

AUTHENTIC

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MEN'S MAGAZINE

Lucky Te Koha FROM CRIME TO CHRIST

Shane Wildermoth Reaching Our Communities

Lew Meyer Modern-Day Discipleship

NIK DOWERS Run The Race, Pass The Baton

PLUS

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- Bob McCoskrie - The Impact Of 'Fatherlessness'
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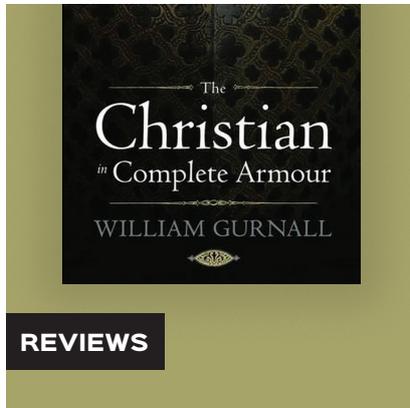
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WELCOME TO THE TWENTY FIRST EDITION OF

AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE



Jeremy with Kevin McFetridge, a Seafarers Welfare Board for New Zealand (SWBNZ) welfare officer at the Port of Tauranga.

Forever Twenty-One...

It's been said, "...it's not so much about where you're planted, as it is about growing while you're there..."

On this Authentic journey, I've been blessed, and had the best of both worlds. I've known this is where God planted me in this season, and I've grown personally too. There's much God's taught me - the same goes for our whole team.

That said, the Authentic Christian Trust board recently, in trusting God's leading and timing, made a difficult decision. Authentic Christian Trust will close at the end of April. Practically, that means this issue will be the last edition we publish.

Authentic Media International - our media and marketing agency - will also close.

From humble beginnings over the kitchen table, founders Dave Firth and Lee Hanson put together our inaugural issue in the early hours of the morning.

Now, after nearly five-and-a-half years, 12 staff, 1764 pages of content, nearly 60 feature interviews and contributions from more than 80 writers, we're saying goodbye.

But, not before saying thank you.

Since launching in December 2017, about 77,500 copies of Authentic - including this issue - have been printed and

distributed. It's been sold in physical locations and online. Pastors nationwide have received copies, as have doctors who place them in waiting rooms.

More than 3000 magazines have been provided to welfare officers at the Seafarers Welfare Board for New Zealand, and copies have been made available to men's prison chaplains.

As we reflect, underlying everything is our thanks and praise to God. He inspired the birth of Authentic Christian Trust, continually providing in many ways. Now, He's leading us to lay it down. And, with a heart to be obedient, we are.

Thank you Dave and Lee for your faithfulness in practically outworking the vision God initially laid on your hearts.

Thank you to the Authentic Christian Trust board, which - as well as Dave - has included Stephen Whitwell, Marty Richards, Jono McCullough, Zane Raphael, Ryan Kilfoil and Paul Gardiner. Your leadership was invaluable.

Whatever connection you've had with Authentic Christian Trust, thank you. If it's been contributing financially, thank you. We couldn't have done what we have without the support of subscribers, advertisers and donors to the ministry. When we asked if people could help us with paid advertising in this issue, we were amazed by how people said yes with a heart to bless us.

If you've written for, contributed to, advertised in, suggested content or - everyone's favourite part - been interviewed and photographed, thank you.

If you've simply been committed to praying for us, thank you.

Thank you also to all our Authentic Media International clients. It's been a pleasure to serve and work with you.

In this issue, we'll leave you with a few design and layout changes and several first-time Kiwi writers, contributors and advertisers - having prayerfully implemented some feedback we received through the Authentic Magazine reader survey.

If you want some of our past editions you may have featured in, while stocks last, there are back issues of most editions of the magazine available. We'll continue to distribute them while some are available. To find out more about any associated costs, email info@authentic.org.nz.

On that note - as mentioned - one place we'll continue providing copies to is the Seafarers Welfare Board for New Zealand. We met Port of Tauranga welfare officer Kevin McFetridge only recently with that purpose in mind.

Please pray that - long after April - the issues we distribute bless those who receive them.

Regarding any ongoing subscriptions you've already purchased, there are three options. Firstly, you can waive the amount you're owed, leaving it with us as a donation. It will go towards the cost of printing and distributing this last issue.

Secondly, we can send you back issues in place of what you've already paid for.

Thirdly, if you'd like a refund, let us know by emailing the above address.

Finally, we stand in awe of what has been achieved, and are thrilled and humbled at the generosity - and belief - many have shown in what Authentic was doing.

We pray that the Lord brings to each one the harvest which is promised after having sown so faithfully. Whatever connection you have had with us, thank you. We pray God blesses you in all you do.

Words in these pages will never adequately express just how much every God-ordained connection has meant to us all.

With that, from myself- Jeremy - Lee, our Authentic Media agency manager, Tania, our graphic designer, Sharon-Louise, our office administrator and Joel, our website development specialist, God Bless.



■ Jeremy Smith is Authentic Magazine's editor. He's an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his giftings to glorify God.

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Pointing A Community TO THE GOSPEL

SHANE WILDERMOTH

What will it take to authentically reach our communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Shane Wildermoth offers some prayerful reflections.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” - Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV).

As Jesus’ followers, that’s our calling - it’s also my key encouragement.

I’m aware of many community-orientated ministries that have gone before us. Through ministries, schools, hospitals and universities they’ve given back to the community.

A challenging thought, to me, is that over time, many of these ‘ministries’ - though once community-orientated - seem to have become more business minded, even outright businesses.

When this happens, there’s a high likelihood they’ll lose the original intent of what it is to ‘be’ the Church in the community. This shift affects those ministries for many years.

I’m also challenged that, for a time, many of the ‘ministries’ the Church ran centred around the church building.

It seemed many would only head into the streets - their community - to preach.

Hear me, there’s nothing inherently wrong with that - it’s undoubtedly what we’re called to do. In fact, that’s what I was involved in before God called me off shore into missions. May I simply encourage us that reaching our community is broader. Being the ‘light’ we’re called to be involves serving practically.

On returning to New Zealand, I noticed two things. The Church appeared to either be heading towards forgetting the communities around it, or it was becoming more involved in the community with a ‘social’ - not a gospel - intent.

As I got involved in our local community, I saw broken people struggling. The Church, it seemed, was nowhere in sight. Communities are our God-given ‘spheres of influence’ - people need to see the Church continually involved in them.

A key question is, “...how can we practically help in ways which ultimately point people to the gospel?” Because, community-centred outreach has to lead people to the gospel. Through genuine

relationships, this process may take years. Many people may also tell you of times they've been hurt by the Church.

With this in mind, there are two areas the Church can prayerfully consider.

Are some of your congregation volunteering through organisations like parent-teacher associations - PTAs - or your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)? Is the Church practically involved in your community?

Where my home congregation - Te Awamutu Bible Chapel - (TABC) is concerned, we run a community café every Wednesday. We have a lot of congregational involvement, both in the kitchen and in sitting with, and talking to, people at the café. It's been running for about eight years, purposefully connecting with other TABC ministries.

With community work in mind, all ministries have to connect back to others, like Alpha courses or Christians Against Poverty (CAP).

Both longevity when - and commitment to - working with people is key to effective community outreach.

Some people in Te Awamutu have said, "...you've stuck with us. Others have - at times - come in for six months or so. Then, when they feel no one is coming to their church, they leave us high and dry."

What a challenging thought.

One of the most important factors of 'true', or genuine, community work, I believe, is a joint passion. People with a passion for both the community they're planted in, and for the gospel.

When someone heads up a community ministry without the passion for the gospel, we simply end up with a 'social' ministry, not a 'gospel' ministry.

I'm not meaning we need to 'preach' to people every time we see them. But, we must be

“Jesus recognised people were going to hell because of sin. We need to catch Jesus' vision.”

committed to walking alongside them in their struggles - and joys - while taking opportunities God presents to share the gospel.

As I said, community ministry must also be tied into all other ministries of the Church. It's not separate.

Maybe you're wondering what TABC's community ministries in our area are?

For example, there's the community café, CAP Budgeting and the CAP Debt Centre, a food bank - we make a point of someone sitting and talking with people every time they collect a parcel - counselling with professional counsellors, Alpha courses, a firewood ministry and allowing our building to be used for specific community gatherings - including weddings, funerals, birthdays and even floral art shows.

Some might be surprised by things we allow to happen in our church building. But, a building should be more than just a facility sitting idle all week, apart from a group of Christians gathering on Sundays to use it.

When the community is welcome, they become part of your outreach, and - again - opportunities open up to share the gospel.

Jesus recognised people were going to hell because of sin. We need to catch Jesus' vision. The good news He's given us is the answer.

When was the last time you walked around your community? Does your community know you're part of a church in town?

People are struggling, and, while there are many organisations helping physically, only the Body of Christ - His hands and feet - can, through Him, bring both physical and spiritual healing.

Our communities must see us as 'real' people who love them. Let's not get tied up in 'numbers'. Rather, let's be motivated by a desire to see each person we come across in our communities encountered by the gospel. That passion should be central to all community work.

Jesus told us to shine our light before others. So, just like Jesus walked among the people, so should we. | 

■ Shane Wildermoth is associate pastor at Te Awamutu Bible Chapel. His main role is to bring the gospel to the community, providing opportunities for the church family to get involved in evangelism - including Bible studies, preaching, and teaching. Shane and his wife Rene have been back in New Zealand since 2009, having previously served as missionaries in the Philippines.



Fathers

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL



"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul starts several of his letters like this. Consider who is writing these words. He's the Apostle Paul, but he was once Saul, the persecutor of the Church. He was once filled with anger, hatred and resentment. He had all manner of issues with Christians.

The chip of all chips on his shoulder. Now, he's completely free - free to say "...grace to you and peace...". What a transformation. He's also free from the baggage of those issues.

Everyone has baggage in some form, everything we say communicates that. What's your baggage? What's my baggage? Remember, you can't board a plane and fly away to your destination with excess baggage. It must be dealt with.

One piece of excess baggage people carry that's often mentioned is issues with their earthly father. Or, issues with men in general. Excess baggage of

any sort restricts our 'flying' through life. It binds, holds us back, weighs us down and stops us from rising to function in the things God has for us.

The imprint our natural father had, or didn't have, on us affects the way we relate to others, to God, and, even to church leadership. Many find it hard, or can't relate at all to God as Father, because of the issues they've picked up from their own dads.

Some of the baggage we collect in relation to our fathers includes past abuse, disconnection, absentee fathering, part-time fathering, selfish tendencies, or, simply, having a bad example set. But, seeing God as unrelatable, abusive, disconnected, absent and part-time isn't the way His Word says He is.

Therefore, we need a revelation of who God the Father really is. You don't need to carry the baggage of past hurts. God wants you and I to be a grace carrier, and a grace giver, just like Paul. So, what's God the Father like?

“What is one thing, that - if you had it, implemented it, grew in it or gained it somehow - would bring you to a whole new level of relationship with God as your Heavenly Father?”

2. Fathers Give Time

Fathers can be interrupted because they believe children are important. *“So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NKJV).

Fathers love no matter what, and they give time. You know what? Children actually often spell love as ‘TIME’.

3. Fathers Give Discipline

2 Timothy 3:16 says, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* (NKJV). And, in the ESV translation, Hebrews 12:7 says, *“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”*

Fathers love those under their care enough to confront them lovingly when wrong has been done. But, it’s always with the motive of wanting to correct behaviour, restore relationship and to see growth. David never confronted his son when he’d done wrong, and he paid a very high price for that. Read 1 Kings 1:6. So, fathers, give discipline.

4. Fathers Give Life

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
- 2 Timothy 2:2 NKJV. Fathers in Christ always want to reproduce themselves in others. Fathers give life. Fathers see potential. Fathers believe in their kids. They’re always looking for people who they can train, equip and release into doing things which will develop the gifts and talents in those they love.

Here’s seven powerful truths about God, and fathers.

1. Fathers Give Relationship

By coming into a child's world - through relationship and trust - a father can lead that child into his world. It’s the same spiritually.

That’s exactly what God the Father does. He comes into our world, presences Himself with us, and in us, and draws us into His world - which is far better and more real.

Above all else, God the Father wants relationship with us. Leaders bring people to maturity through building relationships - allowing their personal lives to impact - and be an example to - believers. Paul’s passion was to know Christ.

Read *Phillippians 3:10* - *“...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”* (NKJV). So, again, father’s give relationship.



Fathers don't mind if their kids are twice as talented, twice as strong and anointed as they are. It's as if they ask the question, "...who's going to take over the farm when I'm gone?" Almost any man can be a dad, but it takes a special kind of dad to be a father.

5. Fathers Give Identity

Look at these verses. *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."* - John 1:6 (NKJV), and *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus..."* - Ephesians 1:1 (NKJV). These scriptures tell us that both John and Paul knew their identity. They knew who they were. We are the sons of, and daughters of, the Father. Our name traditionally comes from our father. It was always this way in the Bible.

Identity is a huge need in today's world. Without a clear identity, we don't know where we are from, why we are here and where we are going. Fathers give the answers to these questions and they instill in their children a sense of identity, of being, of place and of belonging.

6. Fathers Give Security

John 10:29-30 says, *"...My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."* (NKJV).

Even in an earthly sense, security comes from our father. That's why we have so many messed up people walking through life without a sense of security. They haven't received it from their father, or a father figure. A child at rest in their father's arms is a wonderful picture of security. When we're in the Father's arms, it's a place of no worries. Fatherhood provides total security. Oh, the security of Father.

7. Fathers Give Encouragement

"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." - John 8:28 (NKJV).

Fathers encourage. They inspire, motivate and instill in us the desire to do the right thing - and - please our father. When there's a good relationship between a father and his children, the children want to please their father.

Here's another huge thought. God is my employer. As such, He has promised to provide, to guide and guard us as we serve Him. Our work is to please Him. So, we have ample encouragement in the scriptures to serve and work, and worship and honour Him - because we're motivated and inspired to want to please Him. *"Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."* - John 4:34 (NKJV).

Personal ambition and competition between one another is destructive. Success is not security.

“My suggestion is this - find a worthy father figure, even in another region of New Zealand, get beside him and learn from him. They're around. The Church simply needs men as mentors.”

Fathers encourage their children to be the best they can be. And, they're genuinely thrilled when they do succeed.

Fathers must give encouragement.

Angus Buchan, a South African speaker, tells this story. He relayed it in a newsletter he wrote in 2004. “I shared something Jill, my wife, told me, to the Nelspruit meeting. The young bull elephants were causing huge problems in the game reserve. They were killing the young rhinos, and - apparently - some tourists were affected as well. The game wardens were called in to sort out the problem - and they first asked where the old patriarchs - or bull elephants - had gone.

They were told the authorities had moved them out. As soon as the old bulls were brought back, the youngsters quietened down and things got back to normal again. The moral of the story? The young elephants had no role models to follow after, no leaders and no mentors. We must pray that Jesus will raise up spiritual fathers”.

Despite what the media says, there are men and fathers who are such examples of spiritual fathers. Not all fathers are - as they are commonly portrayed - weak, bumbling and untrustworthy. Many quietly get on with their role as a Christ-like father, and do a fine job of it in the world we live in.

My suggestion is this - find a worthy father figure, even in another region of New Zealand, get beside him and learn from him. They're around. The

Church simply needs men as mentors. Don't let baggage hold you back from experiencing a close and personal connection and relationship with God the Father.

Here's a quick reminder. Fathers give relationship and God the Father wants relationship with us above all else. Fathers give time and God the Father has all the time in the world. He created it!

Fathers give discipline and God the Father loves us too much to leave us. Fathers give life and God the Father is the source of all life. Fathers give identity and God the Father gives us His identity. Fathers give security and God the Father gives us absolute security. And, fathers give encouragement and God the Father gives us all the encouragement we need, in just the right way.

I grew up on a farm in a great family environment. My father lived out these seven things. Like me, he wasn't perfect. But, he demonstrated these qualities and set the stage, and example, for me to have a relationship with him - and with my Heavenly Father. I wouldn't trade that for anything.

Everything in life works better when we have the father issue sorted. Then, we're in position to receive His grace and provision, and be a carrier of these qualities.

Finally, here's some questions I'll leave with you.

Where would we be without the gift of fathers? What did your father give you - good, not-so-good and average? What imprint, good or bad, has your own father left with you? What imprint do you have of God, and where did that come from? How would you like to relate to God?

For example, as a father, a friend, a buddy, a helper, or as Master and Lord. What would you say is your own personal 'identity'?

Lastly, what is one thing, that - if you had it, implemented it, grew in it or gained it somehow - would bring you to a whole new level of relationship with God as your Heavenly Father? |▲

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





BY MURRAY SMITH

As we consider this Easter season, Murray Smith offers a poignant reminder that Jesus, in laying down His life for us, embodied and displayed the greatest love there is...

In some languages, there are multiple words for 'love'. Sanskrit, which influenced modern Southeast Asian languages as much as Greek and Latin influenced modern European languages, has an astounding 96 words for love. Persian has 80.

In English we use 'love' to express fondness for anything we really like. When we say we love someone, or something, the context explains that a difference exists in the way affection, appreciation and fondness is felt.

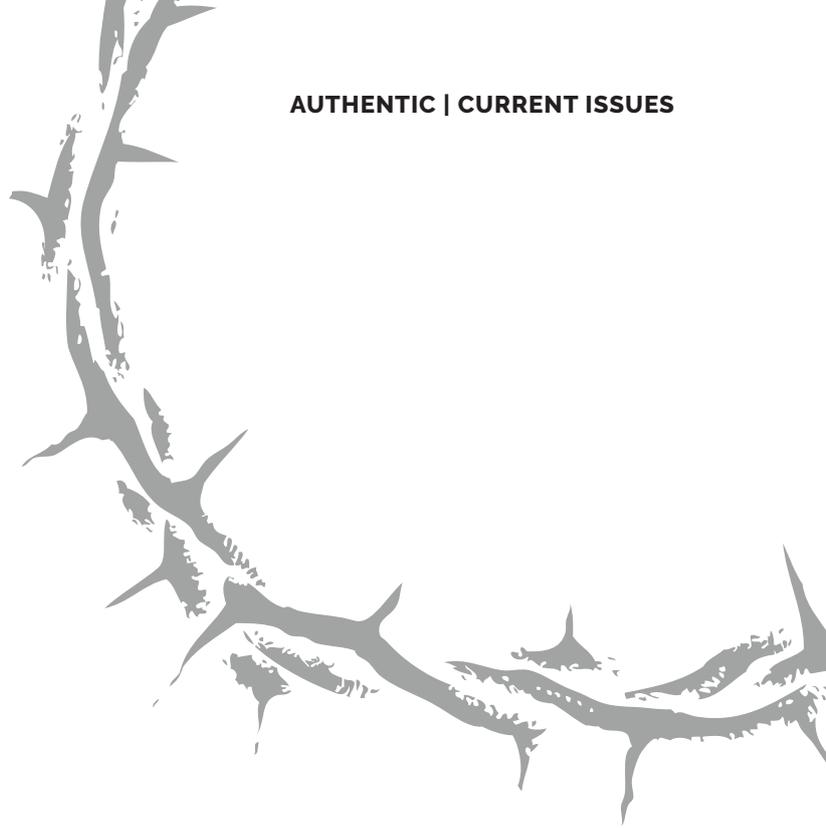
For example, it's clear that a person who says they 'love' their family, while enthusiastically raving about how much they love chocolate, or going to the movies, is not saying they hold loved ones with

equal affection for everything else they 'love' in life. There's a difference. And there are degrees of love, although we rely on one word to try and say it all.

I read a moving account highlighting this. It was in the historical account of 65,000 allied prisoners of war in Burma, or Myanmar. Battling torture, starvation and disease during WWII under cruel Japanese captors, they were forced to hack through harsh jungle - shaping what became known as the 'Death Railway'.

The book *Bridge on the River Kwai* tells of prisoners herded into concentration camps, facing terrible deprivation. Sickness and food and water shortages made life a daily struggle. The remains of the railway and bridge these prisoners constructed under forced labour is still visible today.

Each day finished with guards ensuring all the prisoners were accounted for, along with the captors turning in all digging and construction



“While the prisoner of war in our story demonstrated that depth of love, the love Jesus showed for humanity was even greater. And, it’s that love and sacrifice we honour at Easter.”

implements. A captain named Ernest Gordon related how, at the end of one day, a spade was unaccounted for.

A hysterical Japanese guard demanded that whoever took it step forward. No one responded. Walking down the line brandishing his gun, the guard screamed into the prisoners’ faces. “...all die, all die!” His frenzied rant, threatening to execute every last one of the prisoners, propelled one soldier to step forward and stand to attention.

He was beaten to death by the guard - the folly being that it was later discovered that the guard had miscounted the inventory and there had never been a missing shovel.

Love for his fellow prisoners motivated that innocent soldier to step forward, and that action saved his comrades from certain death.

I mentioned that there’s degrees of love. Not long before being crucified, Jesus foretold details of His imminent death. The hearers understood little of why He said His death was essential. In fact, it was of course central to Him coming to earth.

Jesus Himself said in *John 15:13*, “*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*” (NIV).

While the prisoner of war in our story demonstrated that depth of love, the love Jesus showed for humanity was even greater. And, it’s that love and sacrifice we honour at Easter.

In Romans 5:7-8, the Apostle Paul explains,

“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (NIV).

It happens. A person dying for someone they love. Yet, dying for someone estranged - and at enmity - is love indeed. | 

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



A MAN OF CRIME TO A MAN OF GOD



LUCKY TE KOHA'S JOURNEY TO CHRIST

BY JEREMY SMITH

"Lucky, how did your life of crime start?," I ask.

Sitting back in his chair, I can see Lucky Te Koha reflecting on past thoughts and memories.

"I started selling marijuana at 10 for an older guy called 'Chub'. I remember a little, dark, stained wooden slat house - set up high on an elevated section overlooking the local primary school.

"School and I definitely didn't mix. Except for rugby, things were going pretty badly for me.

"Living in rural Lincoln, just out of Christchurch, I was kicked out of intermediate school because I beat up another student and my teacher. I was sent to a school in the city.

"The 25 kilometre trip each way took an hour every day. On the bus were two older boys - 'Coulthard' and 'Gabbs'.

"They'd seen me beat two kids up on the bus for picking on my sister - from that day on, they were friendly to me." Lucky says.

"They were a bit different, with shaved heads and mohawks, black jackets, black jeans and big black steel cap

boots. After a little while, I asked them what was up with the way they dressed. They proudly told me, "...we're boot boys." So, two weeks later, there I was - wearing my old man's black work boots and ripped jeans with my shaved head and a black bomber jacket. I took that from a kid in town." As a boot boy, school finished for Lucky at 14. The torture of school was over - but it wasn't over at home.

"I was soon kicked out of there as well. I'd live anywhere I could find, including on the streets. I was still only 14, so I needed to find work. I was the youngest - and most vulnerable person - in that work environment.

"I was easily taken advantage of - including being sexually abused. That filled me with rage - ready to kill or be killed. It didn't matter. To me, back then, life made sense when I believed it was about being out of my mind drunk, on drugs and violent."

Lucky says his dad was the one who modelled that 'training' throughout his early years. "My answer to everything was, simply, violence. My mindset was "...anything you want, take it.

"I also believed the more drugs I sold, the more successful I'd be. And, the more drugs I took, or 'booze' I drank, the better I'd feel.

"In fact, all that led to was crime, court cases, police battles, boys homes, youth prison, prison and rehabs. My best mates 'Flute' and 'Scruff' and I were 17 when we became skinheads. We joined a group of like minded 'soldiers'. It was a life of addiction and violence."

Lucky then makes a matter-of-fact statement.

"My friends start dying of suicide and overdoses. Flute passes at 20. He was my brother - I didn't know how to feel. So, I quickly went back to my 'comforts' - anger violence, drugs and booze. Out of frustration, myself and my friends Evan, 'Scruff' and 'Nig' 'kicked some heads in' when we came across a rival group at the railway public bar. As we chat now, 'Scruff' and 'Nig' have passed to suicide."

Just two years later, Lucky moved into an organised crime group full of hardened gangsters.

"Our business was drugs, the sex industry and organised crime. Looking back, it was dealing misery. I was under a guy known as 'Tony Montana', doing - and taking care of - business. I became known as 'Famous', a name given to me by a mobster called 'Beans' in Paparua prison."



Lucky's 'For The World' t-shirt. The words John 3:16 are written in te reo Māori on the sleeve.

Life was - simply - "up and down" - even more so following the Christchurch earthquakes. At 49, I started seeking a better way of life. My then bride-to-be and I were moving to Kaikōura. Saying goodbye to my 'brothers', I was rewarded with a lifelong membership for my "acts and services".

"If we fast forward just three months, I'm radically saved." With four of Kaikōura's five policemen surrounding Lucky, all he could think of was "...immense pain" radiating in his chest - an "...intense feeling I was going to have a heart attack."

As that moment in 2017 started, Lucky was harbouring a "...lifelong, pure hatred" for law enforcement. He had for well over 40 years.

"I can't explain how much I hated police," he says. "It'd probably take days."

Not even 24 hours before standing with those men, he'd assured his now wife - Hayley - "...as long as I live, I'll hate police..." But God. And, this was unlike any encounter he'd had with officers.

At the front of Kaikōura New Life Church on a Sunday, he'd gone forward for prayer in likely the "...last place I'd expected to be..." One of the officers asked him to. It was the third time Lucky attended a service. Its pastor, Brian O'Connor - who he'd met through surfing - kept inviting him.

"I knew Brian and his family, but I wasn't aware he was a pastor. He was just a good, solid dude. I was a bit shocked when he asked me to church."

For context, Lucky has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), dyslexia and bipolar disorder. Practically speaking - one of the ways Asperger's syndrome, in particular, manifests itself is in Lucky being "brutally honest, with no filter".

Every time Pastor Brian invited him, he didn't have an excuse not to go. "He'd see me and invite me. I know it was God, but I really didn't want to go."

"Hayley even asked once, as Brian left, "...are we really going?" "Yes," I said. "I gave my word."

"I didn't want to tell him about my first visit. I didn't like it. Everything was so foreign to me."

Reflecting now, Lucky "...didn't even know what 'praying for me' meant," when he was invited up the front. "When the officers prayed, my chest pain left. I sensed God saying, "...I softened you, giving you a new heart. From here on, you'll feel for others. I'd never cared about anybody in my entire life - let



Lucky with Jeremy
Photo: Blake Adams

alone felt compassion or empathy. I only knew hate, rage and anger. But, standing there, I discovered what it was to feel empathy for the first time.” Submitting his life to Christ, something shifted in Lucky. The deep-seated, long-lasting hatred for police he’d had for many years “fell away”.

“I know God delivered me,” Lucky reflects. “I sensed that in this house, these were my brothers. Why? Because I was in God’s house.” That realisation was life-changing. There was an overwhelming sense of family.

“As I said, just three months from turning 50, I’d only ever felt I belonged in gangs, foster homes or prison. Yet, that very moment, I’d come home. It truly was the first time I felt I belonged somewhere.”

It’s a moment only God could’ve orchestrated - its significance can’t be underestimated. “If we’re talking about radical, this is radical. This is God.”

When Lucky told Hayley the night before that Sunday he’d always hate police, he’d been “arrested and processed” earlier that afternoon while returning to Kaikōura from Christchurch.

Then, that Sunday, as Lucky - somewhat reluctantly - and Hayley stood at the back in church, in walked the policeman who’d arrested him - sitting up the front with his family. It’s then Lucky started feeling like his chest was in a vice “...being crushed from front and back...”

“I grabbed Hayley’s hand. “That guy pulled me over yesterday, I’ve got to go talk with him,” he said. That and, mid-service, “...keep an eye on me. I think I’m going to have a heart attack.”

At service end, Lucky approached, tapping the policeman on the shoulder from behind. The officer’s face and shirt were wet with tears.

“I’m sorry for yesterday,” Lucky said. Apologising too, that policeman gathered three others to pray with Lucky. Only afterwards did Lucky discover all of them were, in fact, policemen too. He also found out later he was pulled over because his history made him a person of interest. A large poster of Lucky was on the Kaikōura Police Station wall. “There was something different about the officer who arrested me though. He showed me dignity and respect.” That ‘history’ was Lucky’s life-long involvement with organised crime. For well over 40 years, as he mentioned - he was 49 then - it’s all he knew.

Moving to Kaikōura from Christchurch was his way of stepping towards shifting away from that life.

“I wasn’t a Christian yet, but I’d started evaluating life. That way of living was everything, yet I was asking, “...do I keep doing what I’m doing?”

“The reality was, if I stayed there, I’d probably have ended up in prison for the rest of my life.” So, he’d told those he needed to that he was leaving.

"I knew things had to change. I wanted a better future for my wife and kids, I just didn't know how."

He says again that, growing up, his background was - simply - violent. Mentioning a cycle of boys' homes, foster homes, alcohol, drugs, rehabilitation, youth prison and prison.

He "didn't have a single friend". The first time he didn't feel alone was during his first stay in a boys' home. "Dad was a violent man, mum was a Christian," Lucky recalls.

"An amazing woman, she prayed for me daily. I'm only here because she did. I've clinically died three times - if it weren't for those prayers, I wouldn't be here. All I can say is, God has a plan that He calls us to. I'm 55 - sometimes I think God could've called me earlier. Yet, it's all His timing. Before, I probably wasn't ready to steward His calling. I couldn't escape that endless cycle - continually making the same mistakes. Only God could bring me to where I was desperate to change, and He did.

"I wasn't a Christian when my mother went to be with Him either. In that sense, she didn't see the 'fruit' of her prayers. Yet, here I am. Keep praying - there's immense power in a mother, or father, praying for their child. And, a husband and wife praying together."

Dealing drugs for almost 40 years too, Lucky started smoking marijuana and taking LSD at 11. Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol started shortly after. He was addicted to heroin, prescription pills and "everything else" by 16.

Those initial choices put him on a path of addiction, trauma and depression. Dealing methamphetamine started after 1994. "I was a high-functioning addict.



“Go all in, give everything to God. Don't 'sit on the fence' being lukewarm - Jesus doesn't ask for that. He honours our decision to completely submit everything.”



It was self medication - I needed anything to numb my mind."

Now, Lucky powerfully describes how much God has changed him. "He's transformed me from a man of crime to a man of God.

"My diagnoses mean I see things in black and white, cut and dry - no middle ground. I'm all in, or all out. I'd lived in my own strength for almost 50 years. Becoming a Christian, I realised God wants our whole heart. So, I gave it to Him - all in - praying, "...You tell me what to do and how to do it.

"In my old life, I'd had everything, whatever the world said I needed to be happy. Now, I haven't had a steady income since shortly after I was saved - and yet - in Him, I'm more content and at peace. He provides all my needs.

"Go all in, give everything to God. Don't 'sit on the fence' being lukewarm - Jesus doesn't ask for that. He honours our decision to completely submit everything." Lucky now lives by "...three God-given cornerstones" from Matthew 22:37-39. "I'll love God with all my heart and I'll love my neighbour. And, I'll walk in obedience - only going where He tells me."

Regular prayer helps him decipher that, Lucky says. "I step out, leaving the results with Him. Jesus said, "...My sheep hear My voice...", so I simply spend time with Him."

Practically, Lucky's dyslexia makes it difficult to read the Bible. He's probably read eight pages.

"I wholeheartedly believe scripture is God's divinely-inspired words to us. I just have to find other ways to absorb them."

Where Lucky says he once had no friends, he now marvels at those God's placed in his life. One of his greatest treasures is Hayley. "Before I came to Jesus, I once said to Him, "...if You're real, please provide a Godly woman to help me get out of this lifestyle." Hayley is, undoubtedly, that answer. Lucky and Hayley - who came to Jesus after seeing God at work in her husband - have been married five years.

"She's incredible - everything I'm not. My weaknesses are her strengths and vice versa. That's so beautiful. I have no doubt we're the 'perfect match', brought together by God."



Five years on from inviting Lucky to church, Pastor Brian remains his “spiritual mentor”. “My life changed simply because he was obedient to God. He has a heart for others like no-one I’ve ever met.” Lucky then mentions Ariki Paito and Duke Kaitapu. They’re also key role models he’s “incredibly grateful for”.

“If you want good, Godly advice, find somebody whose behaviour you can model, whose morals and principles you admire. I have amazing people around me. All of them absolutely, 100 percent, have my back.”

Soon after coming to Jesus, a passion to reach those in gangs still walking the path he was once on began stirring in Lucky. He subsequently spent 18 months crafting the “Lord’s template” for what’s now the Kingdom Brotherhood network.

Ordained as a New Life pastor, Lucky - as Kingdom Brotherhood’s national director - and another of his key mentors, Pastor Darryl Pye, travel nationwide facilitating it. “Darryl’s my second in charge - I have the utmost respect for him. He’s wholeheartedly committed to Godly principles.”

In the two-and-a-half years since its launch, Kingdom Brotherhood now has groups in 14 locations around Aotearoa. “God gives us all spheres of influence. Obviously, one that’s on my heart is those in gangs and organised crime. I want

people who are still where I came from to discover the hope, and deliverance, Jesus offers.”

The Kingdom Brotherhood programmes Lucky shares with gangs navigate participants through Godly approaches to trauma, addiction, depression, anxiety, aggression and violence and relationships.

“And, we pray together. There’s such openness. Because the template is from God, the fruit’s incredible. There’s absolutely a heart - and desire - for change in those environments. So many want to be better people for their partners, wives and children. But, they’re just like I was. They don’t know how.”

Lucky says James 5:16 is foundational. “In prayerfully bringing our struggles into the light before Him, they no longer hold us.”

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” James 5:16 (NIV).

Kingdom Brotherhood programmes have also grown to include work with youth, church congregations and church leadership and men and women from all walks of life.

“One of my favourite groups is made up of ladies - the eldest being in her 80s. In those contexts, we discuss intentional, targeted topics. The

AUTHENTIC | FEATURE

cornerstones include having a heart to see people walking in His freedom and peace. And, seeing youth - Godly leaders of tomorrow - becoming all they can be in Him. "It's about helping people grasp a Godly vision of who He's calling them to be - all while journeying together." Lucky spoke in more than 70 churches in 2022.

In the course of Kingdom Brotherhood's work alongside those in gangs, Lucky met Jared van Berkel. A New Life Pastor, Jared founded - and is director of - Christchurch's Fantail Studios. Before Fantail, Jared pastored for almost 10 years.

In 2020, a video snippet of Lucky's testimony was part of the first series of stories Fantail shared.

Then, a God-given "big picture" friendship developed. "The Lord was at work," Jared recalls. "I felt strongly the Holy Spirit wanted me to follow, film and document the restorative work God was doing in the lives of those in gangs Lucky was coming alongside.

"In 'honest relationship' with those we filmed, it's about serving them and sharing their stories." Nearly two years on, that journey has become Mana Atua - a documentary likely due for release later this year.

Fundraising towards the cost of the project is underway - Jared has been "blown away" by how God has brought he and Lucky together in unity to, ultimately, proclaim Him.

"Mana Atua has been the most challenging - and yet life changing - film project I've ever undertaken. "My hope is it takes viewers on a similar journey to what I experienced. Thinking about the time Lucky and I spent travelling around Aotearoa connecting with gangs, I sense Jesus' heart. He simply loves unconditionally - inviting us to love like, and with, Him as His hands and feet."

As we wrap up, Lucky has one final encouragement. "Let's intentionally demonstrate the hope found in Jesus - practically backed up by authentic love and actions. I want people to encounter the healing, and restoration, I've found.



“James 5:16 is foundational. “In prayerfully bringing our struggles into the light before Him, they no longer hold us.”

“Consider Jesus. I often ask the question, “...do we really love those who aren't yet part of the body of Christ well? “Our Great Commission isn't to have 'lanes' when loving people. We're called to love everyone. Sometimes, His leading requires us stepping out of any self-imposed 'boundaries', into what feels 'uncomfortable'. Be bold. What He calls us to, He equips us for.

“All glory to Him. I'll focus on what He's called me to, committing the 'fruit' to God. I simply know if He can change my life, He can change anyone's.” |  

To partner with Kingdom Brotherhood financially, donate to Kingdom Brotherhood Charitable Trust, 03-0458-0023108-00. For more, email kingdombrotherhood@gmail.com, or visit www.facebook.com/kingdombrotherhood.

To follow Fantail Studios, or donate specifically to Mana Atua, visit www.fantailstudios.com/funding/mana-atua.

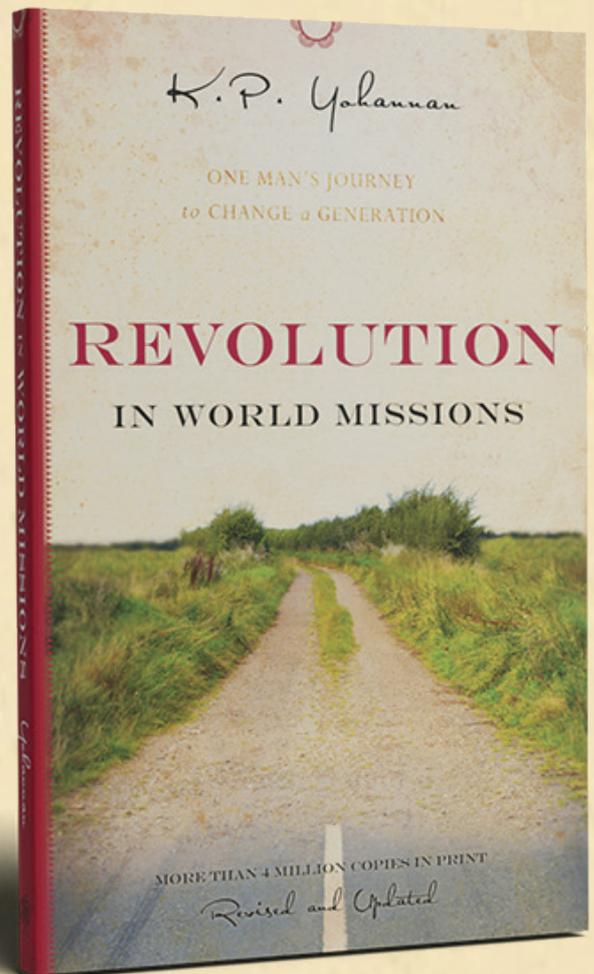
■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.



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“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.”
—Zechariah 4:6



BY BOB MCCOSKRIE

Fatherlessness

Nearly one in five new-born Kiwis in 2021 - or 20 percent - had parents with “...no stated legal relationship,” it can be revealed.

And, as many as one in six didn't have a father living at the same address as their mother.

The figures were in a report commissioned by Family First, and released at the end of 2022. Entitled *Where Does He Live? Measuring Father Absence in New Zealand*, it also confirmed one in 20 births had no father registered. “That means thousands of New Zealand children struggle with having no father in their lives,” its author, Lindsay Mitchell, said. “It's very little change since then Children's Commissioner, Laurie O'Reilly, described fatherless families as the greatest social challenge facing New Zealanders 25 years ago in 1998.

“Over the last 50 years, married and unmarried births have broadly trended in opposite directions.” In the year to June 2022, Mitchell said, 49.8 percent of all births were unmarried. In

the June quarter alone, births to unmarried parents surpassed the halfway mark for the first time - reaching 50.7 percent.

“Children are increasingly being born to de facto relationships - 30 percent of all births in fact.”

The report's findings stated Māori children were most likely to experience either father absence, or living with a solo parent. The proportion of Māori babies born to married parents has fallen from 72 percent in 1968 to just 20 percent in the June 2022 quarter.

Mitchell said father absence has profound negative impacts on children - being associated with poverty, material hardship, abuse and neglect, lower cognitive capacity, substance use, poorer physical and mental health and criminal offending. Estranged fathers also suffer materially and emotionally.

The mortality rate of fathers paying child support is significantly higher than the norm. “There are, however, some positive trends for the prospects of father absence reducing”,

Mitchell said. “The teenage birth rate is plummeting - men are becoming first-time fathers when they're older and more stable. “Perhaps those children who grew up without parental stability are successfully seeking it in their own relationships? Let's hope so.”

Dads, one of the most important things a father can do for his children is love and respect their mother. Don't try to be the ‘perfect’ dad - there's no such thing. Be present as often as possible - especially, I believe, at the dinner table. And, get married and do all you can to stay married.

As a society too, we need to honour fathers, encouraging them in their parenting tasks.

Let's make sure every boy and girl - as much as possible - grows up with the irreplaceable benefit of being loved, and cared for, every day by his - or her - own father. | 🗣️

- Read the full report by searching its title - Where Does He Live? Measuring Father Absence in New Zealand - at www.familyfirst.org.nz

■ Bob McCoskrie is the director of the New Zealand social group Family First New Zealand. He has a master's degree in Commerce from the University of Auckland and is also a qualified teacher.





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Run The Race, Pass The Baton

BY NIK DOWERS

I can't quite remember what my two-year-old daughter said the first time she parroted me, but I do remember how it made me feel.

Man was I struck. Not because she said anything bad, but because it was in that moment - that moment I heard her mouth utter the same words mine did just seconds before - that I realised that what I say and what I do will have a profound effect in shaping this little girl's life.

All of a sudden, I felt the gravity of both my responsibility and my privilege to teach, and be an example to, the next generation.

Recently, I've engaged in conversations with many people older than me and - as these conversations progress - inevitably the topic of our post-modern culture comes up.

These conversations tend to go along the lines of "...I used to think society was bad back in my day...", "...I used to wonder how things could get any worse..." and "...I'm concerned for the young people who are growing up in our godless culture."

I even heard one pastor say that he would call the culture we're living in 'pre-Christian' culture, in that it's as if the gospel has never come.

"This is blatant Baal and Molech worship, paganism 2.0," he said.

Chances are you're already aware of this, but we don't have to dig very deep to see just how far our society has fallen. As a matter of fact, it's being broadcast right in front of our eyes. And how rapidly this appears to be happening.

In one human's lifetime, we've seen the complete turnaround in what are considered social norms, values, morality, the focus of education and on and on. The Bible has been 'thrown out' it appears, and - with it - just about all standards of behaviour.

Essentially, what we're seeing - and continue to observe - is the rising of the words found in Isaiah 5:20. *"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness."* (ESV).

So now, the challenge for us as Christians living in this culture is knowing what to do. And, what should we do? Because we can't just sit back and watch our young people be swept into destruction by this rebellious movement.

As Christians, it's absolutely vital that we instruct and teach this next generation the truth of the gospel. We, simply, have a duty to teach this coming generation the truth of God and the truth of the Bible. Much like a relay race, we have a baton of truth that's been handed to us and we're now responsible to pass it on.

I love Psalm 78. It's an instructive psalm and a fantastic reminder to all of us of our responsibility and privilege to teach our children the things of God. *"My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old - things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done."* - Psalm 78:1-4 (NIV).

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done..."

I pray this will be the testimony of our generation.

You know, the greatest praiseworthy deed, the greatest power displayed and the most wonderful act God has ever done is that of sending His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die for our sins

Therefore, the greatest thing we could ever tell this coming generation is that of what Christ has done for them.

I shared at the start of this article the experience that I had with my daughter. And I did that in hopes of showing you that, even from such a young age, our young people follow a natural course to learn

from the older people God has placed in their lives. It's been said our young people are 'sponges', the question is what are they soaking up?

Have we become ashamed of the gospel and perhaps so passive as Christians in our culture that the only water available for these kids to soak up is the 'water of the world' that poisons and leads them directly into God's wrath?

Or, are we demonstrating to them what pure and living water looks like?

Are we offering to them living water, peace with God and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ through the glorious hope of the gospel?

If we don't teach them God's ways, then who will? If we're not faithful to preach - and live out - the gospel to them, what hope do they have?

It's simply crucial that we impart the truth of the gospel to the next generation, and then the next generation and so forth - one after another until the Lord interrupts that chain with His coming.

We have a God-given responsibility to pass on the baton of truth, let's not drop it on our watch.

"...to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." - Ephesians 3:21 (NIV). | 

“If we don't teach them God's ways, then who will? If we're not faithful to preach - and live out - the gospel to them, what hope do they have?”



Nik and his wife Danni have been married four years, they have two children. Nik works full time in ministry - at Maori Postal Aotearoa (MPA), where the team marks Bible lessons and distributes gospel literature, and at his local church, The Fathers House in Bulls. He considers it a privilege to help continue an MPA ministry his grandfather was part of for many years.



It's too easy to twist the Bible.

BY RAY COMFORT

Someone recently called me “...a dirty little rat,” and I loved it. It wasn't because I was rejoicing because somebody was persecuting me. It was a genuine compliment. Maybe that will sound strange, until you hear the context. See, context is key.

Almost every morning, I play ping pong with a close friend who is also a member of our staff. He's my age and we have a lot of laughs together.

If I am able to beat him with a really good shot, he'll sometimes say, “...you dirty little rat.” That brings joy to my soul, because it's his admission that I just outwitted him by hitting a great shot. So, in context, it's not an insult at all, but rather a sincere compliment.

Someone once said the Bible is like a fiddle. You can play any tune you want on it. Politicians often play their own Bible tune by taking a well-known verse out of context and applying it to their own political agenda. But, there's a more subtle out-of-context Bible verse that is deceiving literally hundreds of millions. It is the belief that we can earn our way to Heaven.

James 2:26 says, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*” (NKJV). It seems clear from that verse that faith doesn't save us - that we need works. However, in the context of the many other verses in scripture about salvation, it is saying that our good works will be the evidence that we have faith in Jesus.

Jesus Himself said, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.*” Matthew 5:16 (NKJV). Therefore, your light shining brightly is evidence that you have charged batteries in your flashlight.

Those who trust in God's grace have the evidence of good works - works that flow from gratitude to God for His mercy. Trusting in works is an attempt to bribe the Judge of the Universe, but He will not be bribed on Judgment Day with money or with our so-called 'good works'.

Imagine if, after Nathan rebuked David for his adultery and murder, the king had tried to appease God's anger by doing some good works. What an

“What! Get to Heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!”



offensive thought. The only thing that could save him was the mercy of God, and Psalm 51:1 tells us that's what he called upon.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." - Psalm 51:1 (NKJV).

So, we must tell sinners the only thing that can save them from death and Hell is God's grace.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." - Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV).

Eternal life is a free gift of God. It can't be earned or deserved, and the way to help sinners see that is to move the thought of earning their salvation out of their reach. Jesus did that by using the Ten Commandments to show the true nature of sin. See Mark 10.

Therefore, it's when a sinner realises that God is holy and that He considers lust to be adultery, hatred to be murder and that He sees our inner motives, that he sees that only mercy can save

“When we trust alone in Jesus for our salvation, we cease from trying to save ourselves...”

him. But, there's also another subtle way that works try to weed their way up into the equation. This is when someone acknowledges that they have sinned against God, but they trust that their repentance will save them.

If they say they're sorry for their sin, and say that they will never commit that particular sin again, then God will allow them into Heaven. That may sound right, but imagine a criminal saying to the judge, "Judge, I know I'm guilty, but I'm really sorry, and I won't commit the crime again," thinking that the judge will therefore dismiss his case.

The judge would likely say, "Of course you should be sorry, and of course you shouldn't do it again. You are going to jail!" So, if repentance can't help us in man's court, it certainly won't help us on Judgment Day.

And that brings us to the rest we find in Christ. When we trust alone in Jesus for our salvation, we cease from trying to save ourselves - just as a man who jumps out of a plane wearing a parachute totally trusts the parachute to save him. He doesn't flap his arms. He stops any effort and simply trusts the parachute to save him.

George Whitfield, in speaking about trying to earn our salvation through our works, said, "What! Get to Heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!"

Context is everything - especially when it comes to our eternal salvation. | 

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





Discipleship

BY LEW MEYER

Many Christians won't be in Heaven. Now I have your attention, and before someone starts stacking firewood around a stake, I'd better explain.

The word 'Christian' is only used three times in the Bible - all in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul never calls believers by this nickname, invented in Antioch. He refers to them as "those in Christ".

'Christian' is a lovely word, of course. 'Christ' means Messiah or 'anointed one' and 'tian' - in Latin - means 'little'. So, according to Antioch citizens, we are little Christs.

The problem is that over time, and with cultural changes, word's meanings can change. Today the word Christian can mean many things. People claim to be Christians because they think they live by Jesus' teachings, or were christened - or baptised - in a church.

Or, even because they want your vote in an upcoming election. Ask people if they're Christians, and they may say, "I think so", or "I hope so".

We must allow for different levels of maturity and understanding in believers, but a true Christian should 'know so'. Let's use the right words. The far

more Biblical word to describe the genuine people of God is 'disciples'. It's found more than 270 times - in one form or another - in the New Testament.

It's far easier for a fake believer to say "I'm a Christian", than "I'm a disciple - or committed follower - of Jesus".

Who's really in charge?

In Matthew 28:18-20 we read, *"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (NIV).

There have been thousands of people called Jesus throughout history, possibly even some in Nazareth. But, only one has now been appointed as top authority of the universe - Lord.

He's the only one who can save our souls. Some people say, "I can have Jesus as my Saviour, but not my Lord". That's absurd. 'Lordship' is not something Jesus may, or may not, have in our lives. It's who He is.

Jesus didn't say, "...go and get decisions from people to do God the favour of letting Him into their lives". No. He said make disciples. When we receive Jesus, He doesn't enter our lives on our terms. He enters on His terms, or not at all.

He'll not lower Himself to give you cheap 'hell-insurance' cover while you go on living under your own authority. He is Lord.

To choose Christ is to choose, with His Spirit's enabling, to live under His authority. This is critical, because there's lots of people who call themselves Christians who warm our church seats, who have not changed, who don't desire holiness, who lack spiritual power, who aren't being transformed into Jesus' likeness, who don't share their faith and who, mistakenly, think they're heading for Heaven.

It's no accident our Lord chose the word 'disciple'. It was a well-known word in the culture. When people chose to be a disciple to a master, they were choosing to live a life of loyalty to that master above all others.

**“Trust Him enough to know
His way is best, no matter
how rough the journey.”**

To be where that master wanted them to be, to do what that master wanted them to do, to not do what that master wanted them not to do, to say what that master wanted them to say, to learn what that master wanted them to learn and to assist that master in his work.

The 'signing up' procedure for this new loyalty that Jesus chose was, and still is, baptism by immersion.

Right now, you might be asking, "Am I really a disciple?" That's an important question.

Paul tells us, *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you - unless, of course, you fail the test? - 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV).*

If you're a genuine disciple of Jesus, you might be saying to yourself, "I'm obviously not a very good disciple". Join the club and take heart.

The word 'disciple' also means someone who is a learner. You only have to read the Gospels to see this. There were three years of highs and lows in the performance of the 12. At times, it seems Jesus was almost tearing his hair out. *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord', and do not do what I say?", "Oh, you of little faith..."*, and so on.

No disciple begins as a perfect disciple. It's no different with us. We don't have the physical Jesus with us to teach, rebuke, correct and train us in righteousness. But we have His Spirit in - and His Word available to - us.

If we're not a counterfeit disciple, sooner or later there should be progress in our growth to spiritual maturity. God knew in advance that we would choose to follow Christ, and organised things in advance so that we'd be conformed to the likeness of His Son.

"For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."
- Romans 8:29 (NIV).

Stick close enough to Jesus to hear what He's saying. Listen to His words. Follow in His footsteps. Trust Him enough to know His way is best, no matter how rough the journey. Spend - and be spent - in the extension of His kingdom. | 

■ Lew Meyer is an evangelist, Bible teacher, apologist and elder of a small fellowship. He is a writer who has recently produced a series of small books on cults and religions designed to educate believers and act as a tool they can give to people of other religions. Lew lives in West Auckland with his wife, Angela.



Jesus

KEEP ME NEAR THE CROSS

BY PAUL MACKINNON

As we approach Easter, it's important we understand the one thing that unites us as the Church is the cross. Paul MacKinnon explains.

The words of this title are essential for the local church's survival.

World-wide, groups of people form for many reasons - rugby, gardening, business associations and thousands more.

Membership is a choice. That's also true of most religious groups. A man, after considering Buddhism - for example - deciding to adopt that religion naturally seeks out a group which practises it. Yet, whether secular or religious, membership in these groups is a choice.

Furthermore, people's interests change. Therefore, our continuing involvement - and membership - in a particular group isn't certain.

The exception is the Church. Our part in the Body of Christ - which is eternal.

Christ's Body is different to other groups because although we become part of it willingly, that willingness is a work of God in our heart. Without that work, scripture says we'd never have come to Christ. Romans 8:5-7, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Acts 16:14 - and many other scriptures - speak plainly of God's choice, in eternity past, to do that saving work in His people.

"...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." - 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (KJV).

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." - 1 Peter 1:2 (KJV).

"...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. - Romans 8:28-30 (KJV).

Every child of God owes their hope of eternal life to God's mercy and grace, not their own wise choice.

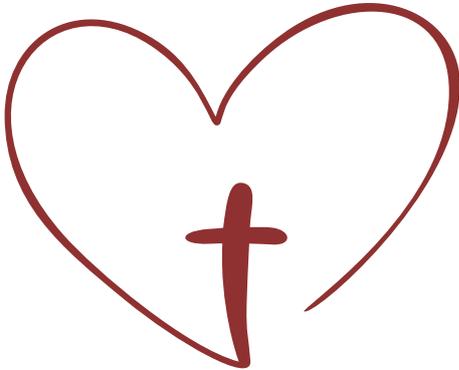
He called them out of darkness, cleansing them from sin by the blood of Jesus.

By His Spirit, we're baptised into the Body of Christ.

"...we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." - Romans 12:5 (KJV).

This union with the Lord, and one another, is accomplished by our sovereign, unchanging, God.

It's true people come and go from membership in local Christian congregations, but there's no such thing as a person who used to be truly one with God's people, but is no longer. If, in this life we've been united in Christ, we shall certainly be so for eternity in Heaven. See Malachi 3:16-17. Christ is building His Church. He said in Matthew 16:18 the powers of Hell shall not destroy it.



I intentionally use a volley of scripture here - you must not doubt that Christ is Lord of the harvest. If we're to be stable, resilient Christians, we must be conscious that salvation is the infallible work of God.

However, in spite of our marvellous deliverance and adoption into God's family, those who are one in Christ aren't always one in opinions! Spiritual immaturity, and remaining corruption of sin, gives Satan an opportunity to bring us into conflict with each other.

That's exactly what he wants There's a coming new world order in which the state will become a 'god' men must worship. The only real obstacle to that is Christianity.

Early believers were persecuted for not worshipping Caesar, we'll be targeted once again for the same reason. One way the enemy is successfully attacking Christian churches is by introducing worldly questions and controversies - they only serve to divide God's house.

“Let us clearly understand the one thing uniting us as the Church is the cross. It's a wall defending the Church from division...”

Let us clearly understand the one thing uniting us as the Church is the cross. It's a wall defending the Church from division - faithful, consistent proclamation of Christ crucified for us.

We may differ greatly in age, background, ethnicity or profession, yet we all meet at this one glorious point - rendering all else trivial.

“...The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” - Galatians 2:20 (KJV).

In churches where Calvary's cross has taken second place to anything else, there will undoubtedly be 'biting back' and devouring of one another before long.

Such congregations will be dying, because other things have displaced the message of Christ's atoning death and resurrection. The cross is there, but it's nothing more than an empty religious symbol - no longer that blood-stained cross where our sins are atoned for.

Once any local church ceases to emphasise that message, in favour of anything else, true Christians quickly discover that unbelievers are in control - Christians become unwelcome strangers in what used to be their spiritual home.

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” - Galatians 6:14 (KJV).

There's no question Christians have social responsibilities. *“...Do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God..” - Micah 6:8 (KJV).* As we have opportunity, we should do good to all men. See Galatians 6:10.

A Christian's good works are the outworking of the Holy Spirit in us - not something we do to earn God's approval. These works are the individual Christian's responsibility, as God leads. Acts 2:42 says the church's business is preaching of God's Word, the fellowship of the saints, worshipping Christ at the table and prayer. |✠

■ Paul MacKinnon has been pastor of Faith Baptist Church (FBC) in Northcote, Auckland since 1996. He and his wife, Liz, have three adult children. With a heart to challenge and encourage readers within its congregation, FBC produces its own in-house publication known as Matters of Faith - which Pastor Paul also writes for.



Kindness

BY JAKE WILMOTH

Have you ever lost something? Maybe your keys, some money, your wallet or a cell phone? I remember one time when I lost my cell phone, or, rather I dropped it down a sinkhole. I was gutted.

This was back in the days of flip phones, so I was able to shrug it off and buy a new one without too much drama. But, that feeling of losing or misplacing something can rock us to the core. Depending on how attached we are to the item we lose, it can be a feeling which is not easy to shake.

Until a few years ago, I'd never really connected the dots when it came to how God genuinely feels regarding people who are lost. At the time, I was teaching through Luke with some students and - as part of his testimony - one of them shared from Luke 15.

He gave a very simple, but profound, message on the fact that you and I are the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son mentioned in that chapter. That realisation has actually stuck with me for over a decade now.

“Shouldn't we show that same kindness to others, so that, in Him, they might see the love of God at work in us?”

Though, for many, Easter seems to have become simply about Easter eggs and egg hunts, ultimately, it's of course about remembering what Jesus did on the cross for you and for me.

A reminder I'd like to leave with you is our part in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Our sin is what made us the lost coin, the lost sheep and the lost son which Jesus referred to. It separated us from God.

This Easter, as we take time to reflect on the work of the cross, may we never lose sight of - or forget - the magnitude of what it was Christ did on our behalf in defeating death, hell, sin and the grave. Thank you Jesus.

In the parable of the lost, or prodigal, son, God is represented by the father. With that in mind, there's something the father does that I find interesting. He sets his dignity aside to meet his sons exactly where they're at.

Yes, that's right, both sons. The first is the more obvious, and the one almost everyone points out.

The father ran to meet the prodigal son. He hugs and embraces that young man, restoring him to the position of son. It's such a picture of those who have been without Jesus, or who have even walked away from Him. And now, our Father brings us into the family by sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus, similarly, set aside His dignity for us! And yet, as mentioned, there's actually a second time the father from the parable of the prodigal son sets aside his dignity - and that is with his first-born son.

The passage tells us the first born son won't enter the house, and so the father goes out to meet him where he is.

This son has been obedient all his life - he's always done



whatever the father told him to do. But, there is bitterness, anger and frustration in this son.

Aren't there times when we can all identify with the son who ran away from home? Perhaps we even view that as the essence of a 'good' testimony. We either ran away from, or never knew, God and yet He reached out and got hold of our lives. The point here is that - in His mercy - Jesus too meets us where we are at when we call out to Him.

A question I'd also like us to consider is, do we identify at all with the first born son? There are times I'm sure we do.

When Jesus was speaking, he probably had the Pharisees and Scribes in mind.

But, who are the 'modern' Pharisees and Scribes? A challenging thought is to consider is they would possibly be you and I. They would be the ones who know the Word of God, and yet stand on the side judging, condemning or even wagging the finger at those who simply ran away from home. Does that sound like the older son?

In light of these thoughts, I'm reminded of Romans 2:4. "...do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and

patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (ESV).

Let's remember that we only came to the Lord in the first place because He was kind to us- sending His Son to die for us.

Shouldn't we - in turn - also be kind to those around us? Shouldn't we show that same kindness to others, so that, in Him, they might see the love of God at work in us?

"...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." - Romans 5:8 (ESV). | 

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



Relational Evangelism

THE 'CAUSE CIRCLE'

BY DAVE GOW

I've worked full time in Christian ministry for 13 years. And, all of those years have been with an organisation which is focussed completely on equipping youth ministries around New Zealand to share the gospel.

That's something I'm absolutely passionate about - I desire to see young people come to know Christ, grow in their walk with Him and share their faith with others.

The only problem is, for a good chunk of my ministry, I was so focused on this goal for others that - at times - I made excuses for myself.

If I'm completely honest, I was fine with the fact that most of my life was spent never rubbing shoulders with an unbeliever, because the rest of my time was committed to helping others do that very thing.

But, once while at a conference, I was listening and nodding away passionately as they were talking about gospel advancement.

They were discussing how we shouldn't just be out there running evangelistic events, but also intentionally ensuring we're training young people, and equipping them with tools to share their faith with their friends.

We were then reminded of one of the values of a gospel advancing ministry, "Leaders fully embrace and model it," they said. Wow. What should have been very obvious a long time ago became very clear to me from this point on.

I simply can't effectively train others to do what I'm not already doing. I had fully embraced it, yes, but I certainly wasn't modelling it.

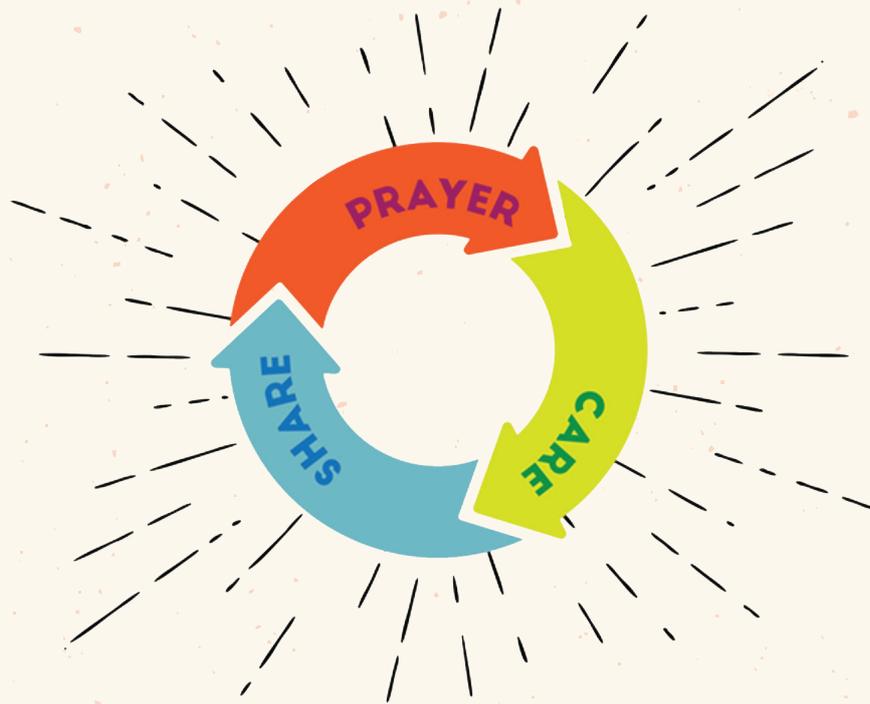
At this point, I began to implement one of the gospel advancing values we had been teaching youth ministries.

Intercessory prayer fuels it. We teach what we call the 'Cause Circle'. It's a strategy to remind and help young people to pray for, care for and share with those that they would 'put into' their cause circle.

I then decided it was time to start my own cause circle, and I began praying intentionally each day for someone I knew to come to know Christ.

My problem? I didn't have a single name. So, I simply started praying, "God, would you open my eyes to see those who are in my circle that need to know You?" And He has.

At first I noticed my next door neighbour, then I noticed the guy at my regular bakery, and so on. I



began adding them to my cause circle, praying that God would begin drawing them to Himself and that He might use me to make His name known to them. From here, God continued - and still continues - to chisel my hard heart.

Often, in the early stages, I would find myself praying with a sense of urgency in the morning. Then, I'd see my neighbour over the fence in the afternoon and think, "...not now, I've got too much to do!" Or, something similar.

There I was, wishing away the very opportunity I had asked God for that same day! I could no longer hide, my sin in this area was plain and evident to me.

Why am I sharing all of this with you, you might ask? Because, I assume many of you who are reading this may struggle in this area, just as I do. I assume that you may have great intentions to share your faith, but isn't it easy to either make excuses, or to attempt to justify that it's not your role?

Often we say that job is for the 'evangelists'. Let me assure you, I am no evangelist but the words of Paul to Timothy hit me hard!

"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." - 2 Timothy 4:5 (NIV).

"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

- 2 Timothy 4:5 (NIV).

“Could you begin to pray for at least one person each day, that God might use you to make His name known to them?”

The language Paul uses gives me the strong feeling that Timothy wasn't an 'evangelist' either, and yet he charged him to do the work of one!

This, and many other verses, make it clear that you and I are called to share our faith with others.

Would you join me in this journey? Could you begin to pray for at least one person each day, that God might use you to make His name known to them?

This prayer changed my life, and it is - I believe - changing the lives of others.

Since this prayer, I have had the chance to share my faith with several people in my cause circle - including my friend at the bakery, a Chinese man in his 50s who has been in New Zealand for over 10 years. He had never heard the name of Jesus before - and now, he's heard it for the first time.

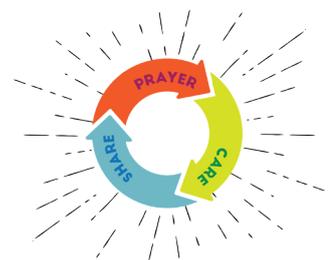
I've also been able to build a relationship with my neighbour, so I can show care for him. And, when I have the opportunity to share my faith, it will have more meaning to him.

There are others I've been able to share with in my cause circle as well and - although none of them have trusted Christ yet - I am excited for the day one of them does!

I hope these thoughts give you some encouragement in your journey - let's seek to live out 2 Timothy 4:5. Let's seek to be true disciples who are growing, and whose hearts are to be obedient to His call to 'do the work of an evangelist' and share our faith with others. | 



Scan Me



Scan Me



advance.wol



Here are some tools that may be helpful if you want to begin or grow in your own journey of relational evangelism.

Scan these QR codes to look up the 'Cause Circle', download the 'Life in Six Words' app, or follow our Instagram dedicated to helping young people share their faith - @advance.wol

■ Dave Gow is the director of Word of Life New Zealand. He lives in Hamilton with his wife, Ainsley and their three young boys, Elijah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. They attend Hukanui Bible Church, where they head up the Young Adults leadership team.



The POWER of the Resurrection

BY EMEAL (EZ) ZWAYNE

“There’s no question how that first Easter morning transformed the outnumbered early believers - going from forsaking Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane to standing boldly on the Day of Pentecost.”

Where would Christianity be without the resurrection? It wouldn't.

Christianity without the risen Saviour is the Amazon rainforest without trees, the Pacific Ocean without water.

The faith “...once for all entrusted to God's holy people” - *Jude 1:3 (NIV)* rises or falls on the resurrection.

Jesus wasn't ambiguous about what would follow His crucifixion. “...Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” - *Matthew 16:21 (NIV)*.

Even His enemies knew what He'd declared. “...we remember... that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'” - *Matthew 27:62-64 (NIV)*.

Aside from the resurrection's veracity - or accuracy - what was its impact? How has it impacted you?

There's no question how that first Easter morning transformed the outnumbered early believers - going from forsaking Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane to standing boldly on the Day of Pentecost. Once hiding in fear, they now

passionately vow to obey God, not man - even when incarcerated and threatened.

Rejoicing in suffering, they endured imprisonments, beatings, stonings, shipwrecks and torture for the sake of their Redeemer. Almost all of His apostles faced a gruesome death over not renouncing Jesus. That's dramatic.

The resurrection, though, didn't affect everyone equally. The Roman soldiers guarding the tomb were so terrified by the angel rolling away the stone they “...shook and became like dead men.” - *Matthew 28:2-4 (NIV)*.

In *Matthew 28:11-15*, they told the chief priests what they saw, and were quickly bought off - agreeing to lie about what had happened. Though some believed when Paul proclaimed the resurrection on Mars Hill, some mocked. Others said, “We want to hear you again...” - *Acts 17:32 (NIV)*.

Where do you stand? Is the power of the resurrection at work in your life? Are you willing to endure persecution, even death, for the sake of our resurrected Saviour? Have you believed? Do you mock? Perhaps you want to hear it again.

We - like Christianity - will all undoubtedly rise or fall based upon how we respond to, and receive, Jesus' resurrection. | 

■ Emeal ('EZ') Zwayne is the President of Living Waters in Los Angeles. A dynamic communicator, he speaks at conferences and churches in the United States and around the world. EZ served as an associate pastor for several years. He and his wife, Rachel, have five children







Martyn Iles
**THE CALL
TO BE PEOPLE OF
CHARACTER
AND COURAGE**

BY JEREMY SMITH

Former Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) managing director Martyn Iles speaking at Family First New Zealand's Forum on the Family 2022 in Auckland. Photos: Ken Buist



Photo Supplied

“I love Kiwis,” he smiles. While an answer perhaps elicited thanks to a somewhat leading opening question, it’s an effective icebreaker as I ask outgoing Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) managing director Martyn Iles how he’s finding New Zealand.

In September, we caught up with Martyn in Auckland as he spoke at Family First New Zealand’s sold out Forum on the Family. He was last there three years ago.

“Honestly, it’s encouraging knowing the work we do resonates with people, and makes a difference, in New Zealand.”

In late February, Martyn announced that after five years as ACL managing director, overseeing about 40 staff, he wouldn’t continue in the role. The ACL board, he said, “...reviewed its strategic direction, deciding I’m not the right person to lead the revised strategy...”

The focus, he said, would be more on political tactics and less on the gospel. “Having heard this, I absolutely agree I’m not the right person.” Calling the role the “...privilege of my life”, Martyn thanked God for blessing ACL’s work, ultimately trusting Him to open the right doors in this new chapter. “The gospel has been declared to the nation, in mainstream and alternative media, and through

the distribution of millions of gospels by volunteers. In my view, this is our greatest achievement.” Founded in 1995, the ACL is a non-party partisan, non-denominational grassroots movement based in Canberra. Motivated by faith, its simply-stated aim is to make Godly truth public.

Authentic attended the Forum thanks to Bob McCoskrie and Family First. After listening to Martyn’s session - Stepping Into The Crosshairs: Answering Secular Culture Through Courage - we sat down to chat. Combining notes from his Forum session, and our chat, Martyn - whose background is in youth work and as a lawyer - and I discuss faith, the importance of having Christian voices in society, sharing Jesus authentically and having “courage in the crosshairs”.

Firstly, you grew up in a Christian home, and were involved in youth ministry for six years. What’s something you’ve learned walking with Jesus you can share with readers?

I did. God was graciously at work in my life from a young age. Our only hope - the ultimate Truth - is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To anyone who - as a Christian - looks at the world feeling downcast about what we see around us, be encouraged. Be grounded in an eternal perspective. God’s in control, bringing all things under submission as part of His

“Jesus Christ’s rule must begin in our own heart and mind. Then, the outflow will be His character produced in our lives.”

ultimate plan. Every amazing story - or testimony - is forged through lows and highs, defeats and victories. If - at times - the lows are as low as they are, then Jesus’ redemptive plan is an amazing story. We’ll rejoice one day we were part of it.

I love mountain biking. When you’re off-road, it’s important to keep your eyes on the right thing. If you’re worried about hitting something, don’t look at it! The more you do, the more you’re likely to do just that. Look to Jesus, never losing sight of His ‘big picture’.

Can you describe the work - and role - God has called ACL to?

ACL is a grassroots movement motivated by faith, seeking to make truth public. The key burden is to intercede for the cause of Godly, Biblical truth, righteousness and justice in public places and spheres. Through being a politically effective voice, ACL wants to see Christian principles and ethics accepted, and influencing, the way we’re governed, do business and relate to each other as a society.

Over 220,000 individuals now share that vision to be a voice for Godly truth in the world we live in.

Can you reflect on your five years as ACL managing director?

ACL isn’t just me - our team is amazing. We’re only here today because God brought key moments across our path. In seeking to be obedient, we responded. Those sorts of things propel us forward, but we never take credit. It’s God. Thinking about past grace from Him gives me enormous confidence for whatever the future holds.

What have you most enjoyed about your role? It undoubtedly brings with it a level of scrutiny - what sustains you despite that?

I often reiterate in several contexts, including ACL’s ‘The Download’ programme - which is run for 18-25 year olds - that persecution is an inescapable feature of the life of whoever seeks to serve God, standing for what’s true, good and right.

“...everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” - 2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV).

Personally, a key is knowing that while I’ve been here, this is where God’s called me. He uses us as we carry out our work.

I probably find speaking publicly the hardest part! And yet - for example - after I spoke here at the Forum, two people told me the content pointed them to Jesus. As He leads, I get that regularly. I have to accept that’s a signal of effectiveness where He’s placed me.

It’s as though those conversations are often also confirmations. When we face the ‘slings and arrows’ from a hostile society, that’s also, ultimately, God’s power at work, and on display, in the world.

Walking through those experiences - just as Jesus did - points people to the Father, God works through us. He’ll use every ‘arrow’. Your testimony is a witness for His glory.

At the Forum, you said, “...what we do through our courage is directly downstream from who we are in character...” How important is it to have Christian voices represented in our world, despite society often wanting us to be silent?

I’ve heard it said we ‘live for an audience of one’. That audience is God. Yes, there’re a lot of potential audiences looking on. But, in my own walk, I’ve found it’s incredibly freeing to realise God’s, ultimately, the only one we serve.

Joseph’s response, for example, when tempted was based on knowing he only served God. *“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” - Genesis 39:9 (NIV).*

We must approach situations and conversations ‘in Christ’, with His heart, right?

Absolutely. Isaiah 6:8 says, *“I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (NIV).* Isaiah’s response is, in essence, an acknowledgement he can’t go in his own strength. He needs God.

Similarly, we can't do anything in our own strength. Christ in us is the beginning of the type of character we must have to be effective in today's world. I believe God is still asking the same question He had for Isaiah. I've often asked myself why I get involved in the 'public square', so to speak. The ultimate answer, for any of us, has to be we want to point people to God - and be an authentic reflection of His truth. He alone is the truth, and the world needs that.

Also during the Forum, you unpacked some great truths from Matthew 5. Jesus calls us to be salt and light in the world. How do we effectively do that?

Jesus Christ's rule must begin in our own heart and mind. Then, the outflow will be His character produced in our lives. John 11:35 says, "*Jesus wept*". Why? Because of the impact of sin and death. If Jesus was compelled to act - displaying the Father - to a world trapped in sin and evil, then we His followers - as His hands and feet - must never lose sight of that as our motivating force. Christ's heart in us for people who don't know Him means that in observing a world trapped by darkness and sin, we too are grieved. Jesus' example is that we don't see anyone as an enemy to be destroyed, but a soul to be saved.

We're called to share Jesus, but the fear of man often stops us. How can we overcome that and boldly speak Godly truth? What steps can we take to effectively in sharing our faith?



The key to being 'salt' is to not compromise - in the sense of holding fast to Godly truth. Being 'light' in the world - as Jesus intends - means to be visible, known for Who it is we believe in and standing on His truth. Said another way, sharing our faith. It takes practice.

Ultimately Jesus' visibility in and through us - like a lamp on a stand - is what will change the world around us. Find ways to make Him known - 'practice' sharing Jesus. The first time your voice might shake, or you might feel you made mistakes. Keep going. You learn by doing - God will equip you. Just start. If you trip and fall, get up and keep going.

Regarding stepping into the crosshairs and answering secular culture courageously, how should we, as Christians, boldly live life authenticity displaying Jesus Christ?

Colossians 1:20 says, "...through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in Heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross." (NIV).

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate peace, pointing us to God. Therefore, that's our starting point. Our most important calling is - first and foremost - to share the gospel, pointing people towards Jesus' sacrifice for us.

“You can authentically ‘wear’ your faith on your sleeve - knowing Jesus is the answer to ‘real world’ questions being asked.”

Whatever our sphere of influence, our great charge from God is to share Christ. We’re to be people who - through being salt and light in the world - initiate the question ‘why?’. Christians living in such a way in our world means the answer becomes visible like light. That answer is Jesus.

You can authentically ‘wear’ your faith on your sleeve. Jesus is the answer to ‘real world’ questions being asked. The best starting point, as you look to feel equipped, is always the Bible.

Charles Spurgeon said, “...live in the Bible, visit good books often...”.

We must know our bedrock. God’s Word. You’ll only start to apply Biblical principles as you read them. If you need to, find other books which help you systematically study His Word. For me, clarity - and what it is to live in authenticity - comes from intentionally reading the Bible, praying and keeping short accounts with the Lord.

How do you ensure a healthy ‘balance’ in life and how important is it to have Godly influences who point us to Jesus?

Good question. Actually, another of those ‘bedrock’ spiritual disciplines, I believe, is accountability. Yes, we’re called to be accountable! In a work sense, as much as I have my role, as a CEO if you will, I need people in my own life whose authority I come under.

My dad is one of those people. He’s a wise, Godly man. I ring him every Sunday night. He always knows when something’s not right. I also have a couple of other people I can go to.

Paul says to pray without ceasing. So, that’s one discipline also I’m implementing - filling each day with a constant attitude of prayer. Balance wise, I think it’s important we realise that if we need to rest, we can. Jesus is a great example of that intentionality. I build into my schedule a good rhythm of breaks. There never seems to be the perfect time, but it’s okay to turn your phone off!

Martyn, thank you. Any final encouragement?

Rejoice. Great is your reward in Heaven. That’s our joy when we seek Christ over comfort. Think eternally, always being aware of God’s ‘big picture’. Whenever we do lose that sense of eternity, we’re prone to lose our joy. That’s often when we feel discouraged and defeated.

When Jesus returns, only those things we did with an eternal perspective will last. And, we’ll be so grateful we did those as unto the Lord.

Watch for opportunities He provides to display the Father-heart of God, and live with purpose - the intentional perspective that our treasure is, ultimately, in the Lord.

Is there any hope? Yes. Jesus. The gospel continues to spread world-wide. And, God is at work and in control. 

Thanks to Bob McCoskrie, and Family First, for the opportunity to attend the Forum on the Family 2022.

Find out more about Australian Christian Lobby at www.acl.org.au. Follow Martyn at www.facebook.com/martynilloydiles. Follow Family First New Zealand at www.familyfirst.org.nz

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The VEIL

BY BARRIE HANSON

When Jesus said, “...it is finished...”, it was. Barrie Hanson takes a moment to share some reflections as we approach Easter.

When we consider the Jewish temple at the time of Christ's crucifixion, the veil divided the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Inside the veil was the ark of the covenant - and outside were the various holy elements of Jewish worship.

The veil was to be made exactly as described in Exodus. *“And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.” - Exodus 26:31-33 (KJV).*

It was to completely separate the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. It was a huge, heavy weaving which was impossible to tear by hand. There was always to be



this separation and the Ark of the testimony was only to be visited by the high priest. Only he could enter, and - even then - only under strict conditions in pain of death.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord, and died. And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.” - Leviticus 16:1-2 (KJV). So, only the high priest could enter, and only once a year and then bearing a blood sacrifice.

“When Christ said “...it is finished...” – it was. We are brought to salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

“And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. - Leviticus 16:14-16 (KJV).

The congregation of Israel had no access to the Holy of Holies, with a death penalty to any who were not priests. This was the Jewish system at the time of Christ's death. Thus, the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, gave His blood for humanity in the place of the old system. This was done for you and for me. It is forever personal to His creation. The blood sacrifice for sin was accepted by God and the

old Jewish system was replaced in a stroke. The veil was destroyed at the cross.

“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” - Mark 15:37-38 (KJV).

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.” - Luke 23:43-46 (KJV).

In Hebrews chapter nine, the connection is made clear. Christ is the permanent High Priest for all the world. Not by the blood of animals but His own blood, obtaining eternal redemption. He is now the mediator between God and man.

No longer are earthly priests required, for now there is an eternal High Priest interceding for His people. No longer does the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies once a year for the people. The veil is torn, destroyed and Christ has opened Heaven to all who will believe.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” - Hebrews 9:27-28 (KJV).

When Christ said “...it is finished...” – it was. We are brought to salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:14-18 (KJV). |

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Timely Encounter Saves Family from Death

It seemed there was nothing left Ilias could do for his family. For weeks, perhaps months, they had suffered torment due to an evil spirit, and the poor father of three had exhausted every avenue of help he knew of. As a last resort, someone had told him, "There is a warlock who might help you." But the warlock's words were terrifying, not comforting.

The Only Way to Freedom?

Ilias worked as a daily wage laborer to provide for his wife, two daughters and one son. As a daily wage labourer, he most likely struggled to put food on the table. Life was hard—even before strange things began happening to his family. His 12-year-old daughter, Varsha, seemed to be oppressed by a dark power. The whole family began to get sick often, and the health of Ilias's wife seriously deteriorated. The family's cows and goats died for no apparent reason.

"Because of me, all [my] family members are suffering," Varsha sometimes told her father. Ilias, desperate to bring peace to his family, had performed rituals and practiced witchcraft—the primary solutions people in his community had for their problems. He sought advice from people from a variety of religions, selling his family's possessions for the money required to perform rituals. But nothing helped. His family only became more impoverished, and Ilias's hope began to fade.

That's when he went to the warlock for help, but the man's advice was chilling: "If you want the permanent solution for this problem, you need to sacrifice your daughter," he told Ilias. "... There is no other way to get freedom from this spirit."

Shocked and dismayed, Ilias lost all hope of setting his family free. Then he made a terrible, desperate decision: He went to a shop and bought some poison so they could all end their lives.

After purchasing the poison, he sat down beneath an electric pole and wept bitterly. That's when someone saw him—someone who could help.

Set Free

GFA pastor Vaso was returning home from a prayer meeting when he noticed the distressed man crying. The pastor approached Ilias, explaining that he was a pastor who prayed for people in need. His hope reignited by the sudden offer of help, Ilias hugged the pastor and pleaded, "Please save me and my family." He told Pastor Vaso about the suffering his family had experienced and the sacrifice the warlock had told him to make.

"We do not need to sacrifice anything because Jesus has done it once for all," Pastor Vaso countered. "Jesus loves you and your family. If you are ready to truly believe in Him and trust in Him fully, without any doubt, He will deliver you and your family."

Pastor Vaso told Ilias more about Jesus and prayed for him. He also encouraged him to bring his family to church so the whole congregation could pray for them.

Two days later, Ilias and his family visited the church. As Pastor Vaso began to pray for the family's deliverance, a loud voice bellowed from Varsha's mouth: "This family belongs to me, and you cannot take this family from me!"

Pastor Vaso prayed over the girl as she continued shouting. After about 45 minutes, the voice spoke once more: "Leave me and let me go. I will not disturb Varsha or her family anymore."

Pastor Vaso commanded the spirit to flee in Jesus' name, and suddenly, Varsha was free. After drinking some water, the girl said, "I am feeling better now."

Ilias praised Jesus for setting Varsha and his whole family free. Pastor Vaso encouraged the family to pray to Jesus and read the Bible daily, trusting in Christ alone. Soon, the fear and despair they had experienced were replaced by joy. They began attending prayer meetings regularly and growing in their faith. Because God sent a GFA pastor to help someone in need at the right time, this family now has freedom in Christ. ॐ



Through the prayers of the believers, Ilias and his family (pictured) were freed from a terrible darkness.

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Biblical Leadership

SOME REFLECTIONS

BY HOWARD GOOLD

What characterises a person God can use to lead His people?

Biblical leadership is based entirely around the Person, and work, of Jesus. There's no room to vary from the Word of God.

"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." - Acts 13:22 (KJV).

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." - Mark 10:45 (KJV).

It's said, "...he cannot serve, who has not first learned to obey...". What qualities, then, did some Biblical characters whose leadership played a significant role in Israel's journey display?

Paul "...believed in someone bigger than himself...". Jesus. Paul had courage when facing opposition and limitless horizons in his mission. He ultimately believed in - and was anchored by - "...Jesus Christ and Him crucified..." - 1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV).

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." - Acts 13:47 (KJV).

Nehemiah teaches us to "...build on what God's given you...". His leadership was built not so much

on ancestry from Jewish lineage, as it was on faithfulness. God gives each leader specific gifts. Some aren't visible - all are useful.

In Joshua we're constantly reminded "...focus on who is commanding you..." He had been in God's presence, and we then see a theophany - a visible manifestation of God - take place.

"...and the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so." - Joshua 5:15 (KJV).

In Acts, a powerful reminder is at work through Barnabas. The importance of bridging the 'gaps' caused by differing opinions. Barnabas bridged gaps between the Greek and the Jewish worlds. *"Barnabas... means son of encouragement..." - Acts 4:36 (KJV).*

Moses reminds us, "...blind your eyes to petty criticism." Exodus 16:8, and verses 16-20 tell us he was seen as the patient leader of a people who displayed little faith.

We often hear the phrase, "...bind the ties of love and courage..." Today's language calls that tough love. Some call it a tough mind and a tender heart. Elijah had both. He loved God and had the courage to speak to the evils of his day.

Peter was restored, having denied Christ. In Matthew 16, Peter was both a 'rock' and a 'stumbling block.' Both blessed and disgraced - almost in the same breath.

Leadership is not a reward for age, gender, affluence or status. Leadership is a calling from God for specific ministry.

As I prayed about Biblical leadership, I felt to make mention of some principles which were brought to mind as I recently watched a Netflix documentary on WWII. I share them praying they may be an encouragement to readers.

Firstly, be willing to change. World War Two came 20 years after WWI ended. Many senior generals, especially in France, were experienced World War One officers successful in methods of that war. Yet, when confronted with new radical ideas of strategy and equipment in WWII, these men said it couldn't be done and things would be fought as they had 20 years earlier. This was ineffective.

"...put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires... be made new in the attitude of your minds... put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." - Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV).

Don't be driven by personal agendas and jealousies. Many generals carried irrational personal motives into some of their operations. Often at great cost to many. Sometimes despite reasoned opposition from their knowledgeable subordinates.

In leadership, you aren't always right. No one knows everything. When dealing with issues outside one's area of expertise, seek the Godly advice of those more aware. Be careful who you listen to.

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" - 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV).

It's often likely too, that - at times - there'll be those following you who have their own agenda. They'll only give you advice they think you want to hear.

Keep your focus on what's important. Don't be distracted by lesser things that intrude at critical times, even if they seem 'normal' at other times, or even important.

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." - Philippians 3:14 (NIV).

Wherever there is boorishness, rudeness, insensitivity, a sense of entitlement or even affluence, it's almost always detrimental.

Importantly, you should regularly evaluate your effectiveness - committing - and leaving in God's hands - the results. When He makes you aware of areas to change, are you willing to do so?

Complacency denies the existence of danger, or the proximity of serious issues. According to the documentary I watched, the Pearl Harbour attack occurred when everyone was resting on a Sunday. Warning signs were assessed as "...not likely to ever happen".

Additionally, the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes was completely unexpected by the United States.

In leadership - and many other areas of life - 'injuries' happen. Rest is required. But, rest in Christ, placing your burdens on Him.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." - Matthew 11:28 (NIV). *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."* - 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV).

Lastly, personal discipline comes before disciplining. How do you exercise discipline? Do you act with a 'payback' reaction? Or in a measured, responsible way?" Read Romans 12 and be encouraged. If your gift is to lead, do so diligently. |✚

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THE EASTER STORY

An Astonishing Triumph

BY ERIC LUDY

Where He goes, you go. That's the gospel miracle. I believed in Him, I entered into Him - born anew in Jesus. If I'm on a plane from Auckland to Perth, where would I go?

If in something, you obviously go where it goes. Where did Christ go? Firstly, the cross. Did you know that when Jesus went to the cross, He took you with Him?

"I am crucified with Christ" - Galatians 2:20 (KJV).
How was Paul there? By faith in Christ.

In Christ, old Eric died. You may not feel like you were at Calvary 2000 years ago. However, in Christ, His death was your death. Your old man - the old life - is crucified.

"...our old man is crucified... that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." - Romans 6:6 (KJV).

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" - Romans 6:3 (KJV).

"...reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. - Romans 6:11 (KJV).

Take that on your behalf - it's done.

Secondly, the grave. I was buried with Christ, my old life is no longer visible.

What also happened? The stone was rolled away. Your old life discarded, a new man rises. Everyone - as a Christian - desires new life, living, breathing Christianity. You can't drum that up in your own strength - or bring yourself to resurrection life.

But, God made a way. In Jesus Christ, you have His death, and His life.

"...we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."
- Romans 6:4-5 (KJV).

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."
- Galatians 2:20 (KJV).

That's a command, by the way. We must reckon ourselves alive.

"...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature..."
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV).

“You may not feel like you were at Calvary 2000 years ago. However, in Christ, His death was your death. Your old man - the old life - is crucified.”

Romans 6:12 is - therefore - a conclusive statement. *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” - (KJV).*

If all this is true, then don't let sin reign in your mortal body. Many feel victim to it - but you're not. In Christ, you're a victor! His victory is yours. Start living as such.

Romans six is Paul saying, “...don't you understand? When He died, you died. When He rose again, you rose again?”

Reckon it. Present your body to Him, allowing Him to dwell within it. When you bring it to Jesus Christ, saying “...my old man's dead...”, it's old management that's dead.

Jesus Christ is that new management. You're not. *“...know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (KJV).*

Thirdly, where does Jesus sit now?

At the right hand of the Father, in Heavenly places. In Christ, you're also seated there.

While physically here, spiritually, you're where He is. His body's there, and He sends His Spirit to be in your body here.

That's Christianity. We're the body of Christ. His spirit dwells with us. He brought us near - by the blood of Christ - to the very throne room of grace. There, we may access what we need to live this impossible life.

“...according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead...” - Ephesians 1:19-20 (KJV).

Where is Christ? *“...at His own right hand in the Heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet.” - Ephesians 1:19-22 (KJV).*

All principality, power, might, dominion and every name is under Jesus' feet. You're in Christ. You just read what His position is. And that's what the enemy doesn't want you to know - your position. If you know that, the church is unstoppable.

“...God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus” - Ephesians 2:4-6 (KJV).

In Jesus, the confession of faith is, “...my old man's dead, I'm in Christ. His work on the cross is my work. When He was buried, I was buried. Now, my old behaviour isn't visible - a new behaviour is seen.

“When He resurrected, I resurrected. I'm a new man, in Jesus. It's no longer I who live, but Christ in me. Where He's seated - in Heavenly places - I'm seated. I'm at the right hand of the Father, in Jesus. All things are under His feet, therefore, all things are under my feet.”

Behold the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He's done it. He'll continue to do it. That's Christianity. | 

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The Rich Young Ruler

BY CHARLES PRICE

"...Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." - Mark 10:21 (NKJV).

In our Christian life, it's possible to be driven by selfish motives. We want what God offers on our own terms. The rich young ruler in Mark 10 was like that. Coming through a crowd, he knelt down. *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" - Mark 10:17 (NKJV).*

Undoubtedly, the crowd was impressed. He clearly meant business. Jesus', in verse 19, probably shocked those watching as much as the man himself. *"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' " (NKJV).*

Then, *"...he answered... "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." ...Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad... and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." - Mar 10:20-22 (NKJV).*

Did Jesus apologise, or invite the man to negotiate his own terms? No.

"Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!" - Mark 10:23 (NKJV).

Why is it hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom? Are riches intrinsically wrong? No. But they can be dangerous. The riches themselves aren't the issue.

Jesus said, *"No one can serve two masters... either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." - Matthew 6:24 (ESV).*

Therefore, Jesus discerned this young man already had a 'god' - given that he was unwilling to exchange his dependence on material resources for dependence on God.

The eternal life he wanted was a commodity, addressing his insecurity about the future. Yet, Jesus defined eternal life as a relationship.

"...that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." - John 17:3 (ESV).

'Knowing Christ' and 'knowing God' includes submission to His agenda - precisely what the rich young ruler was unwilling to yield to.

It's not just the length of life he was offering, but depth. Something only found in full relationship with Christ. Apart from Him, all else will eventually disappoint us. | 

■ Charles Price serves as 'Minister at Large' with The Peoples Church, Toronto, Canada. He is also an itinerate speaker and preacher and author of several books. For more information please visit: www.livingtruth.ca





Invite people you've never met to explore life's big questions.

In 2021, churches in Wellington came together to advertise Alpha on billboards and bus shelters, on radio and social media. They covered the campaign in prayer. And the next time they started Alpha courses, churches across the city welcomed more walk-ins than they'd seen before.

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You can help extend an open invitation for people in this land to gather in churches, ask their questions, and find the eternal hope they seek.

Run Alpha

Plan a course or two this year—and don't forget to register and publish it at run.alpha.org.nz, so that those who are searching can find you.

Pray

Ask God to send more people than we can imagine to find answers to life's big questions this year! Contact us at office@alpha.org.nz if you'd like to join our prayer sessions.

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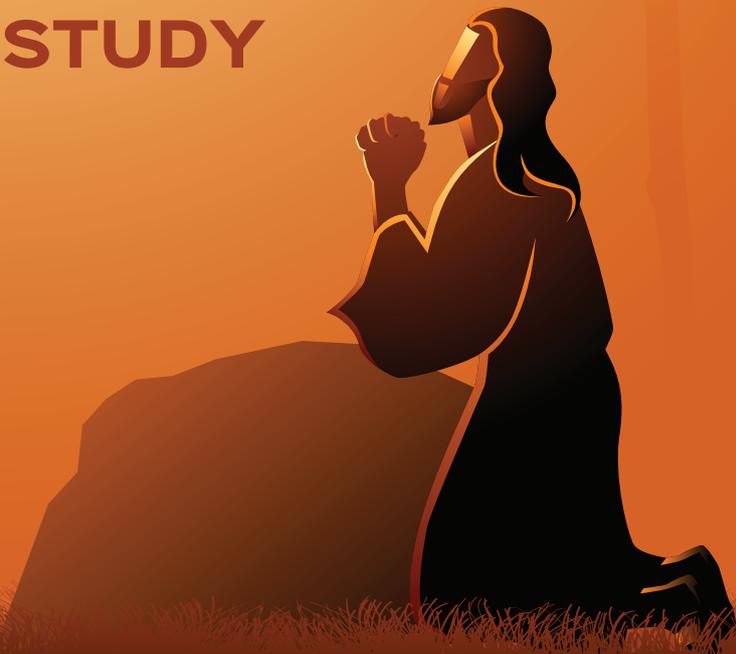
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“Not According to Plan?”

AN EASTER STUDY

BY CHUCK MISSLER



Jesus, not His enemies, set the time of His execution - a destiny established before the foundation of the world.

We know from scripture that the plot against Jesus was expressly designed to avoid the feast days, to minimize the involvement of Roman soldiers.

“...the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.” - Matthew 26:3-5 (NKJV).

Yet, their confrontation occurred on the most crowded feast day of the year!

Again, Jesus, not His enemies, set the time of His execution. Jesus ‘let the cat out of the bag’ - disclosing the plot against Him during the last supper. It forced Judas to either ‘fish or cut bait’.

Jesus’ instruction to Judas was, *“...what you do, do quickly.” - John 13:27 (NKJV).*

Even in the garden during the arrest, it was Jesus giving the orders. *“...He asked them again,*

“Whom are you seeking?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus answered, “I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way.” John 18:7-8 (NKJV).

Much has been written about the ensuing drama, the six trials - three Jewish, three Roman - and the torture and painful death that followed. The term ‘excruciating’ was coined from this event.

Jesus’ destiny as the Passover Lamb was the very label which John the Baptist declared in his initial public introduction of Him. *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” - John 1:29 (NKJV).* That’s a very Jewish label.

This was a destiny established before the foundation of the world. *“...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” - Ephesians 1:4 (NKJV).*

Even the personal representative of the ‘ruler of the world’ repeatedly pronounced Jesus innocent. See, for example, *John 18:38 - “Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I*

find no fault in Him at all." (NKJV). Nevertheless, He was crucified exactly as had been specified many centuries before, despite the fact that - for the Jews - the official form of execution was stoning.¹

The Ultimate Miracle

But, the most conspicuously supernatural milestone to be met was the subsequent resurrection from the dead, occurring on the third day. In Paul's succinct definition of the 'Gospel,' found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, he's very specific.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (NKJV).

Jesus died in the most documented execution in all history, fulfilling dozens of precise specifications recorded centuries in advance.²

He was buried, again fulfilling precise requirements.³ He then rose from the dead, again fulfilling numerous specifications that embroider the entire Old Testament. This third element is the very capstone of Paul's definition. Yet, just where do the scriptures specifically predict the third day? There are ostensibly seven - six more supplementing the obvious allusion to Jonah's 'whale of a tale'.⁴ Jesus Himself also made repeated predictions in the New Testament.⁵

What's also distinctive is what Paul does not include in "...the Gospel."⁶

He makes no mention of the Lord's teachings, His miracles, His example and so on. Our basic calling is to declare the gospel - this differentiates us from the pending social issues of the day. This will not be a popular stance. But it's His primary calling for us.

The Mistaken Identity

A mistaken identity haunts our humanist culture - an insufficient identity which misses the critical issue. Jesus is not simply a concept, nor principally a great teacher, a useful example, or a contrived - although constructive - tradition. Jesus is a living person who is yearning to take His Throne.⁷

He's scheduled an audit of our accounting of His calling for each of us.

Are you ready for 2 Corinthians 5:10?⁸

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. - 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV).

Does your church even teach - and prepare you for - this bema seat event? Do they teach the imminence and realities of the coming Kingdom?⁹ I suspect most Christians who pray "...Thy Kingdom come..." have no idea what they're actually praying for.

- Here's a personal challenge. Are these things relevant to, and are you prioritizing them, in your life? Shouldn't they be the primary focus of our every hour? Make Him known. | |

References:

1. Crucifixion was invented by the Persians, and then widely employed by Rome. It is alluded to in Psalm 22 and in Zechariah 12:10.
2. Not a bone to be broken, see Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20. A Roman soldier violated his specific orders to maintain this requirement - see John 19:33-35.
3. Andrew Bonar detailed the Levitical burial requirements 43 years before the discovery of the Garden Tomb by General Charles George Gordon in 1883. Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus*, 1840.
4. Jonah, Matthew 12:40; The Akedah, Genesis 22; Noah's New Beginning, Genesis 8:4; Rahab's cords, Joshua 2:15-18; The Tolah Worm, Psalm 22:6; Isaiah 1:8. See Genesis 40:20; Exodus 19:11, Leviticus 7:17-18 and Hosea 6:2.
5. Matthew 16:21, 17:23 and 20:19, Mark 9:31 and 10:34, Luke 9:22, 13:11 and 32, 18:33 and 24 verses seven and 21.
6. The popular label of 'good news' is merely a glib cop-out. Paul is definitively specific.
7. John 17:24.
8. The procedure is detailed in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Don't confuse our responsibilities for fruit-bearing with Jesus' completed work at Golgotha.
9. Daniel 2:44-45 and Acts 1:6-7.

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





Rangī Wills

Journeying With Jesus:

Rangi Wills Carves Out A New Path

BY JEREMY SMITH

In the world of whakairo - the traditional Māori art of carving in wood, stone or bone - Aotearoa has a hidden taonga, or treasure. As a tohunga whakairo, an accredited teacher of carving whose work is acknowledged by Toi Iho - the registered and globally recognised trademark of quality and authenticity of Māori art and artists - Rangi Wills is well versed in telling stories through his gifting.

Yet, in as much as his craft reflects journeys, the Lord is also at work in Rangi's life personally - leading him on a profound faith walk since he returned to the Lord and placed his trust in Jesus. And, with a heart that his story would - in turn - bless others, Rangi agreed to share some of it.

“Every ‘cut’ represents a story. One of the most powerful things in life is someone sitting down and sharing their journey with you. That then encourages you on your own. I - for one - can say I wouldn't be who I am today in Christ if it weren't for all the elements of mine.”

It's a profound opening statement from Rangi Wills. As we begin, we pray about the aspects of his story he shares, and the way the Lord would have him relay them. While that beginning thought may have been referring to the process by which Rangi approaches whakairo - the traditional Māori art of carving in wood, stone or bone - it's also a thought which reveals his heart as he thinks about where the Lord has brought him.

He came to a personal relationship with Jesus about seven years ago in his 40s. “As I've been trusting God when sharing my story, I continually purpose to be open and honest about what He's brought me through. And, doors have opened. “They're opportunities to share Christ with others which only the Lord could orchestrate. People often tell me that hearing how Jesus has been at work in my life has impacted them.

“That's my greatest desire now. I pray that as I hand - and submit to - Him every area of my life, hardships, struggles and all the wonderful blessings and giftings I know are from Him, He'll redeem and use everything for His glory.”



“So, how did you first come to know about Jesus?” I ask. “I grew up in church,” Rangi - who was born on Auckland’s North Shore and is of Tainui descent replies. “I suppose what it comes down to is - as with all of us - I made mistakes along the way. Those, ultimately, led to me drifting away from church, and God. I think because I felt unworthy really.”

There’s a key revelation Rangi says God has made him aware of since returning to Jesus - and it’s powerful. “Simply put, when I was younger, I knew a lot ‘about’ Jesus, but I didn’t know Him in the sense of having a personal relationship with Him. That’s the difference.”

Yet, even at a young age, amongst a background of difficulty and the choices he was making, he says he can see God’s grace and mercy at work.

“At 16, I got kicked out of school for smoking marijuana,” he recalls. Ultimately, opening that door in his life saw Rangi addicted for 27 years. Looking back on this chapter of his life now makes him “...so grateful” for where the Lord has brought him, and where He is leading him.

Later this year, it’ll be 12 years since Rangi was set free from his addiction to marijuana. He purposely

“...when I was younger, I knew a lot ‘about’ Jesus, but I didn’t know Him in the sense of having a personal relationship with Him. That’s the difference.”

says, “...the Lord delivered me...” because he’s aware the process of completing rehab back then was definitely a step God had His hand on.

“Along that road, I fell over many times, if you will,” Rangi says. “Each time I took steps back, I’d say in my heart, “...this is the last time...” But, when it wasn’t, I’d think, “...what on earth am I doing?”

We pause briefly to discuss whakairo - or carving - and, creativity. I ask how he first got introduced to the art form and where his love of carving comes from. “Well actually,” Rangi replies, “...not long after I was kicked out of school, one of my friends noticed that my maths book was full of drawings. He suggested I come along and give carving a go. Because I was already passionate about drawing, it sounded cool.”

So, Rangi completed a two-year apprenticeship under Bill Rawhiti. Now, more than 30 years later, Rangi says something profound.

Since coming to Jesus, he’s aware whakairo is a gift God gave him, and one the Lord’s been nurturing in his life over all these years. Rangi has now likely carved “thousands” of pieces - ranging from intricate work with cuts smaller than a 10 cent piece, to large stone and wood pieces.

As mentioned, whakairo encompasses working with wood, stone and bone - Rangi has mostly worked with bone. Though, he’s gifted when working with all three - and the nature of the specific project dictates how long the work takes.

“I think the hardest part of the process is actually drawing the design onto whatever you’re carving into,” he says.

Rangi’s work has previously been featured at Te Papa in Wellington and in the World of Wearable Art And Classic Cars Museum in Nelson, among others. I ask what’s likely the most unique work he’s

completed. “Probably a Fender Stratocaster guitar.” He carved the entire body of the instrument based on the story he was told.

These days, he sells his pieces mostly through word of mouth, or at Auckland’s Gallery Pacific - but in the past Rangi has also travelled up and down New Zealand in a house bus, selling his carvings at each stop.

I ask how coming to a personal faith in Jesus has been reflected in his work and the type of projects he accepts. “Great question,” he replies, “...because it has changed for sure.

“Creativity comes from God, so of course I want to be intentional about honouring the Lord through the gift He’s given me. These days - as someone tells me the story they want depicted - I always commit the whakairo to God, prayerfully considering what I can create which might ultimately point them to Jesus.

“As I walk in relationship with Him, my heart is to reflect His heart. Practically speaking, a personal step I feel the Lord has had me take is to stop making weapons, or patu.

“That’s, in part, due to some of the carvings that are usually on them,” Rangi says. In their place though, the Lord has been nurturing a passion in Rangi for carving pulpits - one of which he made for his home church - and crosses.

Rangi says within Māori culture there’s an innate awareness of the significance of ‘threes’. So, whenever possible with new carvings, his desire is to represent the Trinity - God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in his work.

Storytelling is the essence of whakairo, and, in a moment of vulnerability, Rangi said his life story - and some of its difficulties - have also played a part in informing the way he approaches his craft.

That said, even in his own life, whakairo has been “...really, really therapeutic.”

“On your journey to a personal relationship with Jesus, Rangi, what was the catalyst for seeking the Lord?” I ask. “And, were there key moments in which you could see God’s hand prompting you to come to Him?” “Certainly,” he says, mentioning the first of what he’d call three key ‘factors’ as the Lord began drawing him.

“Firstly, there’s no doubt that on one occasion, in a natural sense, God saved my life. I was walking



“...share Jesus with others. Be bold in telling your story of what He has done, remembering it’s not your job to ‘convince’ anyone to come to Him. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts and leads. Just step out.”

along a roadside in Whanganui, carrying my belongings in a bag on my back. Somehow, I lost my footing and fell down into a gully. I remember it being about a six second fall to the bottom.” I knew ‘about’ God at this stage and I cried out as I fell, “Lord, please save me!” And, He did. I ended up landing on my bag and walking away pretty much uninjured. That shouldn’t have been the case. I don’t know how I survived, apart from it being God.”

Secondly was the decision to enter rehab - at Auckland’s Higher Ground in 2010 - to “...change my life and be a better man.”

“I was tired of walking the same path of addiction and wanted to leave it behind once and for all.”

While at Higher Ground, he said he was told that just three out of every 30 people get clean and stay clean long term. “Those were - at that time - the best statistics in the world. It’s undoubtedly been God bringing me to where I am today.”

Since completing rehab, Rangi has also become a tohunga whakairo, or teacher of carving, because it’s “...important the love of this art passes on to the next generation”.

Rangi’s work is also acknowledged by Toi Iho - the registered and globally recognised trademark of quality and authenticity of Maori art and artists.

He first received that accreditation when he was living in the South Island, and, to his knowledge, at the time he was one of only a handful of carvers in the area to have it.

Now, with God, Rangi also sees it as an opportunity to share his journey - and Jesus - with those he meets thanks to whakairo. “It’s pretty special when you have the opportunity.”

The third catalyst in him taking a step towards God, he says, was the desire to be a better man for his wife, Natalie-Jayne. They married in 2012. Natalie-Jayne was raised in the church, and Rangi says her faith has been key to pointing him to Christ. “She’s just amazing. It’s as though, when I asked God to make me a better man, He gave me my wife.”

Additionally, Natalie-Jayne and Rangi have now been part of their church family - Bridges Church in Cambridge - since 2014.

They first started coming along to a free ‘clothing exchange’ initiative, and there, they’d enjoy cups of coffee and tea and connect through conversations with others. It was the missions-minded approach to the gathering - Rangi says - which was instrumental in helping them get involved.

Rangi committed his life to Jesus that same year - and he and Natalie-Jayne began regularly coming along to Sunday services.



“How important is it to have people in your life who point you to Jesus?” I ask. “It’s absolutely key, he replies. “To be connected once again to a Christ-centred church family is awesome. I’m also so blessed to say my Pastor is one of my mentors.”

On most days of the week, Rangi is in an office at church, praying, listening to sermons and reading and studying God’s Word. His passion for the Bible is growing day by day, he says.

“When you spend time in the scriptures, you can’t help but be changed. Psalm 119:114 says, *“You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in Your Word.”* (NIV).

“It’s so true. God sustains us. I intentionally spend time in prayer, setting aside time first thing in the morning when I wake up, or when I’m driving somewhere in the car.

“It’s such a blessing that God invites us into a personal relationship with Him. It’s important we come to the Lord with the good stuff as well - thanking Him for His blessings, rather than just coming to Him in the tough times, or when we ‘need’ things.”

Rangi adds that the story of David has been impactful when it comes to bringing things in his own life before the cross.

“To me, one of the key things we see in David is that whenever he comes before God to ask for forgiveness, we see a deep sense of remorse because that sin offends God. As we know, David most certainly didn’t live the perfect life - but he was wholeheartedly sincere when it came to

realising he made a mistake. And, scripture tells us he was a man after God’s own heart.

“In my own journey, a key lesson which came out of rehab was the importance of honesty. In our walks with Jesus, my heart is to remember we’re all on individual journeys.

“I’m aware that I’ve made mistakes, as we all have. But, I love *Ephesians 4:32* - *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* (NIV).”

As our chat ends, Rangi has one final encouragement. “Seek the Lord. While I wasn’t walking with Jesus I always thought, “..it’s okay. There’s time to come back...” But, honestly, we don’t know how long we have.

“So, share Jesus with others. Be bold in telling your story of what He has done, remembering it’s not your job to ‘convince’ anyone to come to Him. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts and leads. Just step out.

“I pray that my story - even in some small way - shows people that Jesus is real, He’s alive, He loves us and that - no matter where we are right now - He’s calling them into a personal relationship - and walk - with Him. Just as He graciously did for me.” |▲

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



Prayerfully Walking The Narrow Way

BY KEN HAM

The Bible says there's the broad way and the narrow way. The broad way is the world. We live in the world, therefore, we're living in the broad way. Though within the broad way, the narrow way we're called to leads in the opposite direction.

Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate... wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction... many enter through it." - Matthew 7:13 (NIV). Enormous forces pull against those on the narrow way, so intentional diligence is required to authentically walk it, leading your children - and grandchildren - along with you.

Those forces on the broad way seem to strengthen every day. Considering this, I'm reminded of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 - our need to pray without ceasing. It's a key way through which Jesus' words in Matthew seven will become a reality in our lives.

Parents, how's your family journey going? What road are you on? Are you prayerfully committing - and surrendering - your walk to Christ daily as you travel that narrow road together? Remember, there really is only one way - the narrow road.

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
- John 14:6 (NIV). |  

■ Ken Ham is the founder and president of Answers in Genesis and pioneered the world famous Creation Museum and Ark Encounter in Kentucky, USA. For Answers in Genesis visit www.answersingenesis.org



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In 'Hiding'

BY LOCKY MCNEIL

For many years, I've prayed the same thing each day - "Lord, help me to hide Your Word in my heart, so that I might not sin against You."

It's not a prayer I came up with on my own. David, the Psalmist, actually wrote that - in Psalm 119:11 - as part of a very long song to God.

"...what rests inside us, our thoughts, desires and attitudes will take us somewhere. And... they will come out somehow, even if we don't want - or mean for - them to."

The NIV - or New International Version - says it this way. *"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."* - Psalm 119:11 (NIV).

So, everyday when I sit down to read the Bible I pray that prayer. Why? Because I recognise that, of course, I am capable of sinning and making mistakes. Yet, my heart is that if committing that prayer to God was a cornerstone for David, then - undoubtedly - it's a good idea for me too.

Rightly so too, David recognised that whatever is on the inside of you is probably indicative of who you really are at your core. That what rests inside us, our thoughts, desires and attitudes will take us somewhere. And, that they will come out somehow, even if we don't want - or mean for - them to.

In fact scripture tells us that will be the case. Look at Matthew 12:34 - *"...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* (ESV).

So, what is the antidote then? Well, I'd suggest a major key is to replace all that 'junk' inside with God's Word.

Here's something to consider when reading God's Word too. It is powerful! Scripture tells us in Hebrews 4:12 just how powerful it is, *"...for the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow..."* (NIV). Isn't that incredible!

As we approach and read scripture, let's have that in our hearts. God speaks to, and encounters, us in powerful ways - His words can shift thoughts, motivations and attitudes.

Yet, one of the keys, I think, is coming before God with humility and allowing our ears - and hearts - to hear and receive what it is He wants to say to us.

And, so there's my challenge - what is on the inside of you? Do you want it to be different from what it is now? Then how about taking some time each day this week to just read your Bible? And, before you do, how about praying the prayer I mentioned earlier? "Lord, help me to hide Your Word in my heart, so that I might not sin against You."

It's certainly something to think about. |  

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



LOVE

BY RYAN KILFOIL

We all long to know we're loved. Regardless of age, race, gender, location or other factors, humans innately desire love and acceptance. Scripture says there's only one source of true, unconditional love - God, in Christ Jesus.

Life is tricky. Circumstances arise suddenly - sin, busyness, sickness and more. We often feel they sever the relationship, and love, from our Father.

In Romans, Paul - who experienced ups and downs himself - mentions a list of what separates us from God's love. *"...neither death nor life... angels nor rulers... things present nor things to come... powers... height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus..." - Romans 8:38-39 (ESV).*

Being "in Christ" allows God the Father's unconditional love. These things cannot separate us from God's love.

Death, life - an all-encompassing phrase including anything that happens - angels, rulers, things happening now or in the future and great heights and depths. Paul then finishes with "...nor anything else in all creation."

That's an exhaustive list. Practically, regardless of circumstances you've found yourself in previously, now or in the future, God is always with you.

His love is greater than fear.

Powerful thought. Reflect today on the truth of His Word. |  

■ Ryan Kilfoil lives on a small lifestyle block in Tauranga with his wife, children and extended family. He has a deep passion for God's Word and loves sharing life and faith with people.



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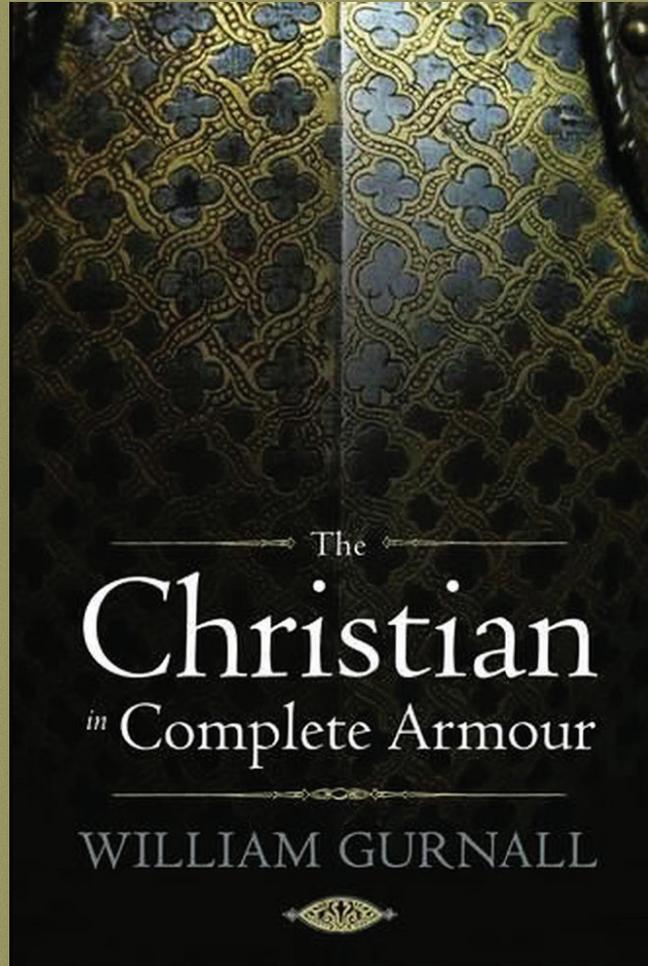
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BOOK



Lost on an Island?

THREE BOOKS // REVIEWS BY NATHAN JOHNSON

I once heard it asked, "...if you were stranded on an island, what book would you want to have with you?" I must confess - at least in my case - this is a rather difficult question. I love books. Thus, to choose a single title proves a great difficulty. I can, however, answer it with three volumes.

Firstly, of course, is the Bible. I'm not sure how much explanation I need to give on this one, because - in truth - this would be the single book I would choose if stranded on an island. One could spend all of one's life and still not plumb the depths contained within. In some ways, I almost want to purposely strand myself upon an island in order to have the

“...all three passionately scream at me to allow Jesus to indwell my life, get my hands dirty and pour His life out - through mine - upon, and to, the world.”

entirety of my day soaking - and saturating within - the depths of Jesus and His Word. I would not need another book if I had but this one. However, the two books below are not only two favourites, but two which continue to challenge - and change - my life.

My second title, therefore, is *The Christian in Complete Armor* by William Gurnall. This book has been recommended by many of the epic Godly men and women throughout the last few hundred years.

And, it's been on many people's 'island book list' I'm sure. These 700 plus pages are overflowing with insight and truth contained in scripture. This is another volume that one could read countless times, finding new truth and wisdom within.

Charles Spurgeon stated this book is "...peerless and priceless - every line full of wisdom." "The book," he said, "...has been preached over scores of times and is, in our judgement, the best thought-breeder in all our library."

David Wilkerson wrote, "Leonard Ravenhill, a very godly friend, gave me a copy of this book with these solemn words - "This book is going to revolutionise your life. It has had a profound effect on my life, and I believe you are prepared to receive its message now.

"At first I put the book aside. Out of curiosity, I later scanned the first 25 pages. That is all it took to bring me to my knees.

Gurnall, the pious puritan, has touched something deep within me. His were such probing, scorching, searing words that they shook my inner man. I devoured the book with great zeal. I will forever bless the day it was placed in my hands."

Having read those thoughts, I simply love the idea of being a castaway with the Bible, and this book in tow. To read but a page and spend the remainder of the day pondering its words and diving into related scriptures sounds enticing.

My third title has to be Norman Grubb's *Rees Howells Intercessor*. This book is an easy to read biography about Rees Howells. A friend of mine wanted to read it again, so I told him I would be delighted to join him - giving fodder for conversation.

Knowing the story of Howells, I was unprepared for the kick in the teeth this book has become - once again - in my life. It's hard to read this excellent biography without feeling the pains of conviction and stirring within one's soul. Every chapter leaves you breathless as the Spirit examines your life.

I continually realise that while we are not to compare our lives with others - only Jesus - when I read Howells', my life is completely lacking.

And, thus how much more when standing against the perfection of Christ? This book never ceases to inspire, encourage, challenge and bring me to the depths of Jesus Himself.

It's probably, in my opinion, the best biography ever written. I would cherish the opportunity of rereading this grand story of a life completely and utterly at the disposal of Jesus.

Now, while I state I would love to be on an island with these three books in hand, I must confess all three passionately scream at me to allow Jesus to indwell my life, get my hands dirty and pour His life out - through mine - upon, and to, the world.

And, one can hardly do that alone on an island. | 

These titles are available to order either online, or in store, at your local Christian bookstore.

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



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THE *Last Word*

“...being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. *Philippians 1:6 (NIV)*”

And with that, we simply say thank you. As we sign off, the Authentic team leaves with you, one final time, a personal expression of what this journey has meant to each of us...



Gratitude. I think this is the word that is at the top of the list when I think about our Authentic journey. Gratitude for those who've supported the vision, to get it off the ground, gratitude to those who have dedicated themselves, their talents or finances to keep it going to this point, and mostly gratitude to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has overseen it all.

I have been so blessed to work with brothers and sisters who love the Lord and want to make Him known to the men of our country.

Lee Hanson, Manager



"I am He who will sustain you."
Those seven words from Isaiah 46:4 perfectly summarise my Authentic journey. Right from my first interview - Rapture Ruckus in January 2020 - I've known this role would continually remind me that sufficiency is in Christ, not Jeremy! And, He's proven Himself faithful.

I think of Matthew 25:14-30 - the parable of the talents. Our collective heart is to faithfully steward the work God entrusts us with, ensuring each page points you to Christ.

As this chapter closes, my prayer is that the Lord would say, *"...well done, good and faithful servant..."*

Jeremy Smith, Editor



"Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place."
- 2 Cor 2:14 (NKJV). Thanks to everyone who has journeyed with us through this Authentic season. Not least, my awesome team mates. I've learned heaps, laughed lots and look forward to what God has next. *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."* - John 6:29 (NKJV).

Sharon-Louise Good, Administrator



It has been a privilege to be part of the Authentic journey. The Lord opened the door to join the team in February 2021, for which I will always be thankful. It is sad to say goodbye to our amazing team, who have worked so well together, had lots of fun and enjoyed a common bond.

It has been a blessing to see the Lord work through His people to provide for the magazine. Thank you to the team past and present, and to our amazing writers and contributors who have had a heart to honour God through this magazine.

Tania Samuel, Designer



"Despite only being at Authentic Media for a short period of time, it has been an incredible blessing. Additionally, being part of a dynamic and purpose-driven organisation that seeks to honour God in everything it does has allowed me to develop new skills and broaden my knowledge. Overall, I am deeply appreciative of the chance to be part of such an amazing team and to make a meaningful contribution to Authentic Media's mission."

Joel Hanson - Web Development

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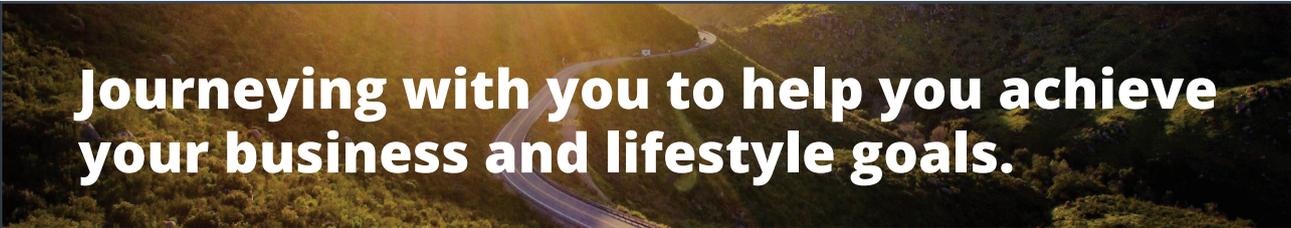
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GOD created us to be with Him. (Genesis 1-2)

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

OUR sins separate us from God. (Genesis 3)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE

Since December 2017, our purpose has been to proclaim the Authentic Christian Life - the real, genuine life - where Christ is alive in us!

A quarterly publication, our heart for Authentic Magazine is that it has been a source of encouragement to Christian men - helping them grow in their faith, knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, while also serving as a light to those living without Him.

And, as this is our final edition, we say to you - our readers - goodbye and thank you.

*"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."
Numbers 6:24 (ESV).*

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