

FROM PANIC TO PEACE



BY JANICE TEO

It was in 2015 that technology consultant Suvas Lobo heard the words that crashed his world.

“Mr Lobo I’m so sorry but we found cancer in your colon, and you have to undergo immediate surgery,” the doctor said, confirming Suvas’ worst fears about the acute pain he had been experiencing for the last three weeks.

Suvas was 42.

“The words ring in my ears as loudly now as they did eight years ago,” he tells *Challenge News*. “The feelings of fear, panic and desperation were probably the greatest at that time.”

A few days later, a new emotion surfaced: anger. Anger at God.

“I had been raised in church and had always observed my faith – I went to church, said my prayers, lived a good life,” Suvas says.

“I thought that’s what it meant to be a Christian and felt this was so very unfair of God. How could I believe in an all-loving God who could let this happen? My faith was

very superficial.” Suvas had the operation. Doctors were confident they got everything but in 2016 the cancer returned and had metastasized into the liver.

Suvas found his faith at a crossroads. Should he walk away from God or toward Him?

Speaking at a Full Gospel Businessmen’s Association meeting recently, he said: “I’ll tell you honestly; it took a lot of soul searching. I struggled to find anything positive about my situation, especially as I had three young children.”

During his recovery from the surgery on his liver, a friend gave Suvas a card with the poem *Footprints in the Sand* (see page 2).

In the poem, the writer recounts a dream he had showing one set of footprints as he walked through life’s deepest valleys.

The writer thinks God left him to walk alone but realises at the end why there is only one set of footprints in the sand - not because he walked alone but because God had carried him. The footprints belonged to God.

“I thought I was alone, but reading that poem made me realise I wasn’t,” Suvas shares. “God was with me.”

Suvas began praying and reading the Bible more as he sought answers.

In 2017, the cancer returned yet again, and this time it went for his lungs. He was now Stage 4, incurable.

Suvas turned even more desperately to the Word of God. “One particular evening, I kept coming across God’s message to us, ‘do not fear’.

“I remember specifically reading 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 [‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.’]”

He fell asleep while meditating on this verse. When he woke up the next day, much had changed.

“I woke up with a tremendous sense of calm and a sense that I was going to be okay. Overnight my fear was replaced with peace. It was inexplicable.

“My mind had been clouded for so many months searching for answers and now the fog was gone.

“After this I committed myself to being an active, not passive, Christian. I repented of being a ‘by the



Suvas undergoing chemotherapy.

numbers’ Christian. “I knew God was asking me: ‘Are you going to choose to trust Me, to believe in Me? To let Me guide you on your path?’ And I said ‘yes Lord’. That moment was shortly after Christmas 2017. I began 2018 as a new creation in Christ.”

Suvas still undergoes chemotherapy, but he has outlived the dire prognosis in 2017 that had given him only two years – five at the most – to live.

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Magic or miracles?

Magician and skeptic André Kole was challenged to investigate the validity of the miracles of Jesus Christ. Would he debunk Jesus’ miracles or become convinced they were literally “acts of God”?



André Kole

André Kole (1936-2022) was seven when he was inspired to become a magician after seeing an illusionist’s performance. By the age of 20, he was performing his Table of Death trick on national television.

He went on to invent more than 1000 illusions including the Squeeze Box and the Head Mover, which has been performed by David Copperfield. Throughout his career, André performed in 80 countries on five continents. He was named Inventor of the Decade by the International Magicians Society and was awarded by The Academy of Magical Arts in Hollywood.

He was also known for governments commissioning him to investigate “miracle workers” who were duping people out of their money with fraudulent miracle cures. He never failed to work out how these fraudsters were tricking people.

At the time he was challenged to investigate the miracles of Jesus Christ, André was a skeptic and believed Jesus was probably the most successful magician who had ever lived.

He acknowledged that if he was wrong and the miracles of Jesus were real, then God was real.

He wrote in his essay, *Jesus: Magician or God?*

“A miracle has been defined as an ‘act of God’. It is

something that only God can do. Anyone can claim to be God and quite a few have; however, only God can do what only God can do. Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster or any other founders of the world’s great religions never claimed to be God. None of them ever claimed to be able to perform miracles. In all of human history, Jesus was unique.

“He could instantly heal every known sickness and disease of every person who came to Him. He could raise the dead. He could take a small boy’s lunch and multiply it to feed over 5,000 people. He could say to a raging storm, ‘Peace, be still’ and the storm would instantly stop.” The Bible reports that Jesus performed these incredible miracles. Non-religious historians also documented Jesus’ miracles.

First-century historian Josephus Flavius, wrote about Jesus in his book, *Jewish Antiquities*, “...we learn that Jesus was a wise man who did surprising feats.”

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FROM PANIC TO PEACE

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However, in February this year, doctors found multiple metastatic brain lesions. In early July, they told him the cancer had spread to his liver and bones.

But ever the fighter, Suvas declares: "Yes it's now a tougher struggle but my faith has not wavered. I know that I will continue to surrender to Him and pray for miracles."

He now uses his time to share the Gospel with anyone willing to listen, bringing his Bible and devotionals to doctors' waiting rooms and even praying for fellow cancer patients and their families.

He speaks as often as he can at meetings. "This is my mission now.

"I have to give some meaning to my diagnosis. God didn't cause my cancer. Of course He can heal me, but now I know the One who knows the number of hairs on my head will never leave me."

Suvas says he doesn't even pray for healing any more, saying: "God will heal me if He wants to.

"Instead I now pray for His grace, for Him to enable me to do my work with as much strength as I can without fear, for grace for my family. And for my children to continue in their faith journey."

As for the big question of why God has allowed him to suffer, Suvas says: "The truth is that suffering is part of the human experience. No matter how we try to avoid it, it's inevitable.

"But suffering teaches humility. When we're faced with hardship and pain we're reminded of our own limitations. Suffering can deepen our relationship with God. It certainly did that for me."



Footprints in the sand

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord, "You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods

of my life there have only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, you have not been there for me?"

The Lord replied, "The times when you have seen only one set of footprints, is when I carried you."

– Mary Stevenson

One word melts Black Widow's heart



Merari Rodriguez

Abandoned by her father when she was six years old, Merari Rodriguez's mother worked many jobs to support her family and left her young daughter with a babysitter. The babysitter's husband, a policeman, abused the child for a year.

Merari remembers the fear he instilled in her. "The words he would speak to me were so controlling," she says in a 700 Club video. "The message he was telling me pretty much was that I belonged to him. I felt like it was my fault. The hatred for myself began to build."

When her mother discovered what was happening, she stepped in and ended it. But then, when Merari was 11, a family friend took advantage of her. When confronted by Merari's mother, the man had the gall to swear his innocence on a Bible.

Seeing his contempt for God, young Merari concluded God did not – could not – exist. With tears rolling down her cheeks, she recalls: "I decided right there that I would never in my life want to hear of God or the name of God – ever."

She began drinking, smoking and skipping school and stumbled from one abusive relationship to another. She had three children while still in her teens.

"I felt like I had become a label," she says. "I felt like I had written all over myself: 'I'm fatherless, I'm alone, and I have no protection so come and hurt me, use me, and abuse me.'"

At 18, desperate to control the turmoil in her life, Merari drifted into Goth culture – and then witchcraft. To the young woman, who had been defenceless her entire life, the promise of power through black magic was irresistible.

"They seemed so together and always talking about power and how you could now have the power to control someone else," she says. "All of my life I was controlled. Now I wanted to control those around me."

She was baptised into witchcraft, given her nickname – the Black Widow – and flung herself into the occult and spell-casting.

It was only when other witches began pressuring her to initiate her children that Merari realised she could not continue in that lifestyle and left town for a fresh start. She soon discovered that while it may have been easy to move away physically, it wasn't as easy to separate herself from the spiritual darkness.

One night she had a terrifying nightmare.

"I see this beast just standing in a yard and it was a form of a lion, but he was awful-looking," Merari remembers with a shudder.

"And I look and he opens his mouth and I noticed someone is in his mouth, and so I yell out 'Oh my God, help! He's got someone in his mouth!' and when he turned the person right before he's going to swallow, I looked and I saw it was me! "I saw myself and he began to

squeeze, and I could hear my bones cracking and I could hear myself gasping for air and blood just gush out of my mouth."

The Bible says that Satan prowls around like roaring lion, looking for whom he can devour.

Suddenly the terrified woman heard a different voice. Unlike the chaos raging around her demonic vision, this new Presence and voice soothed and calmed her.

"Merari, I've been calling you for a long time," the voice said. "If you don't come to me now, he's going to kill you."

Somehow she knew the voice belonged to God. Yet she was still reluctant to submit to it and asked for time. Then God spoke the one word that melted all her objections.

"Daughter," He said. She fell to the floor and cried out: "God, Lord, please don't let me die. I receive You. I don't know You and I'm sorry. But thank You for showing me where I was." When she woke up, everything had changed. She says she felt "clean". She knew God had revealed Himself to her and that He was most definitely real. She surrendered herself to Him there and then.

"If He called me 'Daughter,' then He was my Father," she says. "I never heard a man say, 'Daughter.'"

With the help of a friend, Merari found a church and was baptised.

Merari is now married and her children are grown. She now mentors young women and travels the world sharing her story and the good news of Jesus Christ.

Coffee Break

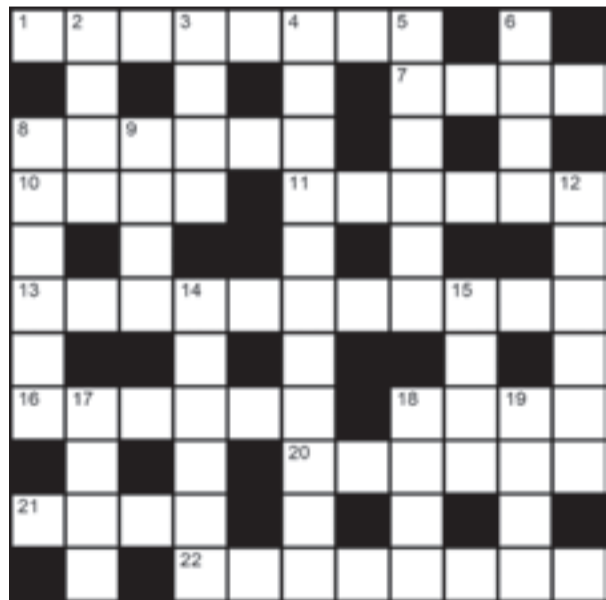
CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Letters A to Z
- 7 Train track
- 8 Quiz show answers, often
- 10 Walk in water
- 11 Carsick feeling
- 13 Defoliant used in Vietnam war (5,6)
- 16 Part of a plant
- 18 Dry; barren
- 20 Siberian plain
- 21 Fasten with ties
- 22 Military or police rank

DOWN

- 2 Old Italian money
- 3 Possess
- 4 Accountant (informal) (4,7)
- 5 Shock, ordeal
- 6 Bee home



- 8 Changes slightly
- 9 Hanging out doing nothing
- 12 To-do list
- 14 Desert rovers
- 15 Geekish sort
- 17 Future branch
- 18 Youngest Brontë
- 19 Wrinkle remover

SOLUTIONS PAGE 11



"Good thing we didn't sell the dog sled."

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Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: ISN'T IT JUST DAFT TO SPEAK OF JESUS AS GOD?



IT DOES sound far-fetched to claim the God who created everything came as Jesus to live among us in human form. And that Jesus was far more than a supercharged version of Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Bono and David Blaine rolled into one.

Some say the idea that Jesus was God was invented by the Church because it matched what they wanted to be true. Others say the followers of Jesus so wanted Him to be God that they made it up.

So what can a sane and reasonable person – you! – believe? Let me give you a few thoughts for starters. What could possibly point us to believing such a mind-shattering claim could be fact? Let's start with the impact Jesus made. It is not the final word but it does speak volumes. And Jesus impacted history more than any other person to have breathed air on planet Earth.

Two thousand years after his birth, Google the name "Jesus" and you'll find well over eight hundred million pages referring to him at the present count. No one else comes close. In other words, when it comes to impact on history and interest in the history maker, there's Jesus and there's the rest.

This proves nothing conclusive but it is enough to suggest we should keep looking.

So what about the things Jesus did as recorded by those who watched Him do them? For me they

are exactly what I'd expect someone to do if they were God. I'm thinking of simple "God things" like miracles. I know we have seen magicians do spectacular stuff. But we know it's a trick. Somewhere there's a trap door, a mirror or an accomplice. But the only-God-can-do-them things Jesus did were altogether different.

Up which sleeve did Jesus keep 120 gallons of wine that mysteriously appeared at a wedding? Or, if He just used sleight of hand and a little colouring agent, how come the guests gave it five stars? Where did Jesus hide enough bread and fish to feed more than 5,000 people in one sitting? How did He heal the crippling conditions of multitudes? How did He bring back to life someone who'd been dead so long his grave clothes stank with decay? And how did He... The list is endless.

How? If Jesus was no more than flesh and blood the answer has to be "no way." But if He was God come in human form it would be a piece of cake – and quite a lot of loaves and fish.

And that's only a fraction of the answer as to why we should take the claim that Jesus was God seriously.

• Peter Meadows is the co-author with Joseph Steinberg of The Book of Y the basis for the eight week Y Course that explores life's biggest questions. If you have a Y Question relating to issues of faith and God Peter or Joseph will do their best to answer it. Send your question to: challenge@veritecm.com Subject: Y Course.

MY MIRACULOUS 9/11 SURVIVAL

BY MARK ELLIS (ABRIDGED)

Stanley Praitnath stared out the window as the plane came closer and closer. It was September 11, 2001 and he was standing in his office in one of the World Trade Center towers. He is now credited as one of the only survivors of the impact zone.

"The Lord saw fit for me to live," says Stanley. His riveting tale of survival is chronicled in *Plucked from the Fire*, co-authored with William Hennessey.

Stanley was born in Guyana and came to America with little money in his pockets in 1981.

Growing up in Guyana, his mother insisted he attend church, but he rebelled and drifted away during high school.

Then later, in the US, a friend called and invited him to church.

"The more I went, the more I liked what I saw," Stanley says. He says he put his faith in Jesus and followed Him in 1983.

A few years later he married and started a new career with Fuji Bank.

On the side, he helped his father-in-law plant a church in a rough neighborhood of Queens, New York.

Within five years Stanley advanced to assistant vice-president, running all of Fuji Bank's operations on the 81st floor of the World Trade Center, Tower Two.

That floor was immense – approximately one acre square, and almost completely soundproof from the outside.

On the morning of September 11, he was riding up the elevator to his office when Tower One was hit by the

first plane. Stanley didn't see or hear a thing.

At his desk, Stanley glanced out his window and was stunned to see huge chunks of fiery debris – "fireballs" – falling from Tower One. Stanley wanted to leave, so he headed down to the lobby but a security guard stopped him and told him to go back to his office.

Soon an intercom was piping in the same message: "Building Two is secure. There is no need to evacuate Building Two."

Back at his desk, Stanley looked out the window. Suddenly he saw a huge plane flying straight towards him.

"It was coming at me at eye-level contact," he notes. Stanley could make out the letter 'U' on the tail. It was United flight 175.

"As the plane was getting nearer I could hear a revving sound the engine was making, like the sound a plane makes when it's about to take off," Stanley says.

"Quadruple that sound, and that's the sound I could hear, even in this soundproof building. I can still hear that sound in my head," he says. "That sound will never go away."

As he watched the plane getting bigger and nearer, he cried out to God: "Lord, I can't do this – You take over," and he dove under his desk.

Stanley's Bible, which he read while eating his lunch at his desk, sat on top of the desk.

The plane slammed into the building with immense force.

The bottom of the wing sliced through his office and stuck in his office door 20 feet away from where he huddled.

"There was a massive fireball as the major part of the plane blew up," Stanley says. "The only desk that stood firm was the one I was hiding under."

Every wall was flattened as if a demolition crew had passed through. Other than his desk, every other piece of office furniture was smashed like match boxes.

Part of the floor above his head collapsed downward, and all the cables in the ceiling were dangling, falling and short-circuiting because the sprinklers came on.

"I thought if the floor doesn't completely collapse and kill me, I'll be electrocuted or the plane's wing is going to blow up and I'm going to die."

Above Stanley, a fiery inferno was raging. Fire had also broken out on his floor, some distance away.

There was no way out of his office, because the plane's wing blocked the only exit door.

Stanley let out an anguished cry to the Lord with every fiber of his being: "Lord, send somebody to help me... I don't want to die."



Stanley Praitnath and Brian Clark are still friends.

What will happen to my wife and two kids?"

At that moment, Brian Clark was walking down the only passable staircase from the 84th floor.

Brian happened to be the fire warden on his floor, so he had a flashlight.

At that moment Brian heard Stanley screaming and he felt compelled to stay and help him.

Through the rubble, Stanley saw Brian's flashlight in the distance.

"I started crawling as fast as possible toward the light, because I knew if that man left me I would die," Stanley recalls.

Brian helped Stanley through the rubble and the pair ran downstairs and out of the building, moments before the building imploded.

Stanley now attributes his survival to God.

"My survival is all about God and His grace, because I'm not a hero," Stanley says.

"The Lord is the hero. If you call on Him with all your heart and soul He will intervene on your behalf and deliver you," he says.

"I may never know why some people prayed and God didn't answer them or why I prayed and He answered me at the same time," he adds. "But I can tell you this, my God lives!" Stanley and Brian, who had never met before 9/11, remain friends and have appeared on numerous shows and documentaries telling their story.

Wayward son convinced by truth

Michael Phiri's parents must have despaired of their only child. The devout parents would bring him to church every Sunday, but Michael preferred "misbehaving with girls" and stopped listening to his parents.

Instead of bringing him happiness though, his lifestyle made him miserable, he tells *Challenge News*.

"Church didn't make sense to me," he explains, adding that the stumbling block for him were the idols that were worshipped in that church. "I didn't believe in them."

A visit to a friend's church in 1979 changed all of that. Michael had just turned 20. That day, the pastor preached on John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life".

"That was the day I truly became a Christian because I was convinced by the Word of God," Michael shares. "That Bible verse showed me His love. That verse and also John 1:12, which says, 'Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.'"

When the pastor asked the congregation who wanted to commit their lives to Jesus Christ, Michael did not hesitate.

That was 43 years ago. Since then, this once wayward son has served in ministry in various roles. He was a music director, then the director of evangelism in his church in Zambia.

In 2008 he answered the call to enrol in Bible College. On the advice of his pastor at that time, he started a new church, one which he pastors to this day.

"From the time I became a Christian my life has changed so much and I have learned to trust God in

every situation," says the 62-year-old. "I have learned how to communicate with God through the Scriptures and I have learned how to lead others to Christ."

He says the best thing about being a Christian is knowing you actually become a child of God. "In every situation you are not alone; God your Father is always with you.

"Jesus Christ is alive and He will return again to Earth. Heaven and hell are real." •

"In every situation you are not alone."



Michael Phiri

Magic or miracles?

• From page 1

The Jewish Talmud said Jesus "worked miracles, but these miracles are attributed to sorcery and not to God."

When it came to André investigating Jesus' miracle of walking on water, he had personal experience of trying to do the same thing for a television special for the BBC and the Discovery Channel.

The producers didn't want him to do it in a tank of water, but on an open lake, just like Jesus did.

The gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and John all give the account of when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee. Here is Matthew's account in Matthew 14:

"But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'"

André said it took him several months and thousands of dollars to develop the techniques that allowed him to fool people into thinking he was walking on water.

It also required three diesel trucks to carry all the necessary equipment for this illusion, which were not

available 2,000 years ago.

At the end of his investigation, André concluded that Jesus could not have been performing magic and, "For anyone to even suggest that Jesus could have been a magician is to demonstrate an absolute, complete, total ignorance of the subject of magic."

He also said, "As a magician I deal with many illusions in my business, but in my own experience I discovered that God is no illusion; rather He is a reality, and that Jesus Christ truly is the 'magic ingredient' Who really makes life worth living!"

After his discovery, André used his talent as an illusionist "not just to entertain people but to share my deep personal faith in Christ... Over the years thousands have prayed to receive Christ through this outreach."

If Jesus' miracles were no illusion but "acts of God", it stands to reason that He is God. André said Jesus' "miracle of all miracles was His own resurrection."

After living a sinless life, Jesus died on the cross for mankind's sins and then rose from the dead three days later.

If you believe this and would like to make a commitment to follow Him, please see the box on page 11 entitled, **How do I Become a Christian?** •

WORK FOR CHALLENGE!

Finance Officer

CHALLENGE NEWS is currently seeking a skilled Finance Officer/Bookkeeper to play a crucial role in supporting the ministry's accounting functions.

This role will suit someone who has worked in a similar ministry organisation, with extensive experience in all aspects of bookkeeping, financial control and a strong knowledge of Reckon software. The position will initially be two days per week and could suit applicants who are looking for a position during school hours.

To register your interest and receive further information, including responsibilities and a job description, please contact John Palandri (john@challengenews.org) or Len Lawrence (accounts@challengenews.org).

Applications close September 11, 2024.

Bible verses for difficult times

♦ "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise Him." - Psalm 28:7

♦ "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." - Isaiah 41:10

♦ "The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace." - Psalm 29:11

♦ "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it." - 2 Timothy 4:17

♦ "The Lord is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him." - Exodus 15:2

♦ "I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in Whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." - Psalm 18:1-2

♦ "He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless." - Isaiah 40:29

♦ "I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and Earth." - Psalm 121:1-2

♦ "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to tread on the heights." - Habakkuk 3:19

♦ "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." - 1 Corinthians 16:13

♦ "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul." - Psalm 23:1-3

♦ "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power." - Ephesians 6:10

♦ "The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation." - Exodus 15:2

♦ "In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul." - Psalm 138:3

♦ "But I will sing of Your strength, in the morning I will sing of Your love; for You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble." - Psalm 59:16

♦ "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." - Isaiah 40:29

♦ "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." - Philippians 4:13

♦ "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." - Exodus 14:14

♦ "He gives power to the faint, and to Him who has no might He increases strength." - Isaiah 40:29

♦ "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31

♦ "For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I am the One who helps you.'" - Isaiah 41:13

Clarity follows Kelsie's confusion

Kelsie Faas was married at the young age of 20, and realised that she needed all the help she could get to have a successful marriage.

She was convinced that the help she needed was to come from God but she was not sure how that was going to happen.

"As I grew up I attended church on occasions with my mother, who was a strong Christian," says Kelsie. "However, when I got married and moved away from home, I didn't know where to go to church. Then one day two Jehovah Witnesses knocked on my door offering to teach me the Bible. I thought that was great and accepted their offer."

Kelsie studied with them for a year and found herself thoroughly confused as to what she should believe.

She realised that what they were teaching was different to what Christians believed. But she was determined to continue doing the study until she knew if they were right or wrong.

"I realised that Jehovah Witnesses suffered a lot of persecution from others because of what they believed, so I assumed they must be real Christians. So I kept praying to God to show me the truth," she explains.

"Then one night when my husband was out, I was reading one of the Jehovah Witness magazines, which stated that Jesus was the same as the archangel Michael."

This raised some concerns for Kelsie and she was moved to pray to ask God to show her the truth once again.

"I decided to ring to ask one of the Jehovah Witness ladies who visited me to ask why they believe this. As I walked towards the phone the front doorbell rang and so I answered the door instead."

Kelsie was greeted by the local minister who lived down the road. He had heard that Kelsie had been visited by Jehovah Witnesses and wanted to have a chat with her about their visits.

"I gladly welcomed him in and shared with



Dirk and Kelsie Faas have been married for 55 years and have been Christians for nearly as long.

him my confusion over their teaching in believing Jesus to be the same as Michael the archangel," Kelsie acknowledges.

"He said, 'Let's look up the Bible,' and he turned to [Hebrews 1:4], which says; '...having become much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.'"

With the answer to that question settled in her mind, Kelsie then asked the minister; "What are Christians supposed to believe in?"

Then the pastor whose name was Geoff pulled out of his pocket a little booklet called the *Four Spiritual Laws* and began to go through it with Kelsie.

The book presents four spiritual laws as follows:

Law 1: God loves you and has a plan for your life.

Law 2: We can't know that plan because we

are separated from God because of our sins.

Law 3: Jesus made a way for us to come back to God by dying on the cross in our place to take the punishment for our sins.

Law 4: We come back to God by asking for forgiveness for our sin and inviting Jesus to come into our heart.

"That truth was so beautiful and simple to me that I asked Jesus to come into my heart straight away," says Kelsie.

"Geoff then explained to me that to follow Jesus I needed to read my Bible and pray on a daily basis.

"He also explained that I needed to find and attend a church that was true to God's Word. Since his church was just down the road, and he was the minister God had sent to me to help me, I started attending his church.

"That was over 50 years ago and I am still going to church and reading my Bible and praying on a daily basis. I can say that God has been very good to me over the years and I'm still very happy to be a Christian," Kelsie concludes. •

“The truth was so beautiful and simple to me.”

NEW LIFE FOR TRUCKIE AND FAMILY

The solitary life of a truck driver is not an easy one. Mile upon mile of endless travel, a tiny living space, days and nights that merge into one another, weeks without seeing family.

Many of them turn to drugs and alcohol just to keep going. That's exactly what American trucker Peter Chatfield did.

He tells *Highway Evangelist* magazine that in eight years of working as a trucker, only two months were drug and alcohol free.

"I was drug dependent and a total alcoholic," he says. "My home slowly became a place of endurance for my wife and my two precious children."

He admits his lifestyle and narcotics dependency "caused hell to my wife and other fine people who tried to help me."

Peter overdosed three times - two of which were deliberate attempts - because "life held no joy, no hope, only hell on earth."

"After years of driving I had nothing to show for all the money I earned."

Truck driving is not only lonely; it is also dan-

gerous. Serious or fatal injuries can occur if driving while tired or exhausted, driving while under the influence of drugs and drink, even loading and unloading cargo.

All this added up to a sense of utter futility for Peter. But that changed when he met Norm, a preacher he met at his neighbour's house.

"My understanding of the Bible was nil and my concept of God was vague," he shares.

"Religion wasn't my thing. Jesus Christ was only part of my vocabulary, not my life."

He was, of course, high and drunk the day he met Norm. He had also just come out of the hospital because of his habit.

After that first visit, Norm came over regularly and brought copies of the *Highway Evangelist* for Peter. The articles in the magazine, which is written for Christian truckies, got his attention.

One day Norm shared with Peter a verse from the Bible - Romans 6:23: "*The wages of sin is death...*"

"I don't suppose anything ever cut into my heart as deeply as did that verse," Peter says.

However, the day he first heard that verse was a Saturday and before long Peter was doing the usual Saturday night drinking and pill-popping with friends.

"I need not tell you the shape I was in at midnight. But while I was in this condition, those words came crashing through my mind and a fear of God overcame me, with

desperation." Conviction gripped his heart as he realised he had nothing to look back on and certainly nothing to look forward to.

He saw he "was in need of Christ's love and forgiveness."

His wife, he says, "couldn't stand his misery any longer" and called Norm at 2.20am.

Norm rushed over. After an hour of talking to Peter, and close to running out of hope himself, he laid hands on the trucker and prayed for Jesus to heal him from this addiction.

What happened next was a miracle.

"After Norm prayed for me I became cold sober. No drug symptoms, no drunkenness, even the three packs of cigarettes I had smoked that day were gone.

"You can believe this or not - I have all the proof I need. I had - I have - a miracle!"

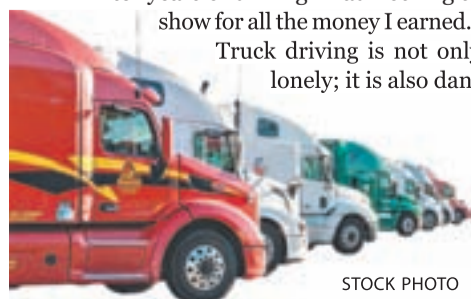
Free from his addictions, Peter says Jesus Christ "changed this messed-up man of no direction into one who knows where he is going."

He admits to being tempted and falling off the wagon occasionally but "thanks to Jesus I didn't go back into the sin and hell I was once in."

Seeing his conversion and the positive change in his life, Peter's parents, his wife and children committed their lives to Christ too.

"We now share a love in our family that we didn't think was possible and believe me, it is only because of Christ and His great love." •

Used with kind permission of Highway Evangelist



STOCK PHOTO

Evolution gets the Royal treatment

DON BATTEN B.SC.AGR.(HONS.),
PH.D. INTERVIEWS PROFESSIONAL
SCIENTIST ROYAL TRUMAN

Professional scientist Royal Truman has a string of academic accomplishments, speaks five languages, plays multiple musical instruments, does martial arts, and just for kicks, goes ice swimming. He shares in the book *Transformed By The Evidence* – a collection of testimonies by leading creationists – that he grew up in Chile, where his parents were missionaries. In high school, he was taught that man descended from apes.

“Every scientist supposedly believed this. God was not necessary to explain where we came from,” he says. “My heart revolted at this claim. I knew this could not be true. If the Bible was God’s word, then it could not contradict scientific truth!”

In an interview with Don Batten from *Creation Magazine*, Royal shares that he worked with scientists who accepted evolution as a given.

“Nothing I learned about evolution made sense based on my own areas of expertise. But how could such clever people all be wrong? What was I overlooking?”

To find out, Royal devoted more than 35 years to learning all he could about molecular biology and systems biology – the chemistry of the machinery of life (proteins, nucleic acids, etc.).

All self-reproducing (‘living’) cells have a set of very complex chemical units called tRNAs (‘transfer RNAs’). These tRNAs are essential

for the manufacture of all proteins but are just a small component of the genetic equipment needed. Royal found that their manufacture was coded for on DNA and they must be extracted by special proteins.

But these proteins could only exist if functional tRNAs were already available to help decode instructions for their manufacture. He concluded that tRNAs and proteins could never arise by any natural (evolutionary) process.¹

Royal also discovered many examples of “irreducible complexity”, which describes biological systems with multiple interacting parts that would not function if any of the parts were removed.

Each is a stupendously complex and efficient ‘nano-machine’, flawlessly repeating indispensable services over and over. But not only is each one irreducibly complex; all these must be present together for cells to function, to reproduce. Royal comments, “How are all these multiple irreducibly complex components to come together without a Planner?”

Royal shares how he quickly discovered that “evolutionary explanations were only vague imaginings; there was nothing solid enough to



Royal Truman with his wife, Petra.

research, and the speculative narratives were easy to disprove.”

He also investigated *Origin of Life* (OoL) publications extensively and came to the conclusion that “all were nothing but wishful thinking.” For example, thousands of complex proteins are needed for cells to work. However, not one of even the simplest proteins could be created naturally. Some of the problems he noted were:

1. Racemisation: Nearly all the amino acids that make up proteins

come in two forms, Levo (L) and Dextro (D), which are mirror images of each other like your left and right hands respectively. Only left-handed amino acids (L) make functional proteins. But they readily turn into each other, so even if you start off with pure L forms, they naturally move towards 50:50 quantities of L and D amino acids. This is called racemisation.

Not only do individual amino acids racemise, but this also happens even faster if they bond together to form proteins. Royal showed that this happens so quickly under realistic conditions (temperature and pH) as to stop the formation of any functional proteins.²

2. Side-chain reactions: To make functional proteins, amino acids must be joined together correctly.

But without the help of enzymes, most will join in the wrong way.

3. Reactions with other chemicals: This includes dozens of unsuitable kinds of amino acids. “These would have dominated a hypothetical early earth. You simply cannot get the life-necessary chemicals without the ones that will interfere with the chemistry of life.”

4. Wrong proportions of biologically relevant amino acids: The latest research reveals that of the 20 amino acids needed for life, between 99-99.9 percent produced in realistically natural processes would have been only glycine, the simplest and biologically least important one.

5. Obtaining long chains in water: Any experiments that join some amino acids together must remove water that is generated by the reaction because the water hinders the process. None having 10 or more amino acids would form in water; too short to be functional.

Royal observes: “If simply obtaining a long, linear random amino acid polymer (i.e. a ‘protein’) isn’t possible, how in the world were thousands of different proteins, each having the correct sequence of amino acids, supposed to have arisen?”

Natural selection can’t operate until you already have something that makes copies of itself.

OoL research is spinning its

wheels. Experiments are designed with a specific goal in mind and the laboratory setup is never plausible; it never mimics something feasible in nature.

When chemists such as I evaluate the results, we find them to be inconsistent with the claim that life made itself by natural processes.

“Evolutionists often claim that progress is being made, whereas an objective evaluation is that experiment after experiment fails to support evolution. I usually summarise each paper as ‘yet another example of what could not have occurred’. There is an assumption that ‘life’ can be defined as any process involving some form of chemical replication and then with enough time a cell must inevitably arise. This has nothing to do with science; it is pure speculation.”

Royal, a member of the Intelligent Design movement³, says he benefits greatly from detailed exchanges with many scientists, some of whom are not Christians. The shared conviction is that biology cannot be explained without an intelligent, guiding agent.

According to Royal, biblical creation makes for good science: “God, the Intelligent Agent, has told us in Genesis that He created discrete classes of organisms instantly, and this is consistent with sound scientific reasoning.”

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Dr Batten worked as a research scientist in tropical fruit physiology before joining Creation Ministries International in Brisbane, Australia. For more: creation.com/batten.

With additional material from *Transformed By The Evidence* (Doug Sharp and Jerry R Bergman, editors)

Dr Royal Truman has bachelor’s degrees in chemistry and computer science, an MBA, a PhD in organic chemistry, plus post-doctoral studies in bioinformatics. He has many professional certifications in such fields as cyber security, supply chain logistics, cloud technology, and project management. He has worked for 40 years for the largest chemical company in the world.

James Webb Space Telescope discoveries

PETER’S CORNER WITH PETER MIKULA

Twenty-seven years ago I built my own homemade telescope, a 310mm Newtonian reflector on a Dobson mount. It was the answer to my dream since childhood.

It has been a regular sight in Kalgoorlie and by my count about 9,000 people have looked through it. It’s a nice telescope, but cheap compared to the \$8.8 billion NASA budget for the new James Webb Space Telescope (JWST).

The JWST has taken amazing impressive photos, seeing galaxies much further away than ever seen before, using both visible and infrared light. This means the JWST can look back further in time too, because the light from distant galaxies takes longer to reach us, so we see older galaxies. The surprise for secular experts is that the JWST is seeing distant galaxies that were supposed to exist. According to Big Bang cosmology, the galaxies simply should not be there.

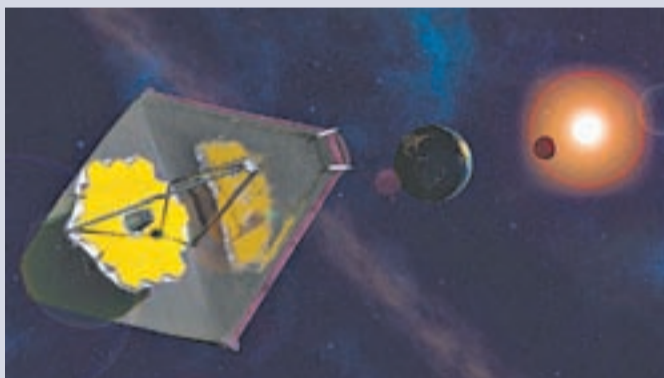
Secular cosmologists have the Big Bang model that describes what happened when the universe first created itself 14 billion years ago, and how stars and galaxies were supposed to form over time.

They believe it took a long time after the Big Bang for the first stars to form, and then the earliest galaxies would need 3 billion to 6 billion years to form. The earliest galaxies should be small, and irregular or peculiar in shape.

Then after much more time, those small galaxies should merge to form mature galaxies – disk-shaped spiral galaxies like our own Milky Way. In turn those should merge to become large elliptical galaxies. Massive galaxies should form last.

For about 20 years, astronomers have had telescopes powerful enough to look back 9 to 11 billion years. They found massive mature galaxies that shouldn’t be there! But they also found many more irregular galaxies, which seemed to fit the theories.

But in 2021, the JWST started looking back over 13



Picture by Kevin Gill from Nashua, NH, United States, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.

billion years, and turned the world upside down. There were a lot more ancient galaxies. Many of them were mature disk galaxies, and with the better images, many of the irregular galaxies turned out to actually be disk galaxies. The oldest mature galaxies had already formed only 230 million years after the Big Bang.

This is an impossible problem for the Big Bang theory. Even before JWST there was a lot of evidence showing that the theory was wrong: it disagreed with observations. To dig into this, go on line to view An Open Letter to the Scientific Community published in *New Scientist*, 22 May 2004. But secular cosmologists still hold on to the Big Bang. This shows that it is not held as a scientific theory – if it was, it would be thrown out once it was shown to be wrong. Instead, it is held like a belief, an ideology, that cannot be questioned.

There are other scientific theories besides the Big Bang, that do fit much better with what we observe, and with what the Bible tells about how God started the universe. Why don’t we hear about those?

I hope these words help you, as they have me, in your journey to surely trust the Creator.

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

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YOUTH TRUTH

Desperate to fill a void

BY SIMEON NEO

When Jonathan Wu left his home in Perth to fulfil his mandatory military conscription in his birth country of Singapore, it was one of the lowest points of his life.

“The first six months were some of the worst moments in my life,” he tells *Challenge News*.

“I was tempted to buy a ticket home because I was so desperate to get back.”

Isolated, Jonathan experienced depression like he never had before. To numb the pain, he picked up smoking – something he had never done before.

“My struggle with loneliness was a big one,” he shares.

“Everything in my eyes was just grey. It was weird.”

Having moved to Perth when he was 11, Jonathan describes his childhood as ‘typical’.

“I remember having an idea of God at a very young age. But I used to be afraid of any god being angry at me. So I thought the logical thing to do was to just believe in all of them.”

Jonathan admits that he used to be a bully when he was in primary school in Singapore. But when he moved to Perth, he became the one being picked on. He then found refuge in boxing.

“Being a boxer became my sense of identity, my way of regaining my dignity.”

In high school, he was exposed to progressive ideologies that challenged his conservative thinking as well as his Christian faith. Yet, his parents were growing in their own Christian faith.

“We started ideologically drifting apart,” he says. “It just made me more and more rebellious towards my parents.”

“I started learning about evolution. My friends were saying, ‘Why do you believe in the Bible?’

“Being an atheist was more popular at that time. It made you look edgy.”

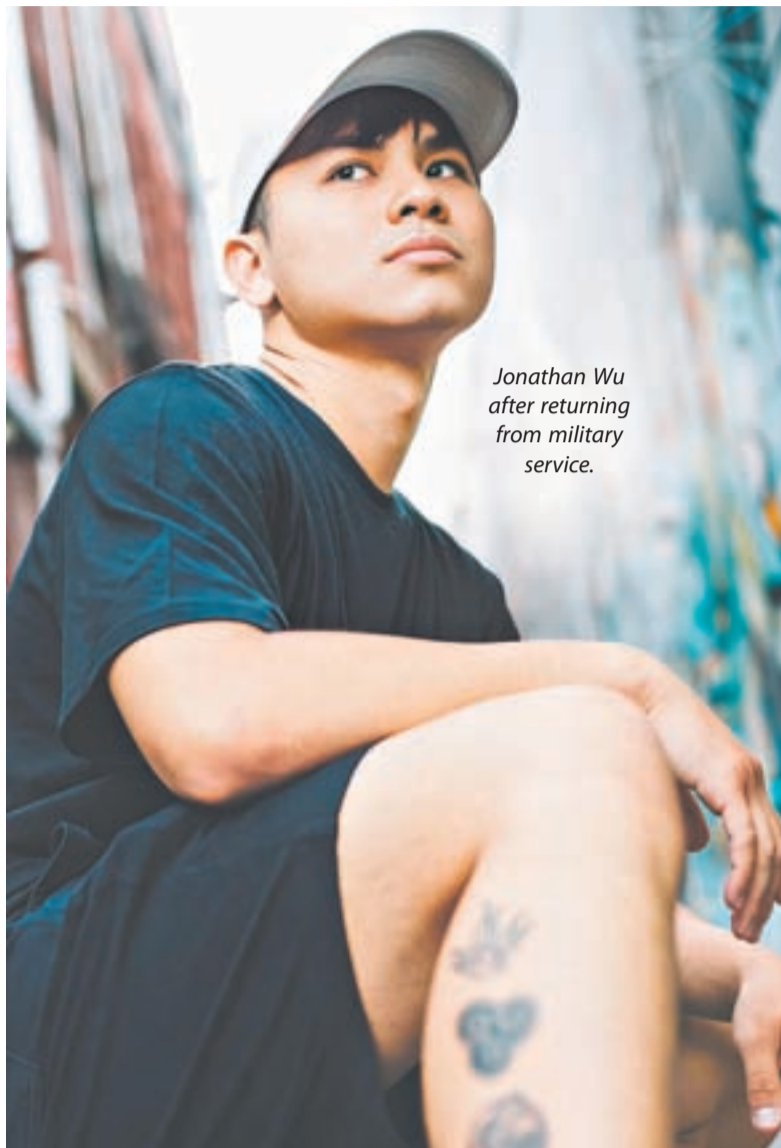
“So that’s when I decided, ‘Jesus, I don’t want You anymore.’”

When Jonathan returned from Singapore, things didn’t get better.

“The emptiness was unbearable. I didn’t have a car so I couldn’t drive myself around. I went on Tinder to look for comfort in relationships. I also made boxing my god because that’s what saved me in high school.”

“I was just trying to fill the hole inside.”

He started pursuing a career as a martial arts videographer as a way to fill the emptiness he was feeling. An



Jonathan Wu after returning from military service.

agnostic at the time, he also dabbled in Buddhism and Taoism.

“I was trying to find a religion that I could agree with. In my mind, I hated Christianity and I wanted nothing to do with it.”

“So I went into Buddhism for a year. I was a photographer for a local Buddhist temple and I started reading up on Taoism.”

He eventually met a girl and they started dating. Jonathan could see that there was something different about her.

“She was more patient and she had empathy,” he recalls.

“We would go on dates and because she’s a Christian we would sometimes talk about Christianity.”

“I told her about a verse I read in primary school that made an impact on me, 1 Corinthians 13:4: ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.’”

“And she said, ‘That’s how I try to treat people.’”

The turning point came when she asked him, “Why aren’t you a Christian?”

Jonathan asked himself the same

question. By this point, he had left Buddhism. When he saw the symbol of the cross on the girl’s Instagram profile, he says that he, “Felt a thirst in that moment”.

So he decided to give Christianity one more try.

“I quietly accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.”

One night, the girl offered to pray for him. Jonathan told her about his friend from the army who was struggling with depression. The next morning, she sent him a text saying that his friend should quit smoking as it was affecting his mental health.

“I was like, ‘How did she know about the smoking? I never told her about it.’”

For Jonathan, it was a miracle.

“I believe the Holy Spirit [the unseen presence of God in the believer] told her. That was the first time all the pieces of the puzzle clicked together.”

“That was the first time I fully believed and it felt like the darkness was lifted off my eyes.”

Two years on, Jonathan now runs a Christian home gym that combines fitness and Bible study.

“Everything just seemed brighter now. It’s like I was born again.”

“I don’t smoke anymore, or do drugs or find satisfaction in romantic relationships with women.”

“Jesus has slowly taught me that He’s way better.”

His favourite verse is Psalm 107:8-9, “Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.”



Angie and Ari of Girls Gone Bible. Screenshot from Sadie Robertson Huff’s YouTube.

When ‘girls gone wild’ became ‘Girls Gone Bible’

BY DANIELA ARGUETA

In a twist on the worldly term ‘girls gone wild’, glam girls Angie and Ari launched a YouTube podcast called Girls Gone Bible.

“We’re a couple of girls who used to be wild,” says Angie, who refers to her friend as a “spiritual Navy SEAL.”

“I look at this sweet, feminine angel, who wears floral dresses and makes floral arrangements in her free time,” she says about Ari. “But, guys, if you see this girl, she will go to battle for the Lord.”

Girls Gone Bible was born of their desire to encourage each other and everyone who struggles with imperfections but wants to serve a perfect God. Today the channel has a respectable 235,000 subscribers.

Angela Halili’s relationship with God boomed when Jesus delivered her from alcoholism.

“I get into my 20s and I have a panic attack one time, chronic panic attacks and after that it goes on for years,” says the Albania-born actress. “I did the only thing I knew how to do, and I started to self-medicate with alcohol.”

Her nominal religious upbringing did little to help because she had never read the Bible. She suffered anxiety, depression, derealisation and depersonalisation. She worked at a night club while her acting career floundered. Then Angie met a pastor who began to instruct her in the Bible and pray for her.

“On Thanksgiving, I stopped drinking,” she says. “It was not by my own might, it was not by my own strength. Jesus took (away) the desire to drink. He went into my brain and rewired it.”

“There is nothing more that makes you a slave than thinking about yourself all day long,” she adds.

Her counterpart, Arielle Reitsma grew up in a religious home in the United States in an unstable home that bred anxieties in her about her career, money, and relationships. Therapy didn’t help.

In fact, she worried so much that she cried four times from nervousness on the day she met Angie.

“I was just sitting there sobbing and all of a sudden I look over and there was Angie, and she sat with me and she just held my hand,” Ari remembers. “I remember the first time you prayed for me, and... it was the most beautiful, moving thing I had ever experienced.”

When nothing seemed to be going right for her, Ari felt like her world was collapsing. “I was someone who was an overthinker, who dwelled. I didn’t have much faith because I was in constant worry about what was going to happen next. It was such a horrible way to live.”

Slowly the anxiety-ridden aspiring actress learned to trust God with her future. She surrendered everything.

“I haven’t felt worried about my career. I don’t care if I get the job, I really don’t. If I never work in acting again, alright,” says Ari. “If I do, thank You, Jesus. Whatever. He has a beautiful plan for my life no matter what.”

Only then did the bookings start rolling in. “God was developing me into the person I was supposed to be,” Ari says. “He brought the community (fellow Christians) into my life and people into my life that taught me how bold I was and smart and funny and good, and now I walk with confidence.”

The comments below their videos are a testimony of their impact.

“I don’t know where I would be without you guys. I have been feeling really dark lately. Suicide thoughts and all,” one writer comments. “I know they’re from the enemy and allowing dark things into my spirit lately due to depression from losing my job. Today God led me to this channel and thank God He did!!! Thank God!!!”

The original of this story can be found at godreports.com and it is used with kind permission.

“I was in constant worry about what was going to happen next.”

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lifestyle and entertainment

Recipe of the month



LOUISIANA CRUNCH CAKE

A POPULAR southern-USA cake with a caramelised nut topping.

Prep: 30 min
Cook: 1 hour
Total: 1 hour 30 min
Serves 12

Batter ingredients

2 ¾ cups flour, sifted
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 ½ teaspoons salt
1 ¾ cups sugar
1 cup shortening
¾ cup milk
3 large eggs
1 teaspoon almond extract
½ teaspoon orange extract

Crumb topping ingredients

¾ cup reserved cake batter
2 tablespoons flour
3 tablespoons brown sugar
3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
¼ teaspoon orange extract
¼ teaspoon orange rind
½ cup chopped pecans, optional

Batter method

Sift together flour, baking powder and salt into large mixing bowl.
Add sugar and stir.
Cut in shortening with pastry blender or two knives.
Add milk, eggs, orange extract, and almond extract. Beat thoroughly. Set aside.

Crumb topping method

For topping, combine ¾ cup cake batter with flour, brown sugar, confectioners' sugar, orange extract and orange rind. Mix well.
Add pecans, if desired.
Spread topping in bottom of well-greased tube pan (angel food cake pan). Pour batter on top.
Bake at 190°C until cake is golden brown and a tester comes out clean, about 1 hour.
Remove from oven and invert onto a wire rack to let cool.

Recipe and photo from MakeBetterFood.com

Kira's songs take new direction

Kira Fontana was a successful vocal coach, working with talented singers on television shows like *Glee* and *The Voice*. But behind the scenes, disappointment and a sense of failure followed her. She sought enlightenment in meditation and eastern mysticism but, when family members challenged her beliefs, she began to investigate the truth for herself.

Kira discovered she was a naturally gifted musician at a young age, after her parents divorced and she turned to music as an escape. She learned to play piano by ear at five and started writing songs at seven.

"It had given me purpose out of a childhood that was very painful. So, I didn't have anything, but I had the music," she tells CBN.

Kira continued to pursue music throughout her schooling and earned a Master's in composition at Yale.

She released her first album in 2007, focusing on spiritual and positive themes in her lyrics.

In her early 30s, she moved to Los Angeles, with the aim of breaking into the pop music scene. But she faced criticism regarding her song lyrics. She was told nobody wanted to hear "meaning of life stuff".

"And I just got the message, 'Nobody wants what you have to offer.' A depression sunk in like nothing I'd ever felt before, like I had no sense of purpose anymore. I stopped writing, I stopped singing."

But she found work as a vocal coach to major labels and television shows such as *Glee* and *The Voice*. Working with top talent only emphasized her perceived failure.

"They had what I thought I wanted, and so it was like this extra in my face all the time, 'Not only do you not have it, but you're going to watch everybody else have it all the time,'" Kira says.

Kira embarked on a spiritual search to help her cope with her disappointment. She began attending a spiritual center in hopes of receiving "enlightenment".

Although she was raised in a religious home, she now let go of all concepts of Jesus, the devil and evil, and embraced the idea of God being a universal force of goodness, love and light. She used meditation and eastern mysticism to transcend her disappointments and experience peace.

But in 2016, her brothers became Christians and shared with her about their new-found faith.

They challenged her to re-examine her beliefs. Kira explained that she believed Jesus was a great spiritual teacher.

"I literally had the gall to say, 'I just try to live like Jesus lived.' I'm not out drinking and partying and this and that. So, you might need that, but I don't."

"I thought that I knew truth and I thought they were stumbling around the darkness and found something that worked for them."



Kira Fontana.
Photo from kirafontana.net
by Zack Patrick.

And I thought they were sinners, and I wasn't!"

One of her brothers replied: "How can you live like Jesus when you have no idea who He really is? You've never read the one book that would tell you who He is."

When her mother also became a Christian, she encouraged Kira to pray that God would show her the truth.

"And I said, 'That I can do.' I did it, over and over."

Kira's eyes opened to the evil and darkness surrounding her.

"I finally saw the world for what it was instead of what I wanted it to be, and I began to see the need for Jesus," she says in her website biography.

She also discovered the Bible's definition of good was different to her own.

For years she had prided herself on being a "good person".

"Despite all my years of spiritual seeking, I finally saw that I wasn't capable of being a good person on my own. And I sensed my need for a Savior," she writes in an article for *Christianity Today*.

She began attending a local church instead of the spiritual center and attended a course called Alpha for people who were curious about Christianity.

"I asked a ton of questions, and I read multiple books on apologetics (which explain the Christian faith). Eventually, I was ready to finally surrender my life to Christ," which she did.

After becoming a Christian, Kira sought God's direction for her life – and her music.

She started an independent Christian music label and began creating music focused on Jesus and the hope that is found in Him.

"All of my lost purpose, I got back."

Kira's debut worship album titled *Refuge* is filled with words of God's triumph over her battles and prayers to the God who saved her and gave her new life.

Her first single on the album, *In Your Arms*, is about Kira's journey to finding faith in Jesus.

"Since I put my faith in Christ, God has redeemed everything that was lost in my life," Kira attests. "He has freed me from the prison of my selfishness, rescued me from darkness, and brought me into His glorious light. He has given my life new purpose, equipping me to serve His kingdom and glorify His name with music. There is no greater joy."

“All of my lost purpose, I got back.”



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"I have tried drugs and a little of everything else. And there is nothing in the world more soul-satisfying than God. It takes a real man to live for God – a lot more than to live for the devil. Everything I have and everything I do is now given completely to Jesus Christ. He is the only way to heaven."

– Johnny Cash

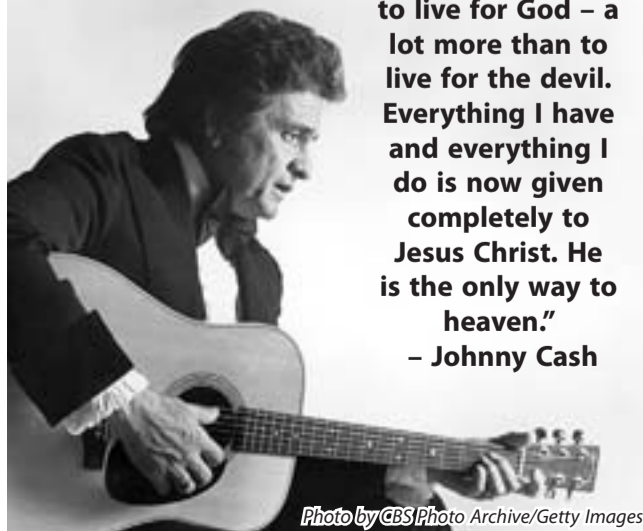


Photo by CBS Photo Archive/Getty Images

nudge

WITH KARL FAASE

Hole in my soul

"THERE'S a hole in my soul / Can't you see it in my face? / It's a real disgrace."

In the words of this song, Robbie Williams sings of his internal struggle to fill his life; to find satisfaction. Even with fame and fortune, the hole still seems to exist.

You may have heard the saying "the more things change, the more they stay the same"?

Early in the third century, there was a bloke who lived a similar lifestyle to Robbie Williams. His life was marked by hedonism and immorality until he found a personal relationship with God. He looked back on his days of womanising and partying and said: "...our hearts are restless until they rest in You (God)".

St Augustine went from a worldly 'party animal' to a significant leader in the early Christian church, when he discovered that nothing fills your life in the way that faith in God does.

If you are out there looking for every opportunity for a buzz and are still left with a "hole in your soul," why not turn to God and discover how living with Jesus changes your life?

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

When Father's Day is difficult

BY ROB FURLONG

FATHER'S Day can be a difficult day for some people. Well-known US media personality, Howard Stern painted a graphic picture of the relationship between him and his father:

"I will never have a lot of self-esteem. I don't feel very good about myself... I still have an inferiority complex. The way I was raised, my father was always telling me I was a piece of [expletive]. I think I'll go to my grave not feeling very positive about myself or that I'm very, very special."

Perhaps your experience with your own father is similar to Stern's and as a result, Father's Day is not a cause of celebration for you.

I can understand that.

A fractured relationship with our father can also cause us to reject God. We read that God is called "Father" and we conclude, "If God is anything like my father, then I want nothing to do with Him."

If that's you as you read this, I want to try and change your thinking.

Jesus told a wonderful story which

we call the Prodigal son. You may be familiar with it. It concerns the youngest of two sons demanding that his father give him his share of the inheritance, leaving home and then squandering it all in a reckless, hedonistic lifestyle.

When his money and friends are gone, he finds himself feeding pigs – there was no worse job for a Jewish boy – and starving to death. In a rare flash of insight, the son swallows his pride and returns to his father with the request that perhaps he will take him on as a hired hand.

It's at this point the story takes on a serious twist. As the son trudges home wearily, where do we find Dad? Jesus tells us that "while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him..." It was heartbreaking for the father to let his son go, but from the moment the boy left, Dad has been at the gate waiting, hoping, and praying that this would be the day his son came home.

But Jesus reveals something even more wonderful about the father's character. Dad runs to meet his son. In treating his father as he did, the son



The Prodigal Son Returns Home by Frank Zimmerman.

brought great shame upon himself and would incur the anger of the whole community when he returned. His father knows this, and in running out through the town to greet his son, he knows the entire community will witness this, and be shocked by it.

"How can he possibly do this, after the way his son treated him?" – they will murmur to each other – "It's scandalous!"

In running out to his son, the father bears his shame for him, and welcomes him home with love and grace.

It's patently clear the father is the central figure in this story and Jesus told it so that we can understand what our Father God is like.

As our Father, God loves us for who we are, even if we have rejected Him or rebelled against Him. He is

waiting at the "gate" right now, for you to come to your senses, and return to Him. And when we do that, we discover He will welcome us home with arms wide open, filled with His love and grace.

If your experience of your earthly father is one of disappointment or even bitterness, I want you to know this Father's Day there is a Father Who loves you for who you are and longs for you to be a member of His family.

In our Heavenly Father we have Someone Who is, as one author said, "faithful in love and care, generous and thoughtful, interested in all we do, respecting our individuality, wise in guidance, always available."

Don't judge your Heavenly Father by your earthly experience. Come home to Him today.

He's waiting for you!

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 :

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE] Please send me: Bible Some 'starting off' literature Information on a helpful church

* Please tick and write clearly *

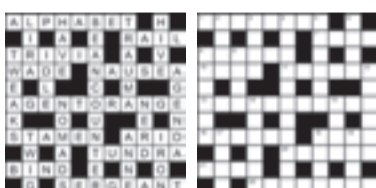
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Want to explore more?

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 - 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 | | Manga Messiah app Christian comic with free games app, illustrated in Japanese-style art | |
| YMI (meant to be read as "Why am I?") Christian news outlet for young adults with various content, devotionals and resources. ymi.today | | More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online | |

When faith comes slowly

BY FAY FOSTER

HOW easy, or difficult, do you find it to believe that Jesus is alive, that He rose from the dead, that He is with you and for you? For some people, faith comes easily. They might find some things hard to understand, but they don't doubt that they are true.

For others, faith is something that comes slowly. We are cautious. We don't want to believe just because we're told to. We need to check things out for ourselves, to get evidence before we can believe.

Not convinced

After Jesus had come back to life, He appeared to the disciples in the room where they were hiding. But one of the disciples wasn't there. That disciple was Thomas, also known as Didymus. When he arrived, the other disciples said to him, "We've seen the Master!"

Thomas wasn't so easily convinced.

"Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands," he said, "and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into His side, I'm not going to believe!"

As a result of this conversation, we sometimes hear Thomas called "the doubter". But to be fair to Thomas, he hadn't seen what the others had seen. It's never the same hearing it from someone else. A week later, the disciples were again in the house and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were shut. And again, Jesus appeared and stood in the middle of them.

Proof given

"Peace be with you," He said. Then He spoke directly to Thomas. "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe!" We sometimes think that God is going to be angry at us if we don't just believe. But here we see Jesus giving Thomas exactly the proof he needed. And Thomas was convinced. "My Lord and my God!" he said.

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen; and yet have believed." (John 20:24-29)

There is definitely an advantage for those who believe easily. But for those of us for whom faith comes more slowly, when we look for evidence of God with open, honest hearts and minds, He will supply it. We don't have to leave our brains at the door when we think about God. He wants us to love Him with our whole heart and MIND and soul.

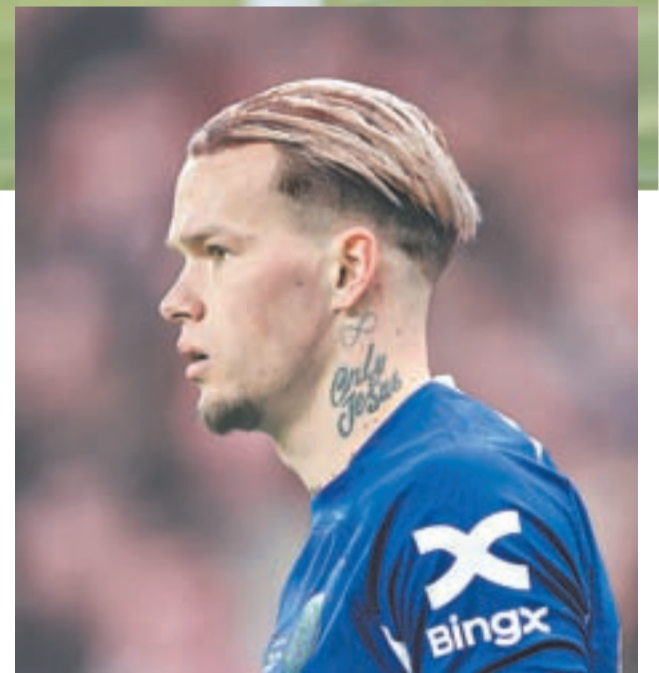
Whatever amount of faith you have, live according to that. We don't have to pretend to believe without questioning. When you use your mind to try to figure out the truth, God absolutely approves. Please do ask all the questions you need to ask. Ask God, ask a pastor, go to Bible study groups and check out the Bible. Every effort to understand will help us examine God's truth and to grow our faith.

This article was first published in Salvos Magazine and is used with kind permission.

Mykhailo Mudryk #15 of Chelsea FC jumps to play the ball during a game between Borussia Dortmund and Chelsea FC at Soldier Field on August 2, 2023 in Chicago, IL. (Photo by Daniel Bartel/ISI Photos/Getty Images)

Challenge
SPORT

ON A WING AND A PRAYER



Mykhailo Mudryk during a match between Chelsea and Liverpool at Wembley Stadium on February 25, 2024 in London, England. (Photo by Julian Finney/Getty Images)

BY ANDREW HALLOWAY
AND JODY BENNETT

When 23-year-old Ukrainian Mykhailo Mudryk arrived in the UK to play for Chelsea he made as many headlines for his tattoos as his football.

He doesn't wear his faith on his sleeve so much as on his arms, neck, chest... The most visible one is on his neck, above his football shirt, and says: 'Only Jesus'.

An Orthodox Christian, Mykhailo prays before matches and writes openly about his faith on social media.

"All my tattoos have a meaning," he has told journalists, "but 'Only Jesus' is the biggest and most important."

He also has a cross on his hand, and "Thank you God" down one finger.

He told *Tribuna*, "Sometimes parents force their views on children. For example, they believe in God and want their children to do that too. But it's not my case. No one forced me to believe in anything, I came to it on my own."

"Aged nine, I read the Bible. I began believing in God and learning more about religion."

"Some people think it [religion] is to show off for the public, but they don't know what and how I feel about God,

why I talk about Him all the time." The international winger says he wants to tell everybody about God but often has to stop himself, to respect others' beliefs.

The *Sun* reported that "Mudryk has a capital 'F' tattooed on the side of his right hand and an 'E' on the left. When he brings them together in prayer as a practising Christian, it forms the Portuguese word for 'faith.'"

On his chest, a prayer reads: Dear God, if today I lose my hope, please remind me that your plans are better than my dreams.

He can't have dreamt of Chelsea paying £88 million to keep him for over eight years, but that's what his contract says!

However, during his first season, some fans wished he scored as many goals as he has inkings.

Mykhailo didn't score a single goal until his 24th appearance on October 2, 2023, opening the scoring in a 2-0 Premier League win against Fulham. The momentum now building, later that month he scored a goal at Stamford Bridge in a 2-2 draw against Arsenal.

Mykhailo's speed is his strength, with fans nicknaming him, "Ukraine Bolt".

Chelsea teammate Wesley Fofana says Mykhailo is probably the fastest player he has played with.

Whilst he's made his own decision to believe, there's no doubting the early

influence of his Christian grandmother.

One story on the web says that, like many children, Mykhailo was afraid of the dark and had nightmares.

But "Mudryk's grandmother came to his rescue and helped him overcome those fears of darkness", assuring him that he was protected by a guardian angel.

She also told him: "When you lie down, say: 'In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.' Then go to sleep and never be afraid again."

After that, "Mudryk's nightmares stopped, and he drew closer to Jesus Christ." As for his tattoos, not all Christians are happy with inking because it was a symbol of slavery in Old Testament times, and it was expressly forbidden in Leviticus 19:28 to "tattoo any marks on you".

However, in Isaiah 44:5 the Bible seems to permit writing on the skin if it's a sign of submission to God.

And many younger Christians like Mykhailo do use it to show their allegiance to Jesus.

One thing's for certain: there's no denying Mykhailo's sincere commitment to Christ.

No one walks around with 'Only Jesus' on their neck unless they really mean it.

“
No one forced
me to believe
anything,
I came to it
on my own.”

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