher Institute in the USA provided some startling statistics in relation to abortion in the USA:

1. 19% of pregnancies in 2014 resulted in abortion¹;
2. Around 926,200 abortions were performed in 2014;
3. Surprisingly, 54% of the women claimed they were Catholic or Protestant; and
4. Worldwide during 2010–2014², an estimated fifty-six million induced abortions occurred each year. This number represents an increase from fifty million annually during 1990–1994, and doesn't include statistics for usage of either the 'morning after' or the 'abortion' pills.

More and more women are choosing to use the 'morning after' or 'abortion' pills over induced abortions. Another option which has now become available is an injectable abortion medication.

Literally hundreds of millions of unborn children have been and continue to be murdered.

In fact, with contraception so easily accessible in the western world and more reliable than ever, surely abortion should be decreasing. The suggestion then is



that abortion is more a matter of convenience, and that some women are using abortion as a means of contraception.

While Guttmacher Institute's studies claim that abortion levels have declined in the US, they admit that their studies only capture about half of all abortions. Additionally, the study doesn't include statistics for the increasing use of the 'abortion' pill, or the 'morning after' pill with statistics suggesting there's been a 43% increase in abortions through use of the 'abortion pill' alone.^{3,4}

In the UK the 'abortion pill' is illegal, and yet purchase of these pills is increasing with women up to 39 weeks pregnant taking it.⁵ The increased usage of these types of pills has also been reported in Australia^{6,7} and Europe⁴.

Consider also that a good portion of people who are pro-abortion would also likely be anti-war, but do not see this as hypocrisy.

Society's Evils

While I could probably list many more evidences of evil in modern times, it's important to recognise that we must remain vigilant to the ways in which it is permeating our society, and to committing to fighting against it.

We cannot stand idly by and whine about the state of our country, if we are not prepared to fight against evil. We can't allow ourselves to feel overwhelmed or give into apathy or be lulled into believing that resisting evil is somehow biased. We must fight it:

- Through prayer;
- Through developing and growing our relationship with God and to hungering for Him;

- Through actively fighting to change laws that are wrong/evil;
- Through giving of our time, money and/or energies to churches and organisations that seek to help those in need and to encouraging our brothers and sisters in their walk;
- Through helping the weak and the vulnerable both in our country and overseas whether financially, through prayer, or through encouraging the UN and leaders of different countries and our own, to help them.
- Through being willing to stand up for what is right, even though it may alarm or hurt us.

There is still an enormous physical battle to come which is revealed to us through the book of Revelation. Although details of exactly how this will happen may be interpreted differently, we know that this final battle will see Jesus leading heaven's armies to

vanquish evil.

Conclusion

God has not changed; He is still a holy and just God who hates evil and punishes those who embrace it, and neither has there been a change in God's desire for us to have relationship with Him.

From Genesis through to Revelation we see God's unfolding plan for us to be reconciled with Him, and for evil to be overcome.

While it may almost seem that these two aspects of God are in discord, we should realise that it is part of

God's holy and good nature to abhor evil and yet to love us, and then perhaps we can understand, even if only a little, that there is no conflict.

As God's utter holiness and goodness is in direct opposition to evil, ultimately evil must be utterly defeated so that we can be forgiven and one day fully live in harmony with Him. [END]

56 million abortions are performed each year, and this number is increasing.

God of War



VS



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It's Ok to Feel Sad



by **Michael Hannett**

SPAG Magazine Journalist

You know, it's ok to feel sad right now. We are in trying times and we are all human. Max Lucado touched on this in a video he posted, and I agree. We need to allow ourselves to process our feelings, but he also said, and this is true, "Don't get stuck there." Process the feelings yes, but don't let them control you and hold you back.

The thing is, if we allow ourselves to feel the sadness, but we don't deal with it, and we don't fight through it and instead get stuck in it, it can consume us. When that happens, we begin to believe one of the biggest lies there is, that there is no hope.

Remember, there is always hope! God exists, Jesus is alive, so there is always hope, even when our circumstances or struggles seem far beyond any kind of help. We can cling to His promise never to leave us, for in this crazy world, He is the one constant, the one person on whom you can completely rely.

Jesus said that we would face struggles in life. It's just a part of living, but He also promised that He would be there through it all, and that we would overcome it through Him. He promised us it would be a momentary affliction.

There are going to be times of sorrow in life. There is going to be pain. But the good news is. God has given us victory over it all. The good news is, He's already made a way through it. There is



no need for us to remain in sorrow, and we should never lose hope. For good times shall arise from the darkness. The light in our lives will return. We will have peace, because we have a Father in heaven who loves us, and will never let us go.

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

John 16:33 [NLT]

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 [ESV]

"But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."

Isaiah 40:31 [NLT]

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

John 14:27 [ESV]



A Climate Change Letter for Everyone



by Cath
Chegwidden

First appeared in the Daily
Declaration

I read yet another climate article in The Sun Herald early this year by Jacqueline Maley,¹ and saw the same rhetoric that is being poured into our minds from the media everywhere, but not once is anyone looking into why it is so. That is, why are these politicians seemingly slow to act?

Everyone is pushing the economic wagon, but from my reading of the situation, the leadership is stuck between a rock and a hard place. I'm from Newcastle. Yes I know, huge coal exports! Don't get those knickers in a knot though, because this coal is unique. This coal is metallurgical coal, is called anthracite, is double burning, and is the hardest and most efficient in the world.

'What has that to do with climate control,' you ask? Well, it is required for blast furnaces to process metal. 'So?' you ask. Well, think about what is necessary for clean, green energy: solar panels,² wind farms, wiring for equipment for the energy to be conveyed, electrical cars, in fact all of those

technologies that are being cried out for, for the betterment of our climate.

Think of that computer on your desk, the iPhone you use, the printer, even the paper clips and staples, including the kitchen sink - they all started life in a blast furnace. Next time you slip that jewellery on, please think. It's metallic too.

The other material requiring this quality of coal is glass. As you look across the city, really look, see how often this product is part of our world. As you switch on the windscreen wipers to clear that smoke dust from those terrible fires look what's there - you guessed it, glass! Recycling metal and glass requires metallurgical coal too! Isn't that interesting?

After Greta Thunberg spoke angrily at the UN about the older generation "doing nothing for thirty years" in her synthetic blouse with plastic buttons, I was very concerned about her knee-jerk outburst as no-one seems to be seriously looking at this from an individual perspective as to how each of us - that's you and me - are not ready to do our part.

Petroleum by-products are in the fashionable clothing, swimsuit,

exercise gear, stockings and socks. What about the commercial packaging producers, and excess plastic used to contain products, like bottled drinks?

Rather than attacking the politicians, how about addressing the source of the problem: the supermarkets and packaging producers? What about the use of synthetics and industries like the fashion industry? If councils can have bags made from cornflower starch, why isn't an enterprising scientist investigating ways to bring change to packaging generally?

Oops! I wonder what is required to produce those bags? A steel wind turbine perhaps? Metal machinery? Electricity must be there too, so wiring's involved.

Walking and biking³ seem a much better idea than driving. Make that walking only, because that bike has both metal and petroleum by-products as its source.

What about that fashionable clothing? Recycle it, after all, if we are genuine about this, we should be wearing natural silk, wool, linen, bamboo and hemp. Cotton's out, because pesticides are necessary in its production. As for colour, only natural dyes will do, and natural mordents (urine was favoured in the past) to fix those dyes.

Then there are those fleece hoodies, dressing gowns and blankets. Did you realise they are causing more microplastics than anything else in our oceans? But wait, to weave this material we



require machinery made from metal, and electricity to run it, and wind turbines and solar panels to 'make it green' and a partridge in a pear tree' - metallurgical coal.

This is starting to sound like that song: *"There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza, dear Liza, there's a hole in the bucket dear Liza, a hole ... well fix it, dear Henry, dear Henry fix it ..."*

Think of all those things that you use each day derived from petroleum products: your toothpaste, shampoo, hair dryer, toothbrush, comb, the detergent in your dishwasher and washing machine, the petrol and diesel in your vehicle, that insect spray for those pesky mosquitoes, the cleaning solution you use to clean your desk and keyboard, the computer and keyboard itself, some furniture, the pod in the coffee machine, the TV screen you observe for news and fire updates, come on now, we are the criminals here and need to be a lot more informed and sensitive to what we are doing as individuals to affect the environment.

Population⁴ has grown rapidly as well, compared to my childhood (I'm in my sixties in case you were wondering). At the end of the war (WWII not WWI - I'm not that old!), Australia's population was roughly 7 million. Now we have about 24 million, I believe. It's not only those cows producing CO₂. Over 7.8 billion people are living on our planet today, compared with a little over 3 billion in 1939. Hold your breath and save the world!

As to the carbon footprint and food, this means no meat, fish, or poultry, and this includes meat substitutes from soy (after all, this grows in farmers' fields and

requires pesticides and machinery to harvest the beans, trucks to transport to processing plants, where more energy is used in canning and packaging).

No imported food, because of the negative effect on the climate and environment, and absolutely no coffee from Brazil, no tea from Kenya and India ... is this making you think outside that blinkered world you're living in?

As for flight to get away from it all: no planes, as aircraft are more heavily polluting our planet than any other form of transport. No ships unless they are wind-propelled, but oops again! No planes, or ships, or trains or cars, or motorcycles, or bikes - they are all made from metal, and metal requires a blast furnace, and the best coal in the world for this is metallurgical coal called anthracite from Newcastle.

"There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza, dear Liza, there's a hole in the bucket dear Liza a hole. Well fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry, well fix it dear Henry, dear Henry fix it. With what shall I fix it dear Liza, dear Liza?" ...

I think by now you may be getting an idea that this needs to begin with us!

The late Ian Kiernan of the "Clean Up Australia Campaign", and Craig Reucassel, who drew our attention to waste with the "The War on Waste" program on the ABC, were both individuals who passionately practiced what they preached, and didn't merely scream their angst at the world without really thinking about solutions and acting on them.

These men were visionary and on the right track. This whole issue is extremely complex, and

will require a huge rethink. How do you eat an elephant? A bite at a time, but each bite will have to be a considered and a quality one. That will require visionary scientists who don't only invent solutions, but really consider all the ramifications of their scientific breakthroughs, unlike many of their predecessors whose inventions, like plastics, have brought us to this point.

Also, we have to look to our own actions: excessive consumption - when is enough, enough? You can point the finger at political leaders, and not always remember that when you point that finger, there are three fingers pointing back at you. [END]

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Status: Adopted



Petro Swart

Press Service
International

One weekend my roommate and I did a crazy thing: we adopted a dog after starting our master's degrees less than two months previously. We live in a small two-bedroom apartment that is currently missing half of the bottom few shutters on the front blinds. Thanks to said dog one fateful Thursday night.

He is sweet and snuggly, excitable and jumpy. He goes 100km/h and then is out like a light on a blanket on the couch, never just on the couch – he's a fancy boy. He is everything that you expect a young old hound dog to be.

Jackson is eighteen months old. Eighteen months he lived without us. He slept somewhere other than my bed and ate something other than Sarah's blinds. His paws are rough from walking somewhere other than our carpet.

His aversion to the rain started somewhere other than our walk to get lunch. Someone else taught him how to sit and shake, and that outside is where he goes toilet.

Someone else; somewhere else; something else.

History

When adopting a dog, it is important to know their history: how they are around other animals and people, why they are at the adoption centre and if they need special care.

Jackson, however, came with zero history other than he was an escape artist that another family returned after wanting to adopt him.

Laying in a ball under my arm, snot from his kennel cough dripping onto my white bed sheets, my heart broke for my little bundle of energy. I wanted to know where he had come from and why it was that no one wanted him.

My human nature wanted to know his history, but then my heart told my mind that she did not care. It did not matter to me where he came from or what he had previously done. All that mattered was that he was here now; he was mine now.

A Gentle Whisper

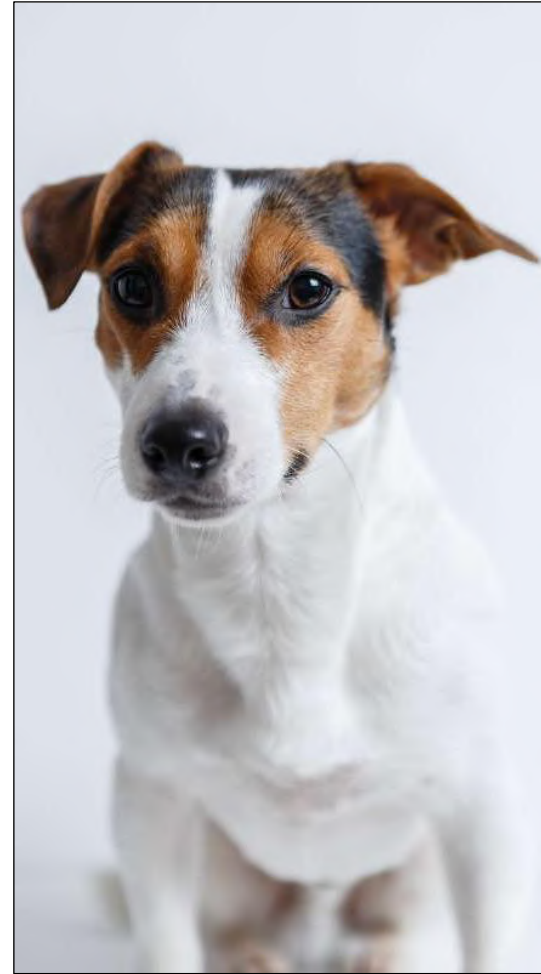
As He so often does, when I was laying there with my exhausted puppy, God gently whispered into my heart. With a kind smile in His eye He said, "That's how I feel about you. About all of you."

The peace that hung so tangibly in my room at that moment is almost indescribable.

It does not matter to my Father the dirty sidewalks that I have dragged my feet along, nor the mud that clung to my clothes when I knocked on His door.

It did not matter who had seen me take my first steps or taught me how to use a knife.

It did not matter if I destroyed His throw pillows or emptied his cupboards.



All that mattered was that I was inside; in His home. All that mattered was that I was His.

The First Promise

From the second I put the leash on Jackson's collar and walked him through the shelter's door, I have repeatedly promised that we will not take him back. Not after he left a puddle on the rug, nor after eating the blinds. No, he is ours now and will not ever go back to the shelter.

If my flawed human heart can feel that certain about my love being unconditional for a tornado on legs, how much more secure are we in the Father's love?

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans chapter 8, verses 37 to 39
[ESV]

Nothing could separate us from His love; a love that He chose to give to us and lavishes upon us freely. A love so undeserved, so healing, so pure. A love so all encompassing. A love carrying the label of child and the gift of eternity.

A Child in His Home

Now, I am only a dog-mom and do not face nearly half the terrors that parents of real children face, but I have somewhat learnt what it means to have a child in my home.

Nothing is ever clean, tidy or in order. Our apartment was once spotless, now it is wild, but it is

still home. It is somehow more home in amongst the chaos than it was when it was in order. There is now always noise and laughter, and the whole apartment, instead of just the four walls of my room, feels like home.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

John chapter 14, verses 1 to 4 [ESV]

No matter how many times we eat his blinds, God is never ever going to return us to the shelter. He'll discipline us for sure, but He will also feed us dinner and make sure we go to bed knowing we are loved, because He is a good, good Father. [END]

Biography:

Petro is a currently completing her Masters degree in Sport Leadership at the University of Miami (Oxford, Ohio). Originating from South Africa and growing up in New Zealand has given Petro a love for all things sport and travel. Writing is Petro's way of making sense of the world around her and expressing the words God places on her heart

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



A Bit of Fun!

~ Collective Nouns ~

We know that a group of birds is called a flock, and a group of puppies is a litter, so for a bit of fun in issue 11, we asked our readers to put on their creative thinking caps and come up with some original, clever or humorous 'collective nouns' of their own.

Dayna, a friend of mine on Facebook suggested this, and I thought it was a fun idea.

Following are suggestions we received and a couple of my own.

Perhaps you could come up with your own or challenge your friends and families to get creative:

- An imagination of fiction writers;
- A blaze of fire-fighters;
- A timber of lumberjacks;
- A scatter of children;
- A migraine of mothers;
- A tune-up of instruments;
- A silence of librarians;
- A temptation of sinners;
- A passion of pastors;
- A bruise of boxers;
- An aggravation of politicians;
- A pi of mathematicians;
- A polygon of geometrists;
- A squadron of wasps;
- An uncertainty of voters;
- A fire of Samsung 7s;
- A flock of tweets;
- A string of puppies;
- A butt of baboons;
- A pretentiousness of actors; and
- A trembling of seismologists



Wherever You Go, Take Your Faith With You



by Paul Lewis

Press Service International

In our current context, I find an idea at work, working like leaven through the whole dough. Even Christians have bought into it. It is slowly affecting our ideas and beliefs. To help you understand what this idea is, let me tell you about an event that occurred several months ago.

I remember sitting in a meeting called to strategically address issues affecting our youth in Jamaica. At this meeting, the influence of Christianity on the culture of our youth was called to the fore as part of the problem. Comments like 'women are demeaned because of the influ-

ence of the Bible and how it paints women as objects' were made.

It was then recognised that the answer was seeing Christian beliefs as more meaningful and beneficial once practised in a private context. Once it is practised publicly it gets problematic. Essentially, the public sphere is no place for religious expression. As such it is compartmentalised: we go to church and play an active role there, we have personal devotions, but among unbelievers in any context whether work or play our biblical worldview is left unsaid or undone.

Some may argue that that this is as a result of fear of expressing

our Christian beliefs. I am, however, talking about the failure to do and say what we believe on the principle of not bringing it into the public space.

I am very aware that we live in a culture that would love to 'have their cake and eat it.' Who wouldn't? But the truth is all things do not work that way. We can't hope to redefine everything to our benefit and without consequence. Patricia Klein, in the introduction to C.S. Lewis's 'Virtue and Vice', says it best:

"Both virtue and vice have been gutted, stripped of their power, and left empty of truth. Sadly, eviscerating the words does nothing to alter the conditions the words originally described, and then, more sadly still, we are left with no words to describe powerful and real matters. Without the words, how can we ever hope to learn, to understand, to change?"

The Dilemma

The dilemma is the same with how we view Christianity. Its purpose is redefined to the point that it becomes something else. In his essay, 'Is Theology Poetry', C.S. Lewis says:

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

Essentially anything, including Christianity redefined, is consequential. A thing must serve its purpose or it becomes meaningless. If Christianity is true, then without its light we are still wandering in darkness with



an inability to navigate properly.

What I have discussed so far can be called 'privatising of Christianity'. How has this happened? Mainly through the introduction of relativism, the offspring of a postmodern context. In this postmodern context there is no uniform, absolute system. Ideas and beliefs are relative and subjective; all views are equally right and accepted.

The way in which Christianity is seen is no different and the minute we promulgate our ideas, using terms like: 'only way,' 'the truth' and 'the life,' we are lambasted or told that we are intolerant. Thus we are forced into a private enclave of expression. With the advent of this ideology all ideas are called on to accommodate this cultural shift of every idea being seen as equal and valid.

Know that you can't change reality without consequences. For example: if I felt like redefining the speed limit, it can be done, but is it without consequence? Know that limits are there for a reason.

In his Templeton address, Alexander Solzhenitsyn makes this observation:

"More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: Men have forgotten God, that's why it all happened."

Solzhenitsyn attributes this ruinous revolution to men 'forgetting God'. In this context religion and even Christianity lost its public prominence, if one wanted to practise their belief they did so privately. I see the privatising of Christianity as nothing but God taken out of the picture, but as was said before, not without consequences.

What is it We Believe?

The Christian must, in light of this, understand what he believes. It is of utmost importance. As mentioned before, if a thing does not realise its purpose, then why does it exist? Should Christianity

be meaningful to Christians only? A thousand times no! Jesus himself said it best in Matthew chapter 5, verses 14-16:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven." [NKJV]

The core of Christianity is public: it is meant to be shared and promulgated. To ask a Christian or tell yourself as a Christian that you can be a Christian 'just for you' means that you do not accept the core tenets of Christianity.

When you knock on the door of the public sphere and are invited in on condition that you keep your beliefs to yourself, remember to say unapologetically, 'If I am to come in, it is always plus one because I cannot check my Christianity at the door.' [End]

Biography:

Paul Lewis is a Staff Worker for Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship in Kingston Jamaica, where he also resides.

He has aspirations of becoming a Christian Apologist and he loves reading especially topics like: History, Philosophy and Theology. You can follow him on:

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The Transgender Movement is a Living Nightmare



by **Fr. Shenan J. Boquet**

First published by Human Life International at

www.hli.org

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The Naked Totalitarianism of the Transgender Movement

Watching the progress of the transgender movement is like watching a train wreck in high speed. This ideological behemoth is hurtling through our culture at breakneck speed. But those driving the train seem utterly heedless of the path of destruction and horror they are leaving in their wake.

“Horror” may seem like an overly dramatic word, but I use it advisedly. There is a truly horrific side to the transgender movement. However, it is being carefully hidden, with the cooperation of the media, behind a wall of newly-minted Orwellian euphemisms.

The media routinely speak of such things as “hormone therapy” and “gender confirmation surgery” as if these things are gentle, benign, and uncontroversial therapeutic measures that always bring peace and healing. But, for many of the rapidly growing number of so-called “detransitioners,” the experience of submitting themselves to the gender “experts” has felt like being a character in a slasher flick.

Teenagers who went through a period of severe emotional crisis, during which they fell under the sway of overzealous ideologues, wake up several years later to find

themselves with a body that has been unrecognizably and irreversibly mutilated by the scalpels of unscrupulous surgeons, with perfectly healthy reproductive organs and other body parts cut off and replaced with unconvincing imitations of those of the opposite sex.

So too have their bodies been irreversibly altered by enormous quantities of artificial hormones with effects such as feminine voices permanently lowered into a husky masculinity; breasts grown on the muscular, bony frames of male bodies; and many side effects - including sterility - and physiological dependencies associated with such drugs.

The Mutilation of Healthy Bodies

A person is the unity of soul and body. In making reference to the “soul,” we speak of that which makes the body be what it is, namely, a human person - either male or female persons. A person’s sexual identity is not a social construction, but it is an objective fact rooted in our nature as either male or female persons. Nothing can change this reality. A person can choose to mutilate his or her genitals but cannot change their sex. Changing one’s sex is fundamentally impossible. Instead, we are speaking of acts of mutilation against a healthy body, which are acts of violence and are an assault against the person’s innate dignity. This is never justifiable.

Even if it is true that some of the time some people suffering from gender dysphoria do experience relief after “sex



change” surgeries, it seems obvious that clinical resources would be better invested in developing less-invasive therapies that do not require the mutilation of healthy bodies. However, what is becoming increasingly clear is that, far from finding relief, many people who have undergone sex changes have only found further, and worse, suffering.

Consider the detransitioners featured in this recent article [\[link\]](#) featured in The Telegraph. The protagonist of the article - a woman who goes by the name of “Charlie” - is fortunate in that she never resorted to surgical or hormonal measures. Instead, she “socially” transitioned - that is, changed her name, her mode of dress, and other superficial gender-linked characteristics. Not so lucky are some of the hundreds of other detransitioners who she says have contacted her since she went public with her story of regret. As The Telegraph reports: “A few have undertaken full surgical reassignment: double mastectomies, hysterectomies and oophorectomies - removal of

ovaries. At least one woman has had phalloplasty: Debbie (formerly Lee), in her early 60s and a victim of extensive childhood trauma including sexual abuse, had flesh removed from her arm to make a penis. She now wants it removed and to be given implants to simulate the healthy breasts she had excised when she was 44."

Charlie tells The Telegraph: "I'm in communication with 19- and 20-year-olds who have had full gender reassignment surgery who wish they hadn't, and their dysphoria hasn't been relieved. They don't feel better for it." In many cases, these individuals had a history of sexual or physical abuse, eating disorders, depression, autism, and other mental disorders. In the midst of their trauma and vulnerability, they were "sold this idea that transitioning was magically going to solve their problems."

But it didn't.

These people are victims - victims of the "experts" who guided them catastrophically awry. Imagine for a moment what it is like to be a 19- or 20-year-old

who is just now realizing that your doctors and therapists have convinced you to permanently maim your body and that you now have to live the rest of your life with the consequences of that decision. People sometimes suffer acute regret after getting embarrassing tattoos. Imagine the frustration and anger after dramatically altering the appearance and function of your body, only to discover further unhappiness on the other side.

One man who underwent "bottom surgery" - that is, the removal of his male sex organs, to be replaced with a simulation of female sex organs - says that, contrary to the promises and media propaganda [\[link\]](#), the result of the surgery was unconvincing; what was done to him is, he says, "a Frankenstein hack job at best."

One woman, Keira, describes how she was prescribed puberty blockers after just three appointments at the age of 16. Later, she started taking testosterone and eventually had a mastectomy - the removal of both of her breasts. However, in her

early 20s she suddenly had a change of perspective and realized that changing how her body looked wasn't the solution to her problems. She also, like many women who enter their twenties, suddenly found herself thinking about having children, something she gave no thought to when she was 16. Despite stopping the use of testosterone, her voice is still low, and she still has to shave and is frequently mistaken for a man.

"I am so angry and I can't see that going away," she told The Telegraph. "I feel sick, I feel like I've been lied to. There's no evidence for the treatments I've had, and they didn't make me feel any better. It was maturity that did that."

The Justifiable Anger of Parents

One recent article in the prestigious British Medical Journal addresses the question of what doctors and therapists should do when parents refuse to allow their children to transition genders. In a truly diabolical reversal of the truth, the doctors conclude that it is the parents' refusal to the gender transition that violates the "Harm Principle" and "justif[ies] state intervention." In other words, in cases where parents don't wish their minor children to undergo gender transitions, the state should intervene and override the parents' wishes.

Here is a whole new horror.

Imagine, for a moment, being a loving parent of a child who is experiencing gender dysphoria. Now imagine that this child has fallen under the sway of some radical teacher at school or has been affected by the "social contagion" effect, exacerbated by social media, that is clearly fueling



the explosive growth in gender dysphoria among adolescents. Your son now claims he is a girl, or your daughter that she is a boy.

And now, imagine that, like any good parent, you have sought out sensible psychological help and urged a “wait and see” approach. This need not mean that you are a conservative who is opposed to transgenderism on principle. It might simply mean that you think it wise for your 13-year-old daughter to wait until she has adjusted to puberty, put normal teenage angst behind her, and gained some life experience before making a decision that will dramatically alter the course of her life.

And now, imagine that some faceless doctor or bureaucrat, who has only known your child for a matter of weeks or months, and who lacks a parent’s loving

concern, has convinced your child to demand the right to transition genders. And, upon confirming your refusal, this person has invoked the power of the state, signing off on medical procedures that you fear will harm your child, and returning your child to you with the demand that you speak of your son as “her” or your daughter as “him” with the threat of losing custody of your child if you do not acquiesce.

Imagine the anger, the sense of betrayal, and of loss in such circumstances.

Tragically, there are parents who do not need to imagine this insane scenario, like the unnamed father in Canada, who has refused to consent to his daughter’s gender transition. Last year, British Columbia Judge Gregory Bowden ruled that this man’s refusal to speak of his daughter as “he” and “him” constituted “family violence.” [\[link\]](#) The judge has also put the father under a gag order so that he cannot even speak to the media about his case without risking severe legal repercussions. Then there is the case of Jeffrey Younger, the Texas father who very nearly lost custody of his son because he refuses to speak of him as “her” or to support the gender transition sought for his son by his ex-wife.

This is the naked totalitarianism of the transgender movement. In the UK over the past decade there has been a 4,400% increase in children undergoing gender transitions. The first wave of detransitioners that we are just now hearing from is almost certainly only the tip of the iceberg. In the years to come there will be many, many more. It may well turn out that the power of

their heartbreaking stories will slow down or even reverse this out-of-control social locomotive. But in the meantime, how many lives must be destroyed, and how many families torn apart?

Fortunately, it does seem that the backlash is beginning. Encouragingly, a review of the UK’s sole gender transition clinic has been ordered in the wake of a lawsuit alleging abuses at the clinic [\[link\]](#). There is also a growing push in some jurisdictions for legislation that would protect minors by punishing doctors who carry out irreversible sex change procedures on them [\[link\]](#).

It is time to stop this madness. We need a movement of parents, doctors, and politicians willing to stand up, speak the truth, and put in place the common-sense regulations that are needed to protect our children and families from the transgender extremists. [END]

Biography:

Fr. Shenan J. Boquet has served as president of Human Life International since 2011. He was ordained in 1993 as a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana.

As HLI’s president, Fr. Boquet collaborates with fellow laborers in the pro-life and family movement in over 80 countries, offering the Sacraments, giving seminars and trainings, appearing on numerous media outlets, and encouraging people of all walks of life to live as faithful advocates for a Culture of Life and Love.

He is available for interviews and bookings on behalf of HLI by emailing hli@hli.org.


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Fancy Flying from Advanced Aeronautics

~ the Design of Swifts and Jet fighters ~



by **Dr Jonathan D. Sarfati**

Bird aerobatics have fascinated bird-watchers since the beginning. And bird design has inspired the designers of flying machines for over a century.¹ Yet still there are new discoveries about their intricate engineering, suggesting that we still have much to learn.

Origin of Bird Flight

God revealed that He created flying creatures on Day 5 of Creation Week, the day before He created land creatures and man. However, progressive creationists deny this and believe that land reptiles came before birds, and evolutionists believe that birds evolved from reptiles.²

Evolution-promoters seem not to understand how flight works, and how it needs so many things arranged in the right order. For example, the Skeptic-dominated Australian Museum claimed that some dinosaurs evolved a certain bone that 'also allowed them to move their hands in a broad fan-shaped motion and to snap their long arms and grasping fingers forward to grab fleeing prey. This

powerful, flapping motion has today become an important part of the flight stroke in modern birds.'³

However, this would be just the wrong sort of motion for flight. A flap in the forward direction would have the effect of pushing the bird backwards, according to Newton's 3rd Law (every action produces an equal and opposite reaction). In a bird's flap for powered flight, the primary flight feathers are angled in such a way that they force air backwards so the bird is propelled forwards. And the wings have an aerofoil shape like an airplane's wings, angled to deflect air downwards. This produces lift, again by the reaction.⁴

Skeptics also ignore the amazing feather. The feather is an aerodynamic marvel that's strong and lightweight, and completely different from a reptile scale.^{5,6} But feathers are not the sorts of structures that would be useful on limbs that flap at a prey animal, since they would be damaged by the pounding.

Finally, the purpose of the wings is to force air backwards and downwards so the



bird is propelled forwards and kept aloft. So wings should form a wide surface that has high air resistance, so it can move large volumes of air. But for limbs designed to grab forward at prey, it's an advantage to have a surface that has low air resistance, i.e. lets air through easily. Think of the holes in a fly swat, or streamlined shapes designed to move through the air as opposed to moving the

**Since we know
that the jet
fighter has
been
intelligently
designed, then
why not the
swift as well?**



Not So Easy

Many evolutionists propose that dinosaurs turned into birds. Supposedly, some dinosaurs began flapping their arms and developed feathers. Eventually, powered flight evolved. However, this would require many coordinated mutations to produce the masses of new information required, and dino-bird intermediates exist only as imaginary models - not as fossils.

air itself. Also, the rush of air from the proto-wing would warn the prey of its impending doom!

Exquisite Eddies

A recent study on swifts^{7,8} shows that there is even more to flight than downward deflection of air. They also make use of a leading-edge vortex (LEV) to generate even more lift, so that 'the current understanding of how birds fly must be revised.'⁷ The bird wing actually has two parts: the inner 'arm wing' and an outer 'hand wing'. The arm wing deflects air downwards just like an

airplane wing, according to the lead researcher, John Videler of the Leiden and Groningen universities in the Netherlands.⁹ But analysis of the fluid¹⁰ flow showed that the sharp leading edge of the hand wing easily formed the 'mini-tornados' that helped suck the bird upwards. These form at a wide range of wing angles, so the bird wing is far less likely to stall (suddenly lose lift) than an aircraft wing.¹¹

Swifts have scythe-shaped wings, each comprising a relatively small arm wing and a very long hand wing that generates a powerful LEV. So swifts can sweep their wings back for fast flight, but can 'turn on a dime'⁸ by reducing the wing sweep (straightening the wings). It enables them to catch insects in flight (in their beaks!). And perching birds need LEVs to produce high lift at low speeds, otherwise they could not land on a branch.

The importance of LEVs has already been noted in insect¹² and vulture¹³ flight. And aerospace engineers have also exploited their superb lift when it comes to landing supersonic jets safely. Their small, swept-back wings make fast flight possible, but without the LEVs, their small wings would not produce enough lift when they slow down to land.

Designing Wings

The commentators spoiled their report of this research with the usual fact-free homage to evolution:

'To maximize flight speed as well as maneuverability, evolution and aeronautic engineering converged on the same solution - variable wing sweep. Swifts and

the Tomcat jet fighter keep their wings swept back to reach high speeds. To execute tight turns, both flyers reduce their wing sweep.'⁸

However, since we know that the jet fighter has been intelligently designed, then why not the swift as well, since good science works by analogy? Furthermore, the authors point out:

'The gliding flight of storks inspired the first airplane designs of Otto Lilienthal in the late 19th century. The benevolent flight characteristics of these slow and stately gliders invested airplane pioneers with the confidence to take to the skies.'

The article concluded:

'In the future, the swift's flight control might inspire a new generation of engineers to develop morphing microrobotic vehicles that can fly with the agility, efficiency, and short take-off and landing capabilities of insects and birds.'⁸

Swifts Navigate in their Sleep!

Swifts often fly at great heights at night - 3,000m (10,000 feet), in fact as high as small private planes - yet swifts are capable of more sophisticated feats of navigation than these. And they do it while sleeping (a swift shuts down half its brain at a time).

Dr Johan Bäckman, an expert in bird migration at Lund University in Sweden, studied over 200 swifts by radar. He found that they kept on course by an unexpected method. Rather than using landmarks on the ground, they judged their direction by the wind,¹⁴ so they would not be blown off course.

Dr Bäckman said:

‘We found that swifts have an extraordinary ability to perform orientations in relation to wind. Even the most advanced planes, with good navigational instruments, would probably be unable to judge the wind drift like this. The remarkable thing is that they do all this while flying through the night and sleeping on the wing at these very high altitudes.’¹⁵

The superior flight control and navigation is just what we would expect from the biblical picture - birds were made by a Designer whose brilliance surpasses our understanding. [END]



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2. See also Q&A: Did birds really evolve from dinosaurs? <www.creation.com/dinosaurs#birds>.
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<www.creation.com/dinodisplay>, 26 November 2002.

4. Many explanations of bird and airplane flight involve the Bernoulli Effect, in which faster flow of a fluid decreases the pressure. So the faster airflow on top means that the greater pressure on the bottom of the wing produces lift. However this is a secondary rather than the primary reason for lift. More recent studies emphasize Newton's 3rd Law. Once there is a turning in the flow, then there will be a force on the object doing it. There are two reasons that forward motion causes the wings to deflect air downwards: first, the wings are slanted slightly upwards into the air stream (a positive 'angle of attack'); second, the Coandă Effect, where a fluid follows the curve of the surface, which from the upper surface points downwards. See Anderson, D. and Eberhardt, S., *Understanding Flight*, McGraw-Hill, 2001; <http://home.comcast.net/~clipper-108/lift.htm>. Prof. Andy McIntosh (see Related resource, above) teaches his students that fundamentally lift is due to circulation (technical term for the turning of the flow), which will generate lift by reaction. The flow leaves the trailing edge of a real wing smoothly (the Kutta condition) which invokes circulation. Lift is given by $l = qvg$, where l = lift per unit of wingspan, q = density, v = velocity, g = circulation strength (the Kutta-Zhukovsky theorem).

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10. A fluid is a liquid or a gas. It doesn't matter what fluid is used, as long as a ratio of velocity and viscosity called the Reynold's Number is constant. This

number is a ratio of inertial to viscous forces named after the British engineer Osborne Reynolds (1842-1912), given by $Re = qvl/\mu$, where q is density, v is mean velocity, l is a characteristic length and μ is viscosity. These researchers used a 1.5 - times - enlarged scale model in a water tunnel, which was easier to analyze than using a wind tunnel.

11. As a pilot reduces an aircraft's speed, the angle of the wing to the air has to increase to maintain lift (the pilot pulls back on the stick or control column). But there comes a point where the smooth flow of air OVER the wing's top surface suddenly fails and so the wing loses all its lift. The nose of the aircraft suddenly pitches down, causing an accident if it happens near the ground.

12. Insects - defying the laws of aerodynamics? *Creation* 20(2):31, 1998; Brookes, M., On a wing and a vortex, *New Scientist* 156(2103):24-27, 11 October 1997.

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“What can be more foolish than to think that all this rare fabric of heaven and earth could come by chance, when all the skill of art is not able to make an oyster!”

Jeremy Taylor

The Creative Urge

Fanning the Flame



by **Heather Wright**

I pick up my wet brush and load it with colour before I carefully drag it across the page in front of me, laying the shape of a petal... I am delighted with, and grateful for the result.

I loved art at school but had little opportunity, and no encouragement, to develop my seemingly tiny talent. Then life happened.

It was a good life, a meaningful life, a purposeful life. Three little boys became wonderful men and forty years of ministry eventually ended in retirement. Suddenly 69 years had flown by and I had time.

Time to Turn to an Old Love and Try Again

It was 1974 that I was first introduced to the idea that as we are made in the image of the Creator, we were intended to be creative. It was an idea that excited me then, and excites me still.

Even knowing this, I didn't expect to find painting to be such a spiritual experience... but for me, it is deeply spiritual.

I feel God meets me in the quietening of my spirit that releases the gift that God gave me and turns it into beautiful images on the paper in front of me.

I get the same feeling from painting that I get in deep prayer and worship. A feeling of connection with and closeness to my Creator God.

"He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own, and the love we share as we tarry there... no other has ever known."

Throughout our formal ministry years there have been scriptures that have underpinned everything I have been a part of... two of them are particularly relevant to this journey also.

Isaiah 42:3:

"a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.." [ESV]

and 2 Timothy 1:6:

"fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you." [ESV]

As I sit in my little studio in the corner of our top room, I am acutely aware that God treasures these times of creative release, and quietness of spirit, as much as I do. I am reminded that before I am a servant of God, I am first and foremost, His child.

The art isn't always easy... and some pieces don't make it past the bin in the corner. Like any talent it needs to be honed, shaped, instructed, practised and moulded.

I believe any talent I have is a gift from my Creator, and the expression of it, glorifies and pleases Him, and I am grateful.

[END]

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Are You Spending Yourself or Squandering Yourself?



by Lisa Copen

When you consider how you are spending yourself and who you are, despite your chronic illness and pain, are you encouraged or discouraged? Lisa shares.

"If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always;

He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame" (Isaiah 58:10-11a).

It is hard to truly appreciate each day, isn't it? We are told to not take anything for granted. As more natural disasters are occurring, from earthquakes, tornadoes, mudslides, and fires, we pray for those who have lost their lives. And yet we get up and try to accomplish a list of tasks, quickly losing sight of the preciousness of our day.

Chronic illness forces us to plan and prioritize constantly. Even the simplest of tasks require a

schedule. I will get up and have coffee and rest, then I will shower and rest, then I will do the dishes and rest. . . Regardless of how plentiful or absent our energy is, we are spending ourselves.

How are you spending yourself? There are days when I have squandered not just my energy - but who God made me to be. I become bitter about a situation, perhaps dwell on hurt feelings, I may be frustrated about my family's messes or resentful that no one appreciates how much I do despite the constant pain. O, how carelessly I have spent myself!

Scripture tells us to spend ourselves helping others: "on behalf of the hungry and the needs of the oppressed."

For myself, this could mean preparing a healthy meal for my family, encouraging my spouse, scheduling and a meeting with my son's teacher. It could be picking up groceries for the local food bank, which my church recently collected.

One time I spoke to a manager at a craft store about how a situation was poorly handled by a cashier with a customer who was deaf, with his young son observing the entire sad scenario.

I know your energy is low, but before spending yourself on that which is temporary, ask God to lead you to opportunities to spend yourself in ways that are eternal. You matter.

Prayer:

Father, I can easily become so caught up in what I need to do in

order to take care of myself, that I have squandered who I am, Your servant.

Lead me to opportunities to spend myself in the ways You desire and give me the endurance I must have to accomplish the task You have set before me. Amen.

Consider: how do you define a "day well spent?" Does it seem to be all about you or does "spending yourself" help others? How do you feel differently when you spend yourself serving rather than only meeting your own needs?

Song Link:

I believe that we all want to serve but our daily pain and demands of our body just make it so difficult sometimes! This song, "My Cry" with Holly Starr, is a cry out to God about how we want to serve but we don't even know where to start.

The song is a plea to God to take what we have, and the lessons that we have been taught by Him, and use them for His glory. I hope you find your own voice in this song. -Lisa

Biography:

Lisa Copen is the founder of Rest Ministries and she lives in San Diego with her husband and son. Lisa's Gutsy Goodness store is available online here:

www.gutsygoodness.com

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DIDUNO

World History and the Christian Connection



by **Graham McDonald**
Director

The flowing copperplate script with red and white colours is a logo that is recognisable around the world. Its success is due to Asa Candler, whose primary motivation in all he attempted was to be faithful to God through his stewardship.

Asa's Faith

Asa Candler was a very rich man who was successful in real estate development and banking. He faithfully embraced the principle of Christian stewardship. His belief was that God gives wealth to individuals in order to promote His kingdom on earth. His inspiration was from Jesus' teaching about not storing up treasures on earth that can be stolen or lost but storing up treasures in heaven where they will never be stolen or lost.

This inspiration led him to support many Christian endeavours, including the training of young men and women in the teachings of Jesus.

The History of Coca-Cola

In 1886, the curiosity of an

The Coca-Cola Story *Coca-Cola*

Note: according to Wikimedia.org, the wordmark of Coca-Cola in this image, as trademarked by the Coca-Cola Company is not copyrighted because the logo is simply "Coca-Cola," and there is no proof as to who originally wrote it, available: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coca-Cola_logo.svg

Atlanta pharmacist, Dr. John S. Pemberton, led him to create a distinctive tasting soft drink that could be sold at soda fountains. He created a flavoured syrup, took it to his neighbourhood pharmacy, where it was mixed with carbonated water and deemed 'excellent' by those who sampled it.

Dr. Pemberton's partner and bookkeeper, Frank M. Robinson, is credited with naming the beverage "Coca-Cola" as well as designing the trademarked, distinct script, still used today.

Prior to his death in 1888, just two years after creating what was to become the world's best-selling sparkling beverage, Dr. Pemberton sold portions of his business to various parties, with the majority of the interest sold to Atlanta businessman, Asa G. Candler.

Under Mr. Candler's leadership, distribution of Coca-Cola expanded to soda fountains beyond Atlanta. Initially Coca Cola was only available at stores with soda fountains.

In 1894, impressed by the growing demand for Coca-Cola

and the desire to make the beverage portable, Joseph Biedenharn installed bottling machinery in the rear of his Mississippi soda fountain, becoming the first to put Coca-Cola in bottles.

Asa Candler 1851-1929

Large scale bottling was made possible just five years later, when in 1899, three enterprising businessmen in Chattanooga, Tennessee secured exclusive rights to bottle and sell Coca-Cola. The three entrepreneurs purchased the bottling rights from Asa Candler for just \$1. Benjamin Thomas, Joseph Whitehead and John Lupton developed what became the Coca-Cola worldwide bottling system.

One of Asa Candler's marketing strategies was to create a shroud of secrecy about the ingredients of Coca Cola. Originally it was marketed as a 'brain and nerve tonic', containing a tiny amount of cocaine from coca leaves, and caffeine from kola nuts, together with sugar, cinnamon and other flavourings, and caramel for colour.

While the formula remains secret, the cocaine was removed by Asa Candler in 1903 due to fears of the effect of cocaine on the poorer section of society. The bottling of Coca Cola enabled a larger portion of the population access to this drink. This was eleven years before the American administration made cocaine an illicit drug due to a 'spike' in usage.



Upon the removal of the cocaine more caffeine and sugar were added for a 'healthier' drink. A Supreme Court decision in 1916 instructed Coca Cola to reduce the caffeine content.

Among the biggest challenges for early bottlers, were imitations of the beverage by competitors coupled with a lack of packaging consistency among the 1,000 bottling plants at the time. The bottlers agreed that a distinctive beverage needed a standard and distinctive bottle, and in 1916, the bottlers approved the unique contour bottle. The new Coca-Cola bottle was so distinctive it could be recognised in the dark and it effectively set the brand apart from competition. The contoured Coca-Cola bottle was trademarked in 1977.

Another of Asa Candler's endeavours was the establishment of Emory College, later Emory University in 1836. The little school struggled for decades, and finally began to prosper in the late 1800s. By 1914, the Methodist Church was looking to create a university in the South, and Emory College was looking to expand. The sole impetus for the founding of Emory University in Atlanta was the role of the church (Christianity) in education, where young minds could be introduced to the teachings of Jesus for the wellbeing of the student and the benefit to society.

Asa Candler wrote the "million-dollar letter" to offer seed money, and he sweetened the deal by donating land in Atlanta. Asa's brother Warren Candler was a Methodist Bishop and he became the first chancellor of the new campus.

With his financial aid, Emory College, located near Atlanta, moved into the city and expanded to become Emory University. The 1915 birth of a new university named Emory relied heavily on Methodist connections. As the students at the University were heavily involved in Christian activities on Sundays, classes were held from Tuesday to Saturday. While this worked well for the regular students it did create an issue for the Jewish students who wanted to join Emory. Negotiations with the chancellor and the Jewish Rabbi, who wanted his children enrolled, were resolved when Jewish students were exempt from Saturday classes. Orthodox Jews adhered to the religious observance of Shabbat. Shabbat is embraced as a time of rest and celebration and begins before sunset on Friday and ends after sunset on Saturday.

In 1922 a Methodist-founded teaching hospital moved to the new Druid Hills campus of Emory to become Emory University Hospital. This teaching hospital adjacent to the university's medical school was made possible

by a gift of nearly \$2,000,000 from Asa Candler. The university played an important role toward integration of African Americans and Jewish students into the university during the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The church viewed Emory as the place where future leaders of society would mature.

Candler sold the Coca Cola business in 1919 for \$25,000,000 (about \$376 million in today's market) and devoted his energy to philanthropy. This legacy was carried on by his son, Charles Howard Candler Snr, who shared his father Asa's love for Emory. Charles gifts to Emory, totalling around \$13 million, included a new administration building and half-interest in Asa G. Candler Inc.

[END]

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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!

Breakfast: Smoked Salmon & Dill Pancakes (serves 2-4)

Ingredients:

4 large eggs ¼ cup almond milk ¼ cup avocado oil 2 tsp baking powder¹
 ¼ tsp salt 1 tsp fresh dill 200g of cream cheese Extra oil for the pan
 2½ cups almond flour (approx 250g) 250g -300g thinly sliced smoked salmon

Instructions:

Mix together the almond milk, oil and eggs in a blender for 30 seconds. Then add, baking powder, salt and almond flour to the mix, and blend until the mixture is smooth. Then allow the pancake batter to rest for five minutes.

In a non-stick frying pan or skillet, add a little oil and heat over a medium/low temperature. Each pancake needs around 3 tablespoons of the mixture, spread out to around 8-10cm. Cook until bubbles form in the top and the edges look dry and set, which should take between 2 and 4 minutes. Carefully lift up the edge of one pancake to check if it looks cooked, then flip it over and cook for another 2 to 4 minutes. Continue cooking batches of the batter, ensuring there is sufficient oil between batches.

While the pancakes are cooking, mix together the dill and the cream cheese and put aside until the pancakes are cooked, and allow the pancakes to cool a little. Place a smallish piece of smoked salmon on the top, then spoon or pipe on the cheese and dill mixture. Decorate with a little extra dill if you wish.

This recipe is suitable for a sweet breakfast or dessert if SPAG (Single Person Approved by God) is a free quarterly, online

Lunch: Burritos (serves 2-4)

Ingredients:

1 tbsp butter 2 medium eggs 2 tbsp full-fat cream
 Herbs or spices Salt and/or pepper to taste Butter or olive oil for cooking (avoid vegetable and canola oil)
 Your choice of filling such as ham, bacon, avocado, cheese or cream cheese, tomato, cucumber, sprouts etc

Instructions:

Mix together the ingredients except the butter/oil, and let it rest for about five minutes. Heat a frying pan or griddle until hot and melt the butter/oil. Pour half the mixture into the pan and spread it thinly. Cook for 2-4 minutes. Gently lift one edge to see if it appears cooked through, and flip it over then cook the other side for 2-4 minutes.

You might like to add chives to the burrito before cooking. Once cooked, add your choice of filling and herbs/spices. Roll each burrito up, secure with a toothpick if you wish, and serve.

Note:

1. Consider making your own baking powder as most supermarket baking powder contains fillers which adds nothing to it other than extra carbs, plus you save money by using less. Quantities: for every teaspoon of baking soda, add 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar and stir thoroughly before placing it into a sealed container. As this blend is more intense than supermarket baking powder, use about ⅓ less than most recipes ask, or adjust as you need.

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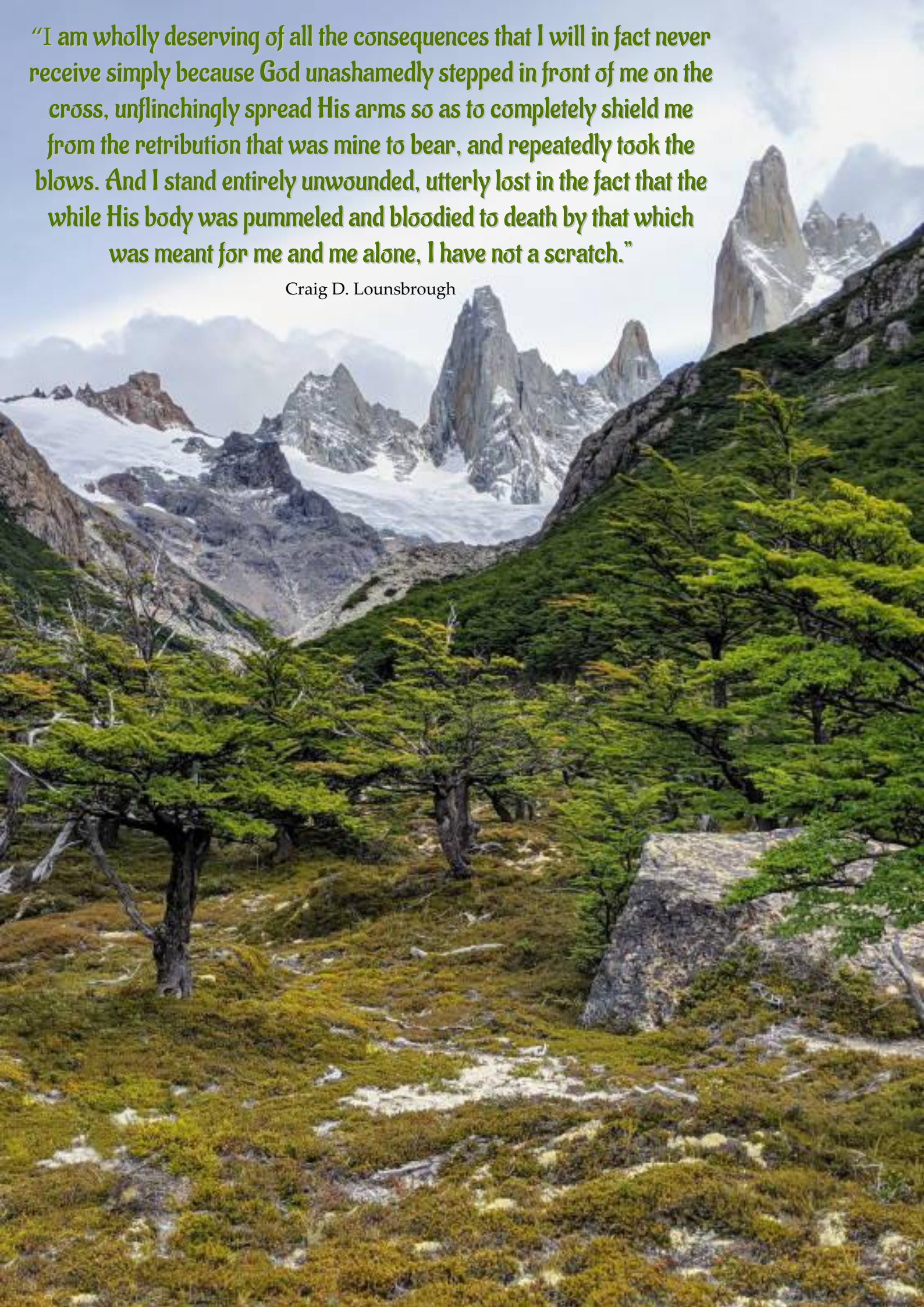
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“I am wholly deserving of all the consequences that I will in fact never receive simply because God unashamedly stepped in front of me on the cross, unflinchingly spread His arms so as to completely shield me from the retribution that was mine to bear, and repeatedly took the blows. And I stand entirely unwounded, utterly lost in the fact that the while His body was pummeled and bloodied to death by that which was meant for me and me alone, I have not a scratch.”

Craig D. Lounsborough



Humorous Challenge

My friend Robyn C. put forward this challenge:

Substitute a food item in the title of a well-known movie or book.

Here are some that people created (plus their initials):

- War and Peas (RC)
- Planet of the Grapes (RC)
- Scone with the Wind (RC)
- The Sound of Muesli (RC)
- For Whom the Bread Rolls (RC)
- Top Gum (PB)
- Jurassic Pork (RC)
- Lambshank Redemption (RC)
- Forrest Gumbo (PB)
- Pie Hard (PB)
- Prune and Prejudice (JM)
- Raiders of the Lost Artichoke (WD)
- Lord of the Onion Rings (WD)
- The Codfather (RC)
- The Princess Bread (VB)
- Silence of the Lamb-chops (VN)
- Of Rice and Men (VN)
- Tortillas in the Mist (VN)



Did you guess what the object is in the close-up image on [page 34](#) as shown below left? Did you guess that it's a puffer fish? If so - well done!



Tantalising Trivia

Experimentation has demonstrated that trees are able to communicate with others of their own kind.

Some years back, two American biologists from the University of Washington placed predatory caterpillars and webworms on the branches of willows and alders. Within hours the leaves began to change their chemical composition which would make the leaves less tasty to the invaders. Additionally, the protein in the leaves changed in a way that made them indigestible. Soon the insects began dying.

What was more remarkable was that nearby trees which were not under attack also began to produce the same chemical defences although they were a long way apart and were not connected to the first trees in any way. Perhaps they "bark" at each other!! Ok, I'll "leave" that one alone.

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