

FINDING LOVE IN A SHOEBOX

Boy sent Christmas shoebox to girl in the Philippines, they wed 14 years later

BY MARK ELLIS

Many people have stuffed a shoebox full of goodies for Operation Christmas Child, a project to bless children around the world run by Samaritan's Purse. But for one seven-year-old boy in Idaho, it led to a surprising outcome many years later.

In 2000, Tyrel Wolfe packed a shoebox for a young girl his age and added a photo of himself wearing cowboy attire, holding a lariat.

After he turned in his shoebox at church he never gave much thought to the girl who received it

more than 11,000km away. Joana Marchan received the shoebox at a vacation Bible school in a suburb of Manila. Not only was a photo of Tyrel included, but also his address.

Joana was thrilled to receive the shoebox.

She wrote a thank you letter to express her appreciation, but it got lost in the mail.

Eleven years later Joana decided to use Facebook to see if she could find the boy who packed her box.

She searched for his name and got one hit in Idaho. She took a chance and submitted a friend request.

But Tyrel had never heard of Joana Marchan, so he ignored the

request.

Two years later, Joana sent another friend request.

This time, Tyrel sent Joana a message asking how she knew him. She replied, telling him that he was the one who sent her a shoebox in 2000.

As the two got to know each other online, they discovered they shared a common faith in Christ and even enjoyed some of the same music.

Tyrel decided he wanted to meet Joana, but had to work to save money for a plane ticket. After his

graduation from high school, he flew to Manila a month later.

He had been on Christian mission trips before, but had never been to Asia and had never travelled by himself.

It was an emotional meeting.



Tyrel Wolfe sent Joana Marchan an Operation Christmas Child gift when they were children.



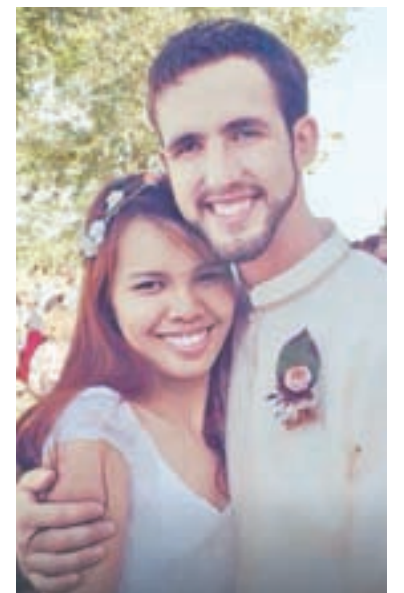
When Joana first saw Tyrel she burst into tears.

"When I finally got there and saw her, I had to punch myself a couple times because I thought it was a dream," he told *People Magazine*. "I was immediately attracted to her."

Tyrel instantly noticed a gap between his way of life and the more modest lifestyle of Joana's family in the Philippines.

All eight members of her family slept on the floor of their 3x6m house.

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Tyrel and Joana are now married and living in the USA.

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DEION SANDERS



Coping with festive funk

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

'TIS the season to be... gloomy?

Feeling low this Christmas season? You're not alone. Amid cheery songs, festive parties, gifts and good wishes, many lonely people are crying or dying on the inside. Maybe you're one of them. I was.

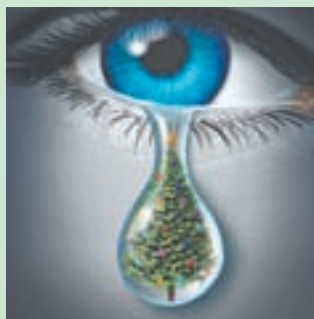
During a horrible year, my wife of 20 years divorced me, my employer of 25 years fired me, and I had a cancer scare.

As I drove home one night, lovely Christmas music came on the radio. A melancholy ache reflected the deep pain of abandonment and loss that I was still processing. No fun.

Blue Christmas

Romantic estrangement, family strife, and bereavement can make your holidays dismal. One of Elvis Presley's most popular songs was *Blue Christmas*, in which a lonely crooner mourns heartbreaking lost love. Performers from The Beach Boys to Celine Dion and Loretta Lynn to Jon Bon Jovi have recorded it.

Several factors can produce Christmas blues. Hectic activity can bring physical and emotional stress. Overspending can produce financial pressure. Year-end reflection and focus on loss can magnify sorrow.



McGill University psychologist Dr Michael Spevack notes, "Over-eating and over-drinking combined with a decreased amount of sleep is also a formula for extreme emotional swings." Depression can lead to thoughts of suicide, especially among the socially isolated, he says.

The empty chair

Is your family apart this season by necessity or choice? Maybe an "empty chair" reminds you of your pain. Does

Christmas cheer contrast with your deep anguish?

One widow recalled how she felt during the Christmas after her husband's death: "Little mattered to me. I didn't want to hear carols. I didn't want to be cheered up. I didn't want to look at perky Christmas cards. I wanted the same thing I'd wanted every day for eight months: the strength to force myself out of bed in the morning, to brush my teeth and to eat."

Coping

How can you cope with Christmas loneliness? Some suggestions:

★ Spend time with people, especially positive ones who lift your spirits. Perhaps you'll be grateful for their cheer.

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Finding love in a shoebox



Joana and Tyrel when they were getting to know each other in the Philippines.

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Prior to the trip, they had agreed not to officially date until Tyrel had asked her father's permission in person.

Midway through his visit he asked her dad, who happened to be a pastor. He quickly agreed.

"I wanted to spend every moment I could with Joana while I was there, because once I left I didn't know what would happen next," Tyrel told *People*.

Tyrel sensed that Joana was the one for him. After he got back to Idaho, he began to work and save so he could go back to visit.

They stayed in touch via Facebook, and Skyped with each other often before Tyrel returned to the Philippines in November. This time he stayed for a month.

On his second trip, he asked her

father for permission to marry Joana.

The couple held an engagement party in the Philippines and obtained a fiancée visa for Joana.

On October 5, 2014 they got married outdoors on Tyrel's parents' 160-hectare property in Midvale, Idaho. The groom wore a traditional shirt often worn by Filipino grooms.

As a special touch, wedding guests were asked if they would pack an Operation Christmas Child shoebox and bring it to the wedding.

The couple decided to live full-time in the U.S. because the job prospects were better for Tyrel.

"It was a big change and adjustment for me," Joana told *People*. "I was raised in the city and now I'm living in the country with much less people and more space, but it's a beautiful place."

In June they were blessed with the birth of a baby boy. ●

MY LIFE-CHANGING CHRISTMAS

Martin Daryl Hendricks faced bullying, rejection and identity issues as a child, which had a big impact on him as he grew up in South Africa. At the age of 39, he found himself broken and alone after his second wife left him. Then that Christmas he had a wake-up call like no other – he was shot at and narrowly escaped with his life. Desperate for change, he took some advice his mother gave him.

Martin describes himself as a young child as happy, funny and full of smiles.

"I loved playing in our backyard," he recalls. "I truly enjoyed school and completed it without failing any grade."

Martin's father abandoned his family, which caused other students to tease him.

"I hated bullying in school and would fight anyone trying to bully me. I felt really rejected when they teased me about my father not staying with us." Martin remembers struggling with his identity as a teenager. Despite being a good student, in high school he started bunking off school and abusing alcohol.

"I played games and would steal small items like chocolate. I would chase girls and indulge in sexual immorality and break hearts because of my first girlfriend who cheated on me."

Martin grew up attending church but, "I did not live according to Jesus' teachings and fell on hard times and many troubles due to double standards."

He admits as time went on he lived a hypocritical lifestyle and believed he was better than his "sinner friends".

"I married and divorced twice. Anger and hate filled my heart for people who hurt me emotionally or physically, and thought I was wise in my own eyes. No one could understand me."

When Martin's second wife left him and their baby boy for another man, he fell into depression.

"I remembered my mother's words: 'God has a plan for your life – go back to Jesus.'"

Martin knew it was time to surrender his life to Christ. "At Christmas, 2010, some guys almost shot me dead and I was grateful to be alive..."

"I went to stay at my mother's place on New Year's Eve, 2010. She prayed with me and I promised God if He gave me a last chance I would serve Him until I died. On January 1st I rededicated my life to Jesus at a church in Braamfisherville."

Martin says his life has completely changed since then. "I no longer tell lies or steal anyone's goods. I have made peace with God and reconciled with my heavenly Father. I

Martin Hendricks with his wife Pulane.



have forgiven everyone, including my father for abandoning us when we needed him the most. I now serve Jesus from a genuine love for Him and have a relationship with God like never before...

"The best part about being a Christian is knowing God will work everything out for my good over time. God has been so good these 13 years and His love makes me love everyone."

Martin is now 51 and works as a pastoral and maintenance officer. His favourite Bible verse is Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loves me and gave Himself for me."

"I have learnt only one thing matters most; my relationship with Christ Jesus, my Saviour and Redeemer," Martin attests. "I want everyone to know that spending time and giving attention to Christ Jesus now is vitally important. I am so grateful that Christ Jesus did not give up on me and thankful that He's kept me all these years, since I was born."

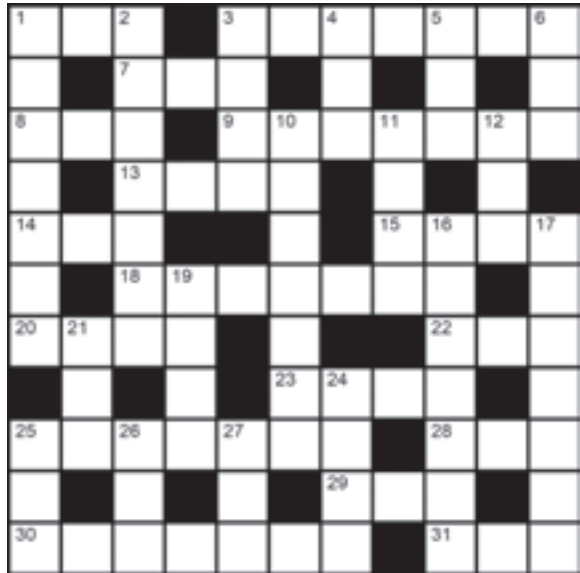
Martin has been happily married to Pulane for seven years. "She serves God with me, together with my 15-year-old boy in the ministry the Lord has given us," Martin says. "Praise the Lord!" ●

Coffee Break

CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

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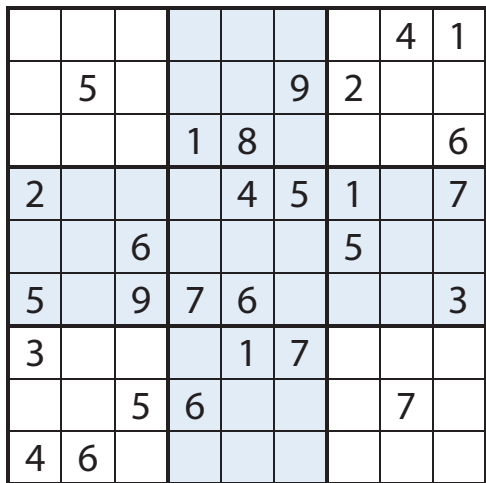
DOWN

- 1 Kitchen article
- 2 Easily understood
- 3 Kind of blocker
- 4 Stand in
- 5 Kind of trip
- 6 Same as 14 Across
- 10 Friendly
- 11 Only one left
- 12 Decorate with frosting
- 16 Set in type
- 17 Take part in a grappling match
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- 24 Concept
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SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



"Can I join your truck pool?"



Coping with festive funk

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- ★ Exercise regularly and eat well.
 - ★ Budget your gift spending and stick with your budget. Prevent January bill shock.
 - ★ Talk about your feelings. Keeping them bottled up can mean anxiety, ulcers, a sour disposition, and/or an emotional explosion. Need a trusted, listening friend? Try a local church.
 - ★ Give to others. Volunteer. Medical professor Stephen Post, PhD, is convinced that giving is essential for optimum physical and mental health in our fragmented society. He says some California physicians give volunteerism "prescriptions" to their Medicare patients.
 - ★ Seek counsel. I used to be embarrassed to obtain professional counsel. Now I recommend it. We all can use good advice navigating life's storms.
 - ★ Develop spiritual roots. I'm glad that before my dark days began, I had a friendship with God.
- Now, I realise you may not agree with me about spiritual matters. But – with sincere respect for you – may I politely mention a few thoughts that have made sense to me, and which you might wish to consider?
- Tired of friends who betray, manipulate, disrespect,

or desert you? God won't. He cares for you, values you, will listen to you and comfort you. You can trust Him. He always wants your best. One early believer put it this way: "Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?" His point: God loved us enough to send Jesus, His only Son, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our wrong, our sins. What a demonstration of love! I can trust a God like that. Then Jesus rose from the dead so He could be our friend and His Spirit could live inside us.

Your choice

Would you like to meet Jesus, the best friend you could ever have? Wouldn't Christmas season be a great time to place your faith in him?

You can tell Him something like this: *Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying and rising again for me. Please forgive me for my sins, enter my life, and give me eternal life. Help me to become good friends with you and learn to follow your lead.*

For more information or resources please see the box entitled *How do I become a Christian?* on page 11. ●

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Was it an angel?

BY DAHLIA GONZALEZ

Her Christmas Eve hope was to die in the hospital and put an end to the endless pain from Crohn's disease.

Then a Jamaican dietitian showed up and prayed for Cassidy Kellagher, and her Christmas gift was to wake up without pain for the first time in many months.

Before coming to the Lord, Cassidy was strongly anti-Christian to the point she wouldn't even say "bless you" when somebody sneezed.

By her own account, she was "an extreme atheist, an extreme vegan, pansexual and an egotistical, terrible person."

She marched in gay pride parades and handed out veggie dogs to senators.

"I wouldn't eat with anybody who ate meat," she says. "I just went out of my way to shame people who didn't believe what I believed in."

In June 2019 Cassidy began to have severe stomach aches.

She soon went to the ER and got a CAT scan and was diagnosed with Crohn's disease.

In the space of three months, she lost 30kg.

Doctors pumped her with pain meds to alleviate the excruciating pain.

"Nothing was working," she says. She dwindled to 40kg and after six months wished to die.

"I wanted to kill myself," she says. "I woke up and hated my existence. I hated every second of it. I had no hope. I lost my personal life."

Then Christmas Eve came, and the pain was so intense that Cassidy asked her mother to take her back to the hospital.

"I felt like it was going to be my last day on Earth," she says. "I was excited, like no more pain, no more tears. Let's do it."

But she didn't die. On Christmas morning she woke up and met the Jamaican dietitian.

She had never seen her before, which was strange because she had been in and out of the hospital so often, she thought she knew everybody. She didn't pay too much attention initially.

For the first time in a long time, Cassidy broke down in tears, which was strange because, "I didn't really have any emotions at that time. I was pretty much a vegetable just waiting to die," she remembers.

The dietitian broke hospital protocol and told Cassidy she was going to pray for her — a decision Cassidy resisted with all the strength she could muster in her weakened condition. But since the lady insisted, Cassidy relented.

"She had so much passion for me," Cassidy recalls.

"You will be healed and you will be a healer," the woman told her.

The day after Christmas, Cassidy woke up and no longer felt any pain. As a matter of fact, she felt so good



Former atheist, vegan, and pansexual Cassidy Kellagher.

she wanted to be released from the hospital, which staff wouldn't allow.

Her mother was mystified. What happened?

Cassidy didn't know but responded: "I have a light in me."

After her condition dramatically improved, she was released the following day.

Since the pain had left her, Cassidy went back to her old ways of sleeping around and partying.

She was still trying to fill a void in her heart.

A friend of hers was Buddhist, and so she got some Buddhist tattoos.

Then Covid hit, and Cassidy went into lockdown.

During this time, she really meditated on her life. She remembered the "beautiful" Jamaican lady who laid hands on her at the hospital to pray.

She realised that the lady had jeopardised her job by inserting prayer into the professional context.

Her curiosity piqued, Cassidy searched the hospital's directory for her. She remembered that she had never seen the Jamaican lady prior to the Christmas visit.

Among the staff, there was no Jamaican dietitian. As she pondered, Cassidy came to a startling conclusion.

"It was an angel sent from God," she says.

"I had to admit that there was no physical way that I could have woken up the next day with no pain."

She put her faith in Christ and committed to follow Him.

Today, she continues to serve the Lord and tells other people about Him.

Cassidy still has health issues, but she is grateful for life and for the love God has poured on her.

"I can tell you with all of my might it is so much better with the Lord by your side," she says.

"I didn't deserve His love, I deserve hell. I actively shamed Christians, I actively went against His kingdom ... He still had hope for me.

"I lost all hope, I lost everything and He still saw something in me. He still loved me. Even through these hospital times and in these deep struggles I still see His hands the whole time.

"He has filled the void!"

This article first appeared on godreports.com and is used with kind permission.



Claudia Wells in April 2022. (Photo Bobby Bank/Getty Images)

The future is bright for former star

In 1985, teenage actress Claudia Wells shot to stardom when she made her big screen debut in *Back to the Future* as Michael J. Fox's character Marty McFly's girlfriend, Jennifer Parker. But her star quickly fell when she pulled out of the following two movies and her role was recast. Behind the scenes, her personal life was in turmoil.

Claudia began landing small television roles when she was 12 years old and living with her single divorced mother in LA.

"My fun and joy was when the camera was on because every single role I played I got to take a part of me and express it," she recalls in an interview with the 700 Club.

But at home, her alcoholic mother continually brought her down, telling her over and over that she regretted the day Claudia was born. She also constantly criticised her weight.

"I used to have to stand in front of my mom's bed and turn while she sat there and told me I was too fat," she recalls. "I wasn't."

At 14, she had had enough and attempted to overdose on her mother's prescription pills.

"It was not a cry for help, it was an 'I'm done. I don't deserve to be here anyway. I'm too fat.'"

By the time she was 16, Claudia was bulimic and taking up to 60 laxatives a day.

Then she landed a role in *Herbie the Love Bug* alongside Dean Jones. The late actor and his wife befriended Claudia.

"[Dean] talked to me about the hole that was inside of me and if I don't fill it with God and if I don't fill it with Jesus Christ, it'll get filled with men and drugs and problems," Claudia shares. "So I said the sinner's prayer (similar to the one on page 11) with Dean at lunch one day and I became saved, not really understanding anything that that meant; but God heard me."

However, the belief that she was a mistake was hard to shake and when she landed the role of Jennifer Parker in *Back to the Future* in 1984, Claudia was terrified.

"In my brain I was thinking, 'Oh no, my legs are going to be so big — it's not just TV — I wonder if I'm skinny enough.'"

The success of the movie made Claudia a household name, but the following year, her mother was diagnosed with cancer. A couple of years later Claudia stepped away from acting in order to care for her.

"I was just not in a place emotionally where I could handle any more than what I was already handling," she told Fox News. "I wanted my mother to be supported and cared for. I left acting altogether, but I knew I would come back."

She also admits she was angry and stopped acting because it was so important to her mother, who wanted her to continue with the *Back to the Future* movies. Claudia was replaced by Elisabeth Shue in the following two movies.

Claudia battled with drug and alcohol problems as well as bulimia until 1992, when she attended a rehab program.

Things started to improve for her when she launched her own business, a men's clothing store called Armani Wells, and started attending church. But the ghosts of her childhood continued to haunt her.

In 2008 her mother lost her battle with cancer.

It was then that Claudia recognised her mother for who she was — a broken woman, like herself.

"I said, 'God I'm really sorry. I'm sorry for the horrible things I said about her. I'm sorry for hurting her on purpose by destroying myself to the best of my ability. Please will You forgive me?'"

A few years later she had an epiphany at church that silenced the voices of shame for good.

"It occurred to me, 'Wait a minute — why am I being so horrible to myself? Jesus died on the cross and He took up all these horrible sins that I'm condemning myself for.' I said, 'I am not a mistake, I am not a mistake,' and I was sobbing. I didn't even know that I thought I was a mistake, I just knew that [my mother] regretted the day I was born. And then I went up to the preacher and I said, 'I'm not a mistake,' and he hugged me."

Claudia who is now 57 and has never married, has returned to acting and has voiced the *Back to the Future* video games. She is also still running her clothing store.

She is a founding board member of a not-for-profit organisation called Kids in the Spotlight which works with foster children and teaches them to produce short movies, including writing scripts and learning how

to act.

"I've lived a lot of experiences I wouldn't want people to go through but God brought me out of them all," the actress told Fox News. "I feel like all of it was for a purpose so that one day, I can help others going through tough times."

She now says that God is "my everything."

"I can't find happiness or peace without Him. He is really, truly my only source of comfort and joy. Anytime I've turned my back to that, even during the darkest of times, I've lost that peace and joy. [My faith is] the reason I'm alive, without a shadow of a doubt." •



Claudia Wells and Michael J. Fox. on the set of *Back to the Future*. (Photo by Sunset Boulevard/Corbis via Getty Images)

“ I am not a mistake, I am not a mistake. ”

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Challenge News

Feliz Navidad! Buon Natale! Joyeux Noël! Merry Christmas!

Christmas traditions from around the world



Venezuela

In Venezuela's capital city Caracas, people make their way to Christmas church services on roller skates!

Many streets close to traffic to ensure the skaters get to church safely.

Many children even sleep with a lace from their skates tied around their toe, while the skate dangles out the window so that their friends can wake them up with a tug on the lace.

Ireland

Irish homes will traditionally display a large candle in a window still after sunset on Christmas Eve. That candle is left to burn all night and symbolises a welcoming light for Mary and Joseph.

Italy

An Italian tradition involves children going from house to house, reciting Christmas songs and poetry in exchange for money or lollies. The children often dress as shepherds, in reference to the shepherds who followed the star to Jesus' manger.



Ukraine

While many people around the world use tinsel and baubles to decorate their Christmas trees, Ukrainians often use spider-themed ornaments.

The tradition comes from a folktale about a poor widow who could not afford to decorate a Christmas tree for her children. On Christmas morning, the children woke up to find the spiders in the house had taken pity on the family and spun beautiful, shimmering webs all over the tree.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Those who attend Congolese Christmas church services bring a gift to lay near the Communion table in honour of Jesus.

"Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him." - Corrie Ten Boom



Mexico

A Mexican legend tells of a girl who had nothing to offer the baby Jesus but a bunch of weeds. When she knelt down to deposit the weeds by the nativity scene,

the bouquet burst into bright red poinsettia flowers. Poinsettia leaves are thought to be shaped like the star of Bethlehem and are known as the Flores de Noche Buena, or Flowers of the Holy Night, and have become synonymous with Christmas.



The advent of an important tradition

BY HARRIET COOMBE

REMEMBER when advent calendars used to be 24 little windows opening to chocolate or lollies? Over the years the Christmas tradition has become a lot more elaborate and now you can find a calendar with almost anything behind the windows.

I must admit, my husband and I have got on board with these new advent calendars and have bought each other calendars boasting Lego, skin care, fidget puzzles, herbal teas and jewellery. And one year we even bought our cat a kibble advent calendar! I've also seen calendars with hot sauce, beef jerky, socks, candles, makeup and books (my pick for 2023 please!). And for those who want to avoid more clutter, there are also virtual calendars offering riddles, games and songs each day.

While most of these calendars are just a bit of cheap fun, as they increase in quality so too does the price tag. Last year jewellery brand Tiffany and Co had advent calendars for sale for an eye-watering \$200,000 each!

We have certainly come a long way from what the first advent calendars looked like.

The tradition began in the 1800s when German families started marking the days until Christmas by tallying chalk marks on a door or wall. This evolved into lighting a candle or displaying a religious picture every day leading up to Christmas Eve.

Families like Gerhard Lang's started making their own countdown calendars. In the early 1900s Gerhard started designing and printing cardboard advent calendars with little doors that could be opened each day to reveal a devotional picture or Bible verse.

During World War II production of advent calendars stopped due to paper rationing but the tradition was picked up again at the end of the war. Soon gifts like chocolate or toys were hidden behind the cardboard windows. They increased in popularity in the USA in the 1950s when photographs of President Dwight Eisenhower and his grandchildren opening an advent calendar



President Eisenhower's three grandchildren join in an appeal for sales of "Little Christmas Town" Advent calendars by the national Epilepsy League. Holding one of the calendars at Fort Leavenworth are (left to right) Susan, 3; David, 6; and Barbara, 5; children of major John Eisenhower. (Photo by Bettmann Archive/Getty Images)



Stock photo

were printed in major newspapers.

Regardless of the fact that more and more companies are jumping on the advent calendar bandwagon as another avenue to sell their wares, marking the days in the lead-up to Christmas is an important time of spiritual reflection and preparation.

The word "advent" means "arrival" and signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person. For Christians, advent refers to a four-week season of remembering and celebrating the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, on Earth.

Imagine what it would have been like for the Jews who waited with hopeful anticipation for the promised Messiah – the One the scriptures prophesied would come to Earth and set them free. They imagined this was from Roman oppression, but it was from their much worse task master – sin itself.

Imagine the joy people like Simeon and Anna (who greeted baby Jesus at the temple) would have felt when they realised He had finally arrived! Jesus fulfilled more than 300 prophecies in the Bible about the coming Messiah – so looking back we can be sure it was Him, although many who met Him fact-to-face could not recognise Him.

The advent season gives us in the 21st century an opportunity to reflect on Jesus' arrival 2000 years ago in the form of a baby, but it also helps us look ahead for another arrival – Jesus' return or second coming. Now it is our turn to look forward with hopeful anticipation.

When Jesus returns He will judge the world, defeat evil and establish His kingdom with those who have followed Him.

Are you ready? The Bible says no one except God knows the hour or day Jesus will return. It could be today. Now is the time to put your faith in Jesus. Please see the box on page 11 entitled *How do I become a Christian?* for more information.



The eye, the inner ear, and vertigo

PETER'S CORNER

HOW amazing are our eyes? For example we can look directly at something and keep it in view, even while moving our heads in any kind of way! Just take a video with a phone while walking, running or jumping, and compare what the camera 'sees' with what we see.

It works like this – a very simplified summary! The inner ear is our main sensor of head movements, position, and balance. It does this using the 'vestibular apparatus' made of two sets of three hair-lined semi-circular canals connected to small bags. The canals are arranged at right angles to each other. Whenever the head moves, fluid in the canals and the bags shifts and tickles the hairs, and that sends the movement information to the brain. Then the brain triggers eye movements to exactly compensate for the head movements. It happens extremely fast! Some eye muscles can make over 170,000 adjusting movements per day and not get tired. The whole system is an awesome example of designed micro-engineering.

The workings of this system impacted my wife who had some episodes of vertigo recently. Vertigo happens like this: The hairs lining the bags are weighted with chalk crystals. If a chalk crystal becomes detached and drifts into a semicircular canal, it interferes with the hairs and tricks them into sensing movement has occurred. The brain then commands the corresponding eye movements. The result for my wife was seeing everything tilt quickly to the left and jump back again, over and over again, even though nothing was actually moving – except for her eyes. It now makes us so appreciate a working eye/balance system.

An eye without semi-circular canals won't work. All of the system has to be designed and built at once to be able to work. Evolution cannot do that – it is blind, deaf and dumb, and has no idea of what or how to design. But our Creator sure knew how to create an amazing design.

The conclusion is that nothing makes sense in biology except in the light of design. Our real challenge is to accept this conclusion.

I hope these words help you, as they have me, in your journey to surely trust the Creator. I gratefully acknowledge the below reference for background information for this article.

Peter Gurney. Our eye movements and their control: part 2. *Journal of Creation* 17(1):103–110, April 2003

Peter Mikula is a mining engineer in Kalgoorlie who loves stargazing and talking with others about Jesus.



Mike Dooley

BY ANDREW SNOWDON, CMI
CREATION MAGAZINE

At the elite Sydney Conservatorium where pianist Mike Dooley was studying, he found his enthusiasm for life and music eroded into disillusion.

"The music we were studying was very depressing," he explained.

"There was no sense of hope. It was basically reflecting the very grim state of the world... I was led into a sense of real despair."

It was during this dark period that a concert featuring JS Bach's *St John Passion* proved pivotal.

"The music was profoundly beautiful, but also, the story of the crucifixion deeply touched my heart," Mike remembers.

He attended the concert as an atheist but by the time he left, his heart was whispering "I believe."

At the time, he was studying with one of Australia's most prominent composers.

"I asked him, 'Why did Bach create such beautiful, harmonious, and meaningful music? And why do we today create this very dissonant-sounding avant-garde music?'"

"He said, 'They had God in those days, but we don't have God anymore.' That was his answer! To me that was like a bit of a light going on."

Mike realised that one's worldview shaped their music.

"Someone with a worldview that has no hope – we came from nothing and we're going nowhere – will write despairing, hopeless music."

"Someone with a hopeful, positive worldview about a purposeful Creator will create purposeful and hopeful music."

"And that is what you see in the great Christian composers. There would always be triumph and hope

at the end because that's reflective of their worldview."

Mike had in fact grown up in a Christian family but his faith was undermined by reading the likes of astronomer Carl Sagan and other sceptics.

"My parents were loving, sincere Christians, but they and my church lacked confidence in the early chapters of Genesis, thinking they were maybe some sort of allegory," Mike tells *Creation* magazine's Andrew Snowdon.

"By my late teens, when I went to study at music college, I was an atheist, or at best agnostic."

Sometime after the Bach episode, a high school friend shocked Mike by telling him he had become a Christian. "He shared the Gospel with me, and very quickly, I took the step of turning to Jesus – a very big change for me."

A couple of days later his friend read Mike some passages from an early creation book.

"There was enough good science in there, and enough truth from the Word, that I completely accepted the Genesis creation account as being true," Mike said.

"I completely rejected evolution at that point."

Mike experienced "incredible joy" at that moment. He no longer thought of himself as a random assortment of molecules caused by a series of cosmic accidents.

Instead, he realised that he was a loved creation of a purposeful and living Creator:

"It was an incredible life-changer for me, and I said, 'I want to serve this God.'"

So, that's what he did. He spent 30 years overseas doing humanitarian missions work while performing.

"Music opened doors to travel to

various countries that would normally be quite closed to the gospel."

Music disproves evolution in its own way, Mike shares, saying it is a uniquely human ability that doesn't really make sense within evolutionary theory:

"What would be the survival advantage of being able to play a harmonic and melodic instrument?" he asked.

"If you think about how musical ability supposedly evolved, or look up the literature on it, evolutionists are really clutching at straws."

"They try to explain why and how we would develop such fine acoustic appreciation, and the motor skills to be able to perform music."

"Researchers are uncovering how the design of our inner ear 'receiver' coupled with the brain's computational ability allows humans to distinguish the pitch and timing of notes in a way that greatly exceeds a theoretical mathematical limit."

"It is bordering on absurd to think that such advanced technology could come about from the selection of random but somehow advantageous mutations."

One of Mike's recent compositions, *Perpetua* – a classical choral work about the Christian martyr of that name – is about "standing up for faith in difficult times and living for heavenly values rather than worldly success or values – and about supporting the persecuted church."

"There was a time in my Christian walk when I started to waver. Some Christian writers were trying to reinterpret Genesis to allow for 'millions of years.'"

As he looked for resources, he

came across creation.com and says, "I was absolutely floored by the high quality, the good scriptural and good scientific arguments."

Mike said he found the writings of creationist Professor Stuart Burgess on engineering and design particularly helpful.

"What it's really about for me is the authority of Scripture. It's the fact that when God says what He says, He means it and He is able to communicate that to us."

"God can create the universe in six days. We humans can wonder how that could be possible, or doubt that God could do it, but He is omnipotent."

1. Related to the complex mathematical calculation called a Fourier transform; see Zyga, L., Human hearing beats the Fourier uncertainty principle, *phys.org*, 4 Feb 2013.

2. Stuart Burgess is Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Bristol University, UK, specializing in biomimetics, i.e. copying designs found in nature for human benefit. See creation.com/stuart-burgess-biomimeticsandcreation.com/prof-stuart-burgess.

Michael ('Mike') Dooley is a pianist, composer, song and hymn writer, producer, and music teacher, who studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Canberra Institute of Technology. For three decades, he lived in Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East, involved in both music and humanitarian mission work. Mike won the APRA/AGSC (Australia's top screen music award) for 'Best Music for Children's Television' for his score for the 2019 animated film *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He and his wife Chalsey live in Canberra, Australia.



Michael and Chalsey with grandson Jamie and sons William, Callum and Anthony.

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NOW I KNOW WHO I AM

Thamzell Sampson



Thamzell Sampson's childhood is split into two parts – the happy early years, and the years after her parents' marriage ended.

She describes her childhood growing up in South Africa as normal until the day her mother discovered her father had been unfaithful.

"When that came to light, everything changed drastically," she tells *Challenge News*.

"Fights between my mother and father were very traumatising. Alcohol played a big role in these fights."

Thamzell's father abandoned his family when she was 11. While her mother was present physically, the pain of rejection changed her.

"This basically forced me to grow up," Thamzell recalls. "I was a very shy girl. I dealt with a lot of anger and rejection because of my father walking out. I had very low self-esteem as well."

She attended church with her aunt, who was a Sunday School teacher.

"The first time I really heard about God was when my cousin committed her life to Jesus and she introduced God to me," Thamzell remembers. "They had regular home group meetings at my grandmother's home."

Thamzell recalls the moment she became a Christian as a 12-year-old girl. "I prayed the sinner's prayer [see page 11 for an example] and committed my life to Jesus," she shares. Thamzell knew God had chosen her.

Sixteen years on, she says many things have changed since then.

"My biggest change I would say is the way I see myself. Where I had low self-esteem, looking down at myself, I now have so much boldness and confidence in myself. I know who I belong to, and who my Father is. I'm a child of God. Knowing who I am gave me a lot of assurance and boldness."

Thamzell says she endeavours to daily renew her mind as it says in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any

longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." She says sometimes this is hard to do with everything going on in the world.

"However, the best part is that the grace (undeserved love) of God is sufficient for us each and every day,"

Thamzell says.

She tells others, "Jesus will meet you right where you are. Jesus loves us just the way we are. I have found that you do not have to be at a certain point in your life to be good enough for Jesus."

Her favourite Bible verse is 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love."

"Jesus loves you," she shares. "Many times in life we seek for something or someone to belong to. But we are created in God's image. Therefore you are His creation and you belong to Him. If you have tried everything and you're out of options, just try Jesus - your life will never be the same."

Thamzell is now 28, married and works as a human resources benefits specialist.

“I now have so much boldness and confidence in myself.”

Conquering depression and regret

Janine Bester



When Janine Bester was 16 years old she started feeling extremely depressed.

"I'd carry every failure, every mistake, every insecurity on my own shoulders," she recalls. Four years on, Janine now realises that she was placing an impossible expectation on others to give her joy. Looking for fulfilment in the wrong places led to disappointment, bitterness, and jealousy towards those who seemed to have it all.

"I got exhausted from always trying to hide the depressed version of me," she explains, "and that led to me drinking too much. I'd have a few really good days, but I still had a reason to cry every night. I lost a lot of weight from feeling insecure, which caused me to have a lot of health problems, and the medication I had to depend on made me feel even more depressed."

"I constantly isolated myself, making up excuses not to go out with friends. I was in desperate for a standard of joy that the world couldn't offer me."

Janine grew up in a loving family, attended a great school and had supportive friends. Despite this, she wasn't happy.

"I was never content with who I was. I always wanted to be better and I developed a mindset of not being good enough and comparing myself unfavourably to others."

But everything changed for Janine in 2019 when a friend invited her to a big worship event at her church. Janine had been raised in a Christian family and attended church since she was a child but she didn't have a relationship with Jesus.

"I always knew there was a God," she says. "I just thought He lived in the church building and we visited Him on Sundays." But during this worship event, she had an encounter with God's Holy Spirit (His invisible presence).

"I physically felt God for the first time," Janine shares. "[There was] an incredible moment where they asked everyone to stand if they wanted to have a life with God and I remember feeling scared to stand up, but I'm glad I did. Some people came to rub my forehead with oil. [Note: Anointing the sick with oil is taught in the Bible

in James 5:14]

When I stepped out of the doors of the building I could literally feel everything that I carried on my shoulders (my insecurities, failures, and disappointments) being taken off ... I realised that God gave me that standard of joy that no one and nothing else could give me."

After giving her life to God, Janine noticed immediate changes.

"My dreams started coming true at age 18. My depression disappeared. I was physically healed and no one could explain how," she attests.

"My reason to cry at night (even on good days) was replaced with a reason to smile and be grateful (even on my worst days). I realised that I could do things that I never could before because I learned that (Jesus') resurrection power runs in my veins too."

"Massive opportunities came my way when I let God plan my direction. I felt relieved because I had Someone I could give my heavy baggage to. My past regrets never appeared in my life again after I gave them to God. I saw God heal my family and friends."

"And now I experience more love from God daily than I would in a year from any human being."

Janine says she has learnt to hear her Lord's voice.

"I now have the ability to communicate with the One who created the entire universe ... The best thing about being a Christian is knowing that there's Someone that will love me no matter how many times I fail. It's awesome to see Him at work, seeing miracles every day."

However, she admits there has also been a cost to following Christ.

"I have been in situations where I have had to choose to say no to certain things because of the values I live by, and that has led others to judge and mock me for that."

However, she assures others, "Christianity is worth it. The moment you realise God is on your side every step of the way, there's no reason to want to turn back. There really isn't a love as big as this."

Janine's favourite Bible verse is Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

“My dreams started coming true”

nudge WITH KARL FAASE

Growing in the presence of God

HAVE you ever considered how your view of God impacts your ability to grow in your relationship with God? There are those who see God as an angry and aloof divine being, judgmental and angry. This has been replaced in some quarters by a God that gives us all we want and cares for our every need without any moral parameters. Bishop Geoffrey Robinson has written, "We cannot grow under an angry god and we will not grow under a god of soft, indulgent love." Both these views of God are extreme and unhelpful. God loves us and reaches out to us, but God is holy and concerned with how we live. Love does not mean He has no concerns with our behaviour and attitudes.

Contact Challenge!

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YOUTH TRUTH

MY ANXIETY PARALYSED ME

After a traumatic event as a child, anxious thoughts would race through Cindy Rivera's mind, leaving her exhausted and frightened. Enduring years of this with no relief, she turned to alcohol and even attempted suicide twice. Finally Cindy found hope and the tools she needed to deal with her intrusive thoughts.

In a Delafe Testimonies video on YouTube, Cindy recalls when she was five and visiting extended family, she got into trouble for something. She ran to her 12-year-old uncle to tell him what happened.

"He said, 'Don't worry, it'll be okay,' and his hand started to wander," she shares. "At five years old I didn't understand what was happening but I knew that I felt so uncomfortable and shameful."

Cindy says she didn't want to get into trouble and told herself it must be "normal".

After this, Cindy recalls feeling fearful out of nowhere. "I felt so anxious and I would wake up in the middle of the night trembling," Cindy recalls. "I would have racing thoughts go through my mind. I was so scared that something bad was gonna happen... I would have thoughts of hurting myself or other people. I would see images in my mind of things that would scare me and I didn't tell anyone."

Cindy noticed the anxiety was worse when she wasn't distracted and busy. In middle school, she started drinking

and smoking in the hopes it would numb her anxiety.

"But none of that was making me feel any better – it actually was making me feel worse."

As time went on, Cindy became overwhelmed with hopelessness that nothing was helping her anxiety.

"I tried to commit suicide two times," she admits.

After her second attempt, she cried out to God in her desperation: "Lord, I don't know if You're real but I need You to show up for me. I need You to come and help me because if You don't I'm gonna do it again and I'm gonna succeed."

Not long after this, she heard an announcement at school inviting students to go to a Bible study and she decided to go. It was there that she heard the good news about Jesus, that He had died on the cross for her and wanted a relationship with her.

"People were sharing their [stories]," Cindy recalls. "They shared how broken they were and how they were free now, and so that gave me a lot of hope. I thought, 'Wow, I want that. I want this Jesus that they're talking about.' So I continued to go and I gave my life to Jesus. I started to experience this peace that I had never felt before."

She was given a Bible and began to read it. "I felt so loved," Cindy shares.

For a while she was free from the intrusive thoughts, but six months later, new thoughts began to plague her.

You're not really saved. This isn't real. Anxiety's still here. What if you try to kill yourself again?

"I remember crying out to God and saying, 'God I can't do this. I won't get married, I won't have children because I don't want my husband to deal with this. I don't want my children to have it. I don't want to be scared to hurt myself or them.'"

Suddenly a thought

dropped into her mind: "One day you're gonna talk about this with your husband."

At the time she dismissed it. But a few years later, she started dating Isaac. One day after church, he told her about a dream he'd had about her.

"He said that in the dream I was much older and that I had a son and I looked at my son with a lot of love and that I was a great mother. When he told

me that I began to cry because I hadn't told anyone besides the Lord about not wanting to have kids because of anxiety. In that moment the Lord reminded me of what He said to me, that one day I was gonna talk about this with my husband."

Cindy recalls feeling a peace and the thoughts subsided again.

Three years later, Isaac and Cindy got engaged and Cindy was overjoyed. But a couple of months before the wedding, the anxious thoughts returned. *You can't do this. You shouldn't get married. You're going to bring this into your household. Your children will suffer because of you.*

Cindy remembers praying about her anxiety when God showed her a picture of a toolbox.

"I remember God telling me, 'I'm gonna give you the tools to be free from this forever and you're going to help

others be free.'"

God showed Cindy how to "rewrite" the thoughts that popped into her mind. When she had an anxious "what if" thought, she would choose to think about a positive "what if" scenario. When a negative image popped into her mind (for example, hurting herself), she would envision herself doing something positive (for example, praying for someone).

As Cindy put these strategies into practice, she realised she was living out 2 Corinthians 10:5: "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Through God's help, Cindy was able to forgive her uncle. She is now a youth leader in her church and draws upon her experiences with anxiety to help young people. •



Cindy Rivera. Photo: YouTube/@delafetestimonies

“ I felt so loved. ”

Equipped for the battle

BY JEFF GLUECK

My porn addiction began when I was 15. Porn was all over my workplace — break areas, restrooms, literally everywhere. You see, growing up, I was taught that access to the gospel was reserved for priests. A personal relationship with Jesus was not only out of the question... it was considered unnecessary. So long as I was baptised and confessed to a priest, I was good. So, I looked at porn guilt-free.

Little did I know, these images were slowly rewiring my brain, eroding my ability to share and experience real intimacy. I was losing a battle that I didn't even know I was in — I was in serious trouble.

Like a lamb being led to slaughter, I was dragged to my own spiritual death. I graduated from porn to massage parlours, to phone sex, to prostitutes. Hindered by my inability to experience and value genuine intimacy, I had a number of extramarital affairs, resulting in multiple failed marriages. I was not only self-destructive; I hurt others.

Though I found myself unable to stop, I felt immense shame after every act. In my mind, this shame confirmed the lie that I wasn't worthy of intimacy; to comfort myself, I sought sexual pleasure. It was a vicious cycle. The root, of course, was spiritual. I was totally and completely lost, but I had no idea.

Then, one day at the bar, I found myself discussing the Bible with my girlfriend Bonnie. I was saying that it was merely a collection of stories. I mean... Noah's Ark? Please. When I said this, Bonnie burst into tears. She insisted that the Bible was the Word of God without



Jeff Glueck

any error. We were in a full-fledged fight. She went home, I went home, and that was that.

A week passed, but the conversation was still on my mind. Curious, I texted Bonnie: "I'm willing to learn if you will teach me." I later learned that she'd decided that our night at the bar would be our last night together; she said that she was so shocked by my text, she almost fell off her chair. She excitedly invited me to read Rick Warren's *A Purpose Driven Life* with her, chapter by chapter, like a book club. I agreed.

Two of the book's messages rattled me: 1) your life and purpose are not about you and 2) you are not defined by your sin. It was like being hit with a 2x4 right between my eyes. All of the misunder-

standings and half-truths I'd been taught in my childhood church were replaced with the truths of Scripture. I learned that I could have a personal relationship with Jesus and that I could read the Bible on my own. My mind was blown.

As I began growing in knowledge, things began to shift. Finally, one morning in the shower, I broke down in tears. Overwhelmed by my own sinfulness and need for Christ, I fell to my knees and begged God to forgive me. When I stood up, everything was different. I was different.

My entire world changed. I was still tempted, and still am to this day, but I wasn't battling it on my own anymore. Jesus equipped me with the weapons needed to resist sin — because He defeated sin for me 2000 years ago! Porn destroys families, relationships, and people; I know this because it nearly destroyed me. But by God's grace, I am free. As for Bonnie, she is now my wife. I am so thankful that she defended her faith back then, because her words planted a seed in me — and that seed sprouted into a miraculous life change.

Though I regret my past, I can see that God is using it for good. Because of my own struggles, I'm able to teach my teenage sons about the dangers and long-term effects of pornography. And despite my guilt, I know that because of Jesus, I have been washed clean: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

No matter your sins and shortcomings, know that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. You're loved by the Lord — so loved that He died for you! •

As told to and edited by Adira Polite and originally published on Then God Moved



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BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

The Christmas truce of World War I

BY ROB FURLONG

ON CHRISTMAS Eve, 1914, the world had been at war for almost six months. At the Western Front, where some of the bloodiest confrontations of the war took place, men on both sides of the conflict were living in squalid conditions and under the ever-present spectre of imminent death, with many of them now questioning the optimistic view expressed six months earlier "that the war would be over by Christmas." Indeed, World War I would rage for another four years, claiming the lives of 15 million people.

But on this Christmas Eve – the first of WW1 – something remarkable happened. Bruce Bairnsfather, a British soldier in the trenches in Belgium that night recorded it in his memoirs:

"At about 10 pm, I heard a noise. Away across the field, among the dark shadows beyond, I could hear the murmur of voices. I turned to a fellow soldier and said, 'Do you hear the Boches [Germans] kicking up that racket over there?' 'Yes,' he replied.

"They've been at it some time!"

The German soldiers were singing Christmas carols but when one of them called out in English to the British soldiers, "Come over here!" the British were understandably skeptical about the invitation. However, both sides eventually agreed to meet up in the middle of "No Man's Land."

Men who had been firing bullets at each other earlier that day were now shaking hands, singing songs, and sharing tobacco and wine with one another.

Bairnsfather said, "Here they were – the actual, practical soldiers of the German army. There was not an atom of hate on either side."

What happened that night was not confined to the trenches in Belgium. There are also accounts of other soldiers elsewhere on the Western front who reported a similar "truce"



Stock photo

taking place on Christmas Eve, 1914 – an impromptu soccer match between German and English soldiers and Germans lighting up Christmas trees in their trenches with candles!

One soldier poignantly described what took place in his diary: "Here we were laughing and chatting to men whom only a few hours before we were trying to kill!"

I first became aware of this remarkable story many years ago when I read that in one trench, a German soldier began singing *Stille Nacht* and then from the British trench, a soldier responded by singing the second verse in English – we know the carol as *Silent Night* – and when the carol was concluded, similar scenes to those already described ensued.

It's worth reflecting on the words of that beautiful old carol and as you

do, notice how the themes of peace, salvation, and grace flow through it:

*Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born
Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.*

Peace, salvation, and grace – this is what the birth of Jesus ushered into the world. And for a few brief hours on Christmas Eve, 1914, as enemy soldiers sang about the Saviour of the world, they also extended peace and grace to each other.

Christmas Eve, 1914, reminds us there is something about the Christmas story which draws out the best in us. But there is more.

By accepting the truth of Christmas – that Jesus came to die for my sin – our inner world will be transformed.

This Christmas, may you know the grace of God's forgiveness, and His salvation which brings you peace with God and your relationships.

Silent night, holy night, Christ the Saviour is born!

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ

We read in God's word: "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)

OUR PROBLEM: **Separation from God**
"Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God's standards are perfect" (Romans 3:23) **ADMIT**

GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION: **Jesus died on the cross**
"God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8) **BELIEVE**

OUR RESPONSE: **Trust Jesus by receiving Him**
"To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12) **COMMIT**

Here is an example of how you can pray.

Dear Father in Heaven. I come to you now because I want to be saved. Please, forgive me of my sins. I believe that you sent your Son Jesus Christ to die for me and that you have raised him from the dead. I now ask Jesus Christ to come into my life as my Saviour and Lord. Take control of my life. Please make me the person You created me to be. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen

The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in me has eternal life." (John 6:47).

He gives life of a wonderful quality that continues forever.

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a Christian that you know or email us at info@challengenews.org
2. Use the resources in the green box on this page to find a Bible to read and more information regarding Christianity.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

AS A NEXT STEP: Please send me: Bible Some 'starting off' literature Information on a helpful church

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Phone _____

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Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985
info@challengenews.org

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Want to explore more?

Here are some **free**, helpful, Christian online resources:

Online Bible - Olive Tree app (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - Bible.is app , or Youversion Bible app	
Christian radio station - CBN radio app (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app	
Christian movies, serials and kids' shows - Good. app	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - the Bible Project on YouTube .	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app	
Comic book Bible online- goodandevilbook.com	
More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online	



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A LIGHTHOUSE?

BY ILSE FRIIS

A LIGHTHOUSE is designed to warn the ships of dangerous rocks or shallows and show them the way they need to go. They deter ships from running aground, preventing the ship's destruction and that of their cargo, and the lives of their crew.

Now, if a lighthouse and a ship are on a collision course, who has to move?

Of course it is the ship that needs to move, otherwise it will be destroyed. The lighthouse will always be at the same spot. It is not designed to move, but to be constantly showing the way. It will always be there to protect.

As long as those rocks or shallows are there, they pose a danger; in the same way, as long as sin is present it will destroy people. God's Word and principles is a lighthouse warning us of the peril we face if we do not change our course.

His lighthouse of truth shows us the way to conduct our lives and to make the best decisions. It protects us from shipwreck and keeps us safe. If we follow God's guidelines and commands we will always receive God's best for our lives.

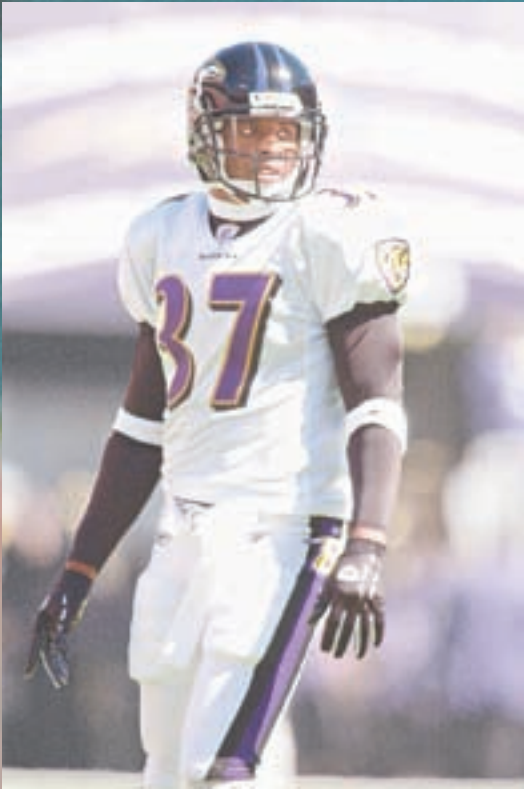
His lighthouse is there to keep us from destruction, not spoil our fun.

Proverbs 6:23 reads: "Sound advice is a beacon, good teaching is a light, moral discipline is a life path."

And Proverbs 2: 6-8 says: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints."

Don't you think the safest course is to let God's Word and principles guide your life?

You can start by praying to invite Him into your life, and asking Him to empower you to live as He directs. Then read His instruction manual (the Bible) and be guided by its light.



Deion Sanders of the Cincinnati Reds attempts to steal second base during a Major League Baseball game against the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1997 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Photo by George Gojkovich/Getty Images)

INSET: Deion Sanders #37 of the Baltimore Ravens during a NFL football game against the Pittsburgh Steelers on September 19, 2004 in Baltimore, Maryland. (Photo by Mitchell Layton/Getty Images)



THE PAIN OF SUCCESS

In 1997 Deion Sanders was at the top of his game in not just one but two sports. Nicknamed “Prime Time” and “Neon Deion”, he was playing in both the National Football League (NFL) and Major League Baseball (MLB) and made history by hitting an MLB home run and scoring an NFL touchdown in the same week. He had achieved success other athletes only dream of, winning two Super Bowl titles and making a World Series.

Yet Deion was empty. So empty that he attempted suicide – something he credits with actually saving

his life. Starting off his career playing baseball, Deion was drafted in 1985 by the Kansas City Royals but didn’t sign with the team, waiting until 1988, when he was drafted by the New York Yankees.

He debuted the following year, the same year he was drafted by the Atlanta Falcons in the NFL draft.

He went on to spend 14 successful seasons in the football league with five different teams. He was named All-Pro nine times, a Pro Bowl player eight times as well as Defensive Player of the Year in 1994 with the San Francisco 49ers.

Deion played parts of nine baseball seasons with four different teams. He is the only player to ever take part in a football Super Bowl and a baseball World Series.

In an interview with Bear Grylls, Deion shares how he felt after winning his first Super Bowl.

“I was the first one on the bus, the first one to bed. I didn’t even go and party. [There] was something missing inside. It wasn’t as fulfilling as I thought it was. It wasn’t about the things – the outward things – because I had power, money and sex but it wasn’t fulfilling ... there was an empty feeling still.”

When Deion went through a divorce and lost custody of his children, the emptiness only grew.

“It was devastating. I went through a suicidal period.”

He attempted to end his life by driving his car off a 12m cliff. To his

surprise, he walked away with no significant injuries.

“Shortly after that I had to just come to the Lord with my hands up and say, ‘I’m done. I can’t do it anymore. You’ve got me. I give up. God, You take me.’”

“I had to get a lot of Word in [read the Bible a lot] so that I could fight off the enemy,” Deion says in a Sports casting article. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without my faith ... My faith is everything. It’s the gas that propels the courage; the truth that keeps me going.”

Deion went on to win custody of his children.

“I pride myself on being the best dad in the world,” he told Bear Grylls in 2014. “I know all their shoe sizes, all their clothes sizes, the teachers. I know how to braid my daughter’s hair. It has to be something bigger than you that you’re working for, that you’re living for. If it’s all about you, you’ve already lost.”

Deion spoke about Christianity in a video for Alright TV on YouTube.

“The fact that you are here is proof that God does exist,” he explains. “Do you really think that you’re the design of two random molecules just coming together randomly? God is a God of order. And we all must go

through the same process. When God created Adam and Eve it was a meticulous process.”

After his playing days, Deion became an analyst for CBS Sports, NFL Network, and Barstool Sports. He was an assistant coach for women’s professional basketball team Dallas Fury as well as the offensive coordinator for the football team for the school his sons attended until 2020, when he was hired by Jackson State.

Last year Deion’s doctors discovered severe blood clots in his leg, which required two of his toes to be amputated from his

left foot. “We may smell like smoke because we’ve been through the fire,” Deion says in an interview with Chris Neely of Thee Pregame Show.

“But I wouldn’t change none of it. I needed it. I love it, I’m proud of it, I’m thankful for it. I got to really see God’s face.”

Deion feels fortunate that he only lost two toes and not his entire leg or even his life.

“So when I look up and say thank you, Jesus, it’s because I know the quiet cries at night that were in that hospital.”

Now 55, Deion is the head football coach at Jackson State.

He has written a book about his life called *Power, Money & Sex: How Success Almost Ruined My Life*.



Deion Sanders speaks onstage during The Big Homecoming Event at Clark Atlanta University on June 17, 2022 in Atlanta, Georgia. (Photo by Paras Griffin/Getty Images)

“**I had power, money and sex but it wasn't fulfilling.**”

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