

AUTHENTIC

WINTER 2018

MEN'S MAGAZINE

A TRIBUTE TO

Chuck Missler

1934 - 2018

WE CHAT WITH RUGBY LEGEND

Bull Allen

WISDOM SERIES BY

Charles Price

Spreading the word with

PROPAGANDA

PLUS

- A military life
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- 7 Things Jesus never said



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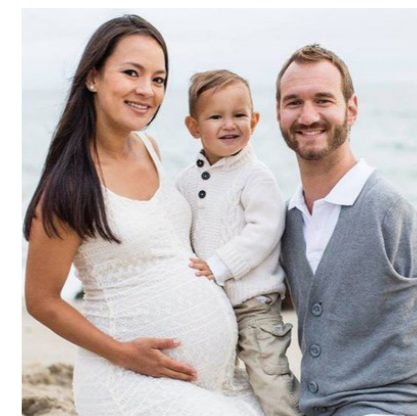


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WELCOME TO THE THIRD EDITION OF

AUTHENTIC

They say 'third time's a charm' – well for us, third time is a miracle!

We knew faith would be extremely important in this venture but God keeps reminding us just how important it is. You see, in Hebrews 11:6, the writer tells us that 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' Therefore, a logical assumption is that 'faith pleases God'.

So when we find ourselves in a situation where we struggle to see how things will work out...it's a perfect opportunity for the Lord to show us that He is all we need and He will accomplish His purposes, for His glory!

So here we are. Third issue. It's a bit weird to think that the next issue will signify the halfway point. Of course, that was the original vision of just 8 issues over a two year period. I've had many people ask about what will happen at the end of 8 issues, but to be absolutely honest, each issue has enough for us to focus on!



We continue to search for excellent content to grace the pages of each issue and we've been incredibly blessed to have such great writers as Eric Ludy, Charles Price, Nathan Johnson, Paul Curtas, Jeremy Suisted and regularly contributing, as well as interesting stories from some well known Christians. But we're also planning to do some features with some regular Kiwi blokes.

You see, you don't need to be famous to have a story and there are some amazing stories, from some amazing people, that all know an amazing Jesus! (keep an eye out in the next few issues).

However, one of our regular contributors, the amazing Chuck Missler, went home to be with the Lord on 1st May 2018. Chuck was one of the major reasons I love the Bible. His passion and enthusiasm for Jesus was infectious.

I'm so thankful for the privilege of meeting him a few years ago and being able to tell him the impact he had on my walk with Christ. He put his hand on my shoulder, his eyes filled up and he simply said, "Thank you, that means a lot."

Yes, he was just a man. But he was a great man.

He'll be greatly missed but his legacy lives on. There is an abundance of his teaching (written, audio and video) available from www.khouse.org and you can read some tributes on page 7.

This issue we are printing twice the amount of magazines than we

have with the two previous issues - 4,000 copies. It's a step of faith but we've been encouraged by the Lord and His people.

We're really grateful for all the feedback you've given. Our job is to serve and that's our focus, so we listen to the comments carefully and try to discern how to improve, issue by issue. Please keep it coming. We don't mind the corrections or the rebukes, not that we've had many, but when you're talking about the authentic Christian life, not everybody is going to have the same view or understanding. We get that. And although we're not looking for an easy life or a safe compromise, we do want to keep the focus on serving and supporting Christian men in New Zealand.

I recently met with Promise Keepers' marketing director, John Surbitzky.

I was deeply encouraged by their vision for the men of New Zealand. Although Authentic Magazine has a slightly different ministry focus, there was a huge amount of common ground and as we talked I felt something very special was brewing! So here's the news...we're going to be at the Promise Keepers 'Legacy' events and support the work!

As with most things, Promise Keepers isn't for everyone, but having met with John I am encouraged by the heart behind this ministry so we will go and see how we can serve the men of nz together - maybe we'll see you there!



AUTHENTIC MAGAZINE EDITOR DAVE FIRTH WITH CHERYL AND TINA, MANNA STORES, HAMILTON

Now, if you're a pastor of a church, let us know so we can get your church's details. We're committed to supporting pastors and partnering with Churches however we can.

Also, you can buy a box of magazines for your church, men's group or even for your friends.

If 50 is too many, just flick us an email and we'll do what we can to get a smaller amount to you as soon as possible.

Of course, with the help of one of our amazing ministry partners, Manna Christian Stores, as well as several other Christian Bookstores, you can pick up a copy of Authentic magazine at more than 25 places around New Zealand (details of stockists are on the website - www.authenticmagazine.co.nz)

Remember, the 'Authentic Christian life' is something only Christ can live. And He's REALLY good at it!

So let Him. |A

■ Dave Firth: Editor of Authentic Magazine, Communications Manager, husband, father and follower of Jesus Christ

Connect with Authentic

We'd love to hear your feedback, ideas and input. You can reach out to us via social media or our website at www.authenticmagazine.co.nz



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The Passing of a Legend by Dave Firth

Chuck Missler was 'called home' on the 1st May 2018.

He chose to spend his final years in New Zealand having relocated his ministry headquarters to Reporoa. I met him a couple of times when I visited The River Lodge - a beautiful property aptly named due to being surrounded on 3 sides by rivers - where he lived for the last eight years of his life. Although 'technically' he retired a couple of years ago, he would still drive from his house at the far end of the property, to the lodge and sit on the patio with guests and students chatting about the Bible and its central character - the Lord Jesus.

The first time I met him I remember feeling a bit starstruck! This was the man the Lord had used more than any other to inspire me to study the Bible.

His humility in meeting those he had helped or encouraged was beautiful. He genuinely was moved that God could use him to do anything of value and worth.

There are literally thousands of people that could write something about Chuck.

Here's just a few...

BRIAN HUGHES

- Pastor, Calvary Chapel, Auckland and Chuck's Friend

Chuck Missler was a loyal friend, and a generous, big hearted, servant hearted, friend. He went out of his way for people.

Don't get me wrong, Chuck was just a man, talented, incredibly brilliant, but a sinner saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ who was his Saviour. He loved the Word of God, and he loved the God of the Word.

I have been asked as we travelled together over the years, "how does Chuck know the Bible so well?" My answer is always the same and true. Because he reads it!

Yes, he studied. Yes, the Lord gave him deep insight and understanding as he probed it's depths.

But he loved to begin his day just sitting at Jesus' feet as it were, reading his Bible.

He loved to share as we talked, the nature and character of God because he knew and appreciated Him, because he was one who sat at His feet, listening for his "voice" as he read, and who, because he

HE LOVED TO BEGIN HIS DAY JUST SITTING AT JESUS' FEET AS IT WERE, READING HIS BIBLE.

spent daily time with the Lord, actually knew Him.

I was blessed in our friendship and all it encompassed and meant to us over the years.

I was blessed to stand by his side in times of trouble, especially in the last few days and hours of his sojourn on earth.

I was also blessed to stand by his side and witness what the Lord did through him in so many lives that were changed in both Australia and New Zealand.

But most of all blessed in his example of sincere love for the God of the Bible.

Blessed in our hours, and hours, and hours of talking about the Word. I will miss him for a while but know exactly where he is and am assured we will be together again.

CHUCK'S DAUGHTER, LISA (MISSLER) BRIGHT

My dad taught me that life is an adventure. Dad opened the

world to me through traveling or family ski trips. He was very adventurous... had his pilot's license, scuba certified, skier, ... Who moves to the other side of the world in their 70s?

He loved jokes, pranks and treasure hunts: following various clues or maps to hidden destinations with a surprise treasure at the end of the journey. One Christmas,

I had to find a bottle with a secret message buried on the beach at the Balboa Bay Club. Another year, my brother, Chip, had to go to the front desk of a fancy hotel and ask for an envelope for Gandalf (all the while my dad was giggling at our expressions).

Spiritually, these treasure hunts continued in his Bible studies. I thank him for instilling in me the unequivocal fact that the Bible is the inerrant, Divinely inspired Word of God.

In his office he has a wall that has all his awards and business achievements, he labeled that wall "Wood, Hay, Stubble" as they all mean nothing in eternity. Now, his other wall is labeled "Gold, Jewels, Precious Stones" and that wall displays all his Bible projects, books and discoveries.

The fruit of those pursuits are what he is enjoying NOW. Think about the precious stones that are being illuminated to him with facets of light that we can't even imagine!

His death is not the end of his grand adventure, but just the beginning of his discovery of the infinite nature of God.

He now knows exactly how old the earth is, and if there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 2. He is no longer counting down to eternity, but is in his completed destiny.



CHUCK MISSLER AND HIS WIFE NANCY ON ONE OF THEIR MANY ISRAEL TRIPS

HE WOULD SAY THAT HIS HARDWARE IS NOW OBSOLETE, BUT HIS SOFTWARE HAS MOVED ON TO A NEWER, MORE PERFECT AND INDESTRUCTIBLE STATE.

He is no longer subject to the boundaries of reality: no longer bound by mass, acceleration and gravity... He is independent of the limitations of our 3 dimensional reality. He now knows exactly how many dimensions Mr. & Mrs. Flat are missing. Last I heard, he was thinking that there are 11 dimensions: 9 spatial and 2 time, or possibly Hilbert space – a hyperspace of infinite dimensions. Can you imagine his face as he discovers the answers to these questions?

He can see the Seraphim and Cherubim! He now knows exactly where the Nephilim came from. He has a front row seat to the future events that he studied so seriously. He will get to see eschatology play out like watching a movie, as he is now outside of time!

He would say that his hardware is



now obsolete, but his software has moved on to a newer, more perfect and indestructible state.

He had faith in the unseen and now can see it! He completely understands the depth and repercussions of quantum physics; he can see how particles behave when unobserved... I am sure all sorts of hidden codes, scientific mysteries, foreshadows, symbolisms, parallels, and prophecies are being revealed to him.... He is now a little kid on the ultimate treasure hunt! Can you imagine what he is discovering as he digs up a bottle on a beach or asks for an envelope from the front desk?

He is with our High Priest, our Mediator, Our Messiah, the One and only one who has redeemed him: Jesus Christ by whose blood all of his sins have been washed away and he has been reunited with Him in Heaven.

If you want to honor my dad, he would tell you to take the Bible seriously.

To check Acts 17:11 and make your priorities things not of this world, but of eternal value, learn your Bible and be in relationship with your Creator... store your treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy. Live out your life as a grand adventure with Jesus Christ!

RON MATSEN
- President & CEO, Koinonia House

Over the past few years of working with Chuck Missler, people have asked me, "What will happen to Koinonia House when he is gone?"

With Chuck's official retirement announced more than two years ago, we at Koinonia House have been busily engaged in putting in place a structure that would serve this ministry for years to come.

We have considered this pending phase by examining this process as revealed in Scripture and as attempted by other Christian



OUR PRAYER IS THAT CHUCK'S LIFE, MINISTRY, AND MESSAGE WILL ENERGIZE THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND THE SAME EXCITEMENT THAT THE BIBLE IS "SIXTY-SIX BOOKS WRITTEN BY FORTY AUTHORS OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS AND YET WE FIND THAT IT IS AN INTEGRATED MESSAGE SYSTEM FROM OUTSIDE OUR TIME DOMAIN."



organizations. We have found that there are generally two models for ministry continuation experiences that we can draw from.

The first is that of replication. This style of ministry transfer assumes that the method of ministry can and will be transferred from one person to another— just as Moses was followed by Joshua and Elijah was followed by Elisha.

Our natural problem here is...there was only ONE Chuck Missler.

The second type of ministry

continuation is that of reproduction. Here we see the model of producing disciples that then in turn create disciples, that then in turn create disciples, and so on. We believe this reproduction model of ministry continuation is the one Jesus Himself followed.

In fact, the whole idea of the Body of Christ is manifested in diversity, and subsequent strength, within His Church today.

The mission of Koinonia House is still to provide tools and encouragement to the Body of

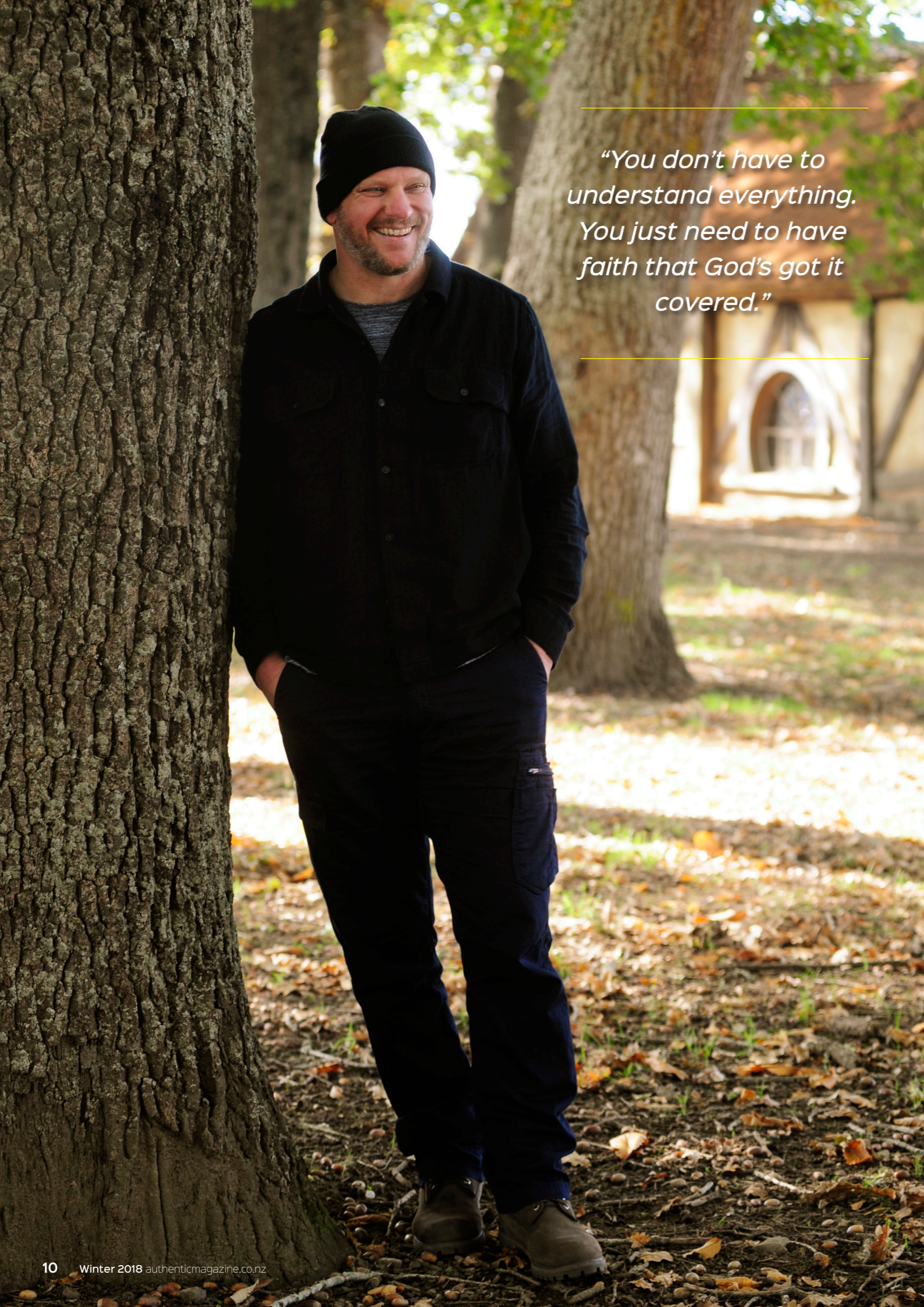
Christ so that its members can be fully equipped for every good work.

Our prayer is that Chuck's life, ministry, and message will energize the lives of those who have found the same excitement that the Bible is "Sixty-six books written by forty authors over two thousand years and yet we find that it is an integrated message system from outside our time domain." | **A**

If you'd like to know more about Koinonia House (K-House) or the ministry of Chuck Missler, you can visit www.khouse.org



THE RIVER LODGE - KOINONIA HOUSE MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS - REPOROA, NEW ZEALAND



“You don’t have to understand everything. You just need to have faith that God’s got it covered.”

Bull Allen

Faith, family & footy

By Dave Firth

The All Blacks are at the centre of New Zealand culture. Along with the silver fern, the Kiwi bird (and the fruit) and stubbies, they are ‘iconic’ in every sense of the word.

But despite all the fame and fortune, some have realised that it’s just not enough and in their searching have found the source of true life – Jesus Christ.

One guy, known for his work ethic and hard hitting tackles is Mark ‘Bull’ Allen who played 19 games and 8 test matches for the All Blacks.

We caught up with Bull to talk about faith, family and footy!

Firstly, how did you get in to playing professional rugby?

Well, I went pro in 1996 and I was fortunate to be part of the first professional game here in New Zealand for the Hurricanes. In fact, I was the first captain of a Hurricanes team, which was a great honour.

What do you remember most about your first game for the All Blacks?

“Being very nervous and very aware of the great players that had gone before me, and I really didn’t want to let anyone down who had helped me get there.”

So, Bull, did you become a Christian before, during or after your rugby career?

“When I was playing rugby I never thought too much about God. I was pretty self-centred and driven. All I cared about was rugby and being successful. Now I realise if I’d have known God then how much better would I have been. When I get up each day I’m still motivated to do my best – I want to be the best husband and the best father I can be.”

Did you play with any Christians and, if so, what was your opinion of them?

“There were a lot of guys that would be praying before the games and talking about God but in the bars afterwards they were just the same as us, doing all the things we were doing so I didn’t really see the difference to be honest.”

“But then there were a few amazing guys that were definitely different. Ronnie Clark, Va’aiga Tuigamala and Michael Jones. On my first tour as an All Black in 1993, I remembered those three coming in my room with a guitar and asked if they could sing some songs - and they were praising God and stuff – I didn’t really know much about it really. They were strong in their faith and still are. Authentic!”

It’s definitely true that some people are put off Christianity by

‘Christians’ that talk one way but live another way. How important is it to you to live an authentic life?

“Every morning I ask God to help me be a good example to those around me but I know there are times when I’m not. But it’s important to realise that being a good example is something that is worthwhile.

Let’s not kid ourselves. We can all fall off the path or head in the wrong direction but the great thing about having faith in God is that he will always help us get back on track. It’s beautiful, eh?”

“I’m really fortunate that I’ve got an amazing wife, Geralyn, that when I was away playing rugby, she prayed for me. She was a Christian for years before me – she used to try and get me to go to church. It took me a few attempts to want to go.

Years later, one day I was in church and then the penny dropped – my wife had been praying for me all those years. She was probably the reason I was here.”

“One of the best things about having a relationship with God is that you don’t have to understand everything. You just need to have faith that God’s got it covered. The

biggest killer in the world is stress so we just need to give it to God and he will take it away.”

“The biggest problem I had when I finished playing rugby is that I’d been blessed with success but I was still cursed with ambition. I wanted to achieve more. I didn’t feel I achieved all that I could in rugby.”

You finished playing due to injury when you were thirty. Was that a hard thing to accept?

“Two prolapsed discs in my back. Yeah, so I played provincial, top level rugby for 11 years but I still felt I could have done a lot more. But somewhere along the way you just got to realise you should enjoy what you have and God will give you what you need when you need it.

“YOU DON’T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING. YOU JUST NEED TO HAVE FAITH THAT GOD’S GOT IT COVERED.”

We’re sometimes looking at our neighbour’s garden when the weeds are growing around our feet!”

So what was it like playing with Jonah Lomu?

“I went on tour with him in 95, 96 and 97. He was a phenomenal athlete. He was also a very humble guy. I never knew if he had a faith. I certainly didn’t hear that when he was playing rugby but he was definitely something special.

He had a great work ethic, which is so important if you want to be taken seriously.

They say, ‘the harder you work the luckier you get’ and that seems to be true in rugby!

However, I would say that Christian Cullen was the best player that I played with He was young fast and fearless!”

You said your wife became a Christian before you. What impact did it have on you at the time?

“Not really sure about that. The main thing I remember is that she was patient with me when I wasn’t being all I could be as a husband Her patience and prayers helped me to become a better person for sure. Also she was the one that really introduced me to God.

When I first went to church I thought I was a pretty good guy. Then after a while I realised that actually, there’s some things I could do a lot better. It’s funny how God reveals these things to us!”

I read a quote about you where you said at one point in your life you ‘put down the bottle and picked up the bible’. How serious was your drinking problem?

“Well, as a kid I just grew up having a few beers. It started out relatively innocent but then it turned sinister. Part of it was the social side, but it became far too important to me.

When rugby turned professional and we found ourselves in the public eye a bit more, a few of us would try and get away to unwind and booze would often be at the centre of that. It was kind of a way to switch off really. Then as you get a bit older and wiser you learn different ways to unwind.”



“I THINK A LOT OF MEN ARE STRUGGLING TO FIND THEIR IDENTITIES AND ARE INFLUENCED BY SOCIAL MEDIA AND THIS INSTANT SOCIETY WE LIVE IN...”

So where did the big change occur?

“When my wife and I were baptised in Omokoroa about twelve years ago, it was amazing because after that the craving for drink just went away! I really felt that God had removed a curse from my life.”

What was the impact on your family?

“Actually, one of the papers got a picture of it and made a big deal of it.

But not long after that my son, Thomas, was watching something on the TV and there was a drunk guy doing something stupid.

Well, Thomas says to me, “Hey Dad, what’s wrong with that guy?” So I told him he was probably drunk. So, then he asks me, “What does that mean?” So, I explained that it meant he’d had too much beer.

Well, then Thomas says, “Have you ever been drunk Dad?” So of course, I have to confess and explain to my boy about some of the mistakes I’d made – it was hard, but definitely worth it!”

You attend ‘Curate Church’ in Tauranga. How important is it for you and your family to be part of a local Christian community?

“We really enjoy going to Church together on a Sunday as a family. Life is pretty full on so it’s important to spend time together as a family.

I’m cautious about using the word ‘Christianity’ – it has different meaning to some people. I say I’m someone who believes God and believes IN God.”

Just like some of our other recent Authentic interviewees, Andrew Stroud and Simon Barnett, you’ve recently turned 50! How has hitting the ‘half century’ impacted your outlook on life?

“Ha ha. No complaints. It’s just a number with a five in it instead of a four.”

Finally, Bull, what would you say is the biggest struggle facing Christian men in New Zealand?

“I think a lot of men are struggling to find their identities and are influenced by social media and this instant society we live in. As men we need to know who we are and how we fit. This isn’t done by looking at our phones all day long. We need to get out there and meet people and form our own opinions from experiences not from what we read online, then we can be better role models for our children.”

Ed. Good on ya Bull. |  



Stop COMPLAINING and start living!

By Focus on the Family



It amazes me how often we can take for granted all of the many good things that we have in our lives, instead choosing to see our glass as being half-empty, failing to see that every drop in our vessel is actually a precious gift that needs to be grabbed firmly with both hands and lived to its fullest.

Which is why we should be profoundly thankful for people like Nick Vujicic (pictured above), a truly inspirational person who has chosen to embrace the hand that life has dealt him, and rather than complaining and making excuses about his situation he chooses to live his life to the absolute fullest.

Nick was born with no arms or legs yet he hasn't let this stop him from playing football, or golf, or from swimming and surfing, among other things.

He has a small foot on his left hip which helps him balance, and which he uses to type, or write with a pen and pick things up – apparently he jokingly refers to this foot as his “chicken drumstick”.

Nick's life is a powerful testimony of the great worth and dignity of every human person, and his courage and enthusiasm for life is something truly inspiring that should remind us all that life is

too short to spend it complaining about what we don't have.

Most of us haven't taken up half the challenges that Nick has, instead we spend much of our time focused on our imperfections, or obsessing about the things we think we need to make our lives better, all the while failing to see the many, many good things we have been blessed with in our lives.


So next time you find yourself wishing for something you don't have, stop and think of Nick Vujicic and allow his truly amazing life to inspire you to firmly grab hold of every good thing in your life, and to live each moment to its fullest.

Nick has often said that if he had arms and legs it's highly unlikely he would have anything like the ministry God has given him.

Here's an interesting question to ponder: If God asked you for your arms and legs so that he could use you to tell millions of people around

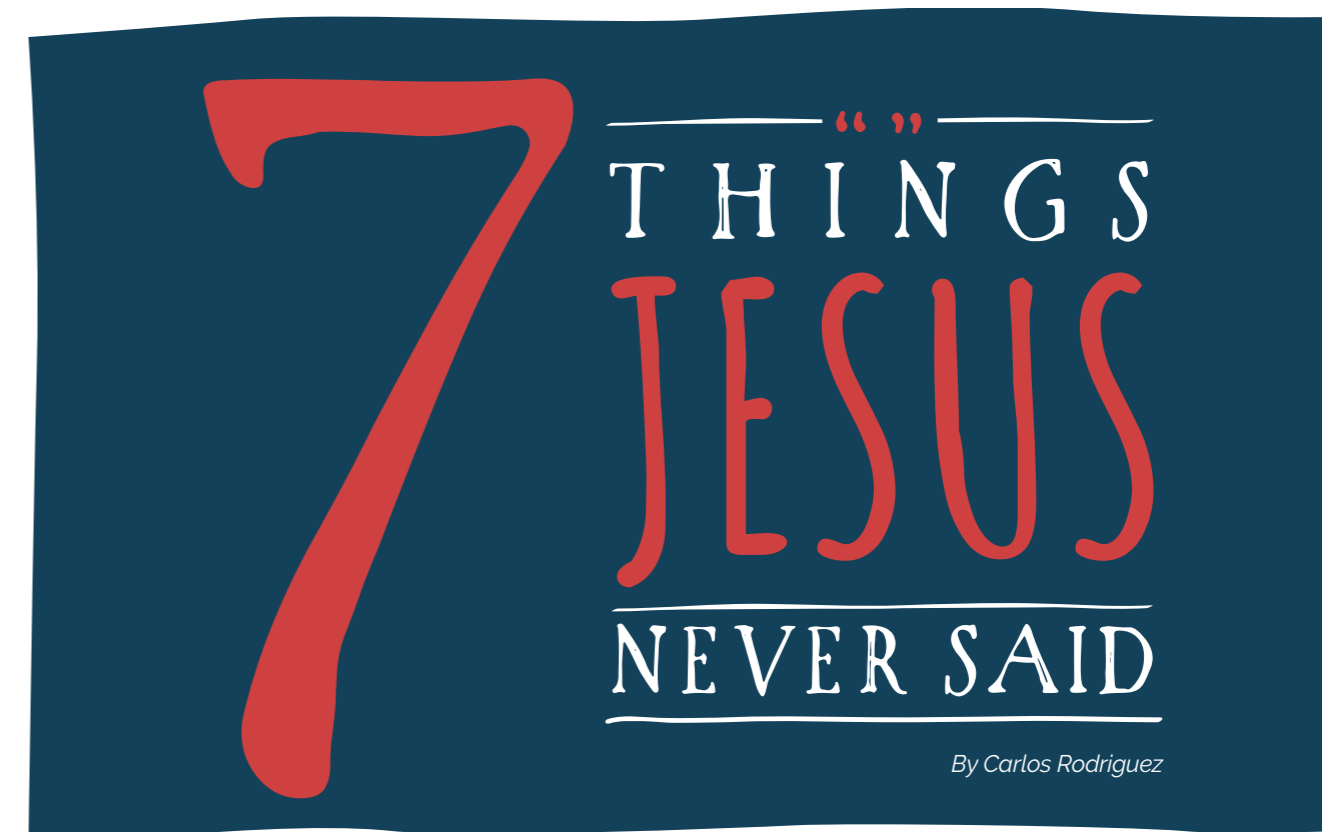
the world about Jesus, what would you say?

The reality is that He is highly unlikely to do that. But maybe he's asking you to give up something. To trust Him with a part of your life you haven't trusted Him with before (work, health, money, relationships?). Maybe it's a step to trusting Him with your whole life - that He might live His life in you?

You can learn more about Nick Vujicic from his website: www.lifewithoutlimbs.org | 



■ Focus on the Family New Zealand. www.family.org.nz



By Carlos Rodriguez

“If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself.”

Augustine of Hippo

With this quote in mind, let's discuss 7 things Jesus never said:

ONE “I JUST WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY”

In our ministry we have a high value for joy, pleasure and the enjoyment of life. But happiness is a by-product of surrender. Jesus wants me happy and he also wants me to be kind and generous. He wants me happy, but he also wants my wife happy (and sometime the greatest hindrance to her happiness is the pursuit of my own). He did say, “I came to give you a life more abundant”.

Happiness is included, but there is also sacrifice, work, and a whole lot of dying to self. Enjoy it.

TWO “YOU'LL GET WHAT YOU DESERVE.”

The opposite actually! Jesus came to give us what we don't deserve. He came so we could have his life, his fullness, his eternity. I know people who had HIV because of their past lifestyle and in one second, Jesus healed them. I know people (myself included) who have messed up majorly but Jesus covered their sins and restored their relationships.

Our deepest fear is judgement. Our deepest longing is love. Christ removes the one and provides the other. #GoodNews

THREE “WHAT WOULD (I) JESUS DO?”

Jesus never invited us to try hard to do it like he did it. We would obviously fail (again, again and again). The gospel is not, “WWJD?” The gospel is, “What Jesus Has Done Already!” If we try to be like him we will constantly be frustrated. If we acknowledge our weakness and embrace his sacrifice, we will be grateful and naturally supernatural.

The grace of God sets us free from a life of performing and pretending. Don't try to be like Jesus, just acknowledge that you are already

in Him, with Him, because of Him and through Him.

The Gospel is not my effort, the Gospel is Christ's perfection.

FOUR "JUST GET OVER IT!"

I used to love saying that. To my friends, my wife, people who were crying in front of me while asking for my counsel. But Jesus is way more patient than that. He's willing to listen, he catches every tear and he is available to walk the long road of victory.

The King already died for our freedom. Now, he's willing to live it with us.

FIVE "THIS IS THE GREATEST COUNTRY ON EARTH"

It's a good thing to cherish the land God blessed us with. We need to appreciate our culture, learn our history, respect our people. But Jesus couldn't care less about our patriotism.

The whole point of the gospel was to include everyone. For God so loved the world. Communists and Iranians and Muslims and Homosexuals, and even us Puertoricans! In his eyes, every

country is the greatest country. Every person is his favorite person. At the cross we all became his number ones. And no matter your nationality, color, religion, politics or hairstyle, you have been loved into the greatest family.

SIX "I AM A WAY, A TRUTH, A LIFE"

Nope. Jesus is *the* Way *the* Truth and *the* Life and no one comes to the Father except through him. The problem is that we have so many churchy add-ons to what this means that we say, "Jesus is the only way" but we behave like we own the road and the payrolls.

When we get to heaven we will find that Jesus was way more gracious than we were.

SEVEN "YOU NEED BETTER BOUNDARIES"

I'm an introvert. And I love my own space. So I'm all about healthy boundaries. But Jesus seemed to be more about priorities. He never said, "No" to the crowds because he had boundaries to take care of. He said, "No" when he had a bigger "Yes". You see, Jesus prioritized his prayer life, his 12 disciples, his ministry to the broken. So when

he said "No" it was never based on self ambition (which is what I mostly use the word boundaries for), He was just saying "Yes" to the right things.


And let's not forget that he said to let people slap you twice. He said to go the extra mile for others. To give to those who ask. To forgive 70x70 times. Those are all classic "bad boundaries".

However, they are perfect invitations to prioritising God and others.

Please pray out loud: "Oh Lord Jesus help Carlos with this last one!"

Now, what do you think about this list? At least, we can all agree that it is best to focus on what Jesus actually said. Because there is so much love and goodness communicated in the words of Christ. So let's take time to read the gospels. To immerse ourselves in his miracles and challenges. Let's allow the Word himself to revolutionize who we are. Even if it contradicts our foundations, let Christians stick to what Christ said.

Peace.

There is no better news than that the God who makes the demand for perfection also meets the demand for perfection on our behalf. | 



■ Carlos Rodríguez is a pastor, a provocative preacher and author.

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."*

— Jesus (John 14:6) —

THE DOWNFALL OF DAVID



By Nathan Johnson

There has been an apprehension in studying chapter eleven of 2 Samuel. It is the well known story of David and Bathsheba. As I've been reading and studying the first ten chapters, I've been uplifted and encouraged by David's exemplary life. He is shown as a man without flaw. A perfect man. A man after God's own heart.

Sure, we realize that he wasn't perfect in that he had no sin or problems; but the author of First and Second Samuel writes as if to say: "here is a man in tune with God, a man whose life is above everyone else. Yes, a man of the highest character and honour."

In fact, there are countless symbolic parallels between David and Jesus throughout Scripture. Yet, here we find in 2 Samuel 11 the downfall of this man, a man after God's own heart. The symbolism between David and Jesus is now gone.

The life of heroic Christianity has crumbled. What remains is a life wrecked and plundered by sin.

How could David do such a thing when he was a man after God's

own heart – when his focus was completely on God? Some point to verse one as the answer: *"It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem."*

David is probably in his fifties at this point, the beloved king of Israel. But instead of going off to battle as was expected, he remained in Jerusalem. While his army was living in tents upon the hard earth with little food, he was feasting at the royal table and sleeping in his feather bed within the protection of his palace. Which presents an interesting contrast: David is living in luxury while his army lives in lack.

David sends his army to protect the country but ends up destroying it and its people from inside. The very inhabitants the army goes out to guard, protect, and keep safe are the same inhabitants the king ravages, destroys, and plunders. But the fact David stays in Jerusalem is only a symptom of the real problem.

Biblically there are three main ideas for the word "right," but let's look at just one. There is a correct, righteous, upright, sincere, honest, godly, just, pleasing, straightforward, proper way of things – it's the "right" way. We often say: "it was right in my own eyes," meaning it was correct, honest, pleasing and proper according to our view point. However, there are times, though it appears "right" in our own eyes, we

find out it was completely wrong. But God's way is ALWAYS right.

When you see circumstances and life through His eyes it ALWAYS is the correct, righteous, upright, sincere, honest, godly, just, pleasing, straightforward, and proper way – it is RIGHT. We find in 1 Kings 5.15 that “David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” There's the crux. David always lived in the “rightness” of God. He continually lived through the eyes of the LORD, never turning aside to his own way of thinking or what he thought was right in his own eyes. Except. A word we wished did not occur in this passage.

You see, there was this one time when David turned into himself and saw life through his own “rightness” – what he thought was

correct and proper ... he WAS the king, you know. He could do what he wanted, right? Yet the one time David turns into himself, sources his own thought process, his own rightness, his own thinking – he found himself completely wrong and in the throngs of sin, death, and hell. It was the matter concerning Uriah the Hittite ... and his wife, Bathsheba.

David turns within himself and his own rightness and we read what transpired in 2 Samuel 11 and its continuing results throughout the rest of the book – the downfall of a man, the death of another, the destruction of a nation, the demise of a baby, the disintegration of a royal family. All because one man turned within himself and sought to source his own actions.

What a picture of self-sourcing! I am here to tell you that you CAN live in continual victory and triumph – a man after God's own heart –

being sourced by God and living in His rightness. But the moment you think you can handle it, you think your way is better and “right,” that moment you turn within and begin to source your life, you find yourself, like David, in sin. Why? Because sin at the very basic level is nothing more than self sourcing. And the only way to ever have victory is to rely and depend solely upon Jesus. It is in the indwelling of His Spirit that He becomes our victory and triumph in every temptation, situation, and circumstance.

There is only one way that is truly correct, righteous, upright, sincere, honest, godly, just, pleasing, straightforward, and proper – and it is not yours. Would you turn to Jesus and allow Him to source your life, your thinking, your attitude, your victory, your everything? |A



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PROPAGANDA

AN AUTHENTIC MAN AND A HUMBLE BEAST

by Dave Firth

I first met ‘Prop’ (real name Jason Petty) about 8 years ago when we were both involved with Dare2Share Ministries in the USA. His zest for life was contagious and his onstage presence was captivating, but behind the ‘performer’ was a smooth, funny, confident Christ-follower that saw fame simply as an opportunity to share Christ with a broken world.

GOD IN WORK

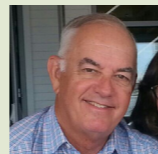
PROFESSIONAL VS SPIRITUAL

by Paul Curtas

It seems that either we are being told to become more professional in our job in order to be successful for God, or we're being told to become more spiritual in order to be a witness for God. I am convinced that as long as we keep each of these isolated in separate categories we cannot reach our full potential as God intended for us at our workplace. For God has placed great value both in our calling to do our work with excellence unto Him, and in our mission of declaring His glory through our

actions and words as we naturally intersect with coworker/people. Our calling to work and our mission at work are like two sides of same coin, and they work best in our lives when they work together.

Consider this: *“Keep your behavior excellent ... so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”* (1 Peter 2:12)



■ Paul Curtas is the Director of FCAP (www.fcacap.org)



Born in South Central Los Angeles, he grew up as the only black kid in a violent neighbourhood. He started rapping at 14. Now having travelled and performed all over the US and overseas ‘the phone keeps ringing’ so we caught up with Jason to see how he manages to keep his eyes on Jesus in the midst of an exciting and growing career with new opportunities and challenges seemingly around every corner

For a lot of people, hearing the word ‘Propaganda’ conjures up images of leaflets being distributed in North Korea - how did you get the name?

“My cousin gave me that name. It was because my first love is visual arts, then you add poetry, hiphop and evangelism... out pops ‘Prop!’”

Tell us about the period when ‘the phone started ringing’?

“I was teaching high school, and doing music on the side. Sort of a weekend warrior. And really just kinda waiting to see what the Lord wanted. I was content in what I was doing but I had that “what if” in the back of my head. I had released two records by then and was trying to book some performances. And then literally one day I got asked to come play a gig in downtown Los Angeles and, for real, I have

no idea what happened, but i was booked every weekend for the next 3 months.”

How would you describe your music?

“AMAZING! just kidding. Ummm, it’s hip-hop. With a tone of justice and hope sprinkled all throughout.”

For all of us middle aged Kiwi blokes, what’s the difference between rapping, hip-hop and spoken word?

“Hip hop is the overall cultural experience, it is made manifest through its art forms, which are break dancing, street art, Deejaying and of course rap. Rap is just the music that came out of the culture of hip hop. Spokenword, is poetry. As old as GK Chesterton!”

By my reckoning, ‘Crooked’ is your sixth album in fifteen years. How has the Christian music industry changed in that time and how have you seen your music change?

“Man, I’d say the biggest change in Christian industry is proving that rap does sell. When i started, there wasn’t even a rap category for CCM. They wouldn’t play it on any Christian radio stations unless it was a worship song that featured a rap verse. So I’ve just kinda learned to just kinda get along without the help of the industry. But with people like Lecrae. It just changed everything.”

Being a ‘Christian Artist’ must have its challenges when it comes to being authentic. What do you think are the hardest parts of being ‘known’?

“I think it’s the same challenges anyone else faces. We all wanna put a version of ourselves out that is carefully curated via our social media. I’m not exempt. I think the harder part for me is not ever feeling like I’m successful “enough” that when my friends get some wins, it’s one less win I will get.”

Which artists do you look up to and why?

“I admire creative boldness and longevity. So for me I look to super obscure artists and how they are able to carve a lane and a future despite the winds of change.”

Your look and style doesn’t really fit the stereotype of a ‘theologian’ but you seem to love the Bible and understand its importance in the life of a believer. Do you think it’s important for Christians to ditch the stereotypes that have been creeping in to the church over the last few decades?

“Absolutely! The only reason i don’t look like a theologian is because we have accepted that a theologian is a white dude with a long beard. Theology doesn’t have a look!”

You were trained as a teacher and taught high school for 6 years – how does your career compare now to what you thought you’d be doing with your life?

“For real, rap was so far off my radar as a career! I will say this, at



the end of the day, I wanted to shape culture. I feel like that has not changed even through the model has.”

You have a wife and two daughters. How has the responsibility of being a husband and a father changed you?

“It’s made me a better writer for sure, and also a better businessman! Like, I’m not just gonna go hang out and rap some songs because it’s cool! No! I got mouths to feed! If you want me to come ya gotta pay me what I’m worth (laughs)! I’m not charging for ministry, because ministry happens via every breath I breathe. I’m charging for my time away from my family.”

What do you think are the most important lessons you’ve learned about being a father and a husband?

“Most of our problems come from a deep selfishness. And I think we really complicate things. It’s pretty simple... just don’t be a jerk!”

As a dad, what are your biggest concerns for your kids growing up in a society that has sometimes been called ‘post-Christian’?

“When you’re the descendant of a slave, it’s hard to see your nation as ever being Christian. A Christian wouldn’t own people or commit genocides so for me, it’s business as usual. Imma carry the faith to my kids



the same way it was carried to me. Through Authentic living!"

What do you think Christian men struggle with the most? (Pride, Lust, Apathy, Materialism?)

"That's a hard one, because I think all of us are different. But I know for me most of those other things like pride and lust, at their core, come from a feeling of not knowing and understanding your value as a person, as a son of God. I think that ultimately it's learning to see myself the way the father sees me - that's the real struggle!"

Gun control is one of the issues that has been a big deal in the States recently. How hard is it staying Christ-centred in a world that seems so 'issue driven'?

"I think it's keeping the main thing the main thing. Just kind of understanding that you're a part of a bigger story and this is just a very short and small moment in time. I'd say do what God told Abraham to do which is be justice and righteousness in the world."

When men are asked, "How are you?", most say "busy". With the 'busyness' of your life and travel schedule, how do you find time to read and study God's Word?

"I try to use the plane as a sanctuary. Because I'm on so many flights I try to download podcasts and sermons and spin that for five hours on the flight."


So, it'd be great to get you out to New Zealand. Is it true that you were booked to come to the Parachute festival until they cancelled it?

"Yep, I was booked to come and then the festival got cancelled!" (We'll see what we can do...Festival One... cough, cough...!)

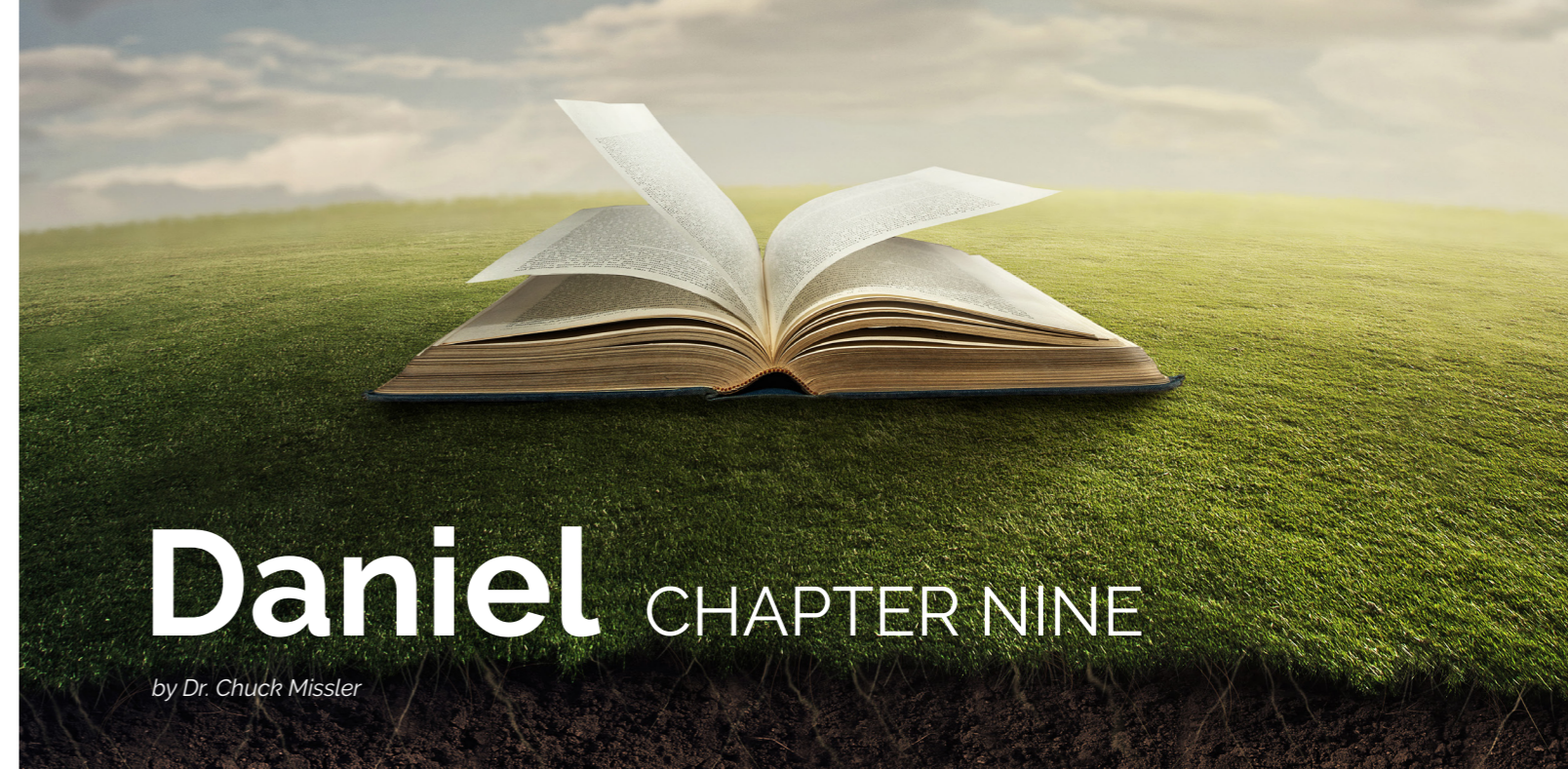
We featured Alert312 and the Streetlights Bible App in the first issue of Authentic magazine. Have you done any more stuff with those guys?

Yup! I'm on their new records.

Lastly, if you could sit down and read any Christian author or listen to any sermon, who would it be and why?

"St Augustine, for sure! Dude, he's a G!" | 

Propaganda is with Humble Beast records in Portland Oregon -for more info visit www.humblebeast.com



Daniel 9 is probably one of the most pivotal chapters in the entire Bible for understanding end-time prophecy. That may seem like an exaggeration, but after seeing what's packed into this chapter it will be easier to understand why that perspective is held by so many.

Daniel 9 is only one of twelve chapters, so we should start with some context. The first six chapters are historical. In those chapters we read that Daniel is deported from Israel after the Babylonian conquest. He encounters King Nebuchadnezzar, correctly interprets his dream, and is promoted as a result. Then we see Daniel's rivals trying to "undo" his three friends in the fiery furnace episode.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the world at that time, writes chapter four of Daniel in which he recounts his lesson from God about pride. That makes Nebuchadnezzar the only Gentile writer in the Old Testament. Next, the fall of Babylon to Darius leads us into the Persian Empire period.

After the first six chapters, we have six chapters that are a collection of Daniel's visions. They are, in a sense, appended at the end of the history. They're not in chronological order; the chapters appear as a group.

In the first chapter of that group, chapter seven, we have the times of the Gentiles. In chapter eight, the ram and the goat are described in a vision about the career of Alexander the Great as he defeats the Persians. That leads us into chapter nine and the seventy weeks.

It's interesting, chapters two through the end of seven are not written in Hebrew; they're in Aramaic. The author uses Aramaic because those chapters focus on the Gentile world. It's very unusual for the Bible to do that because Scripture usually sees everything, past and future, through the lens of Israel. This is a section that very unabashedly focuses on the Gentile world, and that's one reason it is so dear to us.

This is a very exciting book, but again, it's not in chronological order. The visions in Daniel seven and eight occur between the events in chapters four and five, and the interview with an archangel in chapter nine occurs between

the events of chapters five and six.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Before we get to chapter nine, it's important for us to get another perspective – a perspective coming directly from Jesus. Then we will look at the events leading up to Gabriel's words about the seventy weeks. All of this will help demonstrate what God did in order to deliver this amazing prophecy.

Matthew 24: Jesus' Perspective

In Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus gave a confidential briefing on His second coming to four special disciples. According to Mark, they were Peter, James, John, and Peter's brother Andrew. This talk was important enough that it was recorded in three gospels, and it had a direct connection with Daniel's prophecy.

Matthew's account offers more information than the others, most likely due to a skill he had and the others didn't. He was a customs of-

ficial, and it was a job requirement that he take shorthand. Most people are unaware that shorthand was a skill prevalent in those days.

Matthew wrote:

And as he [Jesus] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24:3)

So they ask Jesus three questions, and He then gives them a two-chapter answer. The next verse gives a flavor of His answer.

Verse four reads:

Jesus answered and said unto them *“Take heed that no man deceive you.”* (Matthew 24:4)

Underline that word deceive because He opens and closes this briefing to His disciples by warning them not to be deceived.

How do we protect ourselves from being deceived? There are all kinds of people spreading all kinds of viewpoints. But which are correct? We discern the truth by diligence, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Our ultimate refuge is always the whole counsel of God. Any particular perspective must be consistent with what we find in the Bible.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning

of sorrows. (Matthew 24:4–8)

Many, many people view these issues as signs heralding His coming, except He says these are not signs. These are non-signs. These things will all happen, “but the end is not yet.”

The word “sorrows” there is actually birth pains. Mothers know what that’s about. These events start slowly and increase in frequency and intensity. “But the end is not yet,” according to Jesus. Then He gives the key event in the whole scenario.

THE KEY EVENT

One caveat should be made here. Remember, Jesus is clearly talking to His Jewish disciples. He is not talking to those of us who are believers under the New Covenant. That’s an important distinction as we move forward.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: (Matthew 24:15)

As readers, we don’t want to miss our instruction here; “Whoso readeth, let him understand.” This passage will be a little technical, but it’s not intended for just pastors or specialists— it’s intended for everyone. As we move through this topic, know that God intends for each person to understand it.

This is a good place to put to rest a controversy that began in the nineteenth century. Some critics, even today, have maintained that the book of Daniel was written by several people. Well, according to this passage, we know who wrote the book of Daniel; it was Daniel.

We know this is true because that’s

what Jesus said was true.

With His clear statement, Jesus has saved every student of Scripture hours of tedious library research. And, that leads me to a familiar comment. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you know who wrote the book of Daniel. If you don’t believe in Jesus Christ, you’ve got bigger problems than the authorship of the book of Daniel!

Jesus identifies Daniel as a prophet, and He does something even more. He points to the very passage that we’re studying in Daniel 9 by referring to this abomination of desolation. That’s a technical phrase. We know a lot about it, though, because it happened specifically once before in history.

The abomination of desolation refers to an idol being placed in the Temple. An idol is always considered an abomination in the Bible, but the ultimate abomination — the abomination that makes desolate — is a pagan idol in the Holy of Holies. That happened in 167 BC, and it led to the Maccabean revolt. After three years, the Jews were able to rededicate the Temple from that outrage. Jews remember the event to this day with the celebration of Hanukkah.

There is another aspect to consider here. The abomination of desolation occurs in the Holy of Holies. Who gets to go into the Holy of Holies? Only the High Priest is allowed in, only once a year at Yom Kippur, and only after great ceremonial preparation. Jesus said, “When ye therefore shall see.” How can someone in Judea see this happen, and consequently know when to “flee into the mountains”? They would have to see it on cable news, of course.

In other words, this is a major political event that happens inside the Holy of Holies, inside the Temple.



That’s how we know there will be a temple standing; it has to be standing for this to happen. If it’s televised, there will be a worldwide audience.

It is the people in Judea who are to flee, not those in New York or Moscow, but those who are in Judea. Why?

We need to understand what’s going on here; the abomination of desolation is a major trigger-point in this prophecy. To make sense of this we have to go to the passage that Jesus is pointing them to in Daniel and understand the context.

THE FLIGHT FROM JUDEA

Jesus said:

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house. (Matthew 24:16–17)

Houses in Israel are typically on hillsides because it’s very hilly ter-

rain. The roof is the patio, sort of a fellowship place. That’s where they spend the cool of the evening, not in the backyard. They have to go downstairs to get to the bedrooms and all the rest of the house.

When Jesus tells them to “not come down,” He’s saying “Split — and do it now!”

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day. (Matthew 24:18–20)

Jesus also warns them about trying to grab supplies; even things like essential clothing would delay them and be a burden. It would be a handicap they couldn’t afford as they flee for their lives.

Notice that His last comment refers to Sabbath; He is not talking to Gentiles. Keep in mind that the focus is on Israel and the Jews, not

Gentiles. He is directing this to His disciples, who are Jewish, but it’s obviously yet future. Most people don’t fully recognize the “Jewishness” of Matthew 24.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Jesus goes on to say:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:21)

He is quoting from Daniel 12. We’ll look at that shortly, but Jesus Himself labels the last half of that seven year period as the great tribulation.

Then He makes another statement:

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. (Matthew 24:22)

That’s a technology statement; it’s an allusion to advanced weapons.

If someone read verse twenty-two during the 1800s, it wouldn't mean much. They couldn't imagine the world wiping itself out with muskets and bayonets, but today the nuclear cloud hangs over every geopolitical decision made on Earth. It is now possible to envision that "no flesh be saved."

CHAPTER 9: DANIEL, JEREMIAH, GABRIEL

With that context established, we are ready for Daniel 9. In this chapter of Daniel, we have what is known as the interrupted prayer. ^[1] Daniel is praying in the first nineteen verses of this chapter, but then the angel Gabriel appears and interrupts his prayer. Gabriel proceeds to give Daniel the most astonishing four verses in the entire Bible: 24, 25, 26, and 27.

The Interrupted Prayer

Most people jump right into those four verses, but this is too important to cut corners. So we will start with Daniel's prayer in verse one.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. (Daniel 9:1–2)

The first verse covers titles and royal successions. Some people believe that Darius was the uncle of Cyrus, but that's conjecture by the scholars. Other speculations are connected to the comment that he was made king, which implies he is a passive recipient of some kind. Setting aside these minor points, we want to look at the important part of this, which is in verse two.

ARE WE SUPPOSED TO PRAY FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST? WE KNOW THE SECOND COMING IS GOING TO HAPPEN; IT'S INEVITABLE. BUT THE LORD TAUGHT US TO PRAY, "THY KINGDOM COME" (MATTHEW 6:10).

This all starts because Daniel was reading his Bible, the book of Jeremiah. Please take note that Daniel took Jeremiah literally. When Jeremiah talks about seventy years in captivity, it wasn't allegorical. It wasn't about an approximate number of years, either. Daniel assumes it's precise, and he knows that the seventy years are about over.

If a believer today were reading in the Bible and somehow discovered that the Lord was coming back to the Earth three weeks from now, what would he or she do? Would they put their feet up on a desk; would they say, "Good, the sooner the better"?

That's not what Daniel would do; he would pray. He's an example to us all. He knew seventy years was prophesied in Jeremiah 25:11, and he knew about sixty-seven years had gone by. So he knew the seventy years were about over, and he's getting excited. As we go through this chapter, notice carefully what he did.

The book of Jeremiah makes reference to seventy years in two places:

And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the

Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. (Jeremiah 25:11–12)

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10)

This was written in Jerusalem. So twice in the book of Jeremiah we have this promise that Daniel could cling to, that the captivity was about over. What does Daniel do? Let's take a lesson here. He says:

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. (Daniel 9:3)

Are we supposed to pray for the second coming of Christ? We know the Second Coming is going to happen; it's inevitable. But the Lord taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). Prayer is God's way of enlisting us in what He's doing. Carefully consider what that should mean in your life.

Daniel also sought God by fasting. Is it appropriate for New Testament Christians to fast? Some might say that fasting was only for the Old Testament times, but we repeatedly find allusions to New Testament Christians fasting:

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. (Matthew 9:14–15)

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called

them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:2–3)

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. (1 Corinthians 7:4–5)

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; (2 Corinthians 6:4–5)

Don't casually decide to start fasting; it's best to have some instruction first. It is an appropriate activity for believers today — just do some homework in that area before starting.

Returning to Daniel:

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. (Daniel 9:4–6)

Notice he says, "We have sinned." That's a strange thing for Daniel to say. He and Joseph are two people in the Old Testament about whom no evil is spoken (besides Christ). It

DON'T CASUALLY DECIDE TO START FASTING; IT'S BEST TO HAVE SOME INSTRUCTION FIRST.

doesn't mean they're sinless, but Daniel is praying earnestly not on his personal behalf alone, but for his people as well.

He continues in verse seven:

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. (Daniel 9:7–11)

He's saying their national destiny is determined by their behavior. Were there some saved among them? Of course, but that doesn't alter their national destiny, which is a function of their national behavior.^[2]

And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done

upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. And now,

O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. (Daniel 9:12–16)

All this has been an acknowledgment of sin. The focus is Jerusalem and the people of God. But notice what starts to happen as his prayer continues; it's fascinating. Even in the English, the frequency of those verbs starts picking up. We can almost feel the intensity, the emotion, the trembling of Daniel.

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and

thy people are called by thy name.
(Daniel 9:17–19)

Gabriel's Visit

Now we get to the interruption. We're going to have a few comments by a mighty angel of God and then, of course, the incredible gift that Gabriel gives Daniel.

And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. (Daniel 9:20–21)

Notice that he shifted gears from the prayer to narrating what happened. It's interesting to see Daniel describe this. Obviously, Gabriel is one of the archangels. We only know of three that are named: Gabriel, Michael, and one named Lucifer who got into a big bunch of trouble because of his pride.

Michael is always a warrior, fighting on behalf of God's people. Gabriel is always announcing something having to do with the Messiah.

The word translated man here, and applied to Gabriel, is the Hebrew word, ish. Ish can mean man or servant, so this can be read as "the servant Gabriel," although he may have appeared as a man.

There is something very subtle here. Gabriel touched Daniel on the shoulder "at the time of the evening oblation." Daniel makes that reference even though the Temple is about four hundred miles to the west and in rubble. There

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE
GOD'S FRIEND? TO HIS FRIEND,
GOD WOULD REVEAL WHAT HE
WAS GOING TO DO.

is no temple; there is no evening oblation. It's an anachronism that's out of date by virtually seventy years, but not for Daniel.

Daniel is using a phrase here that is very revealing of his heart, and how he is thinking. As far as he's concerned, it was God's appointed time and they would be offering a sacrifice, an oblation, if they had a temple. That's when Gabriel came to him.

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. (Daniel 9:22–23)

Daniel must have been thrilled. He's told that he is "greatly beloved" of God. Recall that God spoke to Moses face-to-face "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). And what did Jesus say to the disciples in the upper room:

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. (John 15:15)

What does it mean to be God's friend? To His friend, God would reveal what He was going to do. He called Moses a friend and told him what was going to happen to

the surrounding nations (Exodus 34). Jesus called the disciples His friends and told them about His second coming.

Is there anyone closer than a friend? Moses is known as a friend of God in the Old Testament, but who is beloved in the Old Testament? Daniel is beloved by God. Who is beloved in the New Testament? John is often referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in the Gospel of John. How interesting to see what comes from that kind of rapport with God. Daniel, because he's beloved, is entrusted with apocalyptic insights. In the New Testament, John is beloved, and he is granted the privilege of delivering the apocalyptic book of Revelation.

There is a consistency between the Old and the New Testament concerning relationship. A friend of God will be let in on what's coming. The beloved of God really has the inside track. |A

This excerpt is from Dr. Chuck Missler's book Daniel's 70 Weeks. This and the full Daniel Commentary is available from the K-House Store.

1. There are three important primary prayers in the historical books of the Old Testament: Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9. There happens to be a 9 in all three references. That's not of any significance; I think it's just a way to help remember it.
2. I believe we can apply 2 Chronicles 7:14 to America's predicament, although it's a different one altogether. It reads, "If my people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."



■ Chuck Missler was an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He was also the founder of the Koinonia Institute. Chuck Missler sadly passed away in May 2018.

THE BULGING LEFT BICEP

A four part series by Eric Ludy



PART TWO

Mr. Taylor, Where Are You Now?

For those of you that are a bit incredulous about the phenomenon known as "the bowman's bulging left bicep" and consider it either pure fiction, dangerous hyperbole, or something only witnessed by generations long ago—let's consider for a moment the life of Hudson Taylor.

For that matter, let's consider C.T. Studd. Or how about Amy Carmichael, William Booth, and Rees Howells? And while we are doing all this considering maybe we should also throw in some consideration of Charles Spurgeon, John "Praying" Hyde, Leonard Ravenhill, Richard Wurmbrand, and George Müller. And, while we are in such a great "considering groove," it would seem a waste of a wonderful opportunity, to not also sprinkle in some consideration of Major Ian Thomas, George Whitefield, Oswald Chambers, Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, Gladys Aylward, Edward Payson, William Carey, D.L. Moody, David Brainerd, John G. Paton, David Livingstone, E.M. Bounds, Evan Roberts, Paris

Reidhead, John Wesley, Eric Liddell, John and Betty Stam, R.A. Torrey, Robert Murray McCheyne, Corrie and Betsy ten Boom, Jonathan Gorforth, Brother Andrew, and Andrew Murray.

In just these last two hundred years, left biceps have bulged and the Longbow has been pulled before an awestruck multitude. The past two centuries have boasted the magnificence of God in and through the humble lives of obedient men and women of the faith. Each of these men and women, just mentioned, were athletes of a heavenly order—so utterly spectacular that the athletes of the Olympiad are unworthy to even un-

tie their Nikes. In other words, this "majesty" wasn't just in millennia gone by, but it's been in the very recent annals of Christian history. Close enough in history's timeline, in fact, for us to know that God is still in the business of making biceps bulge.

So, now that we've diffused all of that latent incredulity, let's get down to the business of seeing this majesty return. To do this, we first need to take a step back to get an aerial view of how the return of this majesty is actually accomplished in the life of the Church.

These Christian heroes of the faith just mentioned all had one key thing in common. They all

understood their own inherent weakness. I realize that sounds like a rather strange key to strength. Weakness? Am I serious? Very serious!

If we want the stuff of old—that triumphant vigour of the faith that once fearlessly effervesced in the hearts and minds of the twice-born—then we need to get back to the basics.

The most basic of basic facts in the Kingdom of Heaven is, “We can’t, only He can!” To help you understand this most basic fact, think of God as the Almighty Archer and yourself as the Longbow. Can a Longbow draw itself? Of course, not. But that doesn’t keep us, as human Longbows, from trying.

We are quite comedic creatures, really. When we first catch the vision of the impossible pull of the Longbow, there is a molten stirring of desire that awakens within us as Christians. We crave the real authentic version of the faith and we are tired of the stuffy fluffy version of religious devotion to Christ currently surrounding us like a gelatinous curtain. But, we often go about attempting to fulfill our high calling the wrong way. By nature, we are self-doers. And this proves a significant problem to us all. Self-doing will never bring the thunder of Heaven back to the stage of time.

Many of us, when we hear the overtures of the return of majesty, grit our teeth, dig down deep inside ourselves, and sprint to pick up our Longbow. We grab a hold of it, purse our lips, growl, and yank at that bowstring with all our might. This is self-doing. And it’s akin to a little two-year old child running up to Lars the Gentle Giant’s ten foot tall Longbow and attempting to pull the bowstring and actually shoot an arrow. It simply doesn’t

work. The child, though well meaning, is not physiologically able to pull off such a feat. The Longbow is huge and the little child is . . . ahem . . . not. This may offend some of you that have been raised on the motto, “You can do it!” But please hear me out. I’m not saying it can’t be done. I’m just saying that we, in all our self-doing gusto, are not the ones that make it happen.

We can scour our personal warehouse of strength, talents, abilities, knowledge, wisdom, and resolve. We can get on our fork lift and search the highest shelves in our own personal storehouse of vigour. We can run down the stairs into the deepest cellar of our own grit and determination, but we will not find the supernatural stuff requisite to pull off the job.

After all, the job is termed “impossible” for good reason. You see, the secret to the bulging left bicep and the return of majesty to the Church of Jesus Christ is not found in our own warehouse of ability. It’s found in His.

When all you know is self-doing, it’s a strange thing to switch to another form of “doing.” But switch you must. Let’s call it God-doing. The Bible refers to the concept of God-doing as Grace. And this is what the Scriptures tell us is the one and only thing that can pull the bowstring of our lives. This Grace is what saves us. This Grace is what does the work that we ourselves cannot do in our own self-roused strength. This Grace is the Hand of the Almighty Archer reaching into our lives and doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. It was this Grace that crushed the head of the ancient Serpent and has set us free from the power of sin’s penalty and control.

God knew that the human life could only be mastered and prop-

erly pulled by His Almighty Hand. So, in the Garden of Eden when we partook of that forbidden fruit and subsequently departed from the Almighty Archer, suddenly our lives could no longer wield the arrows of love, faith, and obedience they were created to send forth. They could no longer hit the intended target, for no hand on this earth was strong enough to pull back such a bowstring. And the Great Bowyer (The One who constructs the Longbows) wove a simple principle into His design of the Longbow. That is: the Longbow is simply incapable of pulling itself. Such is the limitation of its design. Self-doing won’t cut it. Only God-doing will work.

God, being the only means by which a Longbow can be pulled, humbled Himself and became a Longbow. Such is the great and bewildering mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ—God in the skin of a man. God become the chosen war weapon of Heaven. And, to the amazement of all the onlooking heavens, Jesus Christ, though God, yielded Himself unto His Father, the Master Bowman, and for the first time since Adam’s failure in the Garden, the Longbow was pulled. This is God-doing. And this is what saves us. And this is also what enables us.

And in this amazing picture of God-doing, the great secret of the Christian life was revealed. For the Christian man or woman is a unique sort of athlete. We, as believers, are not the work of our own efforts, determination, discipline, and study.

We are a result of Another’s work, Another’s fitness, Another’s endurance, Another’s power, Another’s knowledge of the game, and Another’s training regiment.

The principle of earthly athleticism

is “practice makes perfect”—while the principle of heavenly athleticism is “His work makes us perfect.” And it’s this Work, this Grace of Jesus that makes for athletic Saints—men and women able to pull the bowstring and do with their lives that which would otherwise be impossible.

For years of my life I esteemed the fact that Jesus drew the Longbow and shot through the Devil at the Cross. I believed this fact, but this fact didn’t truly alter me.

For when I went to live out my Christianity, I was no stronger than the God-forsaking man next door. I meant well, but I couldn’t do well.

Hudson Taylor, the famed Christian missionary to inland China, and the namesake for my firstborn son, struggled with the same perplexing dilemma. He esteemed Christ’s pull of the Longbow and went into all the world to tell about it, but struggled to know how his own life was to prove a similar athletic pattern of His beloved Forerunner.

Hudson Taylor’s story of transformation has had a great impact upon my own personal life. For Hudson Taylor ached for an answer to this weighty question—“Can my life demonstrate God’s Life?” He prayed. He fasted. He cried out to God for an answer. And, in the end, he found something golden. The golden Truth had been there all along and was embarrassingly obvious once he finally grasped it in his spiritual grip. It was an idea. An idea of Christ being his Life—His all in all. And it was this heavenly idea that shaped him into a man that altered the history of nations.

And, so, in seeing Hudson’s discovery, I too, as a young man, set out to find this secret of strength

and authentic Christian action in the Person of Christ. And my life has never been the same. The epic vision was awakened in me—the craving for the return of majesty began to stir within.

When Hudson Taylor was discovering this grand Truth, he was already a missionary. His life was already devoted to the service of his King. However, a new pair of glasses seemed to supernaturally set itself upon the bridge of his nose. And suddenly he could see. He exclaimed, “It was resting in Jesus now, and letting Him do the work—which makes all the difference.” How simple a discovery it was. And yet, how profound. Like a Longbow finally recognizing that it can’t pull itself, but if it yields to the Hand of the Archer, the bow can and will be pulled.

In the classic Christian biography of Taylor’s life, Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret, it mentions the dramatic impact this transformation had upon his life:

“WHENEVER HE (HUDSON TAYLOR) SPOKE IN MEETINGS AFTER THAT, A NEW POWER SEEMED TO FLOW FROM HIM, AND IN THE PRACTICAL THINGS OF LIFE A NEW PEACE POSSESSED HIM. TROUBLES DID NOT WORRY HIM AS BEFORE. HE CAST EVERYTHING ON GOD IN A NEW WAY, AND GAVE MORE TIME TO PRAYER.”


Taylor referred to this profound occurrence in his life as “The Exchanged Life.” He realized that he needed to give up his own life, lay it down, surrender it—and receive the Life of God in its place. And so he did just that. He gave his life to

Jesus Christ—lock, stock, and barrel. And then he unlocked the door of his life, body, mind, will, emotions, future, hopes and dreams and invited the Holy Spirit of God to come inside.

What Hudson Taylor did was what all of us must do. And this is how the bulging left bicep will return to the Church of Jesus Christ. Remember the most basic of principles in the Christian life? We can’t, only He can!

What Hudson Taylor found is not special or unique to him. It’s the common treasure of the people of faith. In fact, it’s the gift that every one of us MUST receive and exercise in our daily lives. The supernatural demonstration of heavenly strength that Hudson Taylor modelled in and through his life, marriage, and ministry was not something meant only for his life. It’s intended to be enjoyed by each and every one of us.

This means that the very same vigour that Hudson Taylor demonstrated can and must once again usher forth in this earth. Likewise, the courage of C.T. Studd, the fearlessness of William Booth, and the faith of George Müller are all available to those who simply believe. It’s bewildering, but the love of Betsy ten Boom, the fortitude of Gladys Aylward, and the bravery of Esther Ahn Kim are there for the taking. And God longs for these heavenly attributes to return to this earth full force and undiluted. He’s simply needing a Body to deposit these extraordinary attributes into. And that Body is us, His Church.

Just think . . . He wants to be our Life! | 



The Life of Christ

by Chuck Missler

As we consider instances of fulfilled prophecy, there is no more crucial example than the prophecies of the life of Jesus Christ.

A central theme of the entire Biblical panorama is the actual presentation of the Coming One, the central person of all history whom the Hebrews call the Messiah: "The volume of the book is written of me" (Psalm 40:7, also quoted in Hebrews 10:7); "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

His story is a love story written in blood on a wooden cross that was erected in Judea about two thousand years ago. His crucifixion wasn't a tragedy; it was an achievement!

Announced in advance in the Garden of Eden at the dawn of history, He made His human debut in a manger in Bethlehem, paid a cosmic price on our behalf at the Cross, and now appears ready to finalize His climax of all human history on our near horizon.

In the Biblical record, every detail, every place name, and every number has been skillfully tailored by deliberate design. And they all point to Him. He is on every page, intricately hidden in every detail of the text. Deciphering these "codes" is our ultimate challenge.

JESUS: THE ULTIMATE PROPHECY FULFILLED

Jesus confounded the religious leaders of His day when they couldn't break the code of the Old Testament text:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They said unto him, The Son of David. He said unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? [Jesus is quoting Psalm

110:1.] If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

Matthew 22:41-46

They couldn't break the code. They couldn't understand that He, Jesus Christ, was the embodiment of prophecies from the Old Testament. It is essential for each of us to make sure we don't fall into the same quandary by failing to see Christ for who He was prophesied to be.

It is interesting that Jesus chose to open His ministry at the synagogue of Nazareth by reading from the prophet Isaiah:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Luke 4:16-22

Furthermore, it is interesting to

JESUS CHRIST, WAS THE EMBODIMENT OF PROPHECIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT. IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR EACH OF US TO MAKE SURE WE DON'T FALL INTO THE SAME QUANDARY BY FAILING TO SEE CHRIST FOR WHO HE WAS PROPHESED TO BE.

compare His reading with the complete passage in Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God.

Isaiah 61:1-2

It is significant that Jesus stopped at what is a comma in our text. He deliberately omitted the additional phrase, "and the day of vengeance of our God." Because of details like this, I continue to embrace a very literal view of the Biblical text and have learned to respect its precision. Jesus intentionally limited His reading to the mission of His first coming: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."


The "day of vengeance" has been deferred until His Second Coming. The "pause" of that comma in Isaiah 61 has lasted almost two thousand years, and it appears that it is about to be concluded. But by quoting the Old Testament, a prophecy all of His listeners were familiar with, He wanted to state clearly He was The Messiah, the

long-awaited One. And again, at one of His first appearances after His resurrection, on that Sunday afternoon walk to Emmaus, Jesus spoke of Himself in the context of Old Testament history: "...beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:12-27).

Jesus led them in a Bible study entirely from the Old Testament, highlighting the very things that had so shaken them during the previous few days. He reinforced His Father's sovereignty by speaking of a plan that had been unfolding for centuries, a plan that involved the salvation of mankind.

Some deny that He claimed to be God. But anyone who is unaware of His claims hasn't read the Bible. His claim to be God was the very reason that they crucified Him.

The issue is, were His claims valid? Our individual destinies will hinge on that issue.

What Bible study, repeatedly recorded in the Book of Acts, was given by seven different people on twelve different occasions, and always proved extremely fruitful, yet is rarely given today? The answer: presenting Jesus Christ entirely from the Old Testament. It was the only "Scriptures" they had then; the "New Testament" was still in the process of being compiled. Could you do that? Could you present, to your Jewish friends, Jesus as the Messiah—entirely from the Old Testament? It's not hard if you are prepared. | 

■ Chuck Missler was an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He was also the founder of the Koinonia Institute. Chuck Missler sadly passed away in May 2018.



What comes out of you when you're squeezed?

By Nathan Johnson

A couple days ago I was grabbing a cotton bud after my shower when suddenly the container flipped over and dumped 100 of the white fur balls on sticks into my wet sink. What did I do? I laughed.

The next morning as I headed into town, a lady quickly pulled in front of me. Driving 55 mph and with no cars behind me, I was a little frustrated that she decided to jump in the little space between me and the next car. Why couldn't she have waited ten more seconds? I let out a frustrated breath as I slammed on my breaks.

When the pressures of life press against us, how do we respond?

When you grab a tube of toothpaste and squeeze it, what comes out?

Toothpaste!
Why?
Because that's what is in the tube. Exactly.

Whatever is inside is what comes out when it's squeezed.

There is an old story of a professor who asked a student to come to the front and hold a glass of water.

The professor took his hand and put it on the student's arm and began to shake, causing the water to spill everywhere. He asked the student, "Why did water spill out of the cup?"

The student answered, "Because you shook my arm."
"No," the professor replied, "listen to the question. Why did water spill out of the cup?"
"Ah, because water was in the cup."


It wasn't the shaking that caused the water to spill out of the cup, okay it was, but why water? Had it been coffee then water would not have spilled forth.

What would happen if every time you were squeezed or shaken Jesus came out? When you stub your toe, rather than a sling of curse words, the nature of Jesus is evident. When a lady pulls in front of you when she should have waited, rather than frustration or a

finger, patience, love, and sincere prayer spills forth. When you look in your bank account and discover a lack of funds, you cry out with CT Studd: "Funds are low again, hallelujah! That means God trusts us and is willing to leave His reputation in our hands."

The issue is not will I be squeezed. You will be. The issue is, what is coming out of me when I am squeezed?

When your child does something wrong for the umpteenth time, do they see anger and frustration or Jesus? When the boss at work yells at you, do you respond in like fashion or give the boss Jesus?

If you are a tube of toothpaste, under the pressures and circumstances of life, what is being squeezed out of you? My prayer for you and me, is that it is Jesus ever, Jesus only, Jesus always. 



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A NEW PRINCIPLE

By Major W. Ian Thomas

We have begun to see how victorious Christian living is not a method or technique to be worked out in our strength – it is an entirely different and revolutionary principle of life. It is the principle of the exchanged life. When the Spirit circumcises our heart by cutting off our old flesh-life, we can say with Paul – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

I would like to explore with you the true spiritual content of the Gospel – the good news! It is not just heaven one day, but Christ right now! “The glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you.” (Col. 1: 27) It is the reality of Christ communicating His divine life and nature through our mortal body based on our dependent faith.

Unfortunately, there are many who refuse to give up their old way of living by self-will. They also prefer to rely on the strength of their flesh. Many Christians are like Martha. (Luke 10: 41-42) They are dedicated Christians but they are still serving the Lord through their own human efforts. Like Martha,

because they are still working in their own strength and will, they remain worried and upset about many things. And of course, this kind of service drains them of spiritual energy.

This may of course be a picture of you. Do not be shocked when I say that it is the picture of a carnal Christian. Yes, I am talking about Sunday school teachers, Sunday school superintendents, and pastors in the pulpit. I am talking about many ordinary, average, earnest Christians. They are not hypocrites. But they are tired – desperately tired! Furthermore, their old carnal nature is always rising up to overshadow the light and beauty

of Christ's life. But when you meet them, they will smile sweetly and mean it.

Story after story could be told of men and women who bravely, doggedly, out of a sense of duty and devotion, go on and on in their work for the Lord. But yet, deep down in their hearts, they are frustrated and spiritually worn out. These believers have not yet entered the Sabbath-rest of God where everyone rests from their own human effort. Like Martha, they still lack “the one thing needful.” (Luke 10: 42) They do not yet know about the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit that is able to raise their spiritual life up into

the heavenly realms with Christ's spiritual blessings. (Eph.1: 3, 17-20) And so they still find themselves with an up and down spiritual life and constantly drained of spiritual energy. They still need to enter into a participation with Christ in His divine nature. (2 Pet. 1: 3-4) We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all His energy which so powerfully works in me. (Col. 1: 28-29 Emphasis added)

The problem in Christianity today is that no one is telling God's people to turn from the worldly way of human effort – the old flesh-life. You must seek out the supernatural life of Jesus Christ. It is only His activity and His work clothing you and being displayed through you that will ultimately find the approval of God. You are not to be the original actor. Only what you permit Him to do in and through you by His divine power and in His nature will merit His approval. Before Christians will truly enter into this kind of life, where they walk wholly by faith within God's Sabbath-rest, they must first recognize their own spiritual bankruptcy. But this is a hard lesson to accept when people have grown up under the influence of



the "spirit of the world." (1 Cor. 2: 12) Only after their self-sufficient spirit has been completely broken will they truly begin to wholeheartedly seek out the spiritual wealth that comes from the life of Jesus Christ, through faith.

Can we begin to see why we should be praising God when He brings us to the end of our self-life. While the soul will experience some suffering, it is a time of rejoicing. Only when we have given up all human effort and have truly begun to trust God to direct and empower our every step are we in a condition for God to use His power to take us into His Sabbath-rest. There remains then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for everyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work...Let us, therefore, make every effort {by coming out from the carnal ways of the world} to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Heb. 4: 9-11)

Remember the path our Lord has shown to us. We are to follow Him through the cross and into His resurrection life – "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down

at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 2)

The cross will bring about a death to self-will and human effort. This is why the people of the world will scorn anyone who takes this course. Are you willing to die to the ways of human wisdom in order to be raised up by God's power into the divine life of Jesus Christ?

We must give up the self-life in order to receive the Christ-life. It will be necessary to choose one or the other because we cannot serve both the flesh and the Spirit. "No one can serve two masters." (Matt. 6: 24) Only those who are willing to live wholly under the control and power of Christ's Spirit have the promise of an inner manifestation of His divine life. (John 14: 19-21; 2 Cor. 3: 17-18) For if you live according to the flesh you will die {have a dying spiritual life}; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these {and not everyone who says "Lord, Lord"} are sons of God. (Rom. 8: 13-14) |  

You can learn more about the ministry of Torchbearers, that Major Thomas founded, at www.torchbearers.org

"Christ died for us so that He, risen and alive, might now come and dwell within us, so that we might no longer be egocentric, self-oriented, living only for our own interests: "He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again"

— W. Ian Thomas —



Who would choose **authority?**

by Jeremy Suisted

Dr David Lim was the kind of doctor you have nightmares about.

Working out of a clinic in Hastings, Dr Lim would have patients come in with minor ailments. On five separate occasions, Dr Lim gave the patients the sedative Midazolam – a drug that causes sleepiness and a lack of ability to remember what is happening.

He then led the patients to a dark room or toilet cubicle, and sexually assaulted them.

In May 2017, Dr Lim was sentenced for five years prison. Those who followed the story shuddered as they imagined it – and were relieved that justice was done.

But what happened when they got sick?

I imagine most New Zealanders – like myself – booked themselves in with the doctor, and went off to their appointment without a care in the world. We recognised that Dr David Lim's actions were a perversion of a good role, that is essential for society.

We didn't abandon medicine, or the idea of medical authority. Instead we recognised that expertise in this domain was essential – and we need doctors to keep us well.

Recently, I wrote how the modern world promises freedom from throwing off any boundaries or authority-claims on our life. Religion, tradition, mystery and history are seen to be limitations on our life – and by seeking freedom and making our own meaning, we can become all that we are destined to be.

Instead, as theologian Craig Gay and countless other sociologists argue, we are delivered with a world fraught with anxiety and paralysis at the gargantuan task of creating our own meaning. True freedom, I briefly argued, is found when we live our lives within the parameters of their design – under the limitations and freeing-authority they were created for.

The logical question is then – "Well, whose authority do we dwell under?"

The Sunday school answer – "God's" – is on the money. And yet, it can be easy to say this, but a little more difficult to perceive. What does it mean to live under the authority of God? How do we do this? How does this not just become a saying we spout, while we go on living as if God does not exist?

So how do we live under the authority of God?

One of the answers the Bible – and church history – suggests is an unpopular one. We live under the authority of God, by living under the authority of our church leaders.

Rebelling Cells

Even as I write that, I feel every cell of my body rebelling. It feels old-fashioned, small-minded and dangerous to be suggesting that perhaps we are designed to live under the authority of others. Isn't that what the Reformation raged against?

According to American sociologist and historian Talcott Parsons – yes, that is what they reacted against – but perhaps they pushed the freedom beyond its logical limit. He writes,

"The individual is responsible not only for managing his own relation to God though faith within the ascribed framework of an established church...but for choosing that framework itself, for deciding as a mature individual what to believe, and with whom to associate himself in the organisational expression and reinforcement of his commitments... he is endowed with full responsible autonomy."

Parsons and others argue that the Reformation reacted against the

dangerous abuses of power in the church – by setting in motion a course that throws out any power in church. By focusing on the primacy of the individual, a track was set that would firmly rebel against any sense of authority that would limit our individual choice.

Now – to be clear – some of this is justified. There have been incredible evils committed by powerful people in the church – both Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox. Wicked leaders have used their position to enable all kinds of abuses – and the church has often played a poor role in exposing and condemning these people.

But, part of this reaction against any authority is unjustified. It is part of a faulty belief system that ultimate spiritual authority rests in me. I can choose what I believe, I can adapt my theology to suit my needs, and can argue why my beliefs work for me – without ever considering that I might be wrong.

We can see this across the church spectrum – in discussions about worship, morality, theology, preaching, ministry – wherever there are people, there is often this strong individual belief that I can choose the right way.

For example – when facing big life decisions, most Christians tend towards two different approaches.

The first option is to pray and seek God’s will towards the matter. They may fast, and search the Scriptures for a word, or sense God’s Spirit speaking to their spirit.

The second approach is to use their God-given common sense, to weigh up the options and move forward.

Neither approach is bad – but both are strongly individual.

Imagine if instead – when you were considering a new career path, a marriage partner, a large investment – any of the substantial moments of your life – you brought it to church leadership for their advice and input?

Perhaps some of us already do this – but I imagine for many this is due to a friendship they have with the leader. What if instead this was a perception we had of church leadership – and a perception they had of their own role – as providing leadership over their community’s lives?

Father Joe

This past Christmas my sister gifted me a book called Father Joe: The Man Who Saved My Soul. This fantastic biography is told by Tony Hendra, perhaps best known for his role as Spinal Tap’s band manager in their self-titled documentary.

As a young boy, Tony Hendra had made-out with a married woman. Her husband, furious, took him to see a Catholic priest, Father Joe. Tony writes of how fearful he was – awaiting the beating and judgement that Father Joe would surely provide.

Instead, Tony met a man who would play a pivotal role in his life. Father Joe would tell him when he was wrong, rebuke him, encourage him, love him – and in all he did – lead him in a way that was profoundly spirit-led. It was a loving relationship – yet it was an unequal one. Father Joe was the leader, Father Joe was in control. Tony could always choose how to respond – and many times he ran away from Father Joe’s leadership. Yet it was always there.

Perhaps one of the biggest reasons my body repulses under this idea of putting myself under

the authority of others is because of sin. The central lie at the heart of the cosmos is “You are in control. You don’t need God.” This was whispered by Satan in the first pages of Genesis, and is now shouted from the rooftops of business and entertainment.

And it’s a tempting lie. I want to believe I don’t need the authority of others. I want to believe that I’m quite good figuring out this Christian life by myself, thank you very much.

But when I look at the early church, the apostles, the church fathers – almost all of them had people who they were under – and people under them. This authority and leadership was a natural part of the church.

Were there disagreements? Sure. Was it difficult? Of course. But this was assumed as the natural order of things. Paul writes at the heart of his letter to the church at Ephesus – “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Let your lives be under the authority of others – the wise, loving, spirit-led authority of healthy leadership.

This is not a call to mindless following of authority. But this is a suggestion that perhaps we’ve allowed individualism to creep into places it had no place being.

I encourage you to imagine – what could this look like in the church of 2018? Living within a culture of hyper-individualism – how could followers of Jesus practice this type of living? What could be done to stop this becoming abused – and how have you seen glimpses of healthy living under authority in your life? **IA**



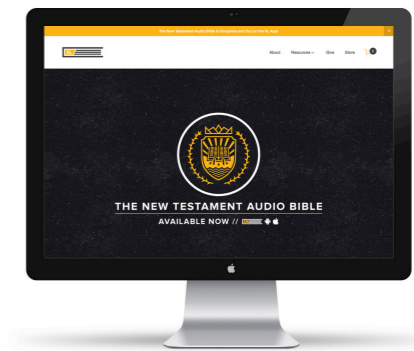
■ Jeremy has a fascination with exploring the intersection between faith and life, and loves sharing his thoughts and observations with others who are interested in looking deeper and closer. www.jeremysuisted.com

RECOMMENDED SURFING SPOTS



Bible Gateway - www.biblegateway.com

Read, hear, and study Scripture at the world’s most-visited Christian website. Grow your faith with devotionals, Bible reading plans, and mobile apps. Bible Gateway is a searchable online Bible in more than 200 versions and 70 languages that you can freely read, research, and reference anywhere. With a library of audio Bibles, a mobile app, devotionals, email newsletters, and other free resources, Bible Gateway equips you not only to read the Bible, but to understand it.



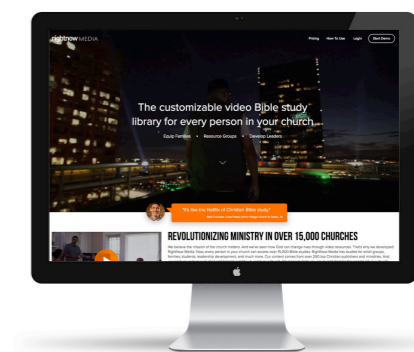
Street Lights Bible - www.streetlightsbible.com

These guys (featured in Authentic issue #1) use audio, video and curriculum tools to communicate the transforming Word of God. With these tools, they help young people (and old) to engage and teach the Scriptures in a relevant format. Their multimedia products are used by leaders and students who have a desire to learn and teach the Scriptures through a creative and dynamic means. Now the whole of the New Testament is available via the Streetlights Bible App!



Koinonia House - www.khouse.org

A collection of great bible teaching resources from Chuck and Nancy Missler. Koinonia House creates, develops, and distributes materials to stimulate, encourage, and facilitate serious study of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God.



Right Now Media - www.rightnowmedia.org

An amazing resource with over 15,000 video studies for small groups, families, students, leadership development, and loads more. Their content comes from over 250 top Christian publishers and ministries. They produce exclusive studies and training to help you equip and disciple the people of your church.

Neanderthals?

by John Mackay



**Did these species exist and when?
What is the scientific and historical evidence?**

Neanderthal? The word means the valley of Mr Neander, but who was Mr Neander? – Answer Joachim Neander who lived in Germany (1650-1680) and used to visit a little valley just outside of Dusseldorf in order to write his poetry and hymns. He meditated in a cave by a river, and the river came to be named for him as the Neander River, and the valley of that river was called Neander Dale or Neander Thal in old German. His most famous hymn is still in many Christian songbooks ‘Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of Creation’.

By strange coincidence Neander’s original surname was Neumann (New man), and as did many Lutheran scholars at the time, he adopted a Greek surname with the same meaning as his German name. Ne means “new” and Ander means “man” as in “andrology” which is the medical study of the male body. A somewhat appropriate label, considering what would be found in the caves of his valley some two centuries later when in August 1856 the remains were found that have come to be called Neanderthal Man, some three years before Charles Darwin’s Origin of Species was published.

The mid 1800s was a time Charles Lyell’s anti-Biblical push was dominating science, Darwin was on the ascendancy and liberals and unbelievers were poking fun at literal Biblical Creation. Neanderthal man was soon grabbed as evidence of a half-ape, half-man creature, in spite of the fact that Professor Virchow, Germany’s expert on anatomy and founder of the science of ‘pathology’, made the claim the skull was some kind of deformed human being, possibly suffering from rickets and arthritis. Thus was Neanderthal ‘elevated’ to the hairy stooped ape like ancestor of man in museums and text books throughout the world. It wasn’t until the 1950’s when the British Natural History Museum study on Neanderthal began to reveal Neanderthal truly was the victim of Vitamin D deficiency or Rickets, that he began to disappear from some leading museums as a missing link. Last time I was visiting the head of the British Natural History museums human fossil section, Dr Christ Stringer, their original Neanderthal was tucked under the stairs beside the cleaners’ cabinet on the way to the basement.

Since the original discovery in

Germany, bones with similar features have been found in a number of sites across Europe and in the Middle East. All studies of Neanderthal anatomy reveal human skeletal features in spite of bone deformities. Modern computer reconstruction techniques have enabled scientists to estimate functions such as hand grip and bite force, and these all fall within the human range. Other scientists have studied tools, artefacts and living spaces made by Neanderthals and found they are all as complex as any other ‘cavemen’ who are classified as fully human. (See link at end of article for these reports) This should be no surprise as the most interesting feature of Neanderthal is that his average brain capacity was some 200 cubic centimetres greater than modern man. So, we now know Neanderthal as being of the human kind human and he is not in any way an ancestor connecting modern man to the apes.

Given that we have also been able to extract genetic material from the bones of the Neanderthal – several other things are evident.

1. DNA studies on one skeleton

AUTHENTIC | SCIENCE

show about 19 point mutations that do not appear in modern man, so no modern evolutionist is directly descended from that Neanderthal.

2. Since the bulk of our DNA is very close to Neanderthal’s, he and modern man descended from the same common human ancestor and

3. therefore Neanderthal is a degenerate sub group of man who is most probably extinct, so the use of the species name Homo neanderthalensis is totally untestable, since to prove he was a separate species, then by definition you would have to

have a breeding program to show Neanderthal could not interbreed with man.

So who in the human or Homo kind were they? Most likely they were part of the original population leaving the tower of Babel who headed North and West where they were afflicted by the increasing cold first recorded in the book of Job some several centuries after the flood and Babel, and which has reoccurred several times later in Asian and European history. Neanderthal seems to have become a victim of his own refuge tactics, and of a possibly dark skin. Choosing caves to live

in to survive the cold, particularly if you were black, comes with a high price. If you can’t get enough sunshine which is responsible for making vitamin D in man’s body, which consequently determines where your calcium is deposited, you develop soft bones. If you are growing up while gravity is pushing the top of your skull down, you end up looking very ape-like indeed no matter what volume of brain space your cranial capacity is.

Neanderthal is a good example of devolution, not evolution. |A

John MacKay is international director of the Creation Research Institute and has been lecturing on God’s wonderful creation as well as leading field trips world wide and doing field research around the globe on Creation and Noah’s Flood, for the last 30 years.

For more information visit: www.creationresearch.net



GOD IN WORK

PROTECTION

by Paul Curtas



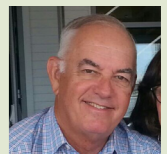
We envision a fortress as a protective place of refuge where one goes to find shelter and rest. Also we see it as a place where we find help in time of need... when life’s situations bring anxiety and when fear seems to silence us (Psalm 94:17-19). People often have a place (like a fortress or refuge) where they go to seek rest. For some it’s their home or it may be a special place where they go and relax on a holiday break. In the book of Psalms we are told that the Lord is our fortress, a place of refuge. It does not speak about running to a place to find Him. Instead we are told

that in whatever place of difficulty we find ourselves, we can run to Him to find refuge and strength to sustain us (Psalm 94:22). During your workday, when things become difficult and anxiety and fear multiply, where do you run for help? The first place should be the Lord our refuge.

Consider this: *“On God my salvation and my glory rest; The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. (Psalm 62:7-8)*

|A

■ Paul Curtas is the Director of FCAP (www.fcac.org)



A military life

Whether a Christian should serve in the military has always been a topic of debate. So we thought we would talk to Lieutenant Colonel Alistair (Al) MacKinnon. Al has served full and part time in the Army for 32 years, is married to Linda coming up 28 years and they have two sons, Sam and Josh and a daughter Chloé, grafted in by marriage to Sam.

So let's start at the beginning - when did you become a Christian?

"I became a Christian before I was nine. I can't remember the exact day, but in February 1978, I confirmed what I believed at a school holiday programme."

When did you decide to join the military?

"Our family had been overseas in Fiji and I came home to the 7th form and realised I needed to get a job."

So I applied for an electrical apprenticeship, Teachers College and the Army. The Army paid the most and they also gave me a free trip to Christchurch. Since I had never been to Christchurch they had me sold at that point."

What did you initially apply for?

"I applied for a trade, but after com-

pleting the various aptitude and selection tests, the recruiter said that I should apply for a commission. I had no idea what that meant except that it included a free trip to Christchurch for a leadership assessment.

So, I flew to Christchurch and went through the Officer Selection Board. I enjoyed the process and following this they gave me an offer to join the Army. It was at that point that I really started to look at it and ask myself what that entailed.

In Christian circles there weren't a lot of people who had served in the military and there is this general sense that the military is a suspicious place for Christians to go.

I was in Gisborne at the time and I started to talk to older people who had served in the military. What I found interesting, was that people

who had never served were not encouraging, but after asking around I met a couple of old guys who had been in World War Two. One in particular was a gentle, lovely Christian man and his advice had the most impact on my decision. He told me "the Army needs more Christians" and so I pushed ahead."

Did you sign up for twenty years?

"When I signed up the twenty year service was linked to your superannuation. So you could leave the Army whenever you wanted (with three months notice), but if you wanted to get more than just your contributions back from your superannuation, you were required to give twelve months notice. This made it a big decision if you did want to leave.

Not that this stopped me from wanting to resign twice in the early



days, to the point of filling out my resignation and even submitting it once.

Both times God changed the circumstances and I stayed, confirming to me that He wanted me to carry on in the Army"

Take us through your career in the different jobs you've had in the military

"I graduated from Officer Cadet School in 87 and after graduation served as a Platoon Commander, and then an Officer Commanding.

After this I worked in a Brigade Headquarters doing planning, and then held a diplomatic post in the High Commission in Australia.

I came home to a development job in Army General Staff and then I went to Waiouru and ran a school for 4 years.

During my Waiouru posting, I spent time in Bosnia, Korea and Afghanistan. After I came home from Afghanistan I was posted to Fiji as the Defence Advisor to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.

This was at the time when the current Prime Minister of Fiji conducted his coup. It was a difficult time to be the Defence Advisor because of the tension between the New

Zealand and Fiji Governments. We basically had a front row seat to the coup and aftermath.

From there Linda and I were called into Military Life (part of Tandem Ministries in New Zealand), a ministry that supports military personnel and their families. So I resigned, we came home and I did another nine months doing strategic planning in Army General Staff to work out my notice.

When we started full time with Military Life, I transferred into the Army Reserve and did a training job, and that lead up to the end of last year when I took up an honorary role as the Colonel Commandant for the Royal New Zealand Chaplains Department.

I accepted it as an extension of my military service and ministry, and now I get to work a lot more with the NZDF Chaplains."

AS CHRISTIANS, WE KNOW GOD'S MORAL STANDARD DOESN'T CHANGE. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF WE ARE TIRED, ANGRY, OR WHATEVER IS GOING ON IN OUR ENVIRONMENT, OUR STANDARD SHOULDN'T CHANGE BECAUSE IT IS ANCHORED TO THE BIBLE.

What would you suggest to a young Christian man looking at entering the military?

"I encourage young Christian men to think about the military as a career, because what that old gentleman told me is still true - the military does need more Christians.

It is a job with a lot of stress. You are asked to make some pretty difficult moral decisions, in very demanding circumstances. But, who better to do that than someone who has anchored their moral standards to God's.

There are parts of the military that recognise the benefits of faith. One of the areas that the psychologists mention, is survival as a prisoner of war - faith in God is recognised as a strong contributing factor to survival.

As Christians, we know God's moral standard doesn't change. It doesn't matter if we are tired, angry, or whatever is going on in our environment, our standard shouldn't change because it is anchored to the Bible. The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) also has high ethical and moral standards that they expect of Service personnel, but under the pressure of a combat environment where fatigue, confusion, stress and sometime fear crowds in, Christians have an advantage over those who have grown up determining their own moral standard. We have an extra layer of accountability against a standard that never changes, and we have strength from the Holy Spirit who is not affected by the environment that we are in. Christians who are genuinely following Jesus bring a moral steadiness to the way we operate.

In thinking about a military career there are two parts Christians need to consider.

- 1) The professional part of service. The principles and codes

of conduct, laws of conflict - all those things that underpin our behaviour in the military are very much aligned with Christian values. I haven't come across anything in military policy that has challenged me as a Christian.

When we go into a conflict zone we are to treat everyone with respect, we are to use minimum force, we are to be willing to put our lives on the line for others, we are to care for each other.

Even our leadership standards are strongly Biblically aligned - I was taught that as a leader I eat last, we put our soldiers before ourselves. We are to exercise the servant leadership that Jesus talked about.

Now, not everyone in the military follows the guidelines about what a good leader is or isn't, but the policy (the doctrine that we adhere to) is very ethical. This shouldn't be a surprise as it is drawn from law, which in turn is originally drawn from scripture.

I can honestly say that I have never been asked by the New Zealand Defence Force to do something that is morally unacceptable from a Christian point of view.

2) The Personal side of service. This is the part you have to be very careful about. The military is an environment that is temptation rich, especially in the early years and even in the first few weeks when you are establishing your standards. You are really put to the test - especially when they know you're a Christian.

So for Christians, the biggest thing is this - you need to be sure of what you believe in before entering the military, and commit to holding to your standards before you're faced with temptation.

You need to be really sure of the 'what' (what is my standard) and

I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT I HAVE NEVER BEEN ASKED BY THE NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE TO DO SOMETHING THAT IS MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE FROM A CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW.

also the 'why'. Why God wants you to stay sexually pure until you are married for example. So when you are challenged in these areas you can answer them - not accuse others or condemn them, but explain what you believe and why it is you believe that and are not prepared to compromise.

There are a lot of young people who are away from home for the first time, there is access to alcohol and a steady stream of cash. That gives you a lot of freedom, which can create a lot of personal moral challenges.

Excessive drinking is a big problem because it is a gateway to other poor behaviour. A young Christian who hasn't determined to avoid getting drunk can easily fall in with the crowd and end up doing dumb things that a sober version of them would have successfully resisted.

The military officially discourages alcohol abuse, but they expect



TALKING TO SOME RFMF OFFICERS IN SUVA, FIJI

you to develop the necessary self-control, they won't hold your hand.

You are also mixing with a lot of people with different ideas about sex and relationships, so Christians need to be committed to the standards God sets for us for our own protection.

Before I was married, I remember there was a steady stream of available women coming through the mess, and that can be morally challenging for someone who has stepped out of a home or church where they were sheltered from these things.

People, being people, will want you to join in with what is going on. They will offer you many reasons why you shouldn't hold onto your previous moral standards. People will try to lure you, or even shame you into doing things you don't want to.

In my experience, this is toughest in the first few weeks. I had girls offered to me, and lots of pressure to drink.

I politely turned down the girls and took a stand not to drink in that environment. Now my peer group has settled down I am happy to have a beer or wine with them, but in



VISITING AN ORPHANGE IN KABUL

those early days I decided not to and am happy that I did, even with the ribbing.

You also need to know that if you do something dumb, it's not the end of the world for you. God is all for restoring us so all we have to do is agree with Him that what we did was wrong and commit to getting it right next time and we can get back on track.

That seems like a lot to ask from a young person, how did you handle that?

"I think it is possible for young people to have enough understanding of why God calls us to do things, and this comes down to discipleship

- if your parents are discipling you, if your church is discipling you well, they are explaining the 'why' to you.

By the time I was accepted into the military I was in a good space, even though I was only 17. I had grown up in the church, which doesn't guarantee a solid foundation, but God had connected me to some good people who convinced me of the 'why' in terms of following God's standards."

Did you encounter other Christians?

"Yes, but there weren't that many visible and solid Christians. There were some outspoken Christians who weren't respectful of non-believers, being openly condemning or pushy with their faith, and they did a lot of damage. I avoided those guys because they were bad for my witness.

There were some who were very involved in their churches, but they were quiet in the workplace so you often didn't know they were Christians until you bumped into them outside the military.

There were a few visible Christians who brought their faith to bear in



SERVING IN AFGHANISTAN

the workplace, but with respect and gentleness for those who didn't believe the same things. These are the people I sought out."

Do you have time for personal devotions and to attend church?

"Yes, the hardest time is during your initial training - you really need to have your devotional space worked out because the military controls your day. You're up at the crack of dawn and they work you like a dog until you go to bed at night. There is an allowance in the doctrine for you to attend a service of your choice on a Sunday, but you can't push it, especially if your fellow soldiers are still working. I was in Officer Cadet School for twelve months and managed to get to four church services that year.

My advice to Christians joining the military is be prepared to snatch short times with God between tasks in the early days, or even later when you're on course or on an exercise.

Get a small Bible that fits in your uniform cargo pockets, and read snippets when you get a chance. One thought a day can be very helpful. Talk to God all the way through, pray about your day, for your leaders and fellow Service personnel. Even 5 minutes a day in prayer is better than getting isolated. Spend time with other believers if you can find them. Just knowing there is someone in the same camp who is a believer can help your accountability and encourage you, and them."

How has it affected your Family?

"There are definitely some unusual pressures there. Early in my marriage there were courses I had to complete, so I was often away for six week blocks. On top of courses, there were multiple exercises for two to three weeks and tours of duty (TOD), I was in Australia for two months and Korea for three months.




AL AND LINDA

than He was in New Zealand, and He ultimately determines if and when I'm going to die.

I also thought that it was totally worth it to help the Afghan people. The ones I mixed with genuinely appreciated our presence and really wanted peace, so it felt good to be helping them.

Working for the Americans was also great. There were a lot of Christians among them - I would say about half the ones I was with would call themselves Christian and the others were comfortable around Christian things, so there were a lot of good spiritual discussions and support."

Would you do it all again?

"Absolutely. My time in the Army has had some tough moments, but on the whole, God has shaped me through it in ways that I could never have anticipated 32 years ago. I have been tested again and again and grown through it. I have learnt a lot from some of the great people I have been able to work with and work for, both believers and non-believers. I have been able to help some people in foreign places. The Army has helped me provide for my family, not just through my salary but also through experiences that we wouldn't have had outside of the military. It was the Army who sent me to Papakura where I met Linda. So I'm very thankful for the time I have had serving and would definitely do it all again, though I would need my younger body back, this one's a bit worn out to get through basic training again..." | 

Al MacKinnon has written a book to help Christians thinking of entering the military or currently in service, entitled "Christian Military Service Handbook", available through Tandem Ministries at <https://tandem.org.nz/product/christian-military-services-handbook>

I also had two operational deployments - seven months in Bosnia and six months in Afghanistan. These are long periods to be away from family. One of the things I learned is that my responsibilities as a husband and father don't end when you aren't there. So you learn to communicate well, even over distance. Fortunately, it's not like WWII where you have to wait for letters on ships, today we can email and video chat.

Linda and I made a commitment that if we could be together we would be. So Linda, and our boys, Sam and Josh came to Waiouru with me - where many other families stayed in more populated areas. Obviously, they couldn't come on deployment, so we committed to communicate daily unless something stopped us. We talked a lot to the boys and prepared them as best we could.

Our boys knew that their dad was not around and that wasn't comfortable for them. During my TOD to Australia Sam was worried that we couldn't pay the mortgage because I wasn't in the country. When I came home from Bosnia Josh had turned 5 and I had been on deployment exercises and courses for over a quarter of his life, and it took a long time for him to trust me again.

But there have been some great things. We had a three year posting in Australia, where we had a lot of family time, also three years in Fiji. By moving around we have gathered a lot of good friends around the world. Our boys grew up exposed to other cultures and ways of looking at things, and this has helped them become the well rounded men that they are. There're a lot of benefits to being in the military along with the pressures."

What has been the highlight of your career?

"I think my tour to Afghanistan. Afghanistan was still very active when I arrived. I had to work through how much I really trusted God. I definitely had some anxiety being there, knowing that every pile of rocks, every donkey cart, every hole in the road could be a bomb.

I was never involved in any direct shooting or having people shoot at me, but there was shooting going on around me, and a few bombs went off that were a bit close for me. There was an incident on the road that I had to cross every day to get to where I was sleeping, so the danger was very palpable. I had to work out that God was no less able to care for me in Afghanistan



Epic Living

by Eric Ludy

When I was eight, I invented a solar-powered car. America was facing an energy crisis in the late 1970s, and I for one was not going to sit idly by and let us go down the proverbial tubes.

The day my marvellous invention materialized was a hot one. It was one of those summer days that calls little boys to explore the wild outdoors, to search for buried treasure, or perhaps discover a slimy crawdad to satisfy their scientific curiosity. Yet though my eight-year-old lungs longed to suck in the fresh August air, an entire country's economic infrastructure hung woefully in the balance, and I felt a prick within my soul to do my part.

I purloined a sharpened pencil from my mother's collection and dug up a pile of drawing paper from the roll-top desk in the den, and I determinedly went to work. I must have worn that pencil down to a stub by the end of the day. My hair was tousled and my lips dried and caked from licking my lips in intense concentration for several straight hours.

I emerged from my makeshift office at around four in the afternoon with one of those dazed da Vinci smirks upon my face, for I had done it: I had saved the world.

President Jimmy Carter didn't have to personally commission me to do this. He didn't have to offer me money, fame, or a position of power. I gave up an entire day of my summer vacation because I truly cared, and my imagination was fired up and ready to solve our nation's energy crisis.

I gave my all. I gave my best. I spent myself for my country.

Why?

Because that day I had something bigger than little Eric Ludy to live for, something grander than my own selfish pleasure to pursue. Creek beds, gold, crawdads, little green army men, climbing trees, flying kites, the continuing adventures of "Eric the Cowboy"—these could all wait, for there was something more important that needed my best energies and my best resources until all was made right with the world once more.

Unfortunately, my solar-powered car was nothing more than a little kid's piece of art. At the age of eight, I didn't understand that a mere drawing of a solar-powered car wouldn't actually solve the energy crisis. Blessed be those days of blissful ignorance and innocence! Yet thanks to my always-encouraging parents, I really did think

I had saved the world that hot summer day back in 1979.

On that balmy day, little Eric Ludy had gone from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. He was not cowering in fear at the looming economic issues facing America; he was staring them in the face and offering his time, his resources, and his artistic talents for the betterment of mankind. As a result, he felt a surge of that strange and inexplicable happiness that courses through the veins of everyone who has ever done the same.

This article is built on a very simple premise: we all need to live for something bigger than ourselves. We need to be part of a story larger than us, a drama grander than our personal aches and pains. We need a blueprint for our existence that is greater than the one we ourselves can draw up. In short, we need to seek God's agenda for how our lives are supposed to be lived and what we are supposed to spend our time and energy pursuing.

In the West, we suffer from a malady I call "puny living." Most of us spend twenty-three and three-quarters hours each and every day tending to our own life stories. And let's face it—our stories

are not very grand. We spend our best energies, our best time, our best resources, and our best ideas on our smallish lives, hoping to somehow increase our net worth, upgrade our wheels, downgrade our stress, outpace our neighbors, and upstage our graduating class. The long and short of it is this: we are completely wasting this precious gift called life.

When I was eight, I tasted the pure and utter bliss of hero's work. To experience this taste, I didn't have to endure cruel torture and privation, storm a burning building, or rescue a drowning child. I merely had to give up my personal agenda in exchange for a much bigger one.

Not long ago, my wife, Leslie, and I were visiting Southern California. While there, we stepped out of a grocery store and ran smack into two young women with a cause. Their eyes were wide with enthusiasm, and their voices were strong with passion.

Their cause? Fifty whales off the shores of Japan.

These well-meaning women were spending their entire Saturday preaching to anyone willing to listen about the atrocities being committed against these poor humpback whales and how something must be done.

Now don't get me wrong. I have only positive feelings about these magnificent, charismatic creatures. Whales are amazing!

However, let's consider the fact that there are 163 million children around the world that are orphaned and in desperate need of help at this very moment. Fifty whales just don't seem important in comparison.

There are more human slaves today than there were one hundred years ago when William Wilberforce fought his noble battle

THERE IS NOTHING PUNY ABOUT GOD'S INTENTION FOR HIS CHILDREN. YET PERHAPS THE GREATEST PERPETRATORS OF PUNY LIVING IN THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS HAVE BEEN CHRISTIAN FOLK.

with Parliament to end this brutal injustice. There are scores of little girls between the ages of six and eleven being sold into slavery as prostitutes in countries all around the world. There are little boys being forced to kill their parents and siblings and become soldiers in the Ugandan "liberation" armies. There are more than four thousand little children who are homeless, parentless, and living in a single dump in Guatemala. There are tens of thousands of kids in Brazil hiding from death squads seeking to kill the "orphan vermin."

Maybe if there were fifty million capable foot-soldiers actively fighting for the cause of the oppressed, enslaved, and orphaned around the world, I could see the importance of turning our attentions toward the suffering of fifty humpback whales off the coast of Japan. But that is simply not the case.

I'm not trying to knock someone for fighting on behalf of the whales. In a fashion, it's noble and it's right. But it is akin to trying to rescue the captain's personal trunk when the entire ship is sinking.

We need to open our eyes to the true scope of the situation we find ourselves in here on earth. We are suffering from puny living, and it's affected our eyesight. We aren't seeing the real issues because we can't see outside of our own little universes.

Heroes Wanted

I'm a Christian and I make no bones about it. I am all about following

Jesus Christ and His agenda. His agenda is huge, it's grand, and it's a steak dinner for the imagination. There is nothing puny about God's intention for His children. Yet perhaps the greatest perpetrators of puny living in the past one hundred years have been Christian folk. It's sad to say, but Christianity is deserving of most of the criticism it receives these days. The church has tried to fit into the world and make itself appealing rather than turning the world upside down and transforming it. Christianity in its truest most historic sense is all about "epic living."

For one entire day when I was eight, I tasted epic living. I was caught up in the cause of saving the world. What I tasted that day is what every believer was meant to taste every single day for a lifetime. Imagine waking up each day feeling a divine urgency to give your best energies, your best time, your best resources, and your best ideas to something other than yourself. That's Christianity in its most elemental form. That's the secret to a life of ever-increasing satisfaction.

The problems facing humanity are much bigger than oil embargoes, whaling, illegal immigration, and global warming. Thirty thousand children are dying this very day due to something as basic as the lack of clean water. And yet our best and brightest are spending themselves on puny convictions and puny causes.

A truly Christian life is one that demonstrates to the world what Jesus would look like, talk like, and live like if He were walking the earth today (Ephesians 5:1-2). A Christian life is nothing more than an everyday human existence given over to the operation and control of the very Spirit of God (Romans 8:6). In other words, it's God who is living, not me (Galatians 2:20). It's God who is talking, not me. It's God who

is deciding where to go and how to get there, not me.

Jesus Christ is interested in your life—All of it. He wants every moment of your existence, from now to the end of eternity, to be spent as He deems fit. He wants to turn your paltry little life into something extraordinary. But to do that, He has to own the entirety of it, with no strings attached. He won't suffer any ifs, ands, or buts. He will rescue you, He will cleanse you, and He will make your life work—but only if you are willing to give up all control to Him.

What would God be doing if you truly gave Him control over your life?

If you are not a Christian, I ask you to please forgive those of us who are not providing an answer to that question with our lives. We've muddled the answer to that question to the point where there are now seventy-six different answers from seventy-six different pulpits every Sunday morning. What has happened to the church? How did we arrive at the place where Christianity is about us—our lives, our retirement plans, our futures, our reputations, our personal comfort—without even a mumbled protest from the pews?

Christianity isn't only about what you know and who you know—it's also about how you respond in obedience to whom you know. If you are not directing your energies toward that which is the heart of Jesus—the rescuing of human souls and the deliverance of human lives—then, like nuclear waste, you will end up actually corroding the world about you. Jesus said it this way: "He that is not with me is against me," and, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 11:23, 19:10).

Our God is all about action. He's all about doing the thing that needs to be done. He's all about giving. (Doesn't it say something about that in John 3:16?)

God is in the business of delivering justice and mercy, setting captives free, bringing health to the sick, clearing the debts of the poor, and breaking the shackles of slavery. God burns with fury when He sees the weak and the little ones being exploited. He cries with indignation when He sees child prostitution in Thailand, abortion in America, death squads murdering street children in Brazil, and little boys and girls struggling to live in a garbage dump in Central America.


Our God is not passive, and He is certainly not unfeeling. He has entrusted His foot-soldiers here on earth with the job of expressing His indignation, His compassion, His generosity, and His love here in this physical world. Christians are supposed to be His hands, His feet, His voice, and His response to these atrocities in the natural realm.

If it appears God is doing nothing to halt these horrors, the blame for inactivity falls squarely on the shoulders of those of us entrusted to be His representatives. It's Christians that bear the onus of culpability. We are the ones commissioned to carry out God's epic agenda, and if we fritter our lives away pursuing puny goals and do nothing to stop these horrors, then we will stand before God in the end with a stain of responsibility upon our souls.

God's agenda is to seek and save that which is lost, that which is broken, and that which is oppressed and enslaved. But if God's children won't carry out His agenda, who will?

The world is waiting for you and me to begin to live out and practice what we preach. Christianity will be nothing more than a byword as long as those of us that call ourselves by such a regal name sit by and live puny lives while the world about us is ravaged by evil. But when Christians once again take up the epic agenda of God, the world will sit up and take notice. For wherever there were Christians who boldly carried the torch of poured-out love, justice, and compassion, the church multiplied and was added to daily. May Christianity once again be the world-altering force it was in those days when Christ first deposited His very life and fire into the souls of His followers.

This call is for all of us, including myself, who have suffered from the malady of puny living. So if you are interested in doing something more with your energies and resources than filling out forms and writing cheques ... if you are ready to be part of something much grander than yourself ... if you are tired of a crusty version of faith that merely sits in pews, listening to sermons and passing the offering plates, then keep reading. You are about to discover the magnificence and marvel of a bigger, more thrilling, more rewarding vision of life.

May the glory and power of Christ be seen in and through you and me. May the lost hear the hope of the Bravehearted Gospel through our mouths. May the hungry be fed with our hands. May the orphans be rescued by our valour. May we break the shackles of the oppressors with our passion for justice. | 

■ Eric Ludy - pastor, author and the president of Ellerslie Mission Society. www.Ericludy.com

SAY "NO" TO JESUS

by Dave Firth

OK, so I know this sounds like a strange title to be starting an article with but if you stay with me it'll all make sense.

A few years ago my wife and I were watching a movie and noticed Jesus' name was used (as a swear word) a couple of times. We both muttered in disgust each time and ended up having a discussion about it afterwards. I came away really challenged about what I accept and tolerate when it comes to movie watching and the excuses I make to justify doing what I want to do.

The end result was life changing! We concluded that the Lord was teaching us that we needed to evaluate every part of our lives and discern where we have compromised on His call to a surrendered

life – the Christian life!

But the detail was clear and obvious too: 'Stop watching movies that abuse the name of Jesus.' It sounds easy enough but it wasn't just an idea, it was a deep conviction. He changed our hearts so we were repulsed by hearing His name misused in a movie.

We started using PluggedIn.com (the Focus on the Family movie screening website) so we could see beforehand whether a movie crossed that particular line or not. It also gave details about other profanity, sex, violence, drugs & alcohol, spirituality and general plot

outline (we highly recommend this site for all parents!)

Occasionally we'd pull out our old DVDs and find movies that we hadn't seen for years, but inevitably, during some of them, to our shock we'd hear 'Jesus Christ!' and realise that our standards used to be a lot lower than they are now..

As time went on it became totally normal for us to avoid movies or turn them off regardless of the situation. A few years ago, late one Friday night, I sat down alone to watch the latest Bond movie at the time (Skyfall) and for whatever reason I didn't check it on PluggedIn.

To my horror, one hour and forty-eight minutes into the two-hour twenty-three minute movie, 'M', played by Judi Dench, hops out of the car and exclaims "Christ!"

I had paid \$4.99 to download it from iTunes and it took me a moment to realise I could ignore it and carry on and no one would know – but He would know. My Lord and Saviour was watching my actions carefully and I realised then that this wasn't just a point I was trying to make. I deleted the movie immediately and went to bed.

A few days later I wrote letters to MGM, Universal, Warner Bros, Paramount, Sony and 20th Century Fox. I knew I would sound like a weirdo so I started with the obvious line, "I know you'll think I'm a weirdo.."

I explained that the name of Jesus is extremely important to a Christian and misusing His name is offensive. I also stated that there are other faiths that would react far more strongly if the object of their faith were criticized. In the last few years there have been significant news stories of protests and even extreme violence when the name of Mohammed has been misused or his image mocked. Most Muslims wouldn't tolerate it and, of course, that is why Hollywood wouldn't think of doing such a thing.

None of them wrote back!

Why would they? Just because a movie has Jesus' name in it, will the Christians boycott it?

Apparently not. But I wish they would.

You see, if it's true that around 31% of movie watchers are Christians (which is the percentage of the population of our planet who identify as Christian), then that's about a third of the income that the film industry makes. So, if all the Chris-

tians simply said, "Sorry Hollywood. That's not acceptable. If you called my mum a 'fat, hairy monkey' I wouldn't watch your movie so if you misuse my Saviour's name you've got no chance!", guess what would happen?

They'd stop doing it!

Because they'd lose, literally, billions of dollars.

The \$872 million (US) that Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice made at the box office would be reduced by about \$267 million!

The \$880 million (US) that James Bond's 'Spectre' movie made at the box office would be reduced by \$272 million!

(Incidentally, all James Bond movies were free of abuses of Jesus' name until 2006 and the last 4 films - out of 24 - have all sullied Christ's name at least twice each!)

Marvel's Cinematic Universe 'Avengers' franchise has been raking in the cash since the launch of 'Iron Man' ten years ago.

They have produced a total of 19 movies so far up to and including 'Avengers: Infinity War', with many more in production or planning.

Jesus' name wasn't heard in any of the first 12 movies but it all changed in 2016 when 'Captain America: Civil War' brought all our favourites together, this time adding Spiderman to the cast!

They also added something else –one mention of Jesus' name (from War Machine to Tony Stark).

But the \$1.3 billion dollars this movie made would be reduced by \$403 million if the Christians had said, "Nope - you guys crossed the line."

But, generally, we don't.

But why? Do we really not care?

AUTHENTIC | CURRENT ISSUES

Something to think about, I hope.

Here's some of the culprits:

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: ROGUE NATION

- Jesus' name is abused once.

Only the latest 'Mission Impossible' movie included an abuse of Jesus' name! The first four didn't - which is good as I generally have enjoyed them.

BATMAN BEGINS (2005)

- Jesus' name is abused once.

THE DARK KNIGHT (2008)

- Characters abuse Jesus' name three times

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES (2012)

- Jesus' name is abused twice.

All the movies in this Batman trilogy included abuses of Jesus' name!

As a lifelong Batman fan, it's pretty disappointing (well, we could all technically be Batman, couldn't we?)

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

- Jesus' name is abused four times.

I was really looking forward to this movie. Fortunately the critics said it was rubbish so I don't feel I missed much - No Superman film has ever included the name of Jesus - until this one, but still, I felt it was the influence of 'The Dark Knight' that turned it!

CASINO ROYALE, QUANTUM OF SOLACE, SKYFALL & SPECTRE

'Jesus' was absent until 2006 but has been present in the last 4 movies

DEADPOOL & DEADPOOL 2

(3 and 10 times respectively)

THE BOURNE MOVIES

All 5 of these James Bond-like movies use 'Jesus' or 'Christ' as an

expletive.

I watched the first 3 many years ago but have avoided the latest 2 thanks to PluggedIn.com

The movies are definitely action packed and I remember enjoying them, so it's a shame the powers that be decided it was necessary to make this inappropriate addition.

But there's some good news if you're convicted about this but still like to watch a movie from time to time.

Here's a list of movies that DO NOT abuse Jesus' name:

The first 12 of Marvel's 'Avengers'

movies - most of which were pretty good fun

All Spiderman movies

All Superman movies (except, of course, Dawn of Justice)

All X-Men movies - except 'Logan'

Most Sci Fi or fantasy movies (Lord of the Rings, Star Trek, Star Wars) as they are often set in make believe worlds - less likely to misuse the name of a real person!

Disclaimer:

Just because a movie doesn't use Jesus' name inappropriately that doesn't necessarily mean it's a good movie! There may be other

elements (swearing, sexual content, drug or alcohol abuse) that you don't want to see.

Apparently, even for Christians, Saturday night is the time when most movies are watched. But just a few hours later, on Sunday morning many of us roll into church, sometimes a little blurry eyed, and sing the words 'Blessed be your name' or 'There is no other name' or even 'Let your name be lifted up and glorified'.

So now you get the strange title. Should we say 'No' to Jesus?

Well, in this context, yes!



■ Dave Firth is a husband, father, bible teacher and communicator. He loves the Lord and has a passion for His Word. To read more about this topic visit www.saynotojesus.org



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DOWN TO EARTH WISDOM FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Sex: The Jet Engine In The Automobile!



by Charles Price

The Book of Proverbs was compiled by a man who had an adventurous sex life. King Solomon married seven hundred wives and if that wasn't enough, had three hundred concubines on the side.

The official wives were 'of royal birth', meaning they were strategic alliances with the daughters and family members of kings and leaders all across the Middle Eastern world. It was much easier making international trade and defense arrangements with the in-laws, than with politicians you didn't trust - speaking of which, that's a huge number of mothers-in-law to charm and get along with!!

However, in compiling of the book of Proverbs, Solomon refuses to endorse his own polygamous lifestyle and writes only of monogamous marriages. In fact he reserved some of his strongest language for sexual impropriety. This is not despite his background,

but because of it! Looking in on his arrangements from the outside, some might be enviously impressed - it's the stuff of tabloid entertainment - but speaking from the inside, Solomon experienced the destructive power of such behavior. In fact, it became his down fall. "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not right with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been". (1 Kings 11.4)

His most damning statement about sexual immorality is: 'A man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself' (Proverbs 6:32). It is not that he destroys his marriage or

his family - that is another matter - but he destroys himself. He drinks a poison which is self destructive to his own soul. In the heat of the moment adultery may have looked exciting and possible, but he has been fooled - badly and painfully fooled. "The lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. (Proverbs 5:3-5). That alone should scare anyone silly who is contemplating adultery. What he thought was a taste of honey, was the bitter taste of poison. It sowed seeds of death into his soul.

We might expect Solomon to have been just a little sympathetic to adultery, not only because of his own polygamous lifestyle, but because his own birth was the result of an adulterous relationship between his father David and his mother Bathsheba. He was not the baby first conceived in that union, for that child died, but having brought about the death of Bathsheba's husband Uriah to cover his own tracks, David then took Bathsheba as an additional wife, and she conceived Solomon. He therefore was born the result of an adulterous relationship. Rather than be sympathetic about his personal origin, he strongly sees its destructive nature. Perhaps he had read his father's poem – Psalm 51 – with its deep lament, sorrow and brokenness over his adultery. Perhaps he had talked to him about it. Perhaps he had seen its continuing affect on David. Perhaps he had seen and heard his tears. But for whatever reason, he is emphatic, 'A man who commits adultery ... destroys himself'. He has opened a floodgate of poison and destruction, that will run its course. Forgiveness is one thing, but erasing the damage and its consequences is quite another, and that can take a long time, if ever!

Adultery takes two to tango, but the rebukes and warnings of Proverbs are to men, in the main to 'my son' and 'my sons', which is why he warns of the adulterous woman, though all the same things apply to the adulterous man and his destructive influence. It is a father warning his sons of the dangerous power of their God-given sexual drive. Perhaps he only felt qualified to talk to his sons and not his daughters, or perhaps he is saying that if they get it right, the women will be OK. He warns his sons of the loose and seductive woman, but holds them responsible for

THE EASY ACCESS OF PORNOGRAPHY IS ONE OF THE CURSES OF OUR AGE OF TECHNOLOGY, AND HAS SEDUCED THEN CAPTIVATED MANY YOUNG AND OLD MEN. STATISTICS TELL OF ITS VERY WIDESPREAD USE, AND ARE ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO TELL OF ITS ENORMOUS DAMAGE.

their responses to them. Men and women are different sexual beings. Generally, men are like an electric light that turns on and off quickly, women are more like an iron that heats slowly, and cools slowly. This is why men must build protection around the triggers – and there are many. In our day with easy access to pornography, with a sexual ethic that reduces sexual activity only to consent and in the hedonistic culture in which we live, we need to be especially aware of its danger as well as its delight.

This is not to be all negative about sex, for our sexuality is to be enjoyed and celebrated, but whilst we are on the dangers of illicit sex, it's important to think about avoidance. Jesus talked about adultery in the Sermon on the Mount, but went beyond the act to say, "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5.28). The real issue is not the external acts but internal thoughts from which they derive. Sexual desire and interest is not in itself lust, for our sexual instincts, thoughts and imaginations are intrinsically good, wholesome and God-given.

Lust is not sexual desire, for that is legitimate, but by definition lust is self-oriented and self-centred, concerned only with fleeting self-satisfaction, whether in fantasy or in reality. Pornography can only

feed lust and be an agent for self-gratification and never, ever produce something good and wholesome.

So how do we deal with this. Here is one very practical way from Jesus in the next sentence to talking about lust says: "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5.29). This is not changing the subject, but addressing it. The agents of sexual arousal are sight and touch. If your problem is how you look and what you look at, do something about your eye, if it is touch, do something about your hand! This is not about self-mutilation, but a strategy to render the eye and hand inactive in this realm of lust. He doesn't say 'how' beyond that, because one strategy doesn't fit all. It is the principle he addresses. Building boundaries around ourselves and around our sexual appetites is his key. Those boundaries need to go as far back as is necessary. As adultery is only a consequence of lust, so lust is itself a consequence of avenues that feed our mind and fan into flame our lusts. The easy access of pornography is one of the curses of our age of technology, and has seduced then captivated many young and old men. Statistics tell of its very widespread use, and are only just beginning to tell of its enormous damage. The metaphor, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away" is especially to be applied here. Accountability partners are the best, provided there is the freedom to be completely honest, and accountability programs that monitor our use of the internet, and report it to trusted friends, may help break what is at best a bad habit, and at worst an addictive compulsion.




But our sexuality need not be our enemy but our friend. Solomon tells us there is joy in our sexuality, to be enjoyed and celebrated. He tells us to '... rejoice in the wife of your youth .. may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love' (Proverbs 5.18-19). Solomon wrote the great love song of the bible, (the Song of Songs) with its fairly explicit references to sexual intimacy. It is this positive view of our sexuality that we are to delight in, even be "captivated by". Marriage is the safe and legitimate place to celebrate sexuality, and to seek each other's good in it.

Behind this, is the thought that sex has two functions. Firstly, it has a procreative function. The first command God gave to humanity after creation was to: 'Be fruitful and increase in number' (Genesis 1.28). The first job description given to the human race was for men and women to step out of their individuality into union with a spouse, in which the 'two become one', but then the 'one' becomes

three, then four as children arrive and the individualism is absorbed by a new community, the family. That of course is not how life works for many people, and singleness is equally valid and according to Paul even preferable, for: "It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:1-3). That sounds a poor reason to marry, but he is affirming singleness as a good or even better status.

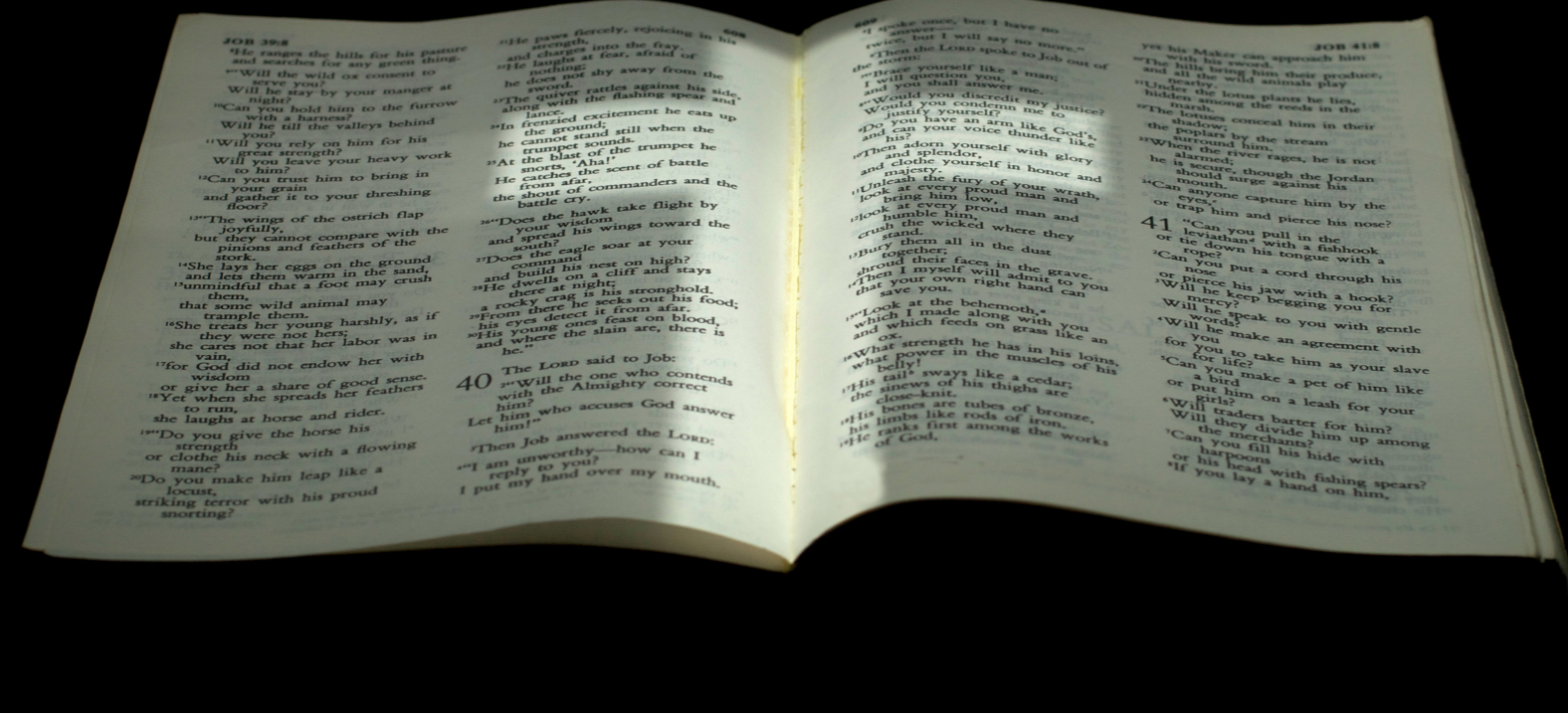
Secondly, sex has a relational function. Companionship was the first biblical reason for marriage and fulfills its purpose with or without children. Sexual appetites may lead us to marriage, but will not in itself sustain it for it is about something much richer and deeper, the union of two people, body, soul and spirit.

I have called this article, Sex: The Jet Engine in the Automobile, because it seems a disproportionately strong instinct. But ultimately, the strength of our

sexuality seems almost like a trick our creator has played on us – its initial interest is our own instinctive desire to connect with the opposite sex, it looks for fulfillment and satisfaction and pleasure. It leads to seeking relationships, and in due course may lead us to marriage. And then children! They come into the world totally dependent on us, and grow up under our care, with many needs for patience, guidance, wisdom and love. They bring us joy but also tears and heartache. Our lives are tied forever to theirs. And we have discovered what it is about. The power of sex has lured us into relationships that offer to teach us what we most need, far more than our own needs met – sacrificial love. Sex leads us to laying down our lives for other people. Sacrificial love brings the best out of us, sometimes screaming and resisting, but the best none the less. And that is where we find the significance, value and ultimate power of sex! | 



■ Charles Price, Minister at Large, The Peoples Church, Toronto, Canada and Living Truth TV and radio.



THE GOSPEL LINEAGE

Seeing Jesus in the Lineage of Adam

I am a strong believer that everything in the Old Testament points to Christ.

Everywhere you turn in the Old Covenant, you discover that God purposely tied “threads of redemption” to point to the coming Messiah. Some are rather obvious (like prophecies) and some are hidden—needing Jesus as the key or that which unveils the depth of the passage.

In talking about the Jews and their understanding of the Old Testament, Paul said “But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:14).

In other words, when Jews read the Old Testament they are blind to what it is talking about—though they may understand in a historic sense, they miss the meaning be-

cause it all points to Jesus Christ ... He is the “key” that removes the veil and gives clarity to the entire Bible. Paul is saying that Jesus is on every page of Scripture.

Let me give you an example of how this “thread of redemption” (Jesus) is seen in the Old Testament.

What is in a Name?

Shakespeare is famous for asking what is in a name. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. However, when you study Scripture you find that names are important. A name wasn't just something used to refer to someone, it was symbolic of their nature, character, attitude, makeup. A name is more than a name.

This is why name changes were so important in the Old Testament.

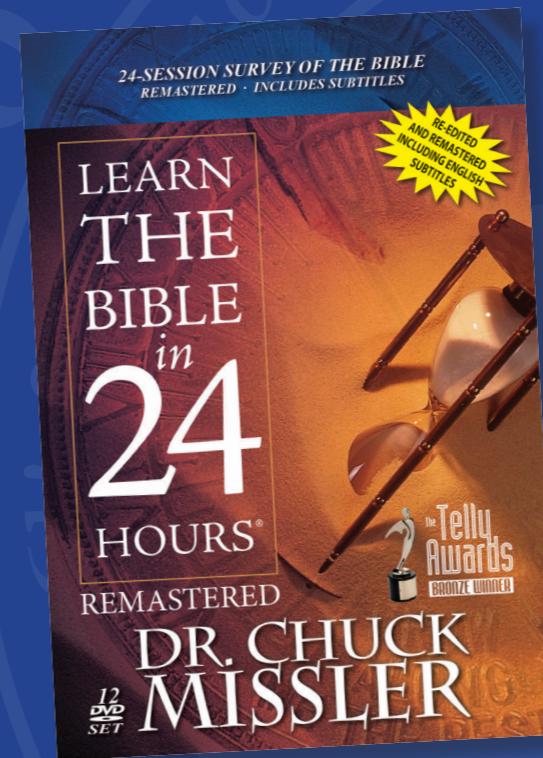
When God changed Jacob's name to Israel, it wasn't because God was tired of the name “Jacob,” it was because God was changing the life and nature of a man. Jacob means manipulator, deceiver, trickster, liar, etc—which Jacob was—but after wrestling with God, God changed his name to Israel (the one who wrestles with God, or perhaps better stated, the Prince of God).

THE LINEAGE

In Genesis 5 there appears to be a seemingly unimportant genealogy of Adam. We realize this is significant as it relates to the line of Jesus (see Luke 3), but why take the time to mention all the details of each individual?

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What is profound is when you begin to look at the meaning of each of the names.

- Adam:** man
- Seth:** appointed
- Enosh:** mortal, frail, or miserable
- Kenan (Cainan):** sorrow, dirge, elegy
- Mahalalel:** the Blessed God (*coming from Mahalal: blessed or praise / El: name for God*)
- Jared:** this is from the verb which means “shall come down”
- Enoch:** commencement or teaching
- Methuselah:** his death shall bring (*coming from Meth: death / Shalach: to bring/send forth*)
- Lamech:** despairing (*root of this word is where we get our English word lament or lamentation*)
- Noah:** comfort, rest (*derived from nacham: to bring relief or comfort*)

What may appear as an insignificant list of names becomes an incredible picture of the Gospel of Christ.

- Man (is)**
- appointed**
- mortal**
- sorrow; (but)**
- the Blessed God**
- shall come down**
- teaching (that)**
- His death shall bring**
- the despairing**
- comfort, rest**

When you read the meaning of the names (as it would have been understood to a Hebrew listing the genealogy) you see how God, even at the very beginning, weaved a picture of the coming Messiah even into the names/lineage of the first ten people through whom that coming Christ would be birthed through.

May the Blessed God (Ephesians 1:3) who has come down, teach you today that His death has brought us comfort and rest in Himself.

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changes everything!

I Can Only Imagine is about the paradoxical link between pain and redemption, between brokenness and forgiveness. We see plenty on each side of that paradox.

For much of his life, Arthur Millard is not a good father. What kind of father smashes a plate on his son's head? What kind of a father beats his boy senseless? What kind of a father burns something his boy has lovingly created?

But faced with death, faced with his loneliness, faced with his failure, Arthur finds that he's not beyond the reach of God's grace and forgiveness, grace that remakes him. Bart says of his dad, "I saw God transform him from a man that I hated into the man I wanted to become."

All of us have broken places inside. All of us stand in need of redemption. All of us have hurt others, and been hurt by them. And I Can Only Imagine paints one picture of what working through that hurt—admittedly, a very dramatic variety of it—might look like. It challenges and inspires me to forgive others and to ask for forgiveness myself in the ways I've failed others.

And I imagine I'm not the only one who's going to have that kind of response. |A

This review is an excerpt. For the full review visit pluggedin.com



Every song tells a story. But sometimes the story behind a given song is more dramatic than the song itself.

That's the case with "I Can Only Imagine," the 2001 MercyMe song that surged seemingly out of nowhere to become the biggest-selling Christian single of all time.

But "I Can Only Imagine" didn't come from nowhere. And even though that band's frontman, Bart Millard, scribbled out the tear-jerking tune about being with Jesus in heaven in just a few minutes one emotion-filled night, its inspiration was a lifetime in the making. A painful lifetime.

It's 1985 when we first meet young Bart Millard as he works in his grandmother's yard, rides his bike through town (Goonies and Jaws 3-D are playing at the local theater)



and makes a Star Wars-inspired helmet out of cardboard. Bart seems a carefree, imaginative kid. A nice kid.

Bart's mother loves her son's naturally whimsical nature: "You're a dreamer, Bart. That's good."

His father, Arthur? Not so much: "I'm gonna teach you something, Bart. Dreams don't pay the bills. Nothing good comes from it. All it does is keep you from all this," he says, waving his hands around at their rural home in Greenville, Texas, "from knowing what's real." And with that, he picks up Bart's helmet, takes it out to the garbage barrel that's already burning with trash, and tosses it into the flames as tears stream quietly down Bart's cheeks.

But Bart strives mightily to earn his crusty father's approval anyway, notably by playing football in high school. But a terrible tackle



For years, Thanos has watched. When the Avengers beat back an alien invasion, he watched. In fact, for nearly the whole of Marvel's Cinematic Universe, as our superheroes did their hero things, Thanos has lurked in the story's borders, watching, waiting, biding his time.

But now, his time has come. He is the coming storm, the creeping death, the threat of apocalypse and Armageddon, oblivion and omega - The end.

Avengers: Infinity War is unlike any superhero movie I've seen and, narratively, almost impossible to classify. Is it good? Is it bad? Hard to say. Aesthetically it works: It takes risks I've never seen in the genre before, and it's got some really satisfying moments. But it's not, in the end, a very satisfying movie.

That's by design. Infinity War is really the first part of a two-part story, with another Avengers' movie rolling out next year. How I will ultimately feel about this movie depends, in large part, upon how well the next one works.

But given that we've got a whole year to wait—and without getting into any spoilers—let me offer this warning: Infinity War will challenge many a moviegoer, especially young ones. Kids and teens who've really invested in this universe will find this intense flick hard to watch at times.

At Plugged In, we often talk about how important it is to talk through the entertainment we consume, and that's especially true for Infinity War. If you decide to see this movie—and if you take your family to see it—budget time to talk about it afterward. There's a lot to process here, and many who watch it will need to process it. I won't lie to you: I'm still processing myself.

Because of this movie's astronomical profile, and because many viewers have invested so much into this universe and its characters, I imagine that plenty of families will feel like they have to see Infinity War. I totally get that. But remember, the word "war" is a wholly appropriate descriptor of Infinity War. And all wars—even fictional ones like this—come with consequences. |A

For the full review visit pluggedin.com



SOLO: A Star Wars Story

The Star Wars saga has gotten so serious. All the bad-guy glowering and massive death tolls of the latest pics have tended to weigh a bit heavily on this 41-year-old franchise set in a certain galaxy far, far away. Frankly, there's a bit of twinkle and lighthearted excitement gone missing.

So fans who cut their teeth on the original trilogy may well appreciate what director Ron Howard has done with this story set about a decade before the events of the original Star Wars: He's made things fun again.

In young Han Solo's universe, the evil Empire and an emerging Rebel Alliance are both just on the outside edges of the narrative.

The main thruster rocket here is not galactic war, but the thrill ride of Han's origin story. It's a tale that spins, soars and blasts like the Millennium Falcon, captained, of course, by the galaxy's most daring pilot.

Parents of younger fans will still need to consider that amid all that swashbuckling action, there's plenty of peril to plunge through. And Han himself hangs with a rogues gallery of characters whose character is sometimes heroic, sometimes self-serving.

There are definitely heroic seeds at our favorite space scoundrel's core, though, seeds that simply need a little life experience to nurture them to growth. And that's exactly what this swooping heist tale is all about. You get a yarn filled with romance, high-stakes gambits, flashy sidekicks, a spunky robot and a whole lot of who's-going-to-outfox-who intrigue.

Ultimately, it's the kind of colorful adventure that one could imagine Harrison Ford's version of Han recalling with a great deal of flourish ... and a twinkle in his eye. |A

For the full review visit pluggedin.com



Reverend Dave Hill isn't a fighter.

No, he's naturally a mild-mannered, all-round nice guy. The kind of guy you'd share your struggles with. The kind of guy who'd listen patiently and offer wise and winsome advice afterward. In other words, he's exactly the kind of guy you'd want as your pastor.

But when push comes to shove, he won't back down from a fight either.

As this story opens, Dave continues to fight the legal battle still lingering from God's Not Dead 2, one in which he's refused to turn over his sermon transcripts after being ordered by the court to do so.

That conviction has landed him in jail, further stoking controversy at Hadleigh University in the town of Hope Springs. Dave's church, St. James, is on the university's property. And students are demanding that the church be removed because they see Dave as a dangerous, divisive presence.

"We don't want you here!" students protest.

After he's released from jail, Dave tells his good friend Rev. Jude that when his father pastored St. James before him, the doors of the church were open 24 hours a day for anyone seeking refuge or spiritual solace. "Now," Dave laments, "we hire armed security guards to protect us from the people we're supposed to be ministering to."

"It's just fear, David," Jude tells him. "And it can be overcome. You know this." Then he adds, "One thing has never changed: God is good, all the time."

Dave certainly believes that. But when St. James is burned to the ground in an apparent hate crime—taking the life of someone trapped inside—it tests Dave's faith as never before.

Adding insult to injury, Hadleigh University's board of trustees refuses to rebuild the church. Instead, they seize upon the tragedy as an opportunity to claim the land under eminent domain laws.

Dave Hill may not naturally be a fighter. But now he's got another fight on his hands. And it's a battle that will once again affect not only his life, but the lives of many others in Hope Springs—especially a young college student named Keaton who isn't convinced that God really hears her prayers anymore. |A



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