

AUTHENTIC

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MEN'S MAGAZINE

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Change is in the Air

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How MAF is Reflecting
God's Heart

Peter Dobbs

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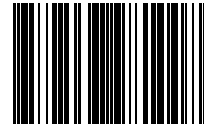


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On The Impossible Life

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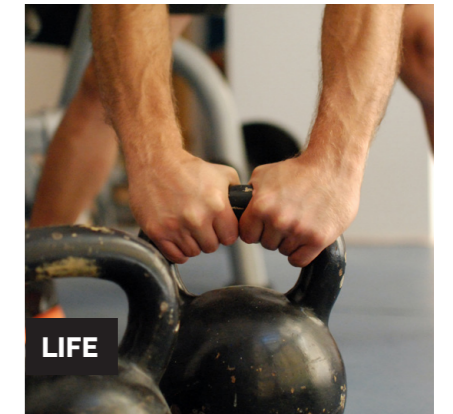
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Cover Photo: Clint Randell, pictured relaxing at home, left The Edge Breakfast Show in December after six years in the role. He's excited about the new chapter God has for him in 2022. Photo: Phil Botha Creative. Other Images: Unless otherwise stated, all images published in this issue which appear outside of the three main feature articles are sourced from either Unsplash or Depositphotos.

WELCOME TO THE SEVENTEENTH EDITION OF

AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE



We're Adding Digital!

Welcome to 2022. I hope you had a restful, relaxing break with family and friends reflecting on all that Christ has done.

Firstly, here's some awesome news. Our team has been prayerfully considering additional ways to provide more people with the opportunity to access - the Christ-centered content which fills these pages. It's a discussion prompted by interest from overseas readers who've said they'd love to be able to access the magazine. Costs associated with sending printed copies off-shore, however, are prohibitive. So, led by the Lord with our ultimate aim being to point more people to Jesus, we're launching digital access to our printed magazine!

The move potentially - and technically literally - opens up a whole new world of God-ordained connections - we're super excited!

You'll continue to be able to subscribe to the printed copy of the issues we produce in New Zealand, and - as of this issue - all current and new subscribers in Aotearoa will also receive digital online access to every back issue of Authentic, at no added cost. Additionally, overseas subscribers can now subscribe to just the digital editions - allowing them to

read the magazine too. Over time, we'll add extra digital-only content - exclusive fun stuff like video content, interview snippets, photos and other digital content from each of our latest issues. All for the price of a subscription. May the Lord use this new opportunity - we'd appreciate your prayers as it unfolds. More information is on page 35.

Over summer, I reflected on a milestone in my Authentic journey - a timely reminder that God's always in control. No matter how often we think we know better, His timing is perfect. Whatever's ahead in 2022, Jesus promises He'll be with us. Ultimately, "...we may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future". *"The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you... do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* - Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV).

January's Auckland Anniversary Weekend marked the two-year anniversary of my first Authentic feature interview. On the Saturday of that weekend, I interviewed Rapture Ruckus' frontman Brad Dring at Festival One 2020 - he was preparing to hang up his microphone following one final performance. "I just knew it was time to move into a new season and be more present with my family. Call that what

you want, but I call it God's grace and calling," he told me.

Little would Brad have known, but his words resonated with me. I too found myself beginning a new season. As my first 'job' on my first day with Authentic, I remember thinking, "how'd I get here?" Barely 24 hours prior, in my previous job, I was with some farmers talking about nitrogen application in paddocks. The answer's simple. God.

Scripture says while we make our 'plans', the Lord directs our steps. In God's perfect timing - not ours. That's certainly true of my Authentic story. *Psalm 32:8 says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My loving eye on you..."* (NIV). I love that God 'instructs', 'teaches' and 'counsels' us as we walk with Him.

Brad and I chatting represented quite a period of time in which I felt the Lord's leading to be here. Naturally, we made plans - I'd join Authentic the week after Festival One 2020.

But God.

Lived experiences journeying with Jesus have taught me a few things! One, God's timing is rarely our timing.

Two, submitting to His will also means purposeful submission to - and contentment with - His timing. Ultimately, I didn't join Authentic until September 2020.

In life, we'll likely always have questions, things we don't understand and even questions to which we may never get what we think are satisfactory answers. At times, I've had some pretty big questions for God.

In a "why?" moment, God laid a question of His own on my heart. "...even if you never get your answers, will you still trust Me?" Poignant right? Yet, our response means everything - because that's the definition of, *"...we live by faith, not by sight..."* - 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV). In life, God's not asking us to work everything out, He's simply calling us to trust Him. Truthfully, I still have questions. I don't have answers to those I prayed about that day, but I've settled on one for the question He asked me. I still don't understand at times, yet I will trust Him. *"...Without faith it is impossible to please God..."* - Hebrews 11:6 (NIV).

Living a life which pleases God therefore requires faith in Him, even - or perhaps especially - when we don't understand. In Genesis 17, the Lord spoke of His promise to Abraham. At 99 years old, Abraham had questions, *"...will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?"* - Genesis 17:17 (NIV). Despite queries, and waiting 25 years for the fulfilled promise, Abraham trusted God. *"Abram believed*

the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness." - Genesis 15:6 (NIV). This verse reminded me that our decisions to trust and believe God matter.

Heart attitudes are key - trusting Him pleases Him.

David wrote, *"But I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands..."* - Psalm 31:14-15 (NIV). This year - whatever is ahead - let's be those who listen to His leading, trust His timing, walk by faith and step out in His strength, not ours. May these pages point you to Jesus, this is His magazine.


There's one final encouragement I took from chatting with Brad. For context, when he went to the United States in 2010, my brother went with him. I spent time with Brad in Texas during a subsequent visit to my brother. Walking into the room at festival in 2020 was fun. "Wait... wasn't I hanging with you in Texas? You're Sam's brother! Oh! This chat's going to be good," Brad smiled. It was. "Bro," he said as we finished, "I'm so stoked you're back in the writing game." Thanks Brad. With God's leading and guidance, so am I.


Until next time!


■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.

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DOING a New Thing:

Communicating God's Heart Through Creativity and Technology

BY TIM HOUGHTON

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” - Isaiah 43:19 (NIV).

Futurist Ray Kurzweil once said, “...when I was an undergraduate, we all shared a computer at MIT. It took up half a building. The computer in your cell phone today is a million times cheaper and a thousand times more powerful. That's a billion-fold increase in both the price and the performance of computing since I was an undergraduate.”

Somehow around 80 percent of the world will have a phone within the next five years - even the poorest of the poor are spending an average of five hours a day on their phones. Technology has no boundaries. It has no walls. We can connect with people anywhere, at any time, even in countries we're not able to physically visit. It allows us to make massive amounts of discipleship, training and learning resources available at basically no cost. If that doesn't drastically shift the way we do missions and how we communicate the Gospel, that's crazy!

Social media is bringing the world closer together. In many ways it's the equivalent to the Roman road system, or the printing press - both massive technological feats that transformed the world in their time. There's an enormous opportunity today to use technology in the context of missions - yet all too often we are not even close to exploiting it effectively.

Technology and MAF

When I first joined Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in 2015, I was impressed by how they used both aircraft and technology to support missions in the most remote communities. In Arnhem Land, in the far north of Australia, solar powered MP3 players pre-loaded with portions of Yolngu Matha audio scripture, English Bibles and Gospel music were fantastic for indigenous people who didn't have mobile phones.

Tablets packed with culturally relevant Gospel music, sermons, evangelistic media, Bibles, dictionaries and interactive Bible stories for kids provided a lifeline to those living in remote communities. Today High Frequency (HF) radios, although an older technology, remain the best way for the many small, isolated communities throughout Papua New Guinea (PNG) to contact MAF. They provide vital airstrip information, organise flights and arrange urgent medical evacuations.

Electronic Flight Bags (EFBs)* are recent developments in the life of a MAF pilot. They do away with the need to work from paper charts, manuals and airstrip diagrams. All of this information is now at the fingertips of the pilot, on an iPad.

Solar light kits provide families in PNG with light, without any monthly power bills. Powered by the sun, they contain high efficiency LED lights and a USB port for charging phones. They are ideal for remote people, as they are simple to install, small and low cost.

Recently, a MAF pilot from New Zealand was involved in installing a PALAS - or Pilot Activated Light and Sound -

device in a remote village in Timor-Leste. This device is activated remotely by the MAF pilot coming in to land, starting a sequence of flashing lights and sound which alerts both the local people and the local caretaker of the airstrip to clear the field of animals, and of people who often use it as a main thoroughfare.

The creative use of technology is only limited by our imagination. Many years ago, I stood in an Iranian church in California. It had its own television studio and as I watched I was amazed as people phoned from Iran with questions about their life-issues and a panel of church leaders talked back in Farsi directly into homes in this restricted country.



From left: Wifi Bible, Microsdcard and Tablet, HR Radio and Solar Lights.

Today, it's possible to show the Jesus film in the privacy of a home on a tiny projector, rather than using bulky projectors and reels. Tracts formatted on a laptop can be printed in a hotel room. Web-based bulletin boards can announce revival meetings in countries where street evangelism is not allowed.

Suzi Childes, a photographer with Youth With A Mission (YWAM), uses her camera to help people 'see' the world of refugees and red light districts, war-torn nations and homelessness.

Create International - another YWAM ministry - sends trained media teams to live among unreached people groups. They write scripts by first identifying indigenous stories within that group, then look for connections to Biblical themes. They film using actors from that group and speaking in the local dialect. These videos resonate deeply within the cultural group and are often copied and recopied.

...my question is, "...how do we build bridges with these young people - and others like them across the world - and help draw them towards church?"

There are opportunities all around us. At the New Wine festival, I watched a woman reading stories to a group of children. I thought how amazing it would be to find someone who speaks Russian, and who loves to read to children, then capture all those stories on video and make them available to the tens of thousands of orphans across Russia who have nobody to read to them.

Over the years, we've noticed that many older people who contact MAF either don't have computers, or the skills to use them well. They are often cut off from resources and information. Could churches provide the elderly in their community with refurbished computers, train them to use them and provide on-going support? What an opportunity for real connection with the local community!

Where do we begin?

The first step is to make sure we are answering the questions and providing solutions to issues that people care about.

If, in your area, there are ten times as many people Googling the phrase "...what is the meaning of life?" then there are searching for "...what is the best church near me?", that tells us something valuable about what the people in your community are looking for. Truthfully, tens of thousands of people regularly search the internet for ways to kill themselves - and they find them.

To combat this epidemic, an organisation called FaithTech brought together web developers, psychotherapists and communications specialists who bought the domain 'howtokillyourself.org'. If you go to their website, the first words you'll see are "...You're Not Alone" - and stories of hope and the opportunity to phone, text or chat. We need to move away from asking, "...how can we use PowerPoint better in our church?" to, "...let's work with others to find creative ways to communicate God's heart to the millions of people who will never normally attend church".

What do we need?

Not much. A media studio which used to cost \$150,000 might cost \$10,000 today. Today it is possible to go on a media safari with just a laptop, lightweight battery packs, mini lights and small external mics. GoPros capture action as it happens.

Smart phones shoot high-resolution photos and videos and don't attract unwanted attention. They can be used during monsoon rain and even dropped in water. They allow research to take place while traveling and can help you navigate around unfamiliar countries.

All of this equipment fits into a small backpack. We might not have all the skills needed - we probably don't - but we can work with others who do. We can share ideas and work collaboratively in a way which was never possible before.



Creation Banner



Electronic Flight Bags (EFBs) are recent developments in the life of a MAF pilot which do away with the need to work from paper charts.



In the remote communities of South Western PNG, RACHEL enables users to access life-changing information without the need for the internet. Photo by Nawi Maba.

How will we communicate?

On a Saturday night I stood in Zagreb, Croatia, surrounded by thousands of university students out "looking for something". The next morning, I sat in a local church where less than 40 people were worshipping. My question is, "...how do we build bridges with these young people - and others like them across the world - and help draw them towards church? Music, photography, art, design, video, animation, dance and dramatic storytelling - especially when combined in creative ways and distributed via new forms of technology - have the potential to connect with people who may never listen to a sermon. A few years ago I took part in a St Paul's Arts and Media (SPAM) event simply called, "Open". On two consecutive Saturday nights, Christians from a variety of backgrounds shared honestly about their lives through creative expressions like dance, jazz, animation and so on. Afterwards, people were invited into a beautifully decorated space for refreshments. Significant relationships were built.

Recently MAF flew missionaries from Pioneers and God's Dreaming ministries to share the Gospel with a Yolngu, or aboriginal, community living on a remote island in the far north of Australia. For the Yolngu, storytelling is a huge part of their communication. The team took with them a 20 metre banner which told the whole story of the Bible - from creation - visually. This community heard about forgiveness and God's love in a way they could understand.

If it's so good, why isn't everyone using it?

When MAF made its first survey flight around the African continent in 1947 to explore the possibilities of using the 'new technology' of aircraft in missions, some immediately saw the value and potential. Many others didn't. Many are aware of the

dark side of social media and the internet and want to steer as far as possible away from its influence.

Some churches have one strong focus, such as evangelism or preaching, and view media as a distraction. There may be cultural considerations. I was once told by a missions leader from a Pacific Island that digital communications, "...are not our way - we do everything through relationship". But in each of these cases, the creative use of technology has the potential to multiply, not dilute, the effectiveness of the ministry. Technology is not a complete answer. Missionaries will continue to live in the South American rainforest among indigenous peoples. Street evangelists in the former Soviet Union will still hand out the 'Steps to Peace with God' printed on paper. Yet upcoming generations are already making decisions about how to follow the Great Commission using the new tools - computers, websites, the internet, satellite-based cellular technology, video and others. With them, they "...go into all the world..." (Mark 16:15) to reach people for whom the internet is their marketplace, their news source and their community.

Let's not miss "the new thing." |

Mission Aviation Fellowship



Started at the end of WWII, by two young Kiwi Air Force officers, MAF today has a fleet of 130 light aircraft flying in 27 countries. Apart from aircraft engineers and pilots, MAF is always looking for people with skills in IT, management, logistics and planning. Find out more about MAF at maf.org.nz.

■ Tim Houghton began working for MAF in January 2015, as communications manager, and oversees the design and production of all publications, as well as the online and social media elements of the MAF New Zealand ministry. Find out more about MAF at www.maf.org.nz





HOW TO BRING OUR CHILDREN TO CHRIST

PART TWO

BY RAY COMFORT

While there's no 'formula' with which to secure the salvation of any human being, Ray Comfort has been sharing some encouragement based on excerpts from his book *How to Bring Your Children to Christ*. This is his second and final column in this series - the first appeared in issue 16.

Have you ever experienced a child who "gave their heart to the Lord" straying from the things of God? In light of this question, I believe it's essential we understand the pitfalls, and the possibility, of steering our children into what's called a 'false conversion'.

Turning to scripture as our foundation, the Bible speaks plainly of false conversions. A particular instance is in what's called the Parable of the Sower, found in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8. Jesus referred to this category of people as 'tares' among the wheat, 'bad' fish among the good, 'foolish virgins' among the wise and so on. He warned that on the day of judgement many would cry out, saying, "Lord, Lord...". Luke 13:27 tells us, "...He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'" (NKJV).

The word 'iniquity' means 'lawlessness'. These are professing Christians who have no concern when they transgress God's Law, the Ten Commandments. They don't keep their word, they take things that belong to other people and they don't guard their heart when it comes to lust. On judgment day they will be found wanting by God's Law. Jesus' own words tell us there are those who will expect Heaven, but who will instead find they end up in hell. What a fearful thing to happen to anyone, let alone your beloved children!

This series has been aimed at helping us make sure we understand the true nature of sin, so that we ourselves know we've repented and been genuinely saved. The double tragedy with false converts is that they're deceived into thinking they are saved when they aren't. The Bible cautions us to 'examine' ourselves. "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" - 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV). Truthfully, I frequently receive letters from distraught parents telling me they've experienced their children giving their hearts to the Lord when they were younger, but now they're

older and those children no longer follow Him. *Luke 9:62 says, "But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (NKJV).*

Here, Jesus warned us we shouldn't even 'look' back from following Him. Those who fall away though don't just 'look' back, they 'go' back. Given that we as parents have either had the experience - or know those who have - of our children deciding not to follow the Lord, I write this piece because it's essential we understand that, yes, there are pitfalls and our children can have what we know as a 'false conversion'. I believe great damage is done when we lead our Children in the 'sinners prayer', but they don't of the true nature of sin.

God only knows how many have had the experience of seeing loved ones 'fall away' from faith in Jesus. In the process of this 'falling away', many become bitter. *In fact, 2 Peter 2:20 tells us "...the latter end is worse for them than the beginning..." (NKJV).* When we teach children that salvation is as simple as saying a prayer, it often results in the terrible tragedy of a teenager being 'Gospel hardened'. By this I mean we often hear from our kids that they "...tried Jesus..." when they were younger, but it didn't work. It's an absolute necessity for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin, because if there's no conviction of sin there cannot be any repentance from it. And, without repentance, there can be no salvation. Although we may work with the Holy Spirit, salvation isn't something we can either 'manipulate' or 'create'.

The way to work with the Holy Spirit is to use the Ten Commandments to bring "...the knowledge of sin". Your children will never appreciate the cross until they understand the demands of the Moral Law. Why on earth did Jesus die? It was primarily to fulfill the demands of the Law.

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill..." - Matthew 5:17 (NKJV). I believe one of the temptations for us as parents is to tell our children to come to Christ because He's their friend and He'll always be there for their every problem. All they need to do is pray when they have a problem and God will provide the answer. While this is true, there's one big qualification. Consider this analogy. A child was once running through a wooded area when he fell onto a sharp stick and pierced his jugular vein.

His father immediately scooped him up, held his thumb on the child's bleeding neck and rushed him to a nearby hospital. As they burst into the emergency room and a surgeon approached them, the small boy lifted his hand. When he fell, a tiny splinter had penetrated his thumb and he wanted the

doctor to take it out. Of course, the good doctor ignored the child's plea and immediately began working to stop the life-threatening injury to his neck.

I say that to illustrate that it's not Biblical evangelism to preach a message which causes people to hold up their splintered thumb to God, rather than that which is truly life-threatening. It's not Biblical evangelism to tell the world Jesus will simply fix the splinter of a bad marriage, drug addiction, alcoholism, loneliness and so on. In actuality, the real reason a sinner should come to the Savior is that, as with our analogy, his life's blood is draining from his neck. God wants to first deal with the fatal wound of sin - our spiritual problem - before He even looks at the splinter of our temporal problems.

Truthfully, sin is an eternal issue. The problems of this life, painful though they may be, are merely temporary. That's why it's important not to fall into the trap of our children making a 'decision for Christ' because Jesus will help them through life. When we paint a pleasant picture of God as our children's friend, we fall into this trap.

“Truthfully, sin is an eternal issue. The problems of this life, painful though they may be, are merely temporary.”

The reality is, because of sin, we were not God's friends, but His enemies. Because of sin, we were under His wrath. *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."* - Romans 5:9-10 (NKJV).

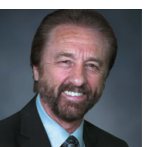
Maybe this thought is contrary to what you've been taught. But think of this - how can children find a place of Biblical repentance before the God they have offended, or angered, if all they have been led to believe is that they have His jovial smile? What do we tell them about God then?

What we should be telling our children is that without the righteousness of Christ, they will perish on the day of wrath. And yes, there is a way to do it without terrorising them. Don't just tell your kids, "Jesus died on the cross for you." But, also teach them the reality of sin. The swift current of eternal justice was sweeping all of humanity into the very jaws of hell. But Jesus gave His life to redeem us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us.

Teach your children the Law and you'll help them appreciate the magnitude of what Christ did for them on the cross. | **A**

*Adapted from Ray's book *How to Bring Your Children to Christ*. Originally from Christchurch, Ray and his wife Sue and their family now live in Los Angeles, California.*

■ Ray Comfort, the founder and CEO of Living Waters Publications, is an internationally recognized evangelist and author. Ray is the host of the award-winning Way of the Master television program and radio program. He is also a best-selling author of over 80 books.



Take COURAGE... and be STRONG!

BY ALAN STANLEY

In Christianity, don't we often run a thousand miles from sin? We get down on ourselves, we imagine it's the first thing God sees when He looks at us - and thus we imagine He's, more often than not, disappointed with us.

We rally against it - if we sin 'big', we find it hard to forgive ourselves - and we're pretty quick to pick up on it when others are involved in it.

And yet, it amazes me that in Matthew 9:2 Jesus says to the paralysed man "Be courageous, your sins are forgiven..."

The phrase "...be courageous..." is actually one word in Greek and it's in our Bibles as "...take heart...". Jesus uses the word when speaking to Paul, *"Take courage! As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."* - Acts 23:11 (NIV). In other words, "Be brave, your sins are forgiven." Be brave! Then, in Ephesians 3:18, Paul prays that his readers might have 'strength' to experience the infinity of Christ's love.

So, why do we need 'courage' and 'strength' to experience forgiveness and love? I would've thought these things would be experiences we could just rock up to? Aren't these pleasant experiences that we gravitate to like a kid to ice cream?

When I hear the words "...be brave..." I want to know, "...what's there to be afraid of?" Imagine if I said, "...you'll need to be brave if you want to experience my grace". Or strength. Why do we need to be strong to experience Jesus' love?

I've heard it said that Christianity is a crutch. Forget the crutch - that makes it sound like it's not for the fainthearted, to be honest. It sounds dangerous, risky even, to experience divine forgiveness and unconditional love. Why? The reason is, I think, because if we are to receive forgiveness and unconditional love we'll need to come face to face with who we really are. And, by the way, that's not a one-time event. The more I face up to who I am, the more opportunity there is to experience God's forgiveness and love.

But it takes courage and strength to face up to who we really are. Many can't do it. Many want to wallow in self-pity or imagine God is angry with them, or do penance or some good work to make them feel better about themselves. The

list could go on. Or, we project our dark side - the side of us we don't want to face up to - onto others. Be that onto people, onto powers and authorities and even onto those who disagree with us.

It's much easier to really believe those other people or that group or system is to blame than it is to face up to it. That takes strength and courage. Another word for owning up to who we really are, I think, is 'confession'. Simply acknowledging, "...this is who I am".

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus tells us, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."* (NIV).

I believe that part of the problem is that we've made confession into something akin to a chant, a cliché, or something that we rattle off - rather than something we need strength and courage for. Imagine standing in church and saying, "...we are now going to confess our sins together.

By the way, you'll need strength and courage for this, so if you're squeamish you might want to either leave or block your ears."

Paul had a way of saying he was the "worst of all sinners" - which means he really understood who he was - and yet, at the same time, he was so confident in who he was in Christ.

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His immense patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." - 1 Timothy 1:15-17 (NIV).

My point in saying all this is that it is possible to own up to who we really are, and the thing God would have us address, without feeling guilt or shame.

And I don't mean, by the way, that somehow we should ignore who we are because we're forgiven and loved. Ignoring it is not owning it or facing it. Courage and strength is needed because owning 'it' means refusing to blame someone else for 'it', or refusing to try and fix 'it'.

Be brave and strong enough to allow God's grace and love to be enough. |A

"The more I face up to who I am, the more opportunity there is to experience God's forgiveness and love. Where sin abounds, grace abounds you might say."

■ Alan Stanley is a Waikato-based preacher, writer and lecturer at Pathways College of Bible and Mission. He has started a new initiative - PreachIt! - aimed at training, equipping and mentoring preachers. See, www.preachit.nz



The CHRIST-LIKE GOD: A Reflection of JESUS

BY CHARLES PRICE



The ultimate question one can ask is, "...is there a God?" If the answer is '...yes', the second most important question is "...what's He like?" We can answer by defining God by His attributes - that He's all powerful, all knowing, omnipresent, unchanging and eternal.

But, an equally important aspect to His attributes is His character. If we ask, "...what is His character?", the answer is straightforward. God is like Jesus. Some see a dichotomy between what God is like and what Jesus is like. Some are afraid of God, but few are afraid of Jesus. In the Old Testament, God is the judge of sinners. In the New Testament, Jesus is the friend of sinners.

Some of us like Jesus but feel less sure of God. We understand God through the person of Jesus, not the other way around. We do not know Jesus by knowing God. Jesus told His disciples, "...no one comes to the Father except through Me." - *John 14:6 (NIV)*. If we are to know God, we need to know Christ. "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." - *John 14:9 (NIV)*. The true God is known by knowing Christ, for He is Christ-like. AW Tozer said, "...what comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us".

Pre-eminently thinking about God must include thinking about Jesus. In Luke 15, Jesus told three parables - the passage begins like this. "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." - *Luke 15:1-2 (NIV)*. Two categories of people are here - the tax collectors and sinners listening, and the Pharisees and teachers muttering.

If you asked the Pharisees and teachers who the spiritual outcasts were among them, they would immediately say the tax collectors and sinners. If you asked the tax collectors and sinners the same question, they would agree immediately it was them.

If you asked both groups who the friends of God were, they would agree equally it was the Pharisees and teachers. The two groups were in complete agreement that God does not look on sin because of His purity.

What both hadn't any grasp of was what Paul wrote in *Romans 5:20*, "...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more..." (*NIV*). God is closest to those who know their sin and furthest from those who don't. Ironically, the ones who don't know their sin are the Pharisees and teachers, the ones who do know their sin are the tax collectors and sinners. Therefore, every measure by which both groups determined a person's

relationship to God was wrong! The Pharisees and teachers grumbled that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. They didn't say Jesus was feeding sinners - which might be a good thing to do. At best, feeding people is generous, at worst it's patronising. What offended the Pharisees and teachers was that Jesus befriended sinners - taking them into His 'turf', if you like, as His friends, showing no discernment as to their true condition.

This discussion led to three parables - the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. We know the parable of the lost sheep - a shepherd counting his 100 sheep finds one missing and goes to find it. In the parable of the lost coin, a woman loses one of her 10 silver coins, lights a lamp and looks in every possible place in her house until she finds it.

The sheep is outside and conscious that it is lost - the coin is inside and has no consciousness. These two pictures of one lost on the outside and another lost on the inside are brought together in the next parable of two sons. Both are lost, the one is on the outside, the other is on the inside. The one on the outside knew he was lost, the one on the inside didn't.

Though we usually call it the parable of the prodigal son, 'sons' is plural, as Jesus tells it. "...A certain man had two sons..." - *Luke 15:11 (NIV)*. "...The younger of them said

to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood." - *Luke 15:12 (NIV)*.

There's no further discussion or debate recorded about that - we're simply told the father gave him what he requested. We know how and why he divided his property for there were laws about it, the younger son got a third.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living" - *Luke 15:13 (NIV)*.

From Israel, the only way to go is east - maybe to Mesopotamia's attractions - one of the great civilisations of the day. Perhaps it was the lights of Babylon or the culture of Nineveh that beckoned. We don't know, but we do know that he arrived with cash in his pocket and quickly accumulated lots of friends. Then, the inevitable happened. His money ran out, just as a famine was spreading through the land.

"We understand God through the person of Jesus, not the other way around. We do not know Jesus by knowing God. Jesus told His disciples, "...no one comes to the Father except through Me." - John 14:6 (NIV)."

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In desperation, the son hired himself out to a pig breeder who gave him the job of feeding pigs. He was so hungry he would've eaten the food the pigs were being fed.

You'll appreciate the degradation of this for a Jewish boy to whom pigs were unclean. As Jesus told this story, those listening would've grasped its full impact. He had sunk to the lowest of lows.

Something then happened which could only really occur when he was in the pig pen. *"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"* - Luke 15:17 (NIV).

The key phrase is "...when he came to himself..." We rarely come to ourselves in comfort - we usually meet our real selves in trouble. The best thing about being in trouble is that things that really matter, begin to really matter.

God often waits a long time for people to come to themselves. That's why, like the father in our story, God lets us go in the first place. One of the most frightening things the New Testament teaches about the wrath of God is that, God hands us over to our own desires and their repercussions. *"Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts..."* - Romans 1:24 (NIV).

In the following verses Romans tell us God hands people over to materialism, sensualism and egotism - their own choices - until they find themselves in a pig pen. If they have the humility to come to themselves, then He can get their attention. To arrive at the story's end - a transformed boy who returns home - the father had had to let him go, which portrays how God lets us go.

We can live under illusions about ourselves, or a carefully managed image we present to others, but - alone in a pig pen when it's just us - we have to be honest. The son's honesty is, "I've sinned, I've messed up, I need to go home."

Luke 15:20 is a wonderful verse, *"...when he was still a great way off, his father saw him..."* (NIV). Had his father been outside every morning, looking down the road? Perhaps. When he let his son go, he took the risk he might never see him again. Slowly, as his father recognised his son, he, *"... ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."* (NIV).

That's far from the reaction the son was expecting. He was returning with a well-rehearsed apology in his pocket. The son begins, *"...Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son."* - Luke 15:21 (NIV). Before he could finish, the father interrupts... *"Bring*

out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. - Luke 15:22-24 (NIV).

God is like Jesus - and Jesus is telling us something about Himself. The father welcomes, forgives, reinstates and dresses the son in new clothing. He's celebrating. Some of us may see ourselves in the younger son and have found ourselves in 'pig pens'. A pig pen of greed, lust, pride or jealousy. If we are in one, we're halfway home when we come to ourselves, for when we begin to move back home, we'll discover the Father has been watching the road all along, He is waiting and He'll run to celebrate you.

An old hymn says,
 "I've wandered far away from God,
 Now, I'm coming home.
 The paths of sin too long I've trod,
 Lord, I'm coming home.
 Coming home, coming home,

Never more to roam.
 Open wide Your arms of love,
 Lord, I'm coming home.
 My soul is sick, my heart is sore,
 Lord, I'm coming home.
 My strength renewed, my hope restored,
 Lord, I'm coming home."

Is that your prayer?

Finally, something else of note is also taking place - the oldest son, who'd been diligently working on the property, is angry and resentful when he's told his brother is home. Jesus is implying to the Pharisees and teachers, "...are you recognising the older brother? Are you seeing yourself in the mirror of this story?"

It is more difficult to see ourselves in the older son, for he never 'comes to himself'. He justifies himself and deflects his own needs by criticizing his brother. But the story ends with the younger rebellious son back in fellowship with his Father. The boy who never left home though is distant and remote. The one who feels he has done well has the most difficulty facing his real need. That was the real thrust of the story. God is like Jesus, and He is the friend of sinners, for He said, *"... I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* - Luke 5:32 (NIV).

It is self-righteousness that gets in the way, and that is where repentance fails to come! The story starts with the youngest lost son and ends with the eldest lost son. You and I can be one or the other. |A



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CHANGE IN THE 'AIR': CLINT RANDELL 'WAVES' GOODBYE - FOR NOW

BY JEREMY SMITH

"Somebody once told me, "if you want something different, do something different."
And, well, 2022 will certainly look a bit different for Clint Randell.

After a 12-year on air radio career - 10 of those with 4am wake up calls and breakfast show hours - Clint left his role hosting The Edge Breakfast in December, closing a six-year chapter on a show which - according to its latest listenership survey - draws a reported listenership of more than 350,000 people. "You get used to waking up quickly, but you don't get used to the alarm! I'm definitely looking forward to not having to navigate that as much this year.

"When we get home from things like summer holidays, I sometimes wonder, "...is this what people who get decent sleep are like?" Ironically, our job is to be fun and exciting - but I do wonder if maybe I'd be way more fun and exciting if we weren't getting up at 4am every morning!"

Some ask why he'd even consider leaving what could be seen as the "perfect radio job". His answer?

"I want to be faithful to what I feel the Lord is calling me to next. I want to be obedient in walking through a door I feel He may be opening for me - the results are up to Him. It will also allow me to be more present with my family."

As he begins a new season, part of which involves "overseas television opportunities", I got the chance to chat with Clint to reflect on his journey so far - discussing everything from giving his heart to the Lord as a teenager, how he navigates being a Christian in the mainstream media, his favourite holiday spot to spend time with his family, that stint on New Zealand Idol and even how close he really came to being a firefighter.

How did you first hear about the Lord?

We didn't go to church as a family when I was a kid. My younger brother Bevan and I weren't raised in a Christian home, but my mum had lots of Godly influences around her. Actually, she told me the other day she was praying about something - that was so cool! Mum and Dad will come to church if something special is happening, or we ask them to, but they don't go regularly. In intermediate school, a good mate of mine - Nigel - was a Christian. We ended up going on to the same high school and then the same place of work. We were into the same sports too. He just came across as a normal dude, but I began noticing he was different. Some of the things he said or didn't say, or did or didn't do, were different to what lots of the other kids at school would do. He never really overtly shared his faith with me, but I definitely noticed a point of difference - and when I had questions about his faith, he'd answer them.

When did you decide to begin a personal walk with Jesus?

I was 18. After my last year of high school, my mates and I headed up north to Kai Iwi Lakes for summer. Up there, a



Clint on The Masked Singer New Zealand last year.



Clint and his wife Jaime at home with the kids.

a church was running what I now know was an outreach missions group. They'd chat to us about Jesus and ask if we knew Him. Nigel was there too - I'd say by that stage I had a certain level of respect for God because Nigel had a faith in Him. I had heaps of questions and literally went back to the group's tent five days in a row to ask one guy there - Russell - everything. He ended up telling me the only person who had the answers I was looking for was the Lord, so he prayed that God would reveal Himself to me in a way I'd understand.

That was my 'baby step' towards Jesus, if you will. The very next day we were wakeboarding and I came off the board pretty bad, injuring my neck. I had it in a makeshift brace, trying not to move it and I was deciding over the course of the day whether I needed to get it checked out.

As I sat on the boat trying not to move and watching someone else ski, I started praying - simply asking the Lord to heal me. I slowly began moving my neck and the pain was gone! I moved it more, still no pain. I couldn't believe it, I was a little stunned to be honest. When I rushed to tell Russell, he calmly replied, "... that's the Lord showing up in your life." He asked if I wanted to give my heart to God - so I did.

Very quickly, the Lord began making Himself known in amazing ways, time and time again. Some people call them coincidences, I can't deny it was God. Looking back, I wish I'd written those down so I could reflect on and read them. As we get older, well for me anyway, there are times we're so 'busy' we may not even notice the ways in which God's still at work on our behalf. Those aren't coincidences, it's God.

Who has had the biggest influence on your relationship with Jesus? What's been their most helpful advice?

I'd say Frank Ritchie. He's a Media Chaplaincy New Zealand chaplain and he provides pastoral care for members of a group called 'Salt' - an initiative established by the Christian Broadcasting Association to support Christians working in New Zealand's media industry. We don't catch up that often, but he reaches out to check how I'm going. I always feel like I'm going to get a bit of a 'tune up' or a telling off! But seriously, he once

told me it's not my job to pressure myself to lead everyone I meet to Christ. It's actually the Lord who draws people to Himself. My job is to be who God has called me to be, wherever He's called me to be, and to love people as Jesus loves us. God will work in people's lives. Frank's been great at helping take some of that 'weight' off my shoulders so that I can enjoy working where God has called me to be a light as a Christian.

What's the biggest thing you've learned in walking with the Lord?

Early on, I was really hard out in wanting to share my faith with other people. Honestly, I think I maybe went about it the wrong way, and ended up almost trying to force my faith onto others. I quickly realised I was doing the opposite of what Nigel did for me - journeying with me over time and allowing me to ask questions - it meant I was open to the Lord when He encountered me.

As Christians, getting really excited about sharing our faith is fantastic, and we should. But I think I learned we can sometimes scare people off if we just 'tell' them everything we know all at once, rather than intentionally 'showing' them what we believe - demonstrating our faith as we journey together. Sometimes, when God encounters people you've walked with, you won't even realise the difference Christ in you has made as they've been watching you.

Can you tell me about your family?

My wife Jaime and I have been married 13 years next month. She was brought up in church and we met when I started singing backing vocals there. Our daughter, Cameron, is six and our son, Ty, is five. The best part about being a dad is simply being so proud of my kids. Sometimes I reflect on the scope of what it is to raise children with God's help - and I just love who they're created to be!

Cameron is so creative, confident and full of life. Ty is so easy going, sensitive, cuddly and calculated in his decisions. And Jaime is a huge blessing. She's wholly supportive in so many ways. Career wise, she's the one who allows me to take opportunities, and who picks up the slack so I can. A lot of the

time, she puts her career second to allow me to do the things I've done. This year, I'm really looking forward to there being times when I take a backseat to her career, so she can pursue things she's passionate about. I couldn't have taken a lot of the opportunities I've had without Jaime's love and support.

Speaking of singing, you hosted The Masked Singer New Zealand last year on Three. But can you cast your mind even further back to being a New Zealand Idol contestant in 2006?

I'd almost finished my radio degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and thought I'd give the competition a crack. As I went through to the top 100, the top 50, the top 18 and the top 10, I couldn't work out what was happening! I was looking forward to country week - the very week I got booted out! I finished eighth.

I was always so nervous on stage - even when I'd audition my songs for the following week, I'd make my family put blankets or pillows over their faces so they couldn't watch me sing. I never entered the competition to get the recording contract. For me, it was just another fun opportunity - one which ended up opening more doors to the career I now enjoy. It's an experience I will always be grateful for.

Your on air radio career started at LifeFM. How'd that opportunity happen?

One of the Idol judges was a broadcaster on ZM at the time - I did some promo work for that station when I finished my degree. I really wanted to be on air, but no opportunities to do that happened. I was probably a little immature and impatient back then, thinking I was ready before I was. I actually left radio for a year and taught at-risk youth who'd been expelled from high school. I've been pretty blessed with my upbringing and I wanted to try to help give them whatever opportunities I could.

One day, I got an email from my AUT student radio station saying LifeFM wanted a drive show announcer. I applied and got the job with no on air radio experience - although I'd done a few children's television shows. After about a year, I moved to the breakfast show for four years.

What's the best thing about radio?

I love that you can come up with an idea, then effectively you're in charge of bringing it to life. It's amazing when, as much as we plan, the unexpected happens. When an idea goes from good to great, it's such an adrenaline rush! It's also amazing when we get texts from listeners telling us how much the show has helped them through tough times. Sometimes, we're not even sure what we did to prompt texts like that.

At LifeFM, did you ever feel any 'pressure' given the influence you can have as a broadcaster? And did you

feel like some listeners looked to you as their example of what it was to be a Christian?

I loved LifeFM - we were given a show and told, "...go for it, have fun". A certain level of responsibility comes with that though. I was a reasonably new Christian when I was at Life. I did feel like a relative 'newbie' to faith at times and that I sometimes got things wrong. That was hard. To some extent, we all have times where we wonder if we're good enough - I certainly know I'm not perfect. Sometimes a few listeners pulled me up on things - that's okay. I'm not too proud to receive advice when it's shared in love.

On the other hand, there were those who weren't Christians listening because they were seeking God. I think they related to me because they could hear the 'newness' I had. I was always honest in saying I didn't have all the answers - it was encouraging that being open meant I was helping somebody else in their walk.

In 2015, when you moved from LifeFM into mainstream opportunities, was it difficult being a Christian in that environment?

Moving to Mai Fm, and then to The Edge was exciting in terms of doing different stuff with a new approach. At Life, we'd pray at staff meetings and have worship. Or, I could freely talk about the Bible. Then, all of a sudden, I was part of a team which wanted to push boundaries and do big promos to get people talking. In a way, the transition was a bit weird - I'd see comments saying,

"...can you believe this guy was on LifeFM?" All I can really say is maybe on Life, listeners knew a slightly more conservative version of me - still me, sure, but maybe on The Edge it was a slightly different version of me. I also think coming from Christian radio brought with it certain preconceived ideas about what I might be like because I'm a Christian.

You mention 'edgy' promos. How did you 'walk the line' of authentically living your faith while at the same time knowing where the line was and not compromising?

That's such a great question! I always reflect on Mark 12:29-31, "...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (NIV)." Probably the biggest challenge for me in mainstream radio has been the balance of demonstrating that you can be a Christian and love Jesus while at the same time laughing and having fun. But, of course, I also don't want to water down what Jesus wants me to reflect. I want radio to seem like lots of fun, because it is, but I also think about how my faith means I should have a point of difference, without being so different that people can't relate.

Were there times you felt something went too far?

Yeah. I have had a couple of conversations throughout my career, to say that, not only from a Christian point of view, but

"In my story, all the glory is God's. The fact I can come before Him, trusting His leading and direction, just sometimes makes me wonder how on earth people navigate life in their own strength."

also given my upbringing and where my moral compass sits - and as a husband and father - I wasn't entirely comfortable with certain ideas. Everyone has their line right? When you're part of an organisation called The Edge, which literally wants to be on 'the edge', you're sometimes going to find yourself in uncomfortable situations, and sometimes that's precisely what makes it entertaining.

There've been times even listeners who weren't Christians have been uncomfortable with things that have played out on air. But sometimes that's live radio. I'm a bit of a people pleaser too, and part of the responsibility of my job was to be a team player at a station wanting to push boundaries. When everyone else was on board with something, and as part of the job I need to be too, I'd ask myself, "...what's my role in this so I can be on board and do what's required of me in a job sense, while at the same time not crossing my line?"

What would you say to readers who want to authentically live out their faith in the sphere of influence God's given them?

I think authenticity is about being honest enough to say, "yes, I'm a Christian, but I'm not perfect. I don't always get things 100 percent right." The expectation that because we're a Christian we're perfect is unrealistic and unattainable. None of us are. It's about my heart when I make a mistake. Am I humble enough to admit I made one, come to the Lord and apologise? We all make them and we all fall short, that's why Jesus died for us! It's just that sometimes my mistakes were broadcast on live radio!

I'd encourage anyone feeling like they're not doing 'enough', or not doing 'things right' that we're going to get it wrong sometimes. When we do, it's about realising we've stuffed up and coming to God. When you're not convicted when you make a mistake, or when someone challenges you, then you know the line has moved. The other valuable thing is having someone in your life who acts as a sounding board. I'm in a group messenger chat with my friends where I often talk about lots of things, including on-air 'bits' I'm unsure about. As long as you have a couple of people like that in your life with whom you stay accountable, then you're in a good spot. It's when you're not accountable that you could potentially end up so far past the boundaries you set yourself that you don't actually even know where they are anymore.

Can you remember a particular on-air 'bit' which really impacted a listener's life?

One of the things church life has taught me is the importance of generosity. I'd love generosity to be one of the things people remember me for. I suppose talking about this almost defeats the purpose of why we do it, but I hope it encourages someone. Jaime and I look for ways to bless people financially, as we feel the Lord leads us. We pray that God brings people

into our lives who He knows need help - then she and I can be Jesus' hands and feet in those situations. One example I remember is a guy who won two tickets on the show to fly to Los Angeles and see an artist who he was a big fan of, perform. He gave the tickets to his girlfriend and his sister, who were also massive fans. As we chatted, I discovered one of his sisters had recently passed away. I rang Jaime and we agreed it'd be really cool if he could go away with his girlfriend and sister so the three of them could have this experience after the devastating season they'd been through. He broke down in tears when I told him we wanted to pay so he could go too.

If you hadn't got into radio, what would you have done otherwise? It's not too late to release an album!

Ha! Before LifeFM, and after working with at-risk youth, I actually applied to be a firefighter! My physical exam was on a Saturday, then I got offered the LifeFM job three days prior on the Wednesday! Early childhood education was on my radar for a bit and in the past Jaime and I have even joked about

heading to Wyoming or Montana to live on a ranch for a while. I don't know what ranch wants to hire a radio and television guy who has never worked on a ranch a day in his life, but in all seriousness, I'd love to give it a go!

How do you balance everything in life that requires your attention with your most important role - a husband and father?

The 4am starts meant that I could knock off a little earlier than most to be available for things like kindergarten and school pickups - things other dads may not be able to

do. The job doesn't just end when you leave the studio though - a breakfast radio show is a full on commitment.

In chasing a new career this year, and stepping away from radio for now, I'm hoping it might also give me more of that balance. In recent years, Jaime and I have been more conscious of when we're on and not on our phones when we get home.

As much as I prioritise work, I also need to be intentional about making time for God and spending quality time with my wife and kids. The danger, if we are all about work, is that we end up giving 'whatever we have left' to the most important people in our lives. And sometimes, there's nothing left.

Can you tell me about competing on Dancing With The Stars in 2019?

It was an incredible opportunity! Effectively like having two full time jobs for 10 weeks straight. I think I worked 70 days without a day off. I probably put in way more hours of practice than I needed to, but I didn't want to put in a performance which I knew, on my part, was maybe a six out of 10 when I was capable of giving a lot more. I'm rather competitive and I never wanted to look back at a particular dance thinking I could've done it better.

“I feel like God's opening a door for me, and so I'll walk through it. It's an exciting opportunity and I trust He will open the right doors and close the wrong ones.”



Clint enjoying some fun at the park with his son Ty, and daughter, Cameron.

We're approaching the end of another Kiwi summer. What's something you do to recharge and where's the best spot in New Zealand to holiday with your family?

As I've mentioned, definitely Kai Iwi Lakes! At the end of the year, or on any long weekend, we love to go camping there. There's nothing else needing my attention up there, besides relaxing with family. The other thing for me is playing football at the highest level I can at 36! I really look forward to the weekends during football season.

How did you know it was right to leave The Edge after six years? Any hints about what's ahead in 2022?

Some people think I'm crazy! They don't understand why I'd walk away from what is a fantastic job - a network breakfast show on one of New Zealand's biggest stations - to take a punt on something different. But I feel like God's opening a door for me, and so I'll walk through it. It's an exciting opportunity and I trust He will open the right doors and close the wrong ones. There's no anxiety or stress, I just know God is there and I'm committing what's ahead to Him. That's how, in a sense, I can walk away from something people think I'm crazy to leave. One of the opportunities is television work overseas, which could potentially expand my international opportunities in the future. I guess time will tell.

Any last encouragement for our readers?

God doesn't promise us a perfect life - He promises to walk with us. As Christians, we can have peace that if something doesn't look like we thought it should, God's got a better plan. In my story, all the glory is God's. The fact I can come before Him, trusting His leading and direction, just sometimes makes me wonder how on earth people navigate life in their own strength. If you're reading this, and you're searching for purpose and meaning, it very much might be God you're looking for. Maybe it's about inviting Him into your life and allowing Him to take the wheel this year and steer in 2022.

If you've been driving your own life for the last 20, 30 or 40 years, and you let God do that this year, He won't let you down. If you take that leap of faith - and He shows up in your life even half as much as He has in mine - you won't be walking away at the end of 2022. You'll absolutely want to press in more.

Thanks so much Clint, awesome to chat! Keep an eye out for Clint as he returns to our television screens next month in an exciting new role he's been eying up for some time. |/A

Additional Photography: Phil Botha Creative

■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.



HOLD

That Thought!

BY JEREMY SMITH

Over the years, I've heard the story told of a railway worker who became trapped as he was working in a refrigerated boxcar, an enclosed railroad car used to carry freight. It's said one of his colleagues - who didn't know the other gentleman was in the car working away - shut the door as he walked past. Seeing it was open, the colleague rolled it shut and latched it, thus locking it from the outside.

The man in the refrigerated boxcar had many years of experience in the industry and worked on them all the time, so he knew what being stuck in there potentially meant.

It likely meant he was there until at least the next day when his fellow workmen returned to unlock the car in order to load it for shipment. He also knew that in all likelihood he would freeze to death before then. Either because of the fact this particular car was refrigerated and had a refrigeration unit blowing cold air into it, or simply because the outside air temperature would drop sharply overnight.

To no avail, the worker kicked at the door, yelling out to try and get the attention of anyone who might still be near the car. Attempts to find an escape route also failed - he tried to get up to the car's ceiling, tampering with the refrigeration unit with a tool and leaving scratch marks as he tried to either shut it off or find a way out. He could do neither - the unit was running and the door was locked. In frustration and exhaustion, he eventually dropped to the floor of the car. Figuring he didn't have long left, he began using the tool he

had with him to scratch some thoughts on the floor of the railway car. Over the next few hours, as the night progressed, he wrote things like "It's getting so cold...", and "...my hands are turning numb - they're so cold."

Later on in the evening, he wrote, "...if I could just go to sleep...", a step known to be the last thing a person does before they freeze to death. One phrase also read "...these may well be my last words..." - with the writing then trailing off.

The following day, several railway workers returned to the rail yard - opening up the railroad cars to inspect them for loading. When they rolled back the door of the particular car the man was in, they found him on the floor - he had died.

The authorities were called, and - because of the strange circumstances surrounding the event - an autopsy was performed. While that autopsy showed physical signs which indicated he'd frozen to death, it was a finding that left the man's rail yard colleagues perplexed.

Subsequent investigations of the cart he'd been in showed the refrigeration unit on top of that boxcar was broken and only the fan was blowing air. It was not sub zero air being pumped into that car, only the outside air simply being circulated. Therefore, he did not suffocate.

It was also ascertained that the temperature outside that night never dropped below 12 degrees celsius - so he did not freeze to death.

Being unable to pinpoint any external factors as to a reason for the man's death subsequently led investigators to ask a remarkable question. "Did he actually talk himself to death?"

Have you ever had anyone in your life say something similar to you? "I'm sick to death of...", or "I'm worried to death about..."

The official ruling in our story was that it was 'likely' he died because of a combination of what he talked himself into that night - what he'd been dwelling on in his mind - and fear, as was evident by the nature of the writings and scratches he'd etched into the boxcar's floor and walls.

Thought provoking isn't it?

Whenever I hear this story, I'm reminded that God's Word, the Bible, is full of injunctions and exhortations regarding just how important it is that we are good stewards of what goes on in our minds - our thoughts and then what is ultimately expressed through our words as a result. The apostle Paul tells us, as the NIV puts it in 2 Corinthians 10:5, to "... take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ..."

James tells us the tongue, though a 'small part' of the body, has the power to influence the direction of one's life - and that "... no human being can tame the tongue..." James 3:8 (NIV). "...take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark." - James 3:4-5 (NIV).

Proverbs also contains several reminders throughout its pages. As the NIV puts it, "...above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it..." (chapter four, verse 23) and "... the tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit..." (chapter 18, verse 21).

The New King James Version (NKJV) tells us in chapter 23 verse seven of the same book, "...for as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." Wow. The tongue it seems, though small, would appear to carry some 'weight' in our lives wouldn't it?

I suppose that by now, as I pray about writing these encouragements in each issue, it shouldn't come as a surprise to me that in many cases the analogies, examples, stories and scriptures I read in preparation - and often the very thing the Lord lays on my heart to share - more often than not end up being an area into which He is also calling me higher personally.

I say that because sometimes, in all honesty, what I think of myself sometimes doesn't match what God thinks of me. By this I mean that sometimes not every thought I have is yet "... obedient to Christ..."

Would you say that's true for you at times too?

In moments when this is the case, I've learned this certainly has flow on effects too. I'd suggest that, in my experience, if a thought I have isn't obedient to Christ, that leaves me open to react, at times, to certain circumstances in ways the Lord wouldn't want me to, doesn't it? In 1 Corinthians 2:16 Paul tells us, "...for, who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (NIV).

Maybe I could even go as far as saying sometimes the way I react to circumstances or unexpected situations shows whether or not I have actually submitted - or handed over - that particular situation to the Lord. In other words - as I may have said before - we can't afford to have any thoughts in our minds about ourselves which God doesn't have about us.

I do probably have a propensity to worry at times if I'm honest, but in my life I'm learning to ask myself a question in those moments. And it's this. "...if a reaction of fear, worry or anxiety crops up, that's not how Jesus would have us respond, is it?" Is it the same for you too, at times? Do those types of responses sometimes surface?

My simple encouragement via this piece is something I have to remind myself of too. And it also comes with a question - "...what environment and atmosphere are we creating in and around our lives through our thoughts and words and through what we allow our minds to dwell on?"

I always need to keep a short account with the Lord and ensure I am cultivating a thought life in which Jesus is at the centre of everything - and worry is not.

Thus taking captive any thoughts which are not of Him. It's worth asking, "...is this how Jesus would react in this situation?" This allows me to ascertain whether I'm allowing what I once heard called 'stinking thinking' - thoughts that are not of Him - to shape my approach to things.

As the Lord continues to teach me in this area, I'm learning too that when He helps us isolate areas that He then asks us to surrender - including thinking we are to let go of - something to consider is this. What, in turn, is my response? Do I bring those thoughts captive under Christ, or do I hold onto them, thinking I know better? Winston Churchill once said, "Personally, I'm always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught."

That holds some truth, doesn't it? While walking through the learning process isn't always easy, I pray that when God asks us to lay down - or submit or take captive - areas of our life, we would do so without reluctance. That includes our minds, thoughts and how we 'talk' to ourselves.

Speaking of Winston Churchill, data in a recent study suggests the average person has about 6200 thoughts a day. It's said that up to 80 percent of those - or just under 5000 of those

“If a reaction of fear, worry or anxiety crops up, that’s not how Jesus would have us respond is it?”



thoughts - are negative. And, as many as 95 percent - nearly 5900 - are repetitive thoughts. By general agreement, there's around 200,000 words in the English language in common use. Most people use about 5000 of these words in normal conversation. Winston Churchill, renowned for his quick wit and intellect, evidently used something like 15,000 words in his personal arsenal.

That's a lot of words and thoughts isn't it? It makes sense that Paul urges us to submit our thoughts to Christ! But here's something to note too - not all of those 6200 thoughts we have should in fact stay on our minds, or be things we dwell on. And as Christians, the study's proportions need not - actually should not - be our proportions.

Scripture clearly tells us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will." - Romans 12:2 (NIV).

So, as we've reflected on these things, what type of thoughts should we be dwelling, or meditating on, then? And how do we go about cultivating the Christ-centered thought life we've talked about? Well, God's Word is clear on the type of thoughts we should allow to fill our minds.

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." - Philippians 4:8 (NIV).

The resulting outflow of such a Christ-centered thought life is subsequent Christ-centered actions and words as our mouths begin to "...speak what the heart is full of..." (Matthew 12:34, NIV).

In closing, what better place to rest on than the words of Jesus Himself. If you're like me, and at times your default response can be one of worry and uncertainty, then here is a reminder that as followers of Jesus, He personally told us He's given us something with which we can combat that. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." - John 14:27 (NIV).

In and through all seasons of life, He remains in control.

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33 (NIV).

So then, what are we allowing our minds to dwell on? And are we - as encouraged in scripture - bringing those musings into submission under the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Or, are we holding onto things we should be releasing to Him? If it matters to you, it matters to Him. Why? Because of His great love for us. And, as far as our part goes, casting our worries, cares and burdens onto Jesus means placing them in His hands, and then purposing in our hearts to leave them there.

It's the safest place of all to put them, don't you think? | 

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The Lifestyle of the Cross

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

With Easter approaching, Nathan Johnson writes that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus wasn't a mere 'speed bump' in days gone by, rather it was the triumphant turning point in history. He says while Jesus' death on the cross was a moment in time on a particular day, the attitude and lifestyle of the cross is one Jesus lived every day.

A library of words cannot articulate the change Jesus' death and resurrection has made - sins were atoned for and forgiven, the power of sin has been defeated, death lost its sting, hope has been secured, Heaven has been made available, intimacy with God made possible and a life indwelt by the Holy Spirit has become the norm. All because of the cross.

It should have been no surprise to the disciples that Jesus was heading to the cross. Countless times He declared Himself the suffering Messiah which was headed to Jerusalem to be handed over. Even in his language with the disciples, Jesus said things like, "...whoever does not take up their cross and

follow Me is not worthy of Me." - Matthew 10:38 (NIV) and "...whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me." - Matthew 16:24 (NIV). But, perhaps even more important, Jesus lived the lifestyle of the cross. Look at the life of Jesus and you'll find He never once thought about Himself. You could argue that in Gethsemane Jesus was focused inward, but even there He was still focused on bringing salvation to the world.

Jesus' life was constantly focused on others, continually meeting the needs around Him. Even His prayer times alone on the mountains were for the purpose of being poured out in ministry. Jesus never focused inward, He never reasoned from the basis of how it might affect Him. Instead, Jesus was constantly rolling up His sleeves, washing feet, bleeding, suffering, dying and meeting the needs of the people around Him. In essence, what the cross symbolised, He lived every day.

When Jesus declared "take no thought for your life..." in Matthew 6:25 and Luke 12:22, it wasn't a cute phrase to stick

on your refrigerator, but rather the life we're called to live. In Philippians 2, Paul says, "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.*" - Philippians 2:3-5 (NIV).

We are to have the mind of Christ. The Greek word means more than a brain, but an attitude, lifestyle and essence of how one lives. I am to have the lifestyle of Jesus.

What was His lifestyle, His mind and His attitude? It was one of the cross. Paul goes on in verses six to eight to say Jesus "*...who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross.*" (NIV).

Jesus is God Himself, yet He made Himself of no reputation, taking upon Himself the life of a servant, coming as a man, living a life of humility and obedience, even to the point of the cross. Jesus lived a lifestyle of the cross. Yes the cross was an event that took place one day in history, which we now call Easter Friday.

But the tone and lifestyle of Jesus was a demonstration of the cross: bleeding, suffering, dying and meeting the needs of the world. This ties back to what Paul said in Philippians - this is the lifestyle of the cross.

So, what does taking up our cross and following Christ look like practically? It doesn't mean we are to wear cross necklaces and earrings, post them on our churches and carry a small one in our pocket - though these are all fine things to do. Jesus emphasised the essence of the cross, which He demonstrated practically every day He lived.

If you want to know what the lifestyle of the Cross looks like lived out on your streets, look at the life of Jesus. He shows us how someone who never thinks about Himself can live and function and how selfless living is even possible.

"...I'm also called to the cross because that was the lifestyle of Jesus. If I find myself in Him, then His life must become mine. I am to have His attitude and lifestyle - which was of the cross."

Let's ask ourselves, "...do I live for myself or do I live for others?" When a problem arises, is my first thought how it affects me, or is it how I can serve and meet a need? Do I run toward comfort and ease, or do I seek the low places and desire to pour out my life? Am I willing to be used by God to win my world, or do I prefer to check in at the church once a week? These are all questions which allude to our selfishness. But we're not called to live for ourselves, we are called to live for others. We are not to turn within, we are to turn outward.

I'm called to the cross - I am to find my salvation, forgiveness and life in the death of Jesus. His death has become my death. His cross is my cross. Romans is replete with this idea.

But, I'm also called to the cross because that was the lifestyle of Jesus. If I find myself in Him, then His life must become mine.

I am to have His attitude and lifestyle - which was of the cross. I am called to the cross because my Saviour lived the life of the cross.



How is such a life even possible? In truth, it's not... If it's done in your own strength and ability. This is an impossible standard for us to live. Never think about myself, constantly pour my life out for the people around me, bleed, suffer and die for my world and roll up my sleeves and meet needs. All this is impossible without Jesus.

The Christian life is not meant to be lived in my own resource, strength and ability. One of the great purposes of the death and resurrection of Jesus

is to create the avenue for the Holy Spirit to have access to indwell my life.

What took place at Pentecost - the Holy Spirit coming to live in and resource my life - is how I am to function daily. I don't live life on my own, but in the power and ability of the Spirit of God. It is this sourcing of God's Spirit which enables me to live an impossible life. He produces the lifestyle of the cross within me.

The cross is not something I discipline myself in, but rather is the fruit - the evidence and outflow - of a life that is indwelt and sourced by the Holy Spirit.

We are called to the cross - not just for salvation, but for how we are to live every moment of every day. The lifestyle of the cross - the 'Cross Style' - is to become my lifestyle. |  

■ Nathan Johnson is program director and an instructor at Ellerslie Mission Society in Windsor, Colorado. Learn and see more at deeperchristian.com. Used by permission.





Hope For a Secure Future

BY MURRAY SMITH

“Jesus offered an antidote to the cares of this life which centres around having a personal relationship with God.”

While I write this a little bit tongue in cheek, the metaphor is intended seriously.

We have a close connection who often brings a reality check to our family. More than that, he challenges our behaviours and attitudes in life without saying anything.

He exhibits steadiness of character, maturity and lack of complexity amongst a bunch of other traits that actually are enviable at times. He never appears stressed, anxious or worried about the future.

He is consistently content, never complains and is always grateful. Perhaps thankfulness is part of the reason his emotional state is even - not all over the place. We've never seen him let his guard down by being moody or grumpy and unpredictable. We haven't seen him depressed or down in the dumps - probably because he never reads or listens to the incessant carping of the mainstream media.

It sounds like I'm writing a personal reference here for a super human, so to be quite clear, I'm not even talking about a human. I'm talking about our two-year-old family pet, a dog who lacks the complexity that so many humans have in their personalities.

As I mentioned, he challenges our attitudes - which may seem an odd thing to say, but that is the case. He wakes up every morning excited and optimistic about a new day, wildly welcoming everyone as if they'd been away for weeks, rather than sleeping in bedrooms a few paces from where he sleeps.

He's not demanding but quite clear in his wishes that he would like breakfast soon, if that's alright with everyone else.

He is totally and utterly confident in his life, at peace that everything will be okay. He eats, sleeps and plays enthusiastically, rattling every preconception that 'a dog's life' is a negative thing.

Before you dismiss my musings as banal nonsense, hear me out. There is a valid metaphor here. You see, our lives become stressful with anxious thoughts and concerns about the future. Jesus offered an antidote to the cares of this life which centres around having a personal relationship with God. Nearness to our Creator introduces a needed perspective - akin dare I say it, to how our dog views his relationship with us. His expectation is that having a 'Master' means everything will be taken care of.

Relationship with God as our Heavenly Father offers rich assurance. Jesus' words express this best.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?... Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” - Matthew 6:25-27, 34 (NIV).

Jesus banishes fears that incubate worry. Being secure in His love displaces fretting about the future, and every consideration regarding life and its necessities. |A

■ Murray Smith is a husband, a father to six children and the senior leader at Bridges Church Cambridge in the Waikato.



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The Disciples' Seven Dark Days!

BY DAVE FIRTH

At Easter time we Christians don't celebrate Passover, as such, we celebrate what happened at Passover 2000 years ago. In about mid-April the Passover festival would attract thousands of believers from all directions and Jesus, as had been His family custom, would head to Jerusalem from wherever He was to partake in the festival.

Of course, this year was significantly different to other years. The Lord Jesus would go to the cross, give up His life, pay for your sin and mine and gloriously rise from the dead - thus guaranteeing us a life with Him both now, and in eternity! Well, we also celebrate another Jewish festival - Pentecost (the feast of Weeks) which occurs 50 days after Passover (pente = fifty). Of course, Christians remember this as the amazing start of the Church, recorded for us by Luke in his

second book, Acts, the sequel to his Gospel where the Holy Spirit descends and, by His indwelling, enables Jesus' followers to live and exhibit the Authentic Christian Life for the first time - Christ's Life literally at work in us!

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." - Acts 1:4-5 (NIV). So, if Pentecost is 50 days after Passover, there is something very interesting that we can observe. Jesus appeared to many people over a period of 40 days after He rose from the dead (Acts 1:3). We don't know much about those 40 days, other than the first week and two other events. We know He appeared to His disciples - just 10 of them - because Judas was dead and Thomas wasn't there - on the evening of the day He rose (John 20:19-20), and we know He appeared to Thomas a week later (John 20:26). Then, in chapter 21 of his Gospel, John records Jesus on the shores of Galilee cooking a fish breakfast for a group of the disciples - just seven of them.

Then finally, after three years of ministry with Jesus, culminating in the cross, His death, His resurrection and almost six weeks of rejoicing with their risen Lord, they watch Jesus ascend as recorded in Luke 24:51 - He's gone!

So, now the maths... The Last Supper was on the eve of Passover, Jesus was executed the following day and then rose three days later and was around for 40 days. That's 43 days! Pentecost is 50 days from Passover. So that means there was a gap of around seven days from when Jesus ascended until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Now, we're told in Acts 1:5 that Jesus had said to His disciples, *"...in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit..."* (NIV). But that must have been a pretty miserable few days for them!

Jesus' followers were about to become true disciples! He had already called them with the simple words: 'Follow Me' - and they had followed. But now, He was going to indwell them. The teaching and discipling would continue with the Holy Spirit - The Counsellor - living, working and moving within them.

But they had to wait a 'few days'! This was an important time for them. A vital part of the training. They had to learn three things:

1. They needed to be patient.

Jesus said "Don't leave Jerusalem..." so they had to wait. They weren't always a patient bunch. To be fair, nor are we. They

had to wait for an unspecified period of time. Isn't that the worst kind of waiting? "When Lord? When are you going to answer my prayer?" The disciples asked Jesus, "When will you restore the kingdom to Israel?" Our problem can often be that we are in a hurry, but God is not! They needed to be patient and wait.

And so I ask, are you prepared to be patient and wait for God?

2. They needed to trust Him

In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, *"You will receive power...and you will be My witnesses..."* (NIV).

The disciples may have thought, "But He gave us power once already. We cast out demons, healed the sick. We want Him here with us!" Of course, Jesus dealt with this in Matthew 28:20 where He says, "I am with you always..." He calls them to a seemingly impossible task and then leaves - but He has promised to NEVER leave them. To be with them ALWAYS. They needed to trust Him. Life's struggles can cause us to doubt God.

So, are you prepared to trust in Him and His timing?

3. They needed to surrender ALL to Jesus

Do you remember the lovely song, 'All to Jesus, I Surrender'? It's a massive statement. We'd be crazy to say that wouldn't we? A friend of mine often says that Christians don't tell lies - but we sure do sing them! He might be right!

"Are you prepared to fully surrender all of your life to Jesus? If you do, it's the best decision you will ever make!"

Surrendering ALL to Jesus is costly. In fact, it should cost us everything. The disciples were told they would receive a new power. They were told they would leave and go to new lands where they would be persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, mocked and, ultimately, they would be killed. Wow! Our flesh wants to rule, our pride wants position and sometimes we want a back-up plan if God isn't doing what we want. Why? Because we're not patient and we don't trust IN HIM.


Are you prepared to fully surrender all of your life to Jesus?

If you do, it's the best decision you will ever make!

So, in those periods of uncertainty, where we just don't know when things will change, and as we approach Easter, remember these three things the disciples learned during those seven dark days.

Wait for Him.

Trust in Him.

Surrender to Him at the expense of everything else. | 

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SPIRITUAL WARFARE

BY JAKE WILMOTH

What is Spiritual Warfare? Is it demonic oppression? Is it a set of bad circumstances? Is it a bad curry the night before? Spiritual warfare has been something that is known to the Christian community, but has been either underestimated or over-stated. Simply put, I believe spiritual warfare is an attack on God's people. It can come in all forms and shapes as something that will affect us.

It can be as simple as more traffic on the road as you head into work, which causes you to be late. Or it can be something more serious like the death of a loved one. Both can involve spiritual warfare. Remember what Ephesians 6:12 says, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the Heavenly realms."* (NIV). So the battles or struggles we have, big or small, are not against other Christians or even other humans, but against the enemy in the spiritual realm.

Recently, I have had quite a few outbursts of frustration and even anger. These have been somewhat explained by the death of a friend or other circumstances. But these outbursts happened, and in reality, they should not have happened. I believe they have been the result of spiritual warfare against me and my family. I should not be angry, or frustrated, but that is where I am at, and that is life in a fallen world. We get upset or thrown off because of various things that happen in our lives. We get mad; we get frustrated. The thing that should be different is how we, as believers, handle these difficult times - these times of attack.

Do we let our anger grow till we fly off the handle at our wife and kids, or do we reach out for help and talk through things with a fellow believer and ask for prayer? As mentioned I have had a few instances where I have expressed real anger. I am sad to say I let my family feel the brunt of that either through my poor attitude or even with unkind words.

To some extent, I didn't realise what was happening until my wife pulled me aside and said "hey I think you're going through something and you need to get some help, it might be a spiritual attack...aka Spiritual warfare". After some prayer and reflection, I realised how right she was. I had been under attack, and I allowed it to get the best of me.

So why am I telling you all this? This is not confession time. My heart is to share with you some of the things I have been reminded of recently as I have been going through these trying times. The things that I am sharing are not new nor revolutionary. They are simply things I - and indeed we - need to keep in mind as the battle continues on.

Firstly, realise that we cannot be an island. We can't even be independent. We as believers were not created to be isolated and independent. When God made us, he made us to need Him and even to have a relationship with Him. If you remember back to Genesis 3:8, it says that Adam and Eve *"...heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day."* (NIV).

The impression I get is that this was a regular custom for God. He would come down and walk with His creation every day in the cool of the day, or the evening. So God created us to be with Him and need Him. But God also created us to need each other. When the Church was formed, it was created for believers to have fellowship and community. We might be diverse and unique, but the common thread that brings us together is Christ. All that to say, being independent or isolated as a believer is neither a good nor healthy thing.

According to 1 Corinthians 12-14, we would be depriving others of what we have to offer, and we would be deprived of what others have to offer us, if we were isolated. So we need to make sure we have friends and family around us who can ask the hard questions, who can check in on us.

Secondly, pray. This should go without saying. Our own prayer life is a must, and it is how we gain God's perspective. Now something to think about is what we pray for.

We should not simply pray for our own struggles, although doing that is good, right and helpful. However, that should not be all we pray for. We should pray for our friends, our family and even our co-workers.

The other day, I was having a rough day, and I started to spiral downhill fast, and so I stopped and prayed...well I didn't really stop. I was at work, but I stopped focusing on my struggle and I started asking God to take the struggle away, or even help


"Our own prayer life is a must, and it is how we gain God's perspective."

This does a couple of things. Firstly this keeps us from lying - that's right, when we do not tell people how we are, that is a lie. Secondly, that allows us to vocalise our struggles. By vocalising our struggles, we externalise them. And, by externalising them we gain a proper perspective of them. We see how

big they really are, and then they are more manageable. If we internalise our problems, they can continue to grow far bigger than they actually are. We only have our mind to see our problems, and sometimes we do not have a good view of our problem, and we need help with perspective.

Thirdly, it gives that person an opportunity to pray for or minister to us. We are the body of Christ, when we rejoice let's rejoice together. When we are hurting, let us hurt together, to be there for one another.

Fourthly, it shows that you are human and have struggles too. That's right. It shows you for who you are, human - struggles and all. We as a body of Christ need to be real with one another to show that we need each other.

So let us be the men God has called us to be by showing we are weak and need His help to get through this Life! Let us never forget that God's strength is made perfect or complete in weakness, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."* - 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV). Or, in other words, when we are weak God is strong. When we realise how much we need Him, we are able to get out of the way and let Him do the work He wants to accomplish. | 

■ Jake Wilmoth is the Assistant Pastor at Calvary Chapel, Hamilton. He has always had a heart for the church. He and his wife Tecla love helping people in the Waikato community - either through food or building projects.



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Is Life Really Worth Living?

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

BY CHUCK MISSLER

We have in our possession a considered response to the basic question that this article's title asks - from one of the wisest, richest and most powerful men to have walked the earth. And yet even today his counsel is widely ignored or misunderstood.

"Vanity of vanities," lamented Solomon, "all is vanity!" Solomon in fact used the word 'vanity' 38 times in the book of Ecclesiastes, as he wrote about life 'under the sun'. The word means 'emptiness', 'futility', or 'vapor' - "...that which vanishes quickly and leaves nothing behind." From the human point of view, life 'under the sun' does often appear futile and it's easy for us to get pessimistic. But we shouldn't mistake brutal honesty for pessimism.

Ecclesiastes is the kind of book a person would write near the end of life, reflecting on their experiences and the painful lessons learned. Solomon wrote Proverbs from the viewpoint of a wise teacher¹ and Song of Songs from the viewpoint of a royal lover.² When he wrote Ecclesiastes, he called himself 'the Preacher'.³

The Hebrew title is 'Kohleth' - one given to an official speaker who calls an assembly. The Greek word for assembly is 'ekklesia'. So, 'ekklesia' and thus the Septuagint version gives us the English title of the book we know as Ecclesiastes.

But, 'the Preacher' did more than call an assembly and give an oration. The word Kohleth carries with it the idea of debating - though not so much with the listeners as with himself. He would present a topic, discuss it from many viewpoints and then come to a practical conclusion.

Ecclesiastes is unlike any other Old Testament book - it has no parallel in other literature of the Biblical world. It is a philosophical discourse, and yet it is more. Ecclesiastes makes no claim to bring man a word from God. Instead, the writer specifically states that he includes only what he can determine by his own reason - and then limits himself to data that is available 'under the sun'.

The doctrine of inspiration, however, assures us that this book conveys the message that God intended that we should receive, though it does not guarantee all of Solomon's statements are necessarily accurate!

Ecclesiastes is different from any other book of the Bible. It does not dwell on the covenant, the election of Israel, redemption, prophecy, or the sacred history or the temple. Its focus is on man the creature, his life on earth and the inscrutability of God and His ways. Ecclesiastes goes beyond the other wisdom literature to emphasise the fact that human

life and human goals, as ends in themselves and apart from God, are futile and meaningless.

And it has great relevance for today. Among other things, Solomon saw injustice to the poor,⁴ crooked politics,⁵ incompetent leaders,⁶ guilty people who were allowed to commit more crimes,⁷ materialism⁸ and a desire for 'the good old days'.⁹ It sounds relevant for us, too, doesn't it? Solomon has put the key to Ecclesiastes right at the front door.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" - Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 (KJV).

Just in case we missed it, he also put the same key at the back door.¹⁰ But don't assume he is cynical or pessimistic, because that would miss his real point! Whether he considers his wealth, his works, his wisdom, or his world, Solomon comes to a sad appraisal - all is "vanity and vexation of spirit".¹¹ However, this is not his final conclusion, nor is it the only message that he has for his readers. We will discover much more as we delve into the depth of the book.

In spite of his painful encounters with the world and its problems, Solomon does not recommend either pessimism or cynicism. Rather, he admonishes us to be realistic about

life and to accept God's gifts and enjoy them.¹² After all, God gives to us "richly all things to enjoy."¹³ Interestingly, words related to joy - including enjoy, rejoice and so on - are used at least 17 times in Ecclesiastes.

Solomon does not say, "...eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die!" Instead, he advises us to trust God and enjoy what we do have, rather than complain about what we don't have. Life is short and life is difficult, so make the most of it while you can.

Solomon initially opens with three bleak observations - those being that nothing has really changed,¹⁴ nothing is really new¹⁵ and that nothing is understood.¹⁶ After experimenting and investigating 'life under the sun,' he initially concludes, "...no, life is not worth living!" And he gave four arguments to support his conclusion - the monotony of life, the vanity of wisdom, the futility of wealth and the certainty of death.

But, being a wise man, in Chapters three to 10 Solomon then reviewed his arguments - this time bringing God into the picture. What a difference it made! By re-examining each of these impressions more carefully, he realised life was not monotonous, but rather filled with challenging situations from God, each in its own time and each for its own purpose.

He also learned that wealth could be enjoyed and employed to the glory of God. Though man's wisdom couldn't explain




everything, Solomon concluded that it was better to follow God's wisdom than to practice man's folly.

And as for the certainty of death, there is no way to escape it - it ought to motivate us to enjoy life now and make the most of the opportunities God gives us.

So, he asks his listeners to look up,¹⁷ look within,¹⁸ look ahead,¹⁹ look around,²⁰ and to take into consideration time, eternity, death and suffering. These being four factors God uses to keep our lives from becoming monotonous and meaningless.

In his final conclusion and personal application, Solomon then presents four pictures of life and attaches to each picture a practical admonition for his readers to heed. These are that life is an adventure to be lived by faith,²¹ life is a gift to be enjoyed,²² life is a like a school from which to learn your lessons²³ and that life is ultimately stewardship and we must fear God.²⁴

These four pictures in fact parallel the four arguments Solomon wrestled with throughout the book - life is not monotonous - rather, it is an adventure of faith that is anything but predictable or tedious. Yes, death is certain, but life is a gift from God and He wants us to enjoy it. Are there questions we can't answer and problems we can't solve? Don't despair. God teaches us His truth as we advance in 'the school of life,' and He will give us wisdom enough to make sensible decisions. Finally, as far as wealth is concerned, all of life is a stewardship from God and one day He will call us to give an account. Therefore, "fear God, and keep His commandments."²⁵

Here, we have practical advice about life from one of the wisest, richest and most powerful men to have ever lived. His insights about life, money, values and ordering one's personal priorities are priceless - it is a rewarding guidebook to the reader who looks behind the initial impressions to find the wisdom this remarkable man gleaned from his unique career. | 

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■ Chuck Missler was an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He was also the founder of the Koinonia Institute. Chuck went to be with the Lord in May 2018.



PAUL ADAMS:

Living Life Pedal to The Metal

BY JEREMY SMITH



More than 20 years after Paul Adams first retired from motorsport, he felt the Lord leading him to get back behind the wheel. Prayerfully, Paul said he would - but only to be a light for Jesus, and if the Lord provided certain things. One of those was a Mazda Familia 323 four-wheel-drive turbo.

When he bought one from someone who drove into his car yard - Paul Adams Motors - one day, he promptly put the number plate 'Psalm 1' on the car. It was a great conversation starter. "Someone once said to me, "I've worked out your number plate! You got 'Psalm 1' because it means "Paul and Sue Adams Love Motorsport!"

An interesting interpretation - yet still a true statement. As one of the country's first professional drivers, Paul's been called one of the "true forefathers" of New Zealand rallying.

He says he just loves putting the pedal to the metal. His stellar career of more than 30 years is filled with highlights and milestones across several different motorsport disciplines - hillclimbs and trials to circuit racing and rallying.

First introduced to motorsport in the mid-1960s, he drove a variety of cars throughout his career - including a few BMW 2002 Ti, a Mk 1 Ford Cortina, a Ford Escort RS1600 and 1800, a Vauxhall Chevette 2300 HSR, and a Toyota Corolla and Starlet. He won several major highlight reel-type accolades along the road.



He and co-driver Don Fenwick won the 1970 Silver Fern Rally in the South Island. Paul also won the 1979 New Zealand Rally Championship (NZRC) and was one of the first New Zealand drivers to compete in an overseas international rally when he raced his Ford Escort Mk1 in the Southern Cross Rally in Australia.

Last year, Paul was given a MotorSport New Zealand Historic Heritage award. He's honest and candid as we chat, saying before becoming a Christian in his mid 30s, he often found his sense of identity and worth in whatever 'success' he achieved in racing. Now though, *"...the old has gone, the new is here..."* - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV). He simply wants to use the gifts God's given him to point people to Jesus. Paul, in his 70s, is still involved in the sport he's had a life-long passion for. We caught up to talk about family and faith, being a politician for a time, and of course, his love - and special memories of - all things racing.

It's great to chat, Paul! To start with, what sparked your love of motorsport?

I was useless at school, really, it didn't excite me. Before racing, I was an apprentice carpenter and joiner. In about 1965 or 1966, my cousin John invited me to my very first hill climb event. I didn't even know what a hillclimb was - competing against the clock to complete an uphill course. I'd never followed motorsport. Not only was it my first ever event, but it was being held on the Cossey family farm and run by the Auckland-based Northern Sports Car Club (NSCC) - the first time they'd held the event there.

John just said, "bring a crash helmet and a car." We used a Morris 1100 which was a company car belonging to one of my dad's salespeople. As soon as I had my foot down, I knew motorsport was for me. We won our competition class that day and from there, I did some club circuit racing. Our first real taste of rallying came when we entered New Zealand's first true high speed special stage rally in 1969, the Shell Silver Fern Rally, in a Mk 1 Ford Cortina.

I knew my conservative dad wouldn't like motorsport. I competed for several years - maybe four or five - before my parents found out what I was up to. In the days when Mustangs were racing at Pukekohe Park and amazing guys like Paul Fahey and others made up the field, I eventually got busted. One day there was a photo on the front page of the newspaper and it just so happened I was in the background because in the picture some of the Mustangs were busy lapping my Ford Cortina!

You weren't a Christian when you started out in motorsport, you came to Christ a bit later in life. How did you come to know Jesus?

I didn't grow up in a Christian home, but in my younger days many families would send their kids to Sunday School. I was no exception. Maybe to get some rest on Sunday mornings, my parents sent me to Northcote Baptist Church. I grew up

knowing the basics of the Gospel. In my early teenage years, I started going to some Friday night social nights held at Takapuna's St George's Presbyterian Church. I even remember asking once what you needed to do to become a minister. Reflecting now though, back then I don't recall anyone ever asking me if I wanted to give my life to Christ. So, I suppose in those early days, I sort of fell away.

What was the catalyst for you beginning a personal relationship with Jesus then?

Great question. There are several aspects to the answer. My wife, Sue, is former New Zealand saloon car champion Alan Woolf's daughter. Sue and I first met at the track - I asked Alan one day if I could take her to the pub after the meet. "...you can ask, but I doubt she'll go," he replied. Sue was a young Christian herself when we began dating - I wasn't a believer for many years after we got married. Honestly, I think I came into the Kingdom largely because of her prayers for me. I became a professional racing driver pretty early on in our marriage and Sue was always extremely supportive. I absolutely remember times when God was working in my life to draw me to Him. At the time, I knew something was going on but I didn't necessarily

know it was God. One night, as Sue was praying for me, she felt the Lord confirm to her that His hand was upon me and He was at work. I didn't come to God straight away after that though - in fact, for about two years, I probably got worse.

To my mind, several key things happened which shook me and got me thinking about Jesus. For example, one day my

co-driver and I were competing in a rally in Tokoroa as part of the New Zealand Championship in our Toyota Corolla. During one particular stage on tarmac - one on which you would have thought there was no way anything could go wrong - we came up over the brow of a hill about 500 metres from the finish line. The next second, at more than 160km/h, the back wheels of the car went off the tarmac onto the grass. We slid sideways, smashing into a letterbox on a solid concrete post. It virtually cut the car in half. Witnesses told us if we'd hit the pole differently, even by millimetres, they thought we wouldn't have survived. That definitely got me thinking about the Lord.

Something else too absolutely shook our whole family. Early on in my racing career, my brother-in-law John and I were teammates in the Nylex Vinyltop team. In 1980, John and his co-driver Grant Whittaker went to the United States to race. The following year, 1981, John and Grant were tragically killed in an accident at Oklahoma's Chisum Trail Rally. Driving a Peugeot 504, John and Grant were the first car in the rally field on the track. The stage was delayed, and many competitors thought it was actually cancelled. As John and Grant started, a 4WD vehicle with some spectators in it entered the live stage, heading in the opposite direction of the rally cars. The two vehicles collided on the blind brow of a hill. Both John and Grant were killed instantly.

“Faith in Christ has always been imperative, but we are living in times - and facing situations - in which we absolutely need to lean on God's wisdom, not our own strength or understanding.”



I was competing in the New Zealand Championship and I remember driving to Taupo to tell Sue John had been killed. I had an event the very next weekend too, and I told my father-in-law Alan I couldn't do it. "...son, you've got to," he said.

So, I did. We were in the Tokoroa area again and I was the first car on the road. I was nervous as I went around every corner and over every hill. Up to that point, I'd never encountered any other non-competing vehicles on the track while I was racing. On this day, just as I was settling down, I went over the brow of a hill and two hunters in a 4WD were coming straight towards us. I missed them by millimetres! When God starts to shake you up, He has his ways. I knew He wanted my attention!

Sue kept her Bible beside our bed, so I began reading it. As I read in John, I knew I needed to give my life to Christ. We started going to church and I was in my 30s when I surrendered my life to Jesus. I've walked with Him for more than 40 years and Sue and I have four children - Maria, Karl, Sharee and Matt.

How would you encourage readers then, whether they're walking with the Lord or He is drawing them to Himself?

Put simply, it's probably best said by Proverbs 3:5, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;"* (NIV). That's true whatever season we're



in - and perhaps even more necessary given the times we're living in. One of my biggest realisations was that we all serve something or somebody. In my case, before I came to Jesus, my god was motorsport - I found my confidence and my joy in it. Ultimately though, everything we need is found in Him. Faith in Christ has always been imperative, but we are living in times - and facing situations - in which we absolutely need to lean on God's wisdom, not our own strength or understanding.

When we talk about your motorsport career highlights, what are a few special moments you remember?

A really special memory is when myself and my co-driver Don Fenwick won the 1970 Shell Silver Fern Rally facilitated by the Canterbury Car Club in the South Island. A cool side note is we won that event in a BMW 2002 Ti, which I bought back many years ago. I still use it every now and again at events like the Leadfoot Festival. I initially bought it from Ross Jensen Motors - the country's first BMW franchise - when the BMW brand was new in New Zealand. Ross was a former motor racing man, but there wasn't anything particularly skilled or premeditated about that purchase, it was just available. When we entered the rally the previous year, 1969, we didn't really know what it was going to be like - we were all learning our way together.

Another highlight was when we won the 1979 New Zealand Rally Championship (NZRC) driving a Ford Escort RS1800. In the 1980s, my team and I actually won three separate New Zealand championships across rallying, rallycross and hillclimbs.

We can't go past you and some other Kiwi drivers blazing a trail of sorts and competing in Australia too...

Well, a group of us were some of the first New Zealand drivers to compete in an overseas international rally - the Southern Cross Rally in Australia. I took a Mark 1 Ford Escort. We probably competed there two or three times overall - unsuccessfully, I must say! It was awesome. The racing conditions were totally different. We once blew a head gasket on what I thought was a dangerous corner. I walked up the bank, sat on the grass and said to my Australian co-driver, "...come here, the other cars will get pretty close around that corner." He just looked at me and said, "...there are no snakes in the car..." I was out of that grass like a rocket!

You competed in both circuit racing and rallying. How did racing in those disciplines differ?

The two environments require very different skill sets. Circuit racing requires skills like racing lines, how you take the corners, your braking consistency and so on. I really enjoyed that. Rallying was a thrill and a rush! I definitely found it an exciting challenge. In those days we'd drive roads blind that we'd never driven before. That in itself was challenging. You had to pre-meditate every situation you could possibly find yourself in, so that if you did, you reacted to something you'd already thought through. The variety of surfaces, tarmac, grass, mud and metal meant you were continually changing and adapting. When you're flying down a metal road at 200km/h you certainly have to have your wits about you!

Were you ever nervous when racing, and how was racing in those days different to today?

I think we were fortunate that, in the early days of New Zealand rallying, we all started out together. The television and press coverage we got was huge. We did feel a little bit like rockstars. For me, one of the great things was the camaraderie. Rallying is a family, and the guys I was competing against were tremendous. We're still all great friends all these years later. They accept me for who I am and when they ask me for wisdom, I always point them to Jesus. Many of them have been great influences on my life too. I was often nervous before a start, but as soon as I dropped the clutch I was calm. Maybe one of the key differences is that when I was competing the race distances were far longer. One year, as part of the North Island South Island rally, we had a special stage that started just out of Queenstown and went all the way to Greymouth with a fuel stop in the middle. One special stage in my day would be the equivalent of the total length of the New Zealand Championship Rally on special stage miles today.

Has Sue ever been brave enough to co-drive with you?

Yes, she's driven with me in several events. She's a very good driver in her own right. Many years ago, driving in her Mini Cooper S, she was one of the first women in New Zealand to

win a championship series. She also has done rallies with her sister as her co-driver.

About two decades after you retired from racing, you felt the Lord drawing you back to motorsport. What was it like going back?

In the early days of becoming a Christian, I was really passionate about sharing my faith with all of my teammates and service crew - but not many were interested in hearing about the Lord. Just before I retired, I certainly felt that the Lord's favour was on me. In the last season I ran, I think we won something like 43 of the 46 events we did. One weekend at Pukekohe, I had a great team around me and Chris Amon, a former Formula One driver, was helping me set the car up. It was going faster than ever by about one-and-a-half or two seconds per lap. I didn't know it at the time, but that was to be my last race as a professional motorsport driver. God simply shut the door. It wasn't until more than 20 years later that I finally got back into a racecar again. God was helping me work through a lot of issues in that time, and I returned because I felt He wanted me to go and be a light for Him.

I love that you've alluded to being a light for Jesus. How would you encourage readers to do the same wherever God has placed them?

The key is that we understand that God loves everybody. He accepts us and wants us to accept them too. As Christians, we've got to be real. I look for opportunities to pray for people as often as I can. Many years ago, I owned a car yard - Paul Adams Motors - and I would often pray for customers. We all know a lot of people in our world who are really hurting at the moment and there's lots they don't understand. They need Him. As Jesus told us, it really is like fishing - putting the 'bait' out as we are led by Him. Often I find one of the best ways to evangelise is to ask questions.

Your son Matt has followed your footsteps, or tyre tracks, into Motorsport. What's that like as a dad?

My son Karl is involved too - both of them are very talented drivers. Far better than I was. It amazes me how the generational bloodline - even on the sports front - does flow down. Matt's a third generation driver now. As I said, his grandfather was a New Zealand saloon car champion, I was a New Zealand champion and now it's his turn. I don't get nervous watching, but I accept there will be times when there may be accidents. Matt did actually have a huge crash last year, basically writing his car off. He was uninjured but his co-driver was taken to hospital. It was a terrible moment. Some of that risk is inherent in the sport, but that doesn't stop us as a family from supporting them all the way - I know what it is to love a sport like that. Matt's currently running a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX.



Does your perfect day out to relax and recharge still involve cars?

I still love driving and heading to a day at the track. Mostly though, I tow Matt's car to events for him. I've co-driven for him a few times and I'll always go and spectate and support him - because people did that for me. My father-in-law Alan gave up motorsport to help me after he won the saloon car championship. At the time, I probably didn't appreciate that enough - but he made a huge commitment to give up what he loved for me.

Why did you go into politics, and what was it like being a Christian in that sphere?

It was an incredible experience. At that time, I was in business running a car yard - Paul Adams Motors. We were a Suzuki agent and we'd just taken on a Kia dealership. I had never been to the Beehive before, even as a visitor. Then, all of a sudden I was ninth on the United Future list and in parliament from 2002-2005. What I loved, in terms of what United Future stood for, was strong family values and proposing the Commission for the Family.

Those core values tick my box, so I got stuck in. Some big legislation was on the table at the time, including the anti-smacking law. It was a wonderful experience though and I had many great conversations with people about the Lord.

Finally, we spoke of Sue's prayers for you before you came to Jesus. What's the importance of having Godly influences around us?

God's Word tells us, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." - Proverbs 27:17 (NIV). It's incredibly important. For me, my family has always been the top priority - we're very close. And I've got fantastic inlaws. Honestly, at times bringing up our children in the ways of the Lord wasn't easy, but I'm reminded of the scripture, "...train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." - Proverbs 22:6 (NIV). These days, all of my children love and serve the Lord and, like me, two of them are Pastors. All 14 of my grandchildren are walking with the Lord. God is good. My encouragement is this - honour the Lord in all your ways. I've found that when you do you walk in His blessings. It's not that we won't have tough times, but we know where our Anchor and our Rock is - Jesus Christ. His word is non-negotiable and eternal.

Thanks so much Paul! Great chat! | A

Additional Photography: Phil Botha Creative



Here's a big one. What's your favourite car you've had over the years, and a favourite place you raced?

It's been an amazing journey and I've had lots. Of course, there's the BMW 2002 Ti, and my Mk 1 Ford Cortina was a key car. In 1980 - the year after we'd won the New Zealand Rally Championship - I made the transition into racing a Toyota Starlet. I'd actually built a brand new Escort to race in that season and we won the first round outright. But our major sponsor had a change of marketing manager, who then pulled our sponsorship. I decided I didn't have the money to then do the Escort justice, so I sold it and built a Toyota Starlet. The amazing team around me built that car in 15 days! The headline in the paper after the first stage we raced in it was 'The Giant Killer'. That was a special car - it started three or four wonderful years with Toyota. Actually, I've co-driven "New Zealand's magic Motu Road" near Ōpōtiki with Matt before and even when I drove it when I was competing it was probably my favourite. It's an incredibly challenging stretch.

Early in my racing career, my brother in law, John and I put a package to General Motors in the hopes that they would bring two Chevettes out for he and I to run. While that didn't eventuate, Pentti Airikkala, a driver from Finland, came out to the international rally here in New Zealand in a left-hand-drive Vauxhall Chevette 2300 HSR. Steve Millen then put together a deal with General Motors for him to be able to run that car. Unfortunately, Steve had a really serious accident while he was circuit racing at Pukekohe. So, because General Motors representatives knew I competed in rallying, they asked me if I would drive the car while Steve recovered. I took to the Chevette like a duck to water! Honestly, that Chevette was one of my favourite cars too. They're probably all favourites - any car that wins is a favourite!

“It's not that we won't have tough times, but we know where our Anchor and our Rock is - Jesus Christ. His word is non-negotiable and eternal.”

■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.



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Navigating By God's Responses

BY PAUL CURTAS

In life there are often times when we don't know why something is happening around us. Though, instead of 'reacting' because we don't understand, we should respond by what we know is right. Regardless of the sphere of life - including, very importantly, in our families as husbands and fathers - Paul Curtas says being grounded in a Godly perspective makes all the difference...

When we say, "respond from a Godly perspective..." as the unexpected things in life crop up, what does that look like practically? Well, as an encouragement, here's what God's Word tells us. As we lead our families, we must be alert and pray.

Take a look at Ephesians 6:18-19 in the NIV - "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel..." When we need God's help to lead by Godly example, we can immediately ask for it, declaring our independence on Him alone.

Jesus himself told us in Matthew 5:43-44, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." (NIV).

Jesus' words here simply tell us we should look for ways to love those who don't love, or sometimes even like, us. Not only that, but as we pray for those who persecute us we are not to return evil with evil. Instead, Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (NIV). When we respond to and in situations which occur not

just in our family lives but in all spheres, we should, in the words of James 1:19 in the NIV, "...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry..."

Why? Because isn't it so easy for our tongue to quickly say the wrong things? As leaders of our families too, we are called by God not to simply look out not only for our own interests, but - dare I say it even primarily - we are to look out for the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4 puts this well. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (NIV).

As and when we have the opportunity too, Matthew 5:41 makes it clear we are to go the extra mile and do more than what's expected of us - "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two..." Now let's look for a moment at Ephesians 4:15 - "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will

grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ." (NIV). Knowing and leading with the truth is one thing, but it is my prayer we would each primarily find ways to speak that truth in kind, loving ways - something that's very important, particularly when navigating difficult decisions. And then, let us forgive as Christ has forgiven us - because that forgiveness characterises us as Christians. Simply put, "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." - Colossians 3:13 (NIV).

Though we can be tempted to, at times, be unforgiving, the Father's forgiveness extended toward us should in fact influence how we subsequently respond toward the people He places in our lives. |

"When we need God's help to lead by Godly example, we can immediately ask for it, declaring our dependance on Him alone."

■ Paul M. Curtas is the General Director of FCAP. He is also the author of the book "When God Shows Up at Work", which is now available in German and Spanish, as well as English. Visit his website for more details - www.godinwork.com



More Will Be Given

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL

"Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."
- Luke 8:18 (NKJV).

Reading this verse again recently I remembered how it seems to bug me a little - what it is saying worries me. I mean, fancy the Bible being so direct, so harsh. Surely God wouldn't take stuff away from us which we don't even have? Is this favouritism? The have-nots get even less and those that have will get more.

But then I remembered that the Bible is amazing. We can read it, meditate on it and study it. The level of revelation we receive goes up with the more time and effort we give to it. Reading is good, meditating on the Scriptures reveals more truth and study unlocks even more. Because it's there in that intensive, focused and committed look at the Word of God that the Holy Spirit reveals things to us.

So be a reader of the Bible - yes. But also be a student of the Bible. A life-long learner, hungry to know and grow in the things of God and His Word. In my study of this verse I discovered some great things.

Therefore Take Heed How You Hear

It's great to hear the Word of God, but it's much better to be careful how we hear. Jesus is warning His listeners to actively prepare the soil of their heart and mind, and to judge themselves as hearers at least as much as they judge the preacher. So I thought about my hearing system. Am I hearing God's Word and am I engaging the Word with my heart, my mind and my will? Am I putting into practice in my life all

the wonderful things I am hearing in my reading and study of the Bible? Is revelation becoming application and then transformation?

One thing I absolutely love in the season of life I am in now are my mornings when I get to read, meditate, pray, study, journal and write about the Word of God. But is the Word I am hearing and seeing, and the things that are being revealed to me, being outworked in my life? Am I doing the right things? Am I a doer of the Word?

That is my heartfelt prayer, that it would be. Because revelation on its own benefits us very little unless we are living and doing and functioning in the power of that revelation in our daily lives.

How's your hearing system? Eager to hear? And equally eager to do, to obey? I love what David Guzik says, before then quoting CH Spurgeon:

"Many lack because they only read and do not meditate. It is not only reading that does us good; but the soul inwardly feeding on it and digesting it. A preacher once told me he had read the Bible through 20 times on his knees - and had never found the doctrine of election there. Very likely not. It is a most uncomfortable position in which to read. If he had sat in an easy chair he would have been better able to understand it."
- CH Spurgeon.

We read and receive a measure of revelation. We meditate and receive a greater revelation. But when we study, we receive even more revelation. The increased effort bears the fruit of increased revelation. And I believe God has much to show us, to reveal to us and to uncover for us. He really does.

For Whoever Has, to Him More Will be Given.

This phrase talks about revelation, insight and understanding of God, His Word and spiritual things. The 'therefore' links what was just said, talking about a lamp (Luke 8:16) - seeing, revealed, or made known.

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light." (NKJV).

Take heed how you hear; the attitude we hear with should be one of a hungry heart and humility - as we are open to know and learn and grow, quick to repent and slow to judge and get angry. Again David Guzik said, "...more will be given: Jesus reminds us that spiritual growth follows momentum, positive or negative.

When we have the Godly habits of receiving the Word and living it, more is built on to that. When we lose those Godly habits they are extremely difficult to get back".



More of what? Well, I believe more of God Himself, more understanding of the Bible, more of His tangible presence in

our life, more of His grace to cope with life and more spiritual awareness, perception and capacity. Then more hunger, which brings more revelation, which brings more hunger. And on it goes. The more of God we have, the more we want and the more we will receive. The less of God and His Word we have in our life, even what we think we have will be soon gone.

Once you've tasted the goodness of God, how could you not want more? Revelation from God should always lead us to relationship with God! God gives us revelation, not just to be better off, or proud that we have received from God, but that we might know Him better, be closer to Him and function in our calling.

"...it's there in that intensive, focused and committed look at the Word of God that the Holy Spirit reveals things to us..."

May we have a momentum, a routine and a habit of meeting with the Lord worshipping, reading, meditating and studying the Word - as well as writing or recording insights.

That habit will bear fruit such as increased revelation, more insight, greater openness, deeper healing, fuller peace, a cleaner conscience, a stronger character, a clearer perspective, more energy and increasing Bible knowledge. May it always continually increase, so that we are always hearing, seeing and then living what we hear. For Your glory Lord. It's a promise. More will be given. Be passionate, be ready, be hungry. More is coming your way! |  

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Easter... More Than a Story:

Convinced by Irrefutable Proof

BY MURRAY SMITH

Fallacies often get reported as though they were accurate historical happenings...

There's no end to examples of purportedly 'factual' events, that didn't occur the way we might have been led to believe. At school I 'learned' that a rebellious Ngapuhi chief, Hone Heke, repeatedly cut down a flagpole in Kororaraka - Russell - defying British colonial forces and how his actions provoked war. The missing facts were that it was Hone Heke's own flag pole, cut down in legitimate protest at the Crown's continual breaching of promises - then, the British started fighting to crush 'native insurrection'. Maybe you've heard how they booed Bob Dylan at a music festival in Newport for going electric? Or how military personnel returning from service in the Vietnam war were routinely spat on by antiwar protestors?

We'd be justified in feeling indignant at such accounts - if they had actually occurred! The fact is such alleged incidents, and others, often bear little or no resemblance to reality. Through the lens of a biased perception, a revised, distorted narrative of the truth became perpetuated - and a myth is born. Before us lies Easter weekend. A significant event on the Christian calendar. But are the recorded elements of the Easter story with Jesus Christ, crucified on a cross, being buried and then rising again on the third day, actually reliable? Or, with the passage of time, has it been embellished and exaggerated, modified or completely re-written?

A cynical English writer who rubbished the Bible's account of the Easter narrative was challenged to evaluate the evidence set forth, as if in a court of law. Determined to write a book debunking the death of Jesus on the cross and His subsequent resurrected appearance to His followers, conviction settled



on Frank Morison concerning the striking body of plausible evidence he discovered. Doing an about face, he wrote a book called *Who Moved the Stone?*

Morison found credibility in the many witnesses to Jesus' sufferings on a Roman cross alongside two criminals. The mock trial, contrived with fake evidence from His accusers among the Jewish religious hierarchy, had led the Roman governor Pilate to resist condemnation of Christ declaring, "I find no fault in him..." (Luke 23:4). Washing his hands in a bowl before a howling mob as if to absolve himself from complicity, he claimed..."I am free from the blood of this man." The determined mob cried, "His blood be upon us and our Children!" (Matthew 27:24-25).

“That reality changed their lives forever - it still changes lives today! It was said these believers turned their world upside down, many were martyred for their witness to Christ. Passion for a cause they knew was not fraudulent, compelled them.”

Removed from the cross, the lifeless body of Jesus was placed in a rock tomb, sealed by a massive stone and guarded by Roman soldiers. The events of Easter Sunday morning shook the world as Christ arose triumphing over death. Early on that third day following Good Friday, some of Jesus' followers arrived to find the stone pushed aside and the tomb empty. Initially dejected and bewildered, all

the disciples were soon to encounter their resurrected Lord! The Apostle Paul states that in one setting alone, five hundred followers saw Jesus alive after His resurrection. *“After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time...” - 1 Corinthians 15:6 (NIV)*. That reality changed their lives forever - it still changes lives today! It was said these believers turned their world upside down, many were martyred for their witness to Christ. Passion for a cause they knew was not fraudulent, compelled them.

Simply evaluating the evidence transformed Morison from sceptic to believer - as it will any honest enquirer. |  



■ Murray Smith is a husband, a father to six children and the senior leader at Bridges Church Cambridge in the Waikato.



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The 'IMPOSSIBLE' Life?

BY ERIC LUDY

Christianity is meant to boast of the majesty, the power, the dominion, the truthfulness and the purity of Jesus Christ. We have been commissioned to live a life that I'm about to describe as utterly impossible.

We don't have what it takes to be great men - we can esteem it, but we can't do it. There does, however, seem to be six key areas of a man's life. Now, for those of you reading this, some of these areas in your life are areas that you've never really spent any time addressing. For others who aren't married, and who don't have any children, your areas shrink. Some of us may also feel that we have a lot more than six areas.

But, here are the six realms of a Christian man's life that I will mention.

1. His relationship with God.
2. His wife.
3. His kids.
4. His friends and family.
5. His business.
6. His ministry.

Firstly, the Christian man needs to tend to his relationship with God - a Heaven-come-to-earth devotional life with his God. Biblical study, prayer and givenness to the pursuit of God. The desire to know your God should be right at the top of every man's list.

Secondly, a Christian man is supposed to have a fairytale, intimate relationship with his wife - with a closeness and a sensitivity to her needs - and the ability to read her even across the room.

Thirdly, is his kids. A Christian man should give and provide a world class investment into the lives of his children. Said another way, if raising children were an Olympic event, he would win the Gold medal. As we work our way through this list, isn't it true that every single one of us, as guys, begins to shrink? We think to ourselves, "...I can't even think about such a heavy weight." I know - but I'm just going to keep adding to it.

So, friends and family. This isn't just your own wife and children, this includes your extended family - your mother, your father, your in-laws, brothers, sisters, whoever. Then there's your

whole collection of friends. This type of man is kind, consistent, honourable and thoughtful in his remembrance and service unto his friends and his extended family members.

Number five on our list is a man's business. As a man we need to be uncompromising in our excellence and diligence in areas like our business dealings and our financial investments. There shouldn't be a single spot of darkness in our life - we handle this area of our life with absolute integrity.

And lastly is ministry - Hudson Taylor-like givenness to the preaching of the Gospel and the practical rescue of the lost, the dying, the orphans and the widows around us. In every single one of these six areas, it is commissioned by God that we be excellent in them.

There is no excuse in the Bible, or passage in which it says, "...yes, you can neglect your God, He'll understand because you're a busy man". There's also no excuse you can use which allows you to neglect your wife and no excuse by which you should forsake your children.

There are all sorts of reasons with which you could justify whatever you wanted to justify. There have been great men who have had great ministries which have changed the world - but they've lost their kids. And their wives were absolutely miserable the whole time.

Do you know, then, how a man is fit to lead the Church of Jesus Christ? It is because he has proved himself in his home. How does a man prove himself in his home? He proves himself in his prayer closet.

You start with proving yourself in the prayer closet and that will help build a great marriage. You prove yourself there and guess what? You'll be successful with your family. You see, if you're great with your wife and great with your God, it's sort of hard not to be great with your kids too! It's a natural by-product. And if you're great with your God and with your wife and with your kids, did you know that that should flow into the other areas of your life? Now, by this stage, here is what I think is going on in your minds.

Something like, "...you see, Eric, if I'm great with my God, I'm not going to have time to be great with my wife and with my kids." And yes. That's one of the most common justifications we have in modern Christianity.

"I don't have time..."

Well, in all my efforts to figure this out, here's my conclusion. Of the six areas we've discussed, I would say that we as men have

maybe the ability - in our own strength - to be great at about two-and-a-half of them at any given time.

You see, we are not built for six - but we can be good at two-and-a-half. We can spread that two-and-a-half across different areas - and in fact, this is how most of us live.

But, we must eventually face the fact that it is impossible to do it all. You do esteem living right and you really would want to. In fact, you would give up everything if you really knew it was possible. However, the truth is, with men it is impossible. But, we have another fact - with God nothing is impossible.

"Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible...' - Matthew 19:26 (NIV).

This is the Word of God - and when God says it, you can be sure that He can do it. He is not capricious - which means He isn't saying, "oh, you need to do that..." and then chuckling and adding, "...as if they could...". Simply put, we can't. But He can.


"...the truth is, with men it is impossible. But, we have another fact - with God nothing is impossible..."

That is what we're missing - you see the vision and you see the standard, but you've been spending your life attempting to diminish the standard - saying to yourself, "...I don't want to get into that dangerous place. I don't want to see how weak I am. I am a man - I need to think of myself as strong..." No. A man's strength actually starts by recognising his inherent weakness - and God's strength.

God has given you a clear command that it is impossible. Yet, He says "...do it..."

When you come to the place in which you reply, "I can't..." He replies, "I know you can't - but I can, in and through you..." You have everything you need to live the impossible life. But you have to take it - relying on God's strength, not your own works.

"...My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness..." - 2 Corinthians 12:8 (NKJV).

In that light, expect to be successful in all six of the areas we've talked about. Why? Because Jesus changes a man - and it is He who makes him able to accomplish what otherwise would be impossible. That's Christianity. | 

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Peter Dobbs: A MAN ON 'HIS' MISSION

BY JEREMY SMITH



If one word describes Peter Dobbs, it's most likely 'missional'. It makes sense too - a key aspect of his roughly eight years in the New Zealand Army centered around mission command - and the question, "...how do you analyse, define and fulfill a mission?"

These days, that mission-focussed foundation motivates him - he keeps it central to whatever season of life he's in.

So far, Peter's journey has included everything from missions work in Papua New Guinea to completing a PhD in practical theology, and even a stint as general manager of a commercial diver training school - Subsea Training Centre.

It's no different in his current role as Christian Camping New Zealand (CCNZ) CEO - an "opportunity which found me and requires me to use all my past skillsets really well".

Having been in the role for two years as of last month, he's highly motivated to equip and support the organisation's nationwide network of roughly 60 camps in their calling to share Jesus.

Peter sat down with Jeremy Smith to talk family, faith, his love of the ocean and an unwavering desire to be "a dog with a bone" in keeping Jesus and His mission as the centre point around which all areas of life revolve.

"Fundamentally, the mission is to see lives transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to see the Kingdom of God extended within the spheres of influence that God has given us.

"Therefore, in terms of my role, everything we do and every decision we make - all of our work focus goes through the lens of asking, "...does this support, equip, encourage and - when required - help represent our members, or camps, so they can achieve that mission?"

Though speaking in a work sense, that's a thought from Christian Camping New Zealand (CCNZ) CEO Peter Dobbs which is applicable wherever we find ourselves as we walk with Jesus. "Do we display Him wherever we are?" Good question.

At the outset of chatting about Peter's journey, it's almost hard to know where to start - simply because life has been so full. But, he loves it that way.

"It'd be the worst to get to the end of your life, look back and regret not 'doing stuff', or pursuing God-given opportunities. With that mind-set, I'm always intentional about taking such opportunities and making the most of life."

Raised in a Christian home, Peter's grateful for the foundation that gave him. In the early 1980s, his father Peter - and others - were instrumental in founding the then Apostolic Trust - now Vision College.

"We grew up in that 'practical ministry' environment. Isn't it really important for all of us though to have 'touchstone

"It's so easy to get 'busy' doing God's work, but forget Him in the process. Let's be intentional about keeping our hearts Christ-focussed despite the inherent 'busyness' of life."

moments' on our faith journey? Moments when we can not only cognitively define why we believe what we believe - but take that a step further and connect that knowledge to what we believe in our heart.

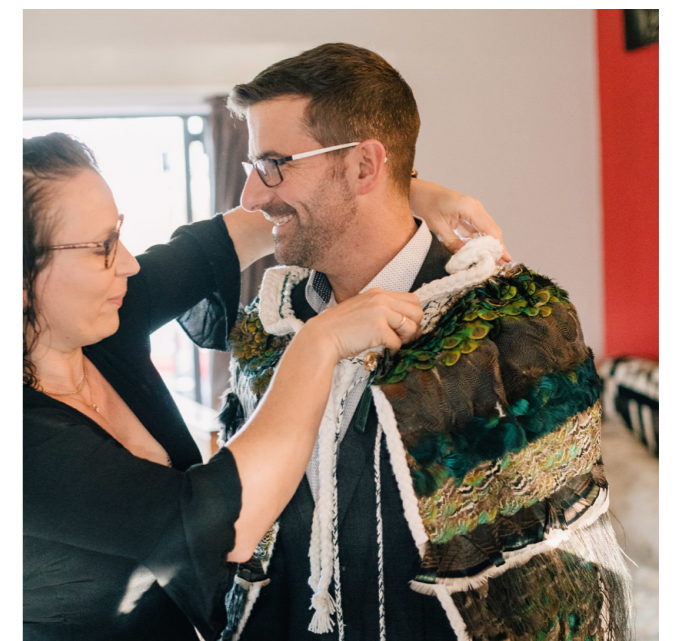
"They're key moments in which we solidify our personal relationship with Jesus and say, 'I remember that moment, God did that. I can't argue, it was Him'. Those anchor us."

Peter, 40, had several such experiences as a child - though he adds candidly he had times as a teenager when he "struggled with the formation of his faith".

Joining the New Zealand Army three days after turning 17 to complete officer training, he found himself living an outward lifestyle different to what he knew he believed in his heart. "I was a kid in a new environment, away from Mum and Dad. I knew the truth and believed it - living it out for myself though was harder. I was inconsistent - at times, over about four or five years, I'd willfully shut off my conscience to be 'part of the crew'.

"I wanted to be a paramedic," Peter says of how he came to join the army. "St John New Zealand staff suggested I become an army medic - but when an army recruiter saw my school grades, he suggested I complete officer training."

Upon graduating from that training, Peter was stationed at Christchurch's Burnham Camp - the South Island's largest army base. While down south, the catalyst for getting his life right



with God occurred - a point at which he began to intentionally seek a more personal relationship with Jesus. What was that moment?

"Meeting my future wife Jessica absolutely motivated me to become the man I knew I needed to be, for her. Before we met, sure, I was attending church and helping with youth group, but I'm reminded of Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." (NIV).

"I was seeking the Lord, but not really - there wasn't so much 'with all your heart' going on.

"In meeting Jessica, I both needed - and wanted - to give her the best of me. And the 'best of me' is living a life which lines up with the faith I profess. Had I not had those touchstone moments with the Lord as a kid, I'm not sure that shift would have happened."

Such moments in his own life are now a "big motivator" as CCNZ CEO, a job he's been in for two years as of last month. He wants other young people to similarly encounter God for themselves.

"In any children's ministry, particularly with Christian camps, a key question is, '...how do we intentionally create environments in which God is given space for touchstone moments to happen in young people's lives?' Then, when those young people have seasons in which they may go through challenging times, if they question things, they have those touchstone moments to reflect on and can't deny God is real. That's so important."

Peter vividly remembers the day he and Jessica first met. "Absolutely! Jessica's a podiatrist - she came down to Christchurch for her first job. I saw her at the church where I was in a youth leader-type role and thought 'wow'. I rang my sister after Jessica and I first chatted to say, "...in case something happens, I want to be able to tell you that the day I met my wife, I told you.

"And here we are. Jessica and I have been married for 18 years. We have five sons aged nine to 15 - Timothy, (15), Samuel, (13), Michael, (11), Joel, (9) and Neo (9). My second son has Asperger's syndrome and my youngest son is an Oranga Tamariki Home for Life foster son.

"We're blessed to have a fantastic relationship with our foster son's birth parents - that's not the norm. I thank God for my family."

On the subject of family, I ask what an opportunity to rest and recharge looks like, and what the perfect family day out is. "It's really interesting. In regards to slowing down, I think it's becoming increasingly difficult to understand what rest really is. Obviously, we know true rest is found in Jesus. But for many, 'rest' looks like catching up on a list of 'homework' around the house. At times we have to even put that 'work' aside - I'm not very good at that - and ask, "...what truly refreshes me?"



"My answer? The ocean - I love it! I didn't grow up near water - but now I get a bit down if I have to go for a while without being there.

"I love surfing. My perfect day is one spent at the beach in the water with all my family. And, when there's waves, I can push the kids onto them and be stoked to watch them stand up. Jessica though, not so much! I know being in the water is a big ask and sacrifice for her, but she'll do it for me and for the kids because she knows how much it refreshes us. I love that about her."

Given Peter's zest for life, it's not surprising he almost casually mentions that prior to meeting Jessica, one of his hobbies was skydiving - and not just once, 50 times!

We discuss the fact many men live busy lives in which multiple areas of responsibility - work, family and others - often require attention.

"...How do you find balance in all of that and keep Christ at the centre?" I ask. "And, how do we, as men, ensure we display Godly leadership in all of those areas - even when it's, at times, difficult to do so?"

"Great question," Peter reflects. "I often ask Christian leaders the same thing about the importance of balance. I think you've got a bit of a clue that you have the balance right if your answer is something like, "...it's really tough, but I'm trying!" Obviously, Jesus needs to be the centre of our lives - He helps with that balance. Additionally though, a key

question I ask - regardless of the sphere we're talking about - is "...what does 'success' look like in that sphere?"

"I'd suggest if you don't know what success looks like, then how will you know if you're being successful? Herein lies the importance of both knowing and defining your 'mission'. "I hope that's a somewhat simplistic, and therefore helpful, answer for anyone reading this. As an approach to leadership - for me anyway - that brings clarity.

"In my family life, is my mission to be my children's friend? No. Do I want to be? Absolutely, but it's not the core goal. My mission is to raise Godly men who love God and their wives and who are fantastic husbands and fathers who participate and contribute to the world they're part of. "Put every decision through the filter, "...does this achieve our overall mission?"

Family is Peter's priority - he takes that thought a step further.

"Personally, my wife comes first. When I tell people that they often say, "...your kids come second?" Truthfully, they do." "That's because one of the greatest gifts I can give my children is to love their mother really well, practically modelling what that looks like to my kids. That gives them an example, and learnings they can refer to in the future - observations regarding the stable family unit and so many other sociological benefits."

In fact, a desire for the balance he's just spoken of in his own life was the main reason Peter ultimately left his eight-year army career in 2006.

Jessica was expecting their first son, Timothy, and Peter didn't want to go overseas for six months, leaving his family behind. So, it was quite literally time to dive into something new - Peter became general manager at Huntly-based commercial diver training school Subsea Training Centre. The importance of balance though was again brought to the fore in 2011 - and Peter faced a question.

"Timothy said to me, '...Dad, when can it just be you and Mum and Samuel - our second oldest? When can we be a family again?' Talk about a wake up call. The very reason I left the army five years prior was to be present for my family."

While at the dive school, Peter had also been studying theology part time - though Timothy's words resonated with him. So, after prayerful consideration, he left the dive school to study theology full-time.

It's a nice transition in our chat - studying - or perhaps, more appropriately, learning is an area in which Peter is hugely passionate. Having previously completed a Bachelor's Degree in business while still training in the army, after the dive school, Peter completed a graduate diploma in theology through Laidlaw College - followed by his Masters Degree in practical theology through Otago University in 2013.

At least in part, Peter's previously mentioned desire to be present in family life may have informed the topic of his Master's research - *The Impact of Fatherlessness on The Way One relates to God as Father*.

As part of his Masters, Peter surveyed about 500 people in churches - asking how they perceived both their father and God.

"One sad finding I discovered - which I'd suspected was there - was that some respondents who displayed characteristics of being 'fatherless' actually did have their dad around. Those respondents were Pastor's children who told me, "...Dad was there for everyone else, but not me..."

"It's a reminder that sometimes there are plenty of 'good' things to do - but those aren't always the right things. Sometimes, we have to say no to some 'good' things' to do the really important things," Peter says.

"It's so easy to get 'busy' doing God's work, but forget Him in the process. Let's be intentional about keeping our hearts Christ-focussed despite the inherent 'busyness' of life.

Upon completing his Masters, Peter briefly lectured at Vision College, before the Lord brought "one of the hardest, but absolutely coolest" things they've done as a family across their path. They were given the opportunity to serve in a short term missions role in rural Papua New Guinea, where Peter was facilities manager at Kapuna Hospital. He mentions it because it's an experience from which he's applied several key learnings as he's subsequently journeyed with God.

"When we say rural, this was properly remote - no roads, boat access only, no cellphone coverage and no power. It was a



hugely impactful time for our whole family - I really enjoyed sharing those experiences with Jessica too, she hadn't experienced anything like it before."

"That time reminded me that at times when God calls us to something, don't we often have the propensity to let fear stop us? Papua New Guinea highlighted to me the fact that we should absolutely be intentional about not letting fear prevent us from stepping out.

"The reality is, we can take the opportunities God calls us to - it's just there will always be a cost. Often we say, "...I'd love to, but..."

"In saying that we can absolutely miss out. "Instead, let's ask, "...are we prepared to step into what God's calling us to, regardless of the cost?"

Most recently, study-wise, Peter was awarded his PhD in practical theology from the University of Otago in 2019. It's appropriate we've discussed the theme of 'mission' at several points so far - the theme is again evident in his doctoral research - *How Theology Shapes Practice in Faith-Based Organisations*.

"Really, it became a story of mission drift and understanding how mission can, and does, shift over time if we're not vigilantly keeping that mission in focus. I'm so passionate about supporting values-based nonprofits to remain effective in the fulfillment of their core mission, vision and values.

"My mission-focussed outlook is one I was obviously trained to have in the army - but I've brought it with me through everything since - from my doctoral research to my current role at CCNZ."

Shifting back to the discussion of balance briefly, he says it's importance was also highlighted to him in a rather stark way as he studied. For a time while completing his three-year doctorate, Peter juggled his full-time studies with working three-and-a-half days doing children's ministry at a church, as well as several other areas of responsibility.

"For about two months, I would either start or finish work each day at 4am - getting about four hours of sleep a night. Long story short, after about eight weeks of that schedule I ended up in hospital with heart issues.

"That was a huge lesson to learn. There's a balance between resilience, or high performance, and sustainability. You simply can't sprint a marathon."

I enquire, then, about the importance of having people in his life who ensure accountability and point him to Jesus.

Similarly to having spoken of mission drift, Peter candidly says our walk with the Lord can drift too - if we aren't intentionally keeping Jesus as our key focus.

"For me, a significant thing is not so much mentors, but rather a few key people who I do life with and who help keep me accountable. If I was going to say I have a spiritual mentor though, it'd be my dad - he's awesome, he's intentional and he's my friend.

"In a personal sense, I have Daz Chettle - he's been a good friend for a long time. His entire focus is Jesus - that's so good for me. When I have a propensity to get so 'busy' or caught up in the challenge or the fun of a project, he simply asks me "...where's Jesus in this?" In a professional sense too, I'd say there's also Bill Tissingsh, who is on the CCNZ board. He's wholeheartedly focused on Jesus. Both Daz and Bill are like a 'dog with a bone' when it comes to keeping Jesus central - I need them in my life.

"I need to remind myself at times - don't we all - that we shouldn't get so caught up in 'doing' stuff for Him, that we forget to get to know Him. Our faith walk is a journey of many steps over time."

And, this is where some thoughts on authenticity come in. "Those who observe us as Christians want to see that we actually live out what we say we believe - our faith in Christ - not watch us say one thing and act another way.

"Be real and keep short accounts with the Lord - when we make mistakes go to Jesus, apologise and continue the journey.

"On this note, a skill set I've been intentional about developing is 'soft skills' - listening intentionally and really 'hearing' people as they talk. Not only that though, empathising with people and ensuring they feel truly valued is huge. The way you listen to and interact with people let's them know how much you care - and you can't fake that you care."

Finally, I ask Peter to both reflect on his time so far as CCNZ CEO and to cast his mind forward to 2022. About 60 Christian camps nationwide are part of the CCNZ network.

"Privileged is the right word," he says of his role. "It's a wonderful opportunity which found me, not the other way around. The role uses so many of my past skill sets and things we've chatted about - knowledge of the outdoors which I acquired in the army,

time spent working at churches, my leadership experience from the education sector while instructing commercial diving and, as my Masters and Doctorate work shows, research in faith development and governance in faith-based organisations.

"The concrete answer whenever we look ahead is that, of course, COVID-19 has meant the most pressing need for camps is simply surviving. It's been incredibly difficult on a number of fronts. As an organisation, at our core, we're simply here to serve our members in whatever capacity we can during what have been incredibly challenging circumstances.

"We're called to be God's hands and feet where we are. So, because I have those specific skill sets and experiences which fit really well, and I'm passionate about camping as a ministry, while I am in this role I'm absolutely committed to contributing in a really positive way.

"This year, one of the big strategic needs which is on my heart is a desire to see both the relational and strategic partnership between Christian camps and the Church in New Zealand strengthened.

"Camps are wonderful avenues through which people often have the opportunity to meet Jesus for the first time and make a decision to follow Him. But, as we all know, we are not solely here to see people make decisions - we're here to make disciples. The Church is wonderful at discipleship. So, whatever the future looks like going forward, that's one of the absolutely key things in my mind - the goal of improving that partnership, and to ultimately make disciples.

"On a personal level, my role as CCNZ CEO needs to be primarily about providing tangible benefits to our members - we're here to serve them. When they feel supported, they're better positioned and equipped to achieve their mission - seeing lives transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"We've spoken about being Jesus' hands and feet - in my sphere, what that looks like in terms of our members for me is identifying both needs and opportunities. Sometimes it's just about listening and being available, other times it's about interpreting legislation and communicating that. No matter what though, we won't lose sight of that core mission. And,

as well as most importantly having God's help, I'm surrounded by a wonderful team of people at CCNZ who are all focussed on that goal. It's so true too that in this role, Jessica and I are absolutely a team - she's amazingly supportive."

Peter says stewardship comes to mind when he reflects on the story of Christian camping in New Zealand.

"Remembering our whakapapa, or history - the reason there are Christian camps in New Zealand - is absolutely critical. If we're going to remain faithful to our mission going forward, we need to honour our origin stories and remember, celebrate and acknowledge the people who have gone before us.

"They dedicated their lives to this cause of seeing lives encountered by Jesus - why? Because they understood their mission and put the call of God ahead of what it might have cost them personally. To lose track of our history would be a

significant disservice to those who have gone before us." As our wide-ranging chat draws to a close, I ask Peter to sum up a final word of encouragement for readers.

"As we walk with God - and submit every experience to Jesus - nothing is wasted. He takes and uses everything.

"Romans 8:28 says, "...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV).

"That's bigger than just the things in life that we liked or didn't like too - it includes even, eventually, the times we were willfully rebellious.

"In walking with the Lord, not only when looking back at where we've come from, but also ahead to what God has for us, one has to simply conclude one thing - and keep that in focus as we walk by faith, not by sight.

"It's all because of Jesus."

Wow. Thanks so much for chatting to us Peter! For more information about Christian Camping New Zealand, see www.christiancamping.org.nz |  

Feature photography by MHB Photography - www.mhbphotography.co.nz

“ Remembering our whakapapa, or history - the reason there are Christian camps in New Zealand - is absolutely critical. If we’re going to remain faithful to our mission going forward, we need to honour our origin stories and remember, celebrate and acknowledge the people who have gone before us. ”

■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.





Can We Trust The Bible?

BY MARK SPENCE

The most common objection I hear concerning the Bible is that it can't be trusted as God's Word because, well, it was written by man and everyone knows men make mistakes. In actuality, the Bible was written through men, by God.

In speaking of how the Scriptures were written, 2 Peter 1:21 tells us "...prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (NIV).

The Bible's writers were not inspired like great artists are 'inspired' to produce great art. The word translated 'inspired' actually means "God-breathed." It conveys the idea of God 'breathing out' the Scriptures. Man was the instrument used by God to convey His thoughts in the Bible.

The Bible is not one book, but 66 different books compiled under one binding. It was written over a period of 1500 years by about 40 different authors from all walks of life and from varying occupations. It was written in three different languages on three different continents during times of peace and times of war.

The Bible's authors wrote exactly what God wanted them to write, about hundreds of subjects, yet with absolute harmony from beginning to end.

Now, think about this. Imagine that we interviewed five people of the same nationality, working at the same job, living in the same town and during the same year. And then we asked them to speak their mind on just one subject. What are the chances they would all agree?

And yet, despite all the differences in the lives of those who penned the Scriptures, the Bible is completely harmonious in

its entirety. The Bible's remarkable continuity is evidence of its divine origin. This unity is due to the fact that, ultimately, it had one Author - God Himself. The Bible served as a basis for modern scientific pursuits. Modern science was born in the 17th century because of a belief in an unchanging God of order, purpose and consistency - the God portrayed in the Bible.


It is filled with numerous medical and scientific facts and has been at the forefront of modern day science. Before oceans were explored, the Bible knew of the existing valleys, Psalm 18:15, and fountains and springs down in the depths, Job 38:16. It even mentions the hydrologic cycle with great clarity, take a look at Ecclesiastes 1:6-7.

It is the only 'spiritual book' which contains fulfilled prophecy. For example, messianic prophecy foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem and that He would be rejected by His own people - yet bear their iniquities and save His people from their sin. This ultimately came to fruition at the cross when Jesus triumphantly proclaimed, "It is finished."

The Bible is God's living and powerful Word. It can be trusted because it is inerrant, inspired and infallible. It is the compass God has given us to govern our lives.

"The Bible may not tell us everything we want to know, but it certainly tells us everything we need to know in order to have a right relationship with God."

The Bible may not tell us everything we want to know, but it certainly tells us everything we need to know in order to have a right relationship with God.

And though it has no contradictions, it certainly does have mistakes. The first one was when man rejected God back in the garden. Don't do the same. | 

An excerpt from Living Waters' The Way of the Master TV show episode, Monaco. For more, see www.LivingWaters.com.

■ Mark Spence is Senior Vice President of Living Waters, a popular speaker at conferences and universities and co-host of the television programme The Way of the Master - aimed at equipping Christians in evangelism and apologetics. He and his wife Laura homeschool their five children.



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THE GAMALIEL PRINCIPLE: HIS STRENGTH, OR YOURS?

BY BARRIE HANSON

Gamaliel was the son of Rabbi Simeon, the grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel. He was a Pharisee, and therefore an opponent of the Sadducees. He was noted for his learning and was president of the Sanhedrin through the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius. Acts 22:3 tells us that the apostle Paul was "...brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel..."

The thought process behind what has become the title of this piece - and the principle therein - is in fact espoused in Acts 5:38-39.

"And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (KJV).

I call it the 'Gamaliel Principle' - and here it is: "If this work is of God, ye cannot overthrow it - if this work is of men, it will come to nought..."

I believe this principle applies to all that we do in the name of Christ. We therefore have a responsibility to consider all that we do, and then determine, "...is it of God, or of man?"

For this, three elements are required - those being spiritual discernment, spiritual separation and spiritual power.

Let's look firstly at the fact that we need spiritual discernment. The Bible speaks of this in 1 Corinthians chapter three. The apostle Paul was with the church at Corinth for many months, yet after he left all kinds of problems arose there, and he writes to correct error. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 tell us, "And I, brethren, could not speak

unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (KJV).

They had abandoned spiritual discernment. What did the scriptures teach? What did Paul teach? What is of God, and what is of men? Truly, these questions are those we need to ask ourselves when facing any issue.

Secondly, We need spiritual separation - something Paul addresses when he writes to the church at Corinth again.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." - 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 (KJV).

"...if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it..."

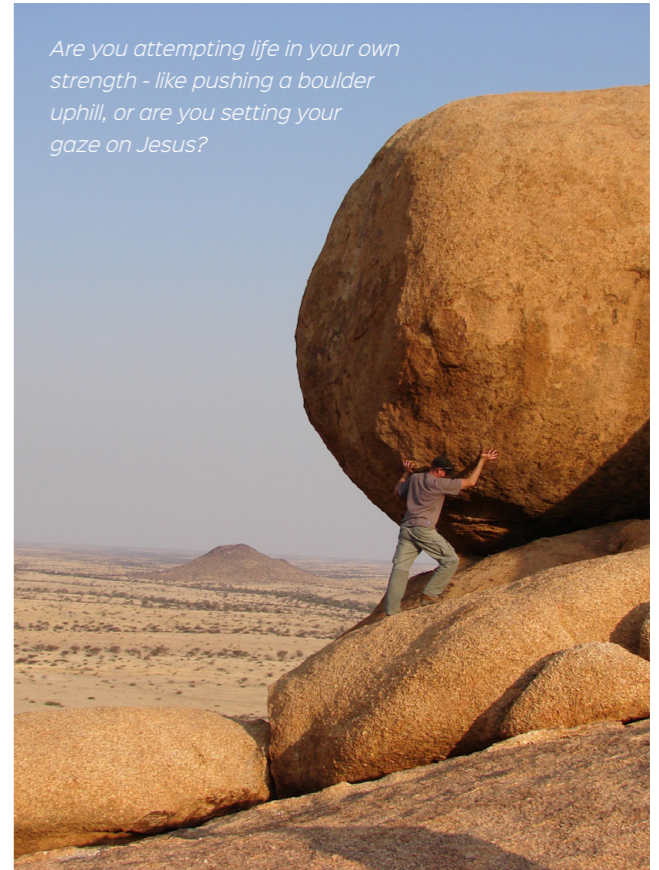
In this regard, the question we must continually ask ourselves is this, "...are we living a life that is different from the world? Our answer must always be based not on what we think, but what the Word of God says. What are the things that drive us? Do we follow the first commandment? Do we lean on our own understanding first? Or, do we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and God's truth?"

Let's look at Jude 1:20-21: *"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."* (KJV).

Then, thirdly, we need spiritual power. We should not attempt to do things in our own strength, but rather, we should look unto Jesus - the author and finisher of our faith.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,

■ Barrie Hanson lives in Bluff, Southland. He has been a Christian for over 40 years and in that time he has been a preacher, Pastor and a church helper in both Auckland and Hamilton.



Are you attempting life in your own strength - like pushing a boulder uphill, or are you setting your gaze on Jesus?

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." - Matthew 28:18-20 (KJV).

Christ is with us always. If we operate in His strength, then what we do will be of God and it will stand. True spiritual power can only be by God's design. There are no accidents.

"Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies." - Psalm 40:4 (KJV).

We must never lose sight of the fact that God is in control and we should have an eternal perspective on any issue.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." - Matthew 6:19-21 (KJV).

Gamaliel was a wise man - and whilst he may not have accepted Christianity, he knew not to fight it! |





Mouth Rinse...

BY LOCKY MCNEILL

As a kid growing up I had to deal with a lot of mouth rinse. And no, not the soap-based kind you probably first thought of. But, because of dental issues, I had a number of teeth pulled.

Then the recommended salty mouth rinse regime ensued for a number of weeks each time. While there was a reason for doing it, it was just not what I wanted to do. Recently, during one of my quiet times, I read the following verse - and when I did so it reminded me of the childhood experience I have just relayed.

The verse was, *"...let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."* - Colossians 4:6 (NKJV).

In life, I find there are times where I have to 'season' my mouth - a major role to

which this applies for me is as a husband and a father. See, I want whatever I say to my wife and family - whether it be encouraging, or at times correcting, to be "...seasoned with grace..."



Ephesians 6:4 is also a good reminder. *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."* (NKJV).

Supposedly, they say being right is one thing, but delivering what we say in a way which means it is received is another thing all together.

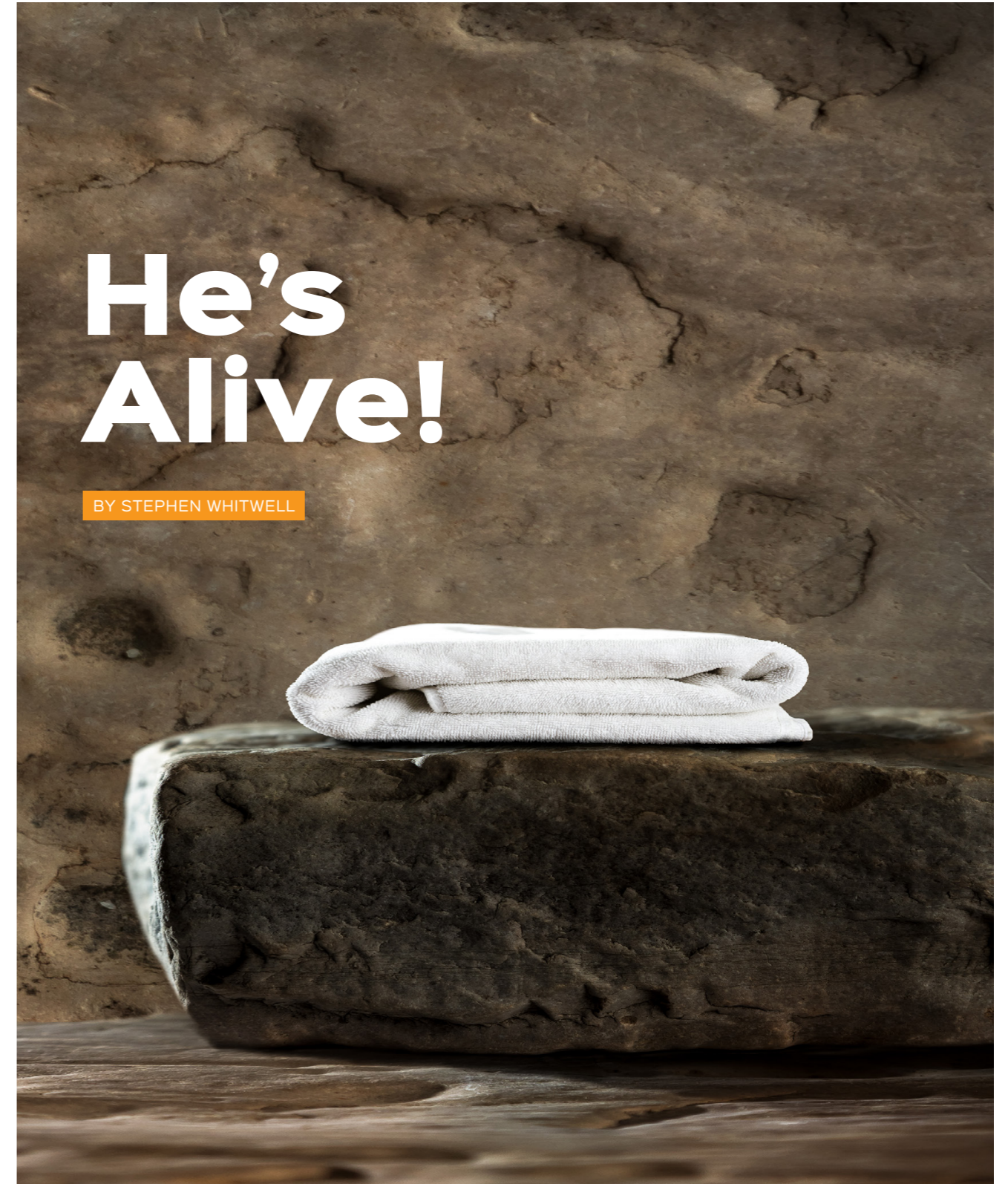
Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12. *"...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."* (NKJV).

Practically, for me that means that I think very carefully before I speak - sometimes even rehearsing it. Many times too, I pray fervently about it. While in this piece we have discussed one of the areas in which this process is highly important - our family lives - in fact all of us are called to this very thing, no matter the sphere of life.

Let grace season the words of our mouths. Like our mouthwash analogy, let grace slosh around. Because grace should be the sound that is heard along with the verbs that I perpetuate. So, there is my simple encouragement - a reminder intended to encourage us to purposefully choose to speak to one another with grace seasoning our words - because as we see in scripture, when we do so we speak life to one another.

Something to think about... |  

Locky McNeill is a faith-based entrepreneur living in Taupo, New Zealand. He is a father to two young sons and a husband to one talented wife who can bake up a storm of goodness. He splits his time between being a digital Pastor, event director, MC, performer, writer and host of the Real, Raw & Relevant with Locky McNeill online show.



He's Alive!

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL

"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid,

for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. Matthew 28:1-8. (NKJV).

AUTHENTIC | CURRENT ISSUES

He's alive! The implications of those words are huge. Many families will tell of a loved one, barely alive, hanging on to life by a thread. But, miraculously, they recover. News quickly filters through that they're alive! The patient makes a full recovery and their loved ones enjoy life again in relationship with them.

Those families will never forget that event. Life lived with their relative will never be the same. Every day will seem like a bonus, a gift.

The 'resurrection' of their loved one who was as good as dead, changes things. The implications of the resurrection we celebrate at Easter are also huge. But far far more so.

It's central to our faith that He's alive! The resurrection of Jesus from the grave happened. The tomb is empty. He is now alive! Those words, "...He is risen, as He said..." (Matthew 28:6), gives us great hope and comfort.

All over the world, at Easter this confession will be made – He's Alive! Jesus Christ is alive. And He is. But not just on Easter weekend. This truth changes things. He said He would be crucified and He was. He said He would rise from the dead and He did. He said He loves us and He does. He said He'd be with us and He is. The implications of those words "He's alive!" are simply incredible. Because He's alive, as He said, we can trust Him.

“This truth changes things. He said He would be crucified and He was. He said He would rise from the dead and He did. He said He loves us and He does. He said He'd be with us and He is. The implications of those words “He's alive!” are simply incredible.”

“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” - 2 Corinthians 1:20 (NKJV).

The reference point for the fulfillment of God's promises is in Christ. He is the guarantee of their reality. We can trust Him. We can rely on Him. As I've said before, when God says "I will...", then, He will! It's not, "I might", "I hope", "I could", "I should", "I would" or "I wonder" - but "I will". The full omnipotence of God is behind His "I will!"

He's alive, so we can trust Him. He's alive so we can be sure that as the miracle of His resurrection took place as He said, the miracle we've been promised, the miracle we're believing for, the miracle we know is just up ahead, will come! As He said. Because He's alive, as He said, we can know Him.

“... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...” - Philippians 3:7-10. (NKJV).

Paul's passion was to know Him. The Christian life involves two blessings. One, is that we can know Him. We can! We can have a living relationship with Him. We can talk with Him and He with us. We can hear Him speak to us through His word, we can hear Him speak to us by the Holy Spirit. Incredible. We can know God, the Creator of the universe. The second blessing is that not only can we know Him, but we can grow in knowing Him. We can pursue, hunger after and be passionate to know Him more.

So - we both know Him, and are getting to know Him more and more. What a privilege to know Him who is life, alive and risen from the dead. He who flung the stars into orbit, created the tiniest atom and who lives in me!



Because He's alive, as He said, we can be known by Him. *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” - 1 John 3:1. (NKJV).*

Just as loving and wise parents know their children, so too, God knows us. He knows us. He knows all about us. But He knows us in the sense that we're one of His. We are one of His children. That is a wonderful thought. Such is the place He has reserved for us, that He calls us children of God. Wow!

Easter reminds me of these things. It reminds me of the foundational truths of the Gospel and of what I believe. It is good for us, from time to time, to refresh our memory of the foundations and basic truths of our faith.

When I do that I am caught up in wonder and worship again, at the immensity of the love of God, His faithfulness to me and His presence with me every moment.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” - 1 Corinthians 15:1, 3-4. (NKJV).

Easter is not just a holiday weekend, a few days off because of some distant religious event. It is a celebration and remembrance of a real occasion. Receiving the living Christ into our life changes everything. Oh yes - He's alive! |  

■ Stephen Whitwell is a husband, father of two and a grandfather of eight. He loves God, the Bible, his family, life, fine food, writing, living in the Bay of Plenty and helping people discover who they really are in Christ. A retired pastor, he writes and publishes Brief Word – a free e-letter and blog - and also serves as a trustee for Authentic Christian Trust. He can be contacted at: www.goodwords.nz



I want to be just like Daddy...
...except for being blind.



River Blindness is a devastating and isolating health condition.

Masu is an amazing man. No wonder his children want to be just like him. Except for the River Blindness parasites that completely destroyed his eyes... and his dreams.

In Nigeria the blackflies, that swarm down by the river, bite and inject dangerous parasites into your body which bloom into hundreds of thousands of baby worms. They cause unbearable itching under the skin, moving through the body to the eyes where they slowly and painfully destroy sight. This blindness cannot be reversed.

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If Masu had just had access to a few vital Mectizan® tablets each year, his parasites would have been killed. Instead, this man with academic excellence and the drive to help others, must be led around the village by his young son Kabiru.

Despite all he has lost, Masu has built a life for himself, finding a lovely wife and having beautiful children together, then starting a group for people like him living with avoidable blindness, called the Association for Blind People. There are many in his village also needlessly blind.

Masu's sight cannot be restored. His life's dreams are gone forever. Your generous gift today will mean so much to a family like Masu's. They're doing all they possibly can, but they can't protect themselves from River Blindness.



To learn more about cbm (Christian Blind Mission) and Masu's full story, scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera or go to www.cbmnz.org.nz/masu1





What One Thing Will Bring You Joy?

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

Where do we find true, lasting joy in a world which so often offers us momentary pleasure? Nathan Johnson explains.

The world is desperately searching for joy - and looking for it in all the wrong places. These can include things like entertainment, sport, drugs, sexuality, success and money and even food - on and on it goes.

Ultimately, the truth is that while some of the things on this list can give us temporary or momentary pleasure - or even maybe distraction - none of them will produce lasting joy. And yet, there is one thing which is guaranteed to give you joy. Psalm 16:11 declares, *"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore..."* (NKJV).

Joy, then, is found solely in Jesus Christ. It is in His presence that the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore are experienced. And, in Galatians 5:22-23, Paul tells us joy is a fruit of the Spirit. It's produced in our life when we abide in the Spirit of God. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."* (NKJV).

True joy isn't found in the 'pleasures' of this world - but rather in the presence of our King. Leonard Ravenhill - some of whose

"Joy, then, is found solely in Jesus Christ. It is in His presence that the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore are experienced."

work appears earlier in this issue - is famous for saying, "...entertainment is the devil's substitute for joy. The more joy you have in the Lord, the less entertainment you need."

Have you experienced that? Or are you maybe searching for joy in all the wrong places? The world is desperate for joy - and I think we can make a good argument that, as people, we were made for joy. But we will never find it in the world, or in sin... for true joy comes from the Lord. It is only found in Him.

And, if you need strength today, please also remember that, as Nehemiah 8:10 puts it in the New King James Version, *"...do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength..."*

Know that I am praying for you and cheering you on down the Narrow Way of the Cross as you experience the limitless joy found in Christ! |A



■ Nathan Johnson is program director and an instructor at Ellerslie Mission Society in Windsor, Colorado. Learn and see more at deeperchristian.com. Used by permission.

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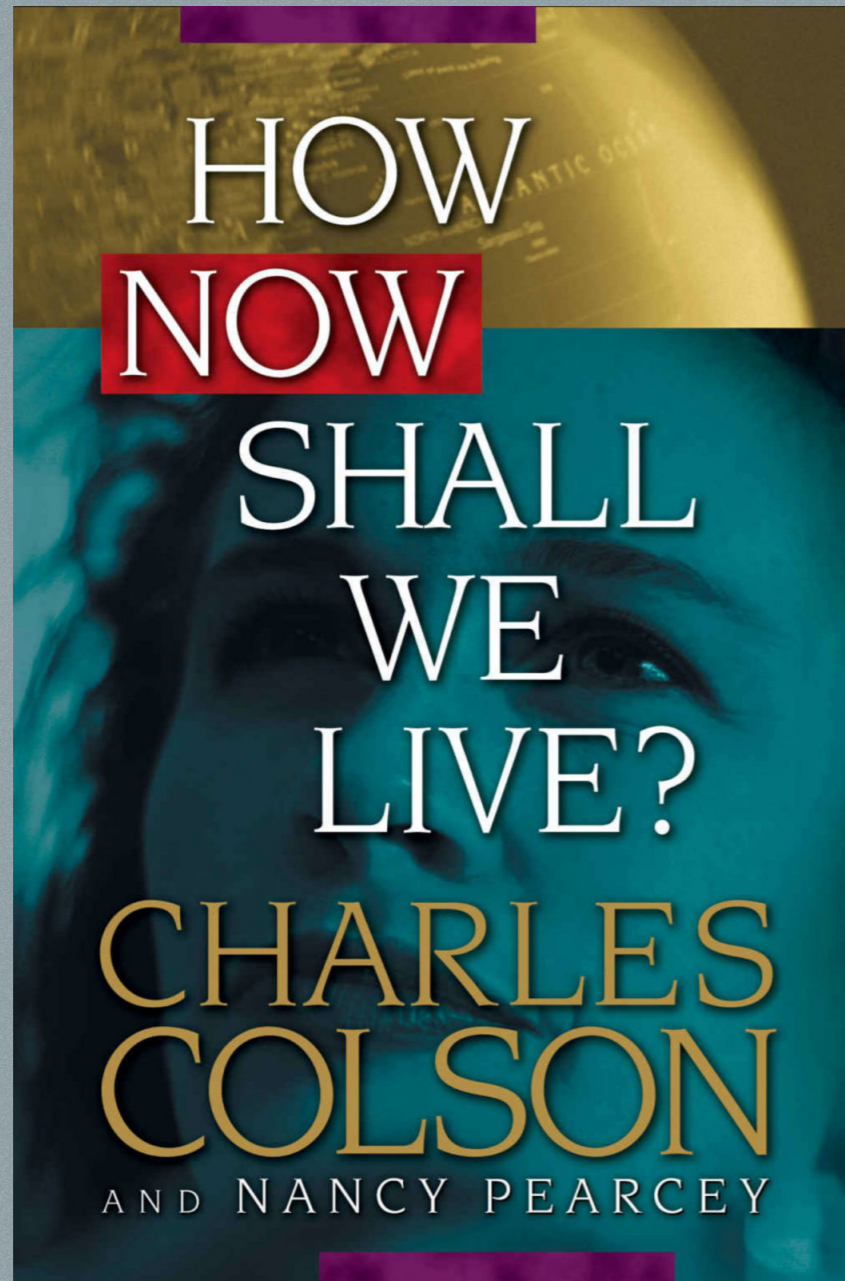
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BOOK



How Now Shall We Live?

CHARLES COLSON and NANCY PEARCEY // REVIEW BY JOHN WARD

In *How Now Shall We Live?*, published by Tyndale House, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey grapple with the important concept of worldview. And with how our ideas about the world in which we live shape the way we live. The authors assert that Christians are called not only to personal faith, but also to a worldview shaped by the Bible - one that has the power to transform the world as it is today.

This is a captivating book because the authors are able to maintain the reader's interest by weaving together - in a most skillful way - stories of Christian involvement and enterprise around the world.

This, along with thought provoking comment and analysis showing how the Christian faith can penetrate life and society at every level. This book also poses a radical challenge to the Church as a whole, and to Christians as individuals - as it presents the spiritual battle between competing worldviews.

These worldviews which oppose God are identified - and their false teaching and values exposed. The stark contrast of the Christian worldview is also explained - and the power of the Christian truth is affirmed in the present age of unbelief. This, in turn, raises some big questions - which are answered in a most convincing and enthralling way.

The book is divided into the following five sections.

Firstly, worldview and why it matters. Christianity is just under 2000 years old - it was born into a world very different to the one we live in.

As Christians, we need to understand why the world at large thinks and behaves as it does if we are to make a relevant impact. If Jesus Christ is the answer, then Christians need to know what the question is.

Secondly, creation. Where did we come from? And, who are we? In this section, the authors explore the subject of origins and the current views held on the topic. Are we simply the product of random selection and chance? Or, are we designed and made by a loving all-powerful God?

Thirdly, the fall. What has gone wrong with the world? During the 21st century, those who claim that humans are 'basically good' and need only the right environment to prove it have

themselves been proven dreadfully wrong. When God is left out of the equation, all 'hell' is let loose - the evidence of this is all too obvious.

Fourthly, redemption. What can we do to fix it? All manner of ways have, and are, being tried to fix the problems which face our world. There are reasons, and excuses, galore - the only true solution though is found in Jesus Christ. As millions worldwide have discovered.

And lastly, restoration. How now shall we live? Every area of life needs to be restored to bring it into line with the blueprint given to us in the Bible.

Anything can happen when Christians get involved. This book tells of many of the people who have made a difference by bringing Christian distinctives to bear in areas of life that needed to be radically transformed.

“As Christians, we need to understand why the world at large thinks and behaves as it does if we are to make a relevant impact. If Jesus Christ is the answer, then Christians need to know what the question is.”

In a South American prison, in slum neighbourhoods and in the entertainment world to name but three of the many examples given. This is a defining book for Christians who are committed to making sense of the competing worldviews which clamour for our attention.

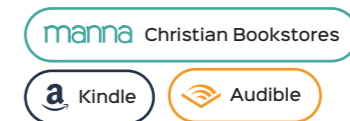
The pluralistic, post modern world we live in claims our allegiance in many subtle ways. In this powerful response,

Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey show that all other worldviews fail to meet the test of rational consistency and practical application.

Only the Christian worldview fits the real world and can be lived out consistently in every area of life. This is apologetics at its best and most powerful - thoroughly researched and presented in a most interesting way.

How Now Shall We Live? provides a real confidence boost for Christians who mean business for God. Christians can make a difference as, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they hold fast to the truths that God has made known in His Word - and live them out in daily experience. |A

This book is available from



■ Christchurch-based John Ward facilitated his 'Between the Covers' book review programme on Rhema for 25 years and 1100 reviews. He was in pastoral ministry for 10 years and also managed a Scripture Union bookshop for 10 years, before becoming a South Island-based Scripture Union Bible Ministries staff worker for five years. He still preaches when required.





Free Burma Rangers

LIFEWAY FILM, DEIDOX FILMS // REVIEW BY LEE HANSON

Free Burma Rangers captures the life of the Eubank family. Who, in faith, followed God into two of the most volatile regions of conflict in the world.

Dave Eubank grew up as a missionary kid in Thailand, but always viewed himself as more of a soldier than a preacher. So, as a young man he joined the military - eventually becoming a captain in the United States Special Forces. After marrying his wife Karen, he responded to the call to head to Burma to use his skills to help those caught up in one of the world's longest-running civil wars.

Starting with a simple view of "...how can I show Christ's love to these people in need?", he went directly into the areas of fighting and started to help in any way he could. In his own words "...everything I have is Yours, how can I serve You?"

By teaming up with locals, he trained groups to go into the conflict zones to help those who were injured and to record the violence in photographs and on video - he named them the 'Free Burma Rangers' (FBR). The FBR would then report what they had seen and experienced to the outside world. Most of the film is made up of the footage captured by FBR as they recorded the atrocities and violence perpetrated by the Burmese military.


The Eubanks raised three kids in the jungle. Karen, as a teacher, also taught Bible classes and kids' programmes to help the local kids learn about the good life available in Jesus, despite what was going on around them. The Free Burma Rangers group became so effective in Burma they were asked to replicate the model in an entirely different war zone - the war against ISIS in

the Middle East. So, with a few of their trusted friends from the Burmese jungle, they did just that - taking what God had taught them from the jungle to the desert.

While in places this movie is difficult to watch - and due to the realities of war is not suitable for young kids - teenagers and adults will be inspired and challenged regarding how we view our lives and what we would be prepared to give up in response to God telling us to "go". With interwoven themes of justice, revenge, forgiveness and tragedy the Eubanks family wrestle with their faith within a backdrop of suffering.

With some limited experience in working with refugees from Myanmar (Burma), this movie was incredibly powerful for my family and I. As a dad, one moment that struck me was seeing one of Dave's daughters in a flak jacket and helmet with bullets flying around outside. Having a daughter a similar age, that really challenged me as to how much I trust God with my life, and with the lives of my family members.

By deliberately putting himself and his family in harm's way, Dave models Jesus' example to love those around us and put them before our own needs or wants. He also encourages us to move forward boldly, doing what God brings across our path with courage and faith in a powerful God. This inspirational movie is a fantastic watch and I can't recommend it highly enough for every Christian.

Available to rent from Vimeo, or when showing to larger groups, you can buy the appropriate license for your needs from <https://brmovie.com/> | 



■ Lee Hanson is Authentic Media's agency manager. He also serves as a deacon at Hukanui Bible Church, is married to the lovely Shae and has three great kids. Lee and his family have also spent time serving in South East Asia.

So, What's the GOSPEL Message?

Enjoying reading Authentic Magazine? It's our prayer the content filling these pages encourages Christian men, helping them grow in their faith, knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ - while being a light to those living without Jesus. If, having read this issue, you have questions about taking the next step towards Jesus - this Dare 2 Share resource might help.

A GOSPEL acrostic, it's also a clear and precise way to share Jesus with others.

G**OD**

created us to be with Him. (Genesis 1-2)

God created the universe (Genesis 1:1) - including the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Created to be in complete fellowship with Him and each other, God wanted them to care for the earth and the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). He said they shouldn't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but His plan was disrupted when they evilly did so.

O**UR**

sins separate us from God. (Genesis 3)

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree (Genesis 3:6), they sinned. Becoming aware of their error, there were both immediate and future consequences. Immediately banished from the garden, they'd physically die in the future. Their offspring - everyone including you and I - was born sinful, selfish and subsequently deprived of God's fellowship (Romans 5:12-14).

S**INS**

cannot be removed by good deeds. (Genesis 4 - Malachi 4)

Humanity attempts to remove sin through good deeds, but the 10 Commandments God gave the Israelites (Exodus 20:1-17) showed they couldn't live up to His perfect standards (Galatians 3:23-24). A sacrificial system involving goats without blemishes (Leviticus 4:27-31) foreshadowed the Lamb of God, Jesus, who'd take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

P**AYING**

the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again. (Matthew - Luke)

Jesus came to earth, fulfilling the law (Matthew 5:17). He was the ultimate sacrifice (Luke 24:46) - living the perfect life we couldn't live, dying in our place for our sin. His payment was infinite and complete. He rose from the dead after three days (Mark 16:6), being seen by over 500 witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:6) on at least 12 occasions in 40 days (Acts 1:3).

E**VERYONE**

who trusts in Him alone has eternal life. (John)

Eternal life is a free gift of God through faith, not by our good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9). It's not trying, but trusting. Jesus paid the price - all we must do is receive the gift of forgiveness through faith. When we believe Jesus died for our sins and trust in Him alone, we receive eternal life and we pass from death to life (John 5:24, Romans 10:9).

L**IFE**

with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. (Acts - Revelation)

Because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we'll be with Him forever in Heaven. When we trust in Him, we enter into a personal, permanent relationship with God. Eternal life doesn't start after you die, but when you believe (John 10:10). A real relationship with Jesus is through prayer, worship and the strength God gives us through His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

For more resources see www.dare2share.org

AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE

Our purpose is to proclaim the Authentic Christian Life - the real, genuine life - where Christ is alive in us!

Authentic Magazine is a quarterly printed magazine, designed to encourage kiwi Christian men in their faith. It is a project of Authentic Christian Trust, a registered charity in NZ.

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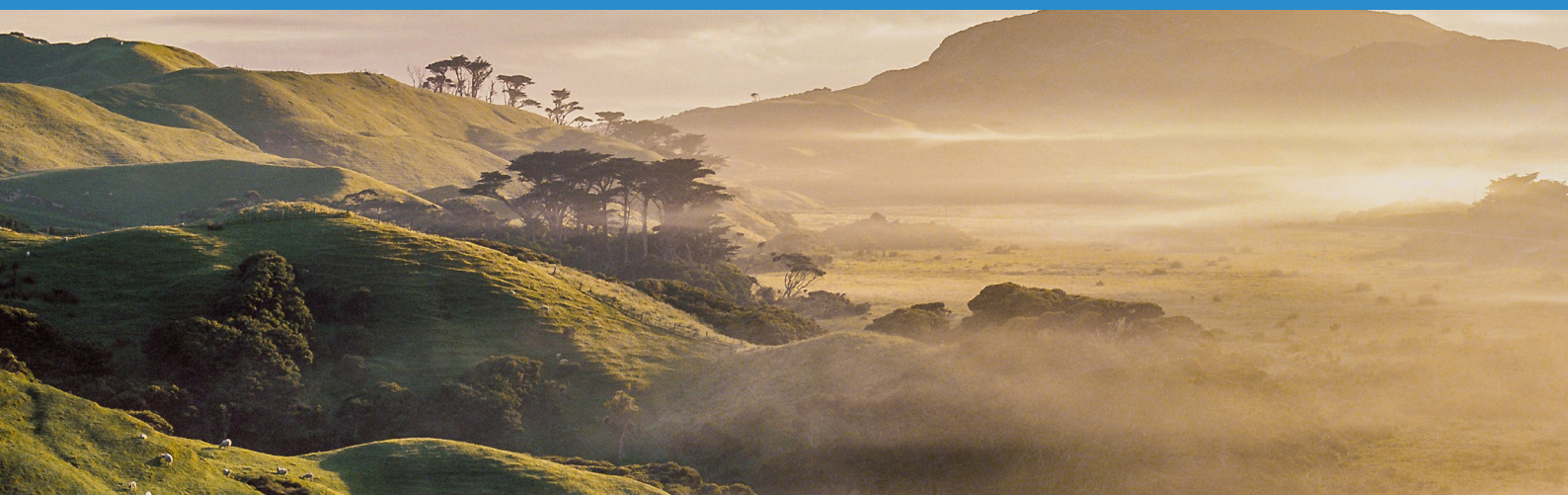
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