

AUTHENTIC

AUTUMN 2018

MEN'S MAGAZINE

EX NZ CRICKETER
John Parker

WE CHAT WITH KIWI ICON

**Simon
Barnett**

WISDOM SERIES BY

**Charles
Price**

A conversation with

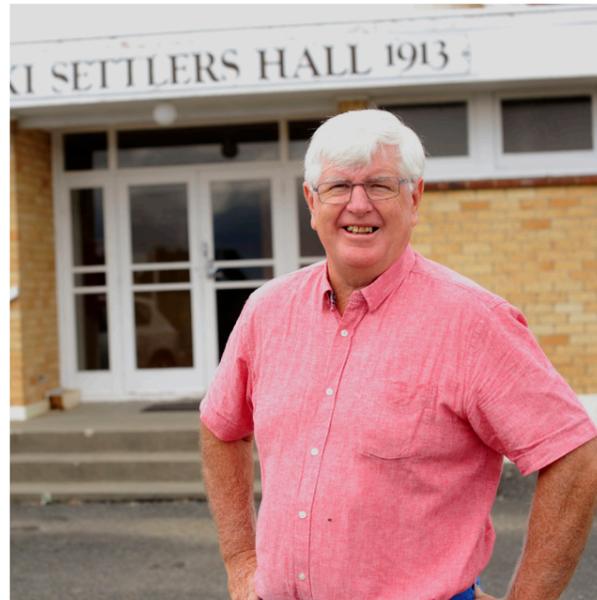
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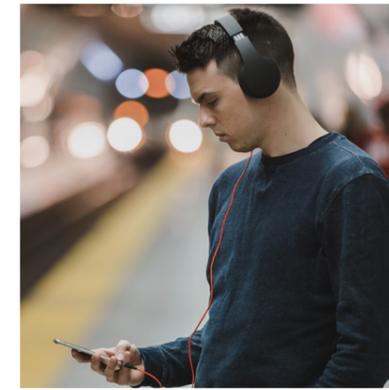
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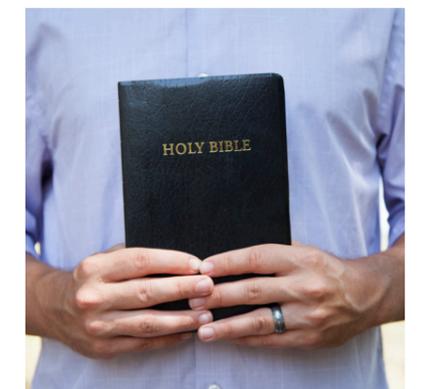
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WELCOME TO THE SECOND EDITION OF

AUTHENTIC

So here we are with issue two and everyone's still alive and, more importantly, still friends!

Yes we can't believe it either!

It's been quite the journey these last few months, seeing how the men of New Zealand would take to this invasion of their coffee tables. Well all we can say at this point is, 'so far, so good!'

As far as we know, everything's still on track for eight issues over two years. And, as you'll see below, we're looking at new ways to get the magazine out across New Zealand.

We're already getting asked about distributing in Australia, the UK and even America but right now we're just focusing on where God has called us to - Aotearoa!

The response to the first issue was amazing. We have been truly humbled. Many of you have emailed or written to say that you were encouraged or blessed by the magazine.

We've had all sorts of emails from ministry leaders, businessmen, politicians, celebrities and dozens of 'salt of the earth' New Zealanders wanting to encourage us.

Well, we will continue to press on and offer ourselves to the Lord and see what happens with this thing. We will keep sharpening the tools and be ready for action. That said, we recognize that this project, like all others under God's Kingdom, is not about us. We are part of a body. His body! So, please get in touch if you feel led to support or help in any way. There are many ways in which you can help so let us know if your

keen to get involved (contact dave@authenticmagazine.co.nz).

The exciting news is that Manna Christian Stores will be selling Authentic Magazine in store and online from now on! So you can jump on to www.manna.co.nz to order your magazines or wander in to any of Manna's 15 stores across New Zealand and head over to the 'Authentic' display! (we're very excited about this - can you tell?)

Also, we hope to have TV and radio adverts out soon on Christian Media channels and social media.

Look out for these and let us know what you think. (They are likely to be very funny and possibly a bit silly!)

We do have a Facebook page and an Instagram account so it'd be great if

you can jump on and 'like' or 'follow' us so we can keep you informed of what's happening (See opposite page for details).

So, this whole 'Authentic' subject seems to be generating some interest. Since the launch of the magazine last December, I've had several opportunities to teach and preach on the topic (and promote the magazine, of course) at camps, churches and men's breakfasts and the response has been really encouraging. I have come to the conclusion that the vast majority of Christians in New Zealand really do want to live the authentic Christian life and many have been bold enough to say that they haven't been living it.

Kiwis are known for their blunt and



LEE HANSON & DAVE FIRTH - STILL SMILING AFTER TWO ISSUES OF AUTHENTIC.

honest manner and I find that really refreshing. The world is full of people that tell us what to think, what to wear, what to buy, what to watch, what to listen to...etc.

We can get to the point where we don't know what we've chosen and what's been chosen for us.

Stepping away from the 'clutches' of this media-infused world and re-fixing our eyes on Jesus seems to be a refreshing option that many are taking and I am excited.

My challenge to you is a simple one (and one that you may have read and heard dozens of times);

'Trust in the LORD with ALL your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In ALL your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.'

Of course, this is Proverbs chapter 3 verses 5 and 6 but notice the emphasis (mine) on the word 'ALL'. As far as I can tell, having studied several dictionaries, the word 'all' literally means 'ALL'.

That means I am to trust in Him at all times, for all things, in all that I do - it sounds simple!

So, the one that promises to 'never leave us or forsake us' (Hebrews 13:5) and to be 'with us always, to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28:20) is also the one that is 'faithful and he will do it' (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

The 'Authentic Christian life' is something that we cannot live. We simply have to leave it to the only one who is capable of living it - Jesus Christ himself! He alone can live the Christian life - in us and through us - but for His glory! |A

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

Connect with Authentic

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



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TEN TIPS FOR

By Scott Brown

Reading the Bible as a Family

Let's read the Bible together as families in 2018! I recently asked one of my grown daughters what was the most helpful thing we did in our family. She said, "Papa, it was those times we sat in the living room and read through the Bible."

For many years, our family read the Bible out loud together. We did it for about a decade. It gave our children a love for the Word of God, and it provided them with an understanding of the sweeping history of redemption from Genesis to Revelation. It showed them where they fit in the world.

WHY DO THIS?

David gives the most powerful argument in Psalm 19:7-11,

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true

and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward."

What is the value of a deep understanding of the Gospel? What is the value of seeing the sweep of history? What is the value of knowing the whole counsel of God? What is the value of getting prepared to meet the trials and heartbreaks that are ahead? I believe that there is no better way to capture this value than to simply read the Bible as a family.

Here is my challenge: read the Bible with your whole family in 2018. Here are Ten Tips for Reading the Bible as a Family in 2018:

1. Resolve this issue right away: Can your children handle it?

Can they? Yes! Don't be intimidated by the fact that your children are young. They may not get everything out of everything, but they will get something out of everything. You will find that they will understand more than you anticipate. Remember that Timothy's mother taught him the scriptures from the time he was a child, "from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures" (2 Tim:3:15). Remember that God's people have gathered for many hours to hear the reading of the Word of God (Nehemiah 8:1). Also, remember that most of the Bible is narrative – stories that children can love. Children are fully able to sit down and watch a video for an hour. Certainly, that is proof positive that they can sit and

listen to reading for 20-40 minutes.

2. Prepare a heart of gladness

The entire Bible points to, "good tidings of great joy which will be for all the people."

Parents who have a love for the words of scripture are the most powerful leverage points in children's lives. The more you love the Word of God, the easier it will be for your children to hear you read it to them. It is contagious when you love the words and the stories of the Bible, believing that they are "pure," "perfect" and "holy." God promises that those who delight in the law of the Lord are richly rewarded, "He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:3).

3. Keep it simple

Don't think you need to explain everything. When you are reading through the Bible in a year, there is no way you can carefully talk about and analyse everything in the chapters for each day. It's simply too much material. When you are finished reading the chapter or the section, pick out one verse or one idea and talk about it. Be content with the big picture. I often asked questions like, "What was your favourite part?" or "What wonderful things did you see in His law?" (Ps 119:18).

4. Pick a consistent place and time of the day to read

Consistency is key. Why? Two reasons. First, we need orderliness to succeed, as the Psalmist said, "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12). Second, because everything in your life will wage war against whatever time you choose. The Devil will throw every trick in the book to get you to divert your family

from reading the Bible, including your own family members. Select an unbreakable time. Sometimes we found it helpful to read the Old Testament in the morning and the New Testament in the evening to break it up. I highly recommend it. This helps you to declare His "lovingkindness in the morning," and "His faithfulness by night" (Psalm 92:2).

5. Be a good tour guide

Take your family by the hand and walk them through the corridors of saving grace. Marvel in the people, the places, the eras and the personalities God included in the history of saving grace. These are the markers on the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:9). Point to the beauty as you read. Cultivate a spirit of awe toward the words and the stories. For practical help, check out

MARVEL IN THE PEOPLE, THE PLACES, GOD INCLUDED IN THE HISTORY OF SAVING GRACE.

the book, "Journey Through the Bible" which is a quick summary resource to help you understand the purpose of each book of the Bible. As you journey, stand in awe at the beauty, truthfulness and practicality that is displayed.

6. Have everyone read

One of the things we did in our family was to have each person read five verses going around the circle. If we had children who could only read a few words, we had them read one, two or more words. If they were too young to read, we would read a few words and ask them to repeat them. It was one of our methods for teaching them to read.

7. Sing about it

Sing a hymn that communicates the message of the book of the Bible you are reading. "Make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him Psalm 105:1-2. In "Journey Through the Bible," there is a recommended hymn for each book of the Bible. Singing drives truth home and is a blessing to the soul.

8. Anticipate being slowed down by child discipline

From time to time, your reading may be slowed down by discipline problems. Children sometimes disobey or have bad attitudes. They may be mean to one another while you are reading. These things need to be dealt with on the spot. If possible, it is helpful if one parent leaves with the erring child to deal with problem, while the rest of the family continues reading. Don't let this discourage you. It is a normal part of life.

Sin patterns providentially come to the surface on the road to holiness. I believe that these things happen in order for parents to confront sin so that children are freed from their rebellion. "Consider it joy when you encounter various trials," James 1:2.

9. Choose a method for reading the Bible in a year.

There are many methods to choose from. Choose one, and start January 1, 2018. Our family used John MacArthur's schedule. It usually took us between 20 minutes to an hour to read each day, depending on the age of our children, and how much discussion (or discipline problems) we had.

10. Catch up when you fall behind

I predict you will sometimes fall behind. Our family did – many times each year. Don't say, "We might fall behind so we shouldn't try." It is

AUTHENTIC | FAMILY

usually a mistake to neglect a great thing for possible failure. Yes, you will fall behind from time to time. Life happens! Our family used different methods at different times when we fell behind. Here are four ways the Brown family bounced back when we fell behind the schedule:

First, spread it out

Let's say you're 16 chapters behind. Add one extra chapter for the next 16 days and you'll be caught up in sixteen days.

Second, grind it out

Just grind it out and read those 16 make-up chapters over a day or two. Take a couple of hours and read, read, read. Just "Git 'er done!"

Third, listen up

Catch up by listening to an audio bible while you are driving or working around the house.

Fourth, jump ahead

Simply jump ahead to the section allocated for the current day in the schedule. Chalk it up to, "It's not a perfect world, we are not a perfect

family and sometimes we fall behind". BUT, we are not giving up!"

So, here's the big question

Are your children ready for the trials ahead? Do they know the true Gospel? Do they have a big vision of God? Do they have a Biblical vision of His love, truth and mercy?

Reading the whole counsel of God is the best training for the future.

Don't let your children leave home without it.

IA



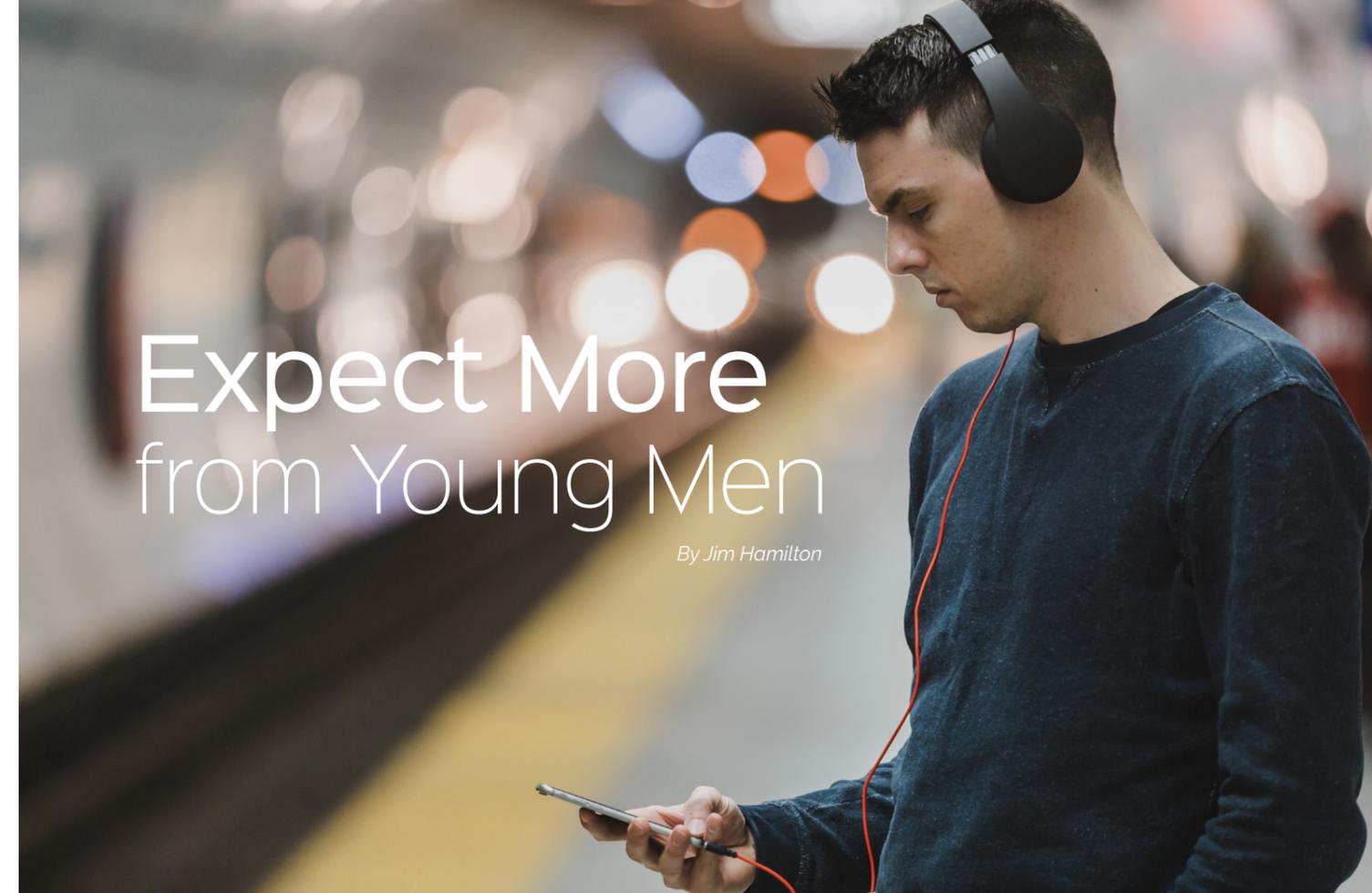
■ Scott Brown is pastor at Hope Baptist Church in Wake Forest, NC and the President of the National Center for Family Integrated Churches. He has just released a new book called, "Journey Through the Bible," which is a practical help for people who want to understand all the books of the Bible.



GODtalk is a digital outreach-training resource for youth and youth leaders. It includes free online video content, and is purposed to see young people throughout our nation talking about the Christian faith again.



View the Godtalk website at www.godtalk.nz



Expect More from Young Men

By Jim Hamilton

Throughout history, we have thought of our young men as restless, healthy, and built for activity. Words like driven, hard-charging, and adventurous come to mind. The possibilities for young men are endless.

They can bear the yoke in their youth and lay the foundation for the rest of their lives. They can marry, have children, and provide for a family and for others – or at least get the training, education, and experience that will enable them to provide.

We are eager to see young men exert energy because we all know what happens when you put testosterone together with capacity to work for the kingdom. And we also

know what happens when you mix the same testosterone and capacity with idleness. The ancient saying proves true: "the devil finds work for idle hands."

SINGLE, CHILDLESS, IDLE

Picture this: one in five less-educated young men are not working and not seeking marriage, and they seem happy about it. No one wants to see that, but we're looking at it. According to University of Chicago economist

Erik Hurst, young men between the ages of 21 and 30 without a college degree worked far fewer hours in 2015 than in 2000, and in 2015, eighteen percent of these men reported not working in the last year (up from eight percent in 2000).

Hurst describes this as almost one-fifth of the population simply being idle: not in school and not working.

Seventy percent of these young men live with their parents (up from fifty percent in 2000). These young men are not married, not having kids, and not earning an income.

They are young, single, childless, and idle.

LEISURE TIME, LARGELY SPENT PLAYING GAMES ON COMPUTERS AND CONSOLES, DOUBLED FROM THE EARLY 2000S TO 2015.

VIRTUAL HAPPINESS

What, then, are these young men doing with their lives? According to Hurst, they are playing video games. Leisure time, largely spent playing games on computers and consoles, doubled from the early 2000s to 2015.

When Hurst relayed these statistics to Econtalk Podcast host Russ Roberts, Roberts could scarcely believe the numbers or accept the idea that so many young men would choose to live with their parents, and not work, so that they could play video games.

In response to the incredulity of Roberts, Hurst pointed to "happiness data," which indicates that the reported life satisfaction of these "less educated young men" has gone up.

These guys are not married, not working, playing video games in mum's basement, and loving it.

Hurst speculates that if these young men were out on the street, they would be forced to work, even for relatively low wages. But because of what he calls "private transfers," which refers to the way their parents fund their lives, they don't need to work. So they don't.

HARD TO LOVE THE IDLE

The apostle Paul has a simple solution for such a dilemma: "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

He won't get a job? He wants to sit in the basement on the Playstation all day? Stop stocking the fridge. Cut off the food supply. It's time for him to provide for himself.

Does this seem harsh? It actually would be a great kindness. And what

IF WE DON'T TRAIN BOYS TO PAY ATTENTION TO OTHERS, MAKE SACRIFICES, TAKE RISKS, AND WORK HARD, WE'LL ROB THEM OF THE FULL AND FRUITFUL LIVES THEY ARE CAPABLE OF.

feels or seems kind is often cruel.

Proverbs 19:18 admonishes parents, "Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death." Let's not make it easy for young men to be lazy, for them to take at no cost, for them to remain dependent upon their parents, training them to look for every loophole out of having to work.

LOW EXPECTATIONS, SOFT BIGOTRY

God created man to work, provide, lead, and protect. And making man in his own image and likeness, God created man to bring the very character of the one he reflects to bear on all creation. God creates, provides, protects, and leads. And God doesn't do any of these because he needs them, but for the sake of others.

A former U.S. president once referred to "the soft bigotry of low expectations." To expect a man in his twenties to remain jobless, uneducated, and unmarried while devoting his energy, employing his ingenuity, and exercising his creativity surfing the web or playing video games is to expect nothing from him. And to expect nothing from someone is the worst kind of insult.

But to expect him to provide, protect, and lead is to highlight his worth and potential as a man made by God. It is to assume that he has dignity.

Finding something to do is as simple as paying attention. But our society doesn't expect boys to do that

anymore, and we have all kinds of excuses we make for them. If we don't train boys to pay attention to others, make sacrifices, take risks, and work hard, we'll rob them of the full and fruitful lives they are capable of.

The New Testament casts a better vision for young men in the church than our society does today. We do not accept their immaturity, or look down on their youth (1 Timothy 4:12), but encourage them as brothers (1 Timothy 5:1). We do not give them a pass, but expect them to grow in self-control (Titus 2:6) and "flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). We stand ready for them to handle the Scriptures for themselves, that they might have the word of God abiding in them (1 John 2:14) and — mark this — overcome the evil one (1 John 2:13), which is immeasurably more satisfying than winning at video games.

Let's adjust our vision first, and then train our young men to realize their purpose and potential. Let's help them see the good in God's design for work — how work contributes to the world and makes us more like Jesus. Let's inspire them to dream bigger dreams than conquering the next level on the screen. Most of all, let's show them that happiness is not found in entertainment, food, or freedom, but in the God who has drawn near to us in Christ.

IA



Jim Hamilton is a professor of biblical theology and is the author of the new book 'Work and Our Labor in the Lord.'

SIMON HAS BEEN ON THE CHRISTCHURCH MOREFM BREAKFAST SHOW SINCE 1997, TEAMING UP WITH GARY MCORMICK IN 2007.



Simon Barnett on life's big changes

By Dave Firth

New Zealand's own TV and Radio legend, Simon Barnett, has been brightening up Kiwi mornings for more than three decades. His insatiable zest for life and his sense of humour are infectious so it's exciting to know that he and his wife, Jodi, have a solid faith in Jesus.

We had a chat with Simon about life, faith, work and dancing!

So, you turned 50 last March! How has that affected you (or are you one of those people that says it's just a number)?

Yep 50 is just a number BUT it's a great number. I love being 50!

I wouldn't swap it for the world, I have no desire at all to be in the midst of teenage angst, or early 20's mortgage or 30's ambition.

I have more hope and joy and contentment than at any previous age.

Being a Christian in the media spotlight must have its challenges. How do you keep your eyes focused on Jesus through the tough times?

By constantly reminding myself of his presence, whether I sense it or not.

CS Lewis said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun rises every morning, not because I see it, but because by it, I see everything"

We often want to lean on our own strengths and in many cases our own righteousness, to be seen to be a good Christian or a good person. But the more I see the world, the more I want to trust my heavenly Dad.

Although you had grown up around Christianity what was it that made you decide to give your life to Jesus at age 30?

I guess at 30 I felt like I had everything the world says you need, A great job, a nice house, a nice car, a nice family, a modicum of fame. I started asking questions of myself such as, "Where to from here?", "Is this what life is?" and the biggie, "What really is the point of my life?" The more I pondered and read the

more I decided there is something much greater than this world, far bigger, far more outrageous, far more than just me!

Your conversion to Christianity made some big news - how did the people around you take the news?

I have to say my colleagues were incredible and very accepting, but reasonably enough, for family, friends and the occasional workmates they were a little concerned they might "lose" the old Si, who liked to have a drink, a laugh and was a bit mischievous.

I often wonder why many Christians are often perceived as judgemental and boring and I do feel it behoves all of us as believers to be seen, more for what we do love than what we don't!

You've said that you and Jodi were thinking about going to church separately - did you both come to the Lord at the same time?

My wife and I came to faith at the same time. I had been thinking about

WE OFTEN WANT TO LEAN ON OUR OWN STRENGTHS AND IN MANY CASES OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, TO BE SEEN TO BE A GOOD CHRISTIAN OR A GOOD PERSON. BUT THE MORE I SEE THE WORLD, THE MORE I WANT TO TRUST MY HEAVENLY DAD.



going back to church and changing things a little and was fearful my wife, Jodi, would think I had gone mad and leave me...Never underestimate the miracles of God. I woke up one morning and decided to risk humiliating myself and said "I'm, er, thinking of going to church" to which she replied, "That's so weird I was wondering the exact same thing"

Working in a mainstream radio station at the time - did you ever feel conflicted with the music or material? How did you handle that?

I definitely had moments of tension between what I thought was appropriate and not. I wrestled with myself as to whether I should just walk away and perhaps work with a Christian broadcaster.

Again a wonderful answer to prayer in that moment of crisis, I was the

MC for an airline pilots gathering and the special guest was astronaut and moonwalker Charlie Duke.

I was transfixed by his story and when I found out he was a Christian, mentioned my internal struggle and whether I should leave the mainstream media to work for a Christian organisation. He simply looked at me and said,

"Son, who do you think got you your job?" I, of course replied "God", to which he said, "then stay where you are and go for it".....that was good enough for me!

How much "Christian stuff" are you allowed to talk about?

I can talk as much as I like about my faith but I think people want to hear about it less and SEE it more! I think it was St Francis who said something like "On all occasions we are to

witness the gospel, and on some occasions use words"

You're a dad to four girls - what are some of the struggles you have had as a dad?

Being a dad is simply a privilege! The struggles are too many to mention! I have always felt that my children deserve, not just 'desire' but DESERVE to be loved, and cared for!

The big issue these days for people is time. They say love is spelt, T.I.M.E.

When it's all said and done though, at the risk of sounding a bit harsh, I think there is enough time for dads. It's more a question of priority.

Do you see time with your children as a priority. Can work wait? The golf, friends, fishing etc? I learnt very early on to take my kids with me everywhere, Mitre 10, the dump, the storage garage, fishing...Children love to hang out with their mums and dads, they may not always, those early bonds will cement forever their knowledge that they were important to you, they mattered!

WE SHOULD NEVER STOP TRYING TO LEARN AND AS THE PROVERB SAYS "IT IS A WISE PERSON THAT IS SLOW TO SPEAK AND QUICK TO LISTEN"

YOU ARE NEVER, NOT EVER,
OUT OF GOD'S REACH OR LOVE.
WE MUST ALWAYS REMIND
OURSELVES OF HIS GRACE
BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW FAR
WE FALL, IT IS HIS GRACE THAT
BRINGS US HOME.

Did you get a lot of hassle for opposing the Child Discipline bill?

Yes and No....It was highly controversial but I thought then, as I do now it was a dopey law. It had nothing to do with being a Christian. In fact, it really upset me when Christian's would spout the Old Testament "Spare The rod, spoil the child" argument because clearly that is contextual and had on a very few occasions been wrongly employed.

My argument was on the evidence that the "anti smacking law" had made zero difference to child abuse rates anywhere in the world it had been used.

Child abuse has much more to do with poverty, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, low maternal age, low maternal income, weak family ties and the list goes on.. I absolutely believe if we address those issues we will address child abuse.

In saying all that, I look for the positives and if the law makes parents think of alternative ways to discipline their child and their first port of call is NOT to smack then that is a good thing.

Was it hard to stand firm on your convictions in the face of strong criticism?

It did create a fair amount of bile from some quarters and that stung a little but I am an advocate of robust discussion if it takes us forward and we learn in the process. We should

never stop trying to learn and as the proverb says "It is a wise person that is slow to speak and quick to listen"

Authentic magazine is here to support and encourage Christian men in New Zealand to live as God intended man to live – not to 'conform' to the world's standards for what a man is. What are your thoughts on how men can easily fall short of God's standards?

The real tricky thing with this question is one can sound highly judgmental. My take on this is "God's mercy triumphs over his judgment". God is merciful and gracious and we ought to remember that always! You are NEVER, not ever, out of God's reach or love. We must always remind ourselves of his grace because no matter how far we fall, it is his grace that brings us home.

In saying that, pornography in my view is the scourge of men the world over. It is insidious and destructive and highly addictive. It has the potential to destroy even the best of marriages and relationships. We need to create an environment inside and outside of churches, where men are free to say "I have a problem with this". Only then when we demystify and take the

stigma away, will men come clean and front up to this addiction.

I have heard you are a bit of a mean dancer! (smiles) Did you get much stick for your appearance on Dancing with the Stars?

Lol! I am actually the worlds whitest man when it comes to dancing! I don't have natural rhythm or flare but I worked hard for that show.

Vanessa (my dance partner) and I would rehearse up to 8 hours a day for a week to get one 90 second routine ready. It was gruelling but I am pretty competitive so loved the challenge.

Can you Moonwalk? (asking for a friend)

I can moonwalk but it doesn't look like Michael Jackson's signature move (think more Phil Dunphy from Modern Family!)

What was your favourite thing about being involved in the Dancing with the Stars project?

When it was over and we had won! Truly the relief was palpable. I could not believe (nor could anyone that knew me, including my own kids) we won! I will never wear a string singlet or mankini ever, ever again!



SIMON AND HIS DANCE PARTNER VANESSA COLE

I hear you're a bit of a Bruce Springsteen fan (I hope that wasn't a secret). What's your favourite album from 'The Boss'?

I love Bruce! I saw him in concert, my wife bought me his autobiography for Christmas, I have his albums... there is something about his earthiness, and authenticity. He is immensely dedicated and appears to have never lost the love of performing or the joy of simply being in a band.

I also love the fact that he understands that people spend vast amounts for tickets to his concerts and he honours that by giving everything on stage.

I particularly love "Born In The USA" and "Wrecking Ball"

GOD'S WORD SAYS "A JOYFUL HEART IS GOOD MEDICINE" (PROVERBS 17:22). FIND PEOPLE TO HANG OUT WITH THAT BRING YOU JOY AND BUILD YOU UP! GET OFF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE WEB IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL STINK AND INVEST IN THINGS THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY.

You've been getting up early for the last 27 years. Are you looking forward to the change of schedule when you leave More FM at the end of this year?

I really am. I have loved doing the breakfast show and working with Gary McCormack, Sam, Bondy, Speedy and the team but it does take a toll. It's the constant pressure for ratings, to get to bed early and get up in what feels like the middle of the night



- that I won't miss!

In saying that, I would never complain. It has afforded me a great life, wonderful memories, tremendous friendships and some bags under my eyes!

I'm sure it's going to be hard to leave MediaWorks after all these years but how do you feel about going back to where it all began for you (Newstalk ZB)?

I am really nervous actually about the change. It's a completely different genre and format. I want to steer away from just talkback and concentrate more on interviews with spectacular and interesting guests, and just everyday people, to act as a conduit for ideas from many different perspectives. I hope it will be a show that is uplifting, fun to listen to and engage in.

Above all I think I want to celebrate humanity and people's stories. I heard a great line from a movie and it talks of all of us having extraordinary, ordinary lives and ain't that the truth! I want to celebrate that!

We were recently alerted to your 'bloopers' on the More FM website (which were awesome!) What was your favourite blooper and do people shout any of them

at you in the street?

Probably my favourite blooper is when I inadvertently asked my co-host at the time, Phil Gifford if, due to Halloween, he was going to get out his goolies.....he was somewhat taken aback and assured me he was not going to get out his goolies, but quite possibly his 'ghouls' may have made an appearance! "Trust me," he said "there is a big difference!"

You seem to really enjoy life and love to laugh. What encouragement do you have for Christian men in New Zealand that struggle to find joy in their lives?

God really does have a sense of humour and He loves it when we laugh. God's Word says "A joyful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). Find people to hang out with that bring you joy and build you up! Get off social media and the web if it makes you feel stink and invest in things that make you happy. In my case my wife! As Harold Potts, the world's first investment billionaire said when asked by a journalist what his greatest investment was, "To invest in my family" |

TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST!

A Testimony of Major W. Ian Thomas



Born in 1914 within the city of London, Ian Thomas dedicated his life to the service of the Lord as a child. At age 19, Ian became a “windmill of activity ... every moment of [his] day was packed tight with doing things: preaching, talking, counseling” with passionate desire to win souls for Christ.

But he found the more he did, the more energy he expended, the less happened.

He states: “I became deeply depressed, because I really loved the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart;

I wanted to be made a blessing to my fellow men. But I discovered that forever doubling and redoubling my efforts in order to win souls, rushing here and dashing there, taking part in this campaign, taking part in that campaign, preaching in the morning, preaching in the evening, talking to the Bible class, witnessing to this one, counseling with another, did nothing, nothing, nothing to change the utter barrenness, the emptiness, the uselessness of my activity. I tried to make up with noise what I lacked in effectiveness and power.”

In a state of spiritual exhaustion, one night about midnight, he got upon his knees and cried out to God in despair. He continues the story: “I said, ‘Oh God, I know that I am saved. I love Jesus Christ. I am perfectly convinced that I am converted. With

all my heart I want to serve Thee. I have tried to my uttermost and I am a hopeless failure! So far as doing anything more, I am finished.... It is useless for me to continue like this. I hate this double life!”

That night things happened.

“I can honestly say that I had never once heard from the lips of men the message that came to me then. I never had read it in print; but God, that night, simply focused upon me the Bible message of Christ - who is our Life.

This was the moment He had been waiting for; seven weary years He had watched me running around and round in the wilderness! he had been waiting for the time when at last I would fall down in hopeless despair. I heard His voice: ‘To me to live is Christ ... I am the way, the truth, and the life ... If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by

the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life ... When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory.’ Life! New Life! To me to live is Christ!

“It just came from every area of God’s Word, and very kindly and very lovingly the Lord seemed to make



it plain to me that night, through my tears of bitterness: ‘You see, for seven years, with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for Me, on My behalf, the life that I have been waiting for seven years to live through you. I have been there the whole time. All the things you have been pleading for, all the things for which you have been asking, have been yours since the day seven years ago, at your request and invitation, I came into your heart at that Crusader boys’ camp; but you see, although you have given mental consent to the truth that I have been in your heart, and have accepted it as a theory, you have lived totally ignoring the fact. You have been busy trying to do for Me all that only I can do through you.

YOU HAVE BEEN BUSY TRYING TO DO FOR ME ALL THAT ONLY I CAN DO THROUGH YOU.

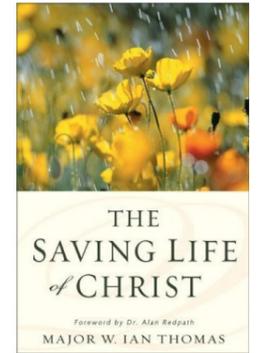
Now supposing I am your life, and you begin to accept it as a fact, then I am your strength! You have been pleading and begging for that for seven years. I am your victory in every area of your life, if you want it! I am the One to whom it is perfectly natural to go out and win souls; and I know precisely where to go and find them. Why don’t you begin to reckon upon Me and say ‘Thank you.’

“I simply said to the Lord Jesus Christ that night, ‘Well, it is that or nothing! If this is true, then I am going to thank You for it in sheer cold-blooded faith... I am going to thank You that if You are my life, and this is true, then You are my victory, You are my strength, You are my power, You are my future!

You are the One who is going to go out now, clothed with me to do all that I so hopelessly have been trying to do in the past seven years!’

“I got up the next morning to an entirely different Christian life, but I want to emphasize this: I had not received one iota more than I had already had for seven years! I had had the Lord Jesus, equal to all my need and in whom I had been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly things, for the whole of those seven years; but I stepped out on my way to the university that morning with a new song in my heart. I was saying, ‘Lord Jesus I thank You for the first time in my life, this is Your day! I no longer have the burden of running my own life.’

“At the end of five weeks God made it very plain to me He had something more to say. He had just begun to whet my appetite. He said, ‘That is My life. You know perfectly well that it has nothing to do with you, because it happened overnight! It is not a new method. It is not a new technique that you have learned. It is simply My life; being what I am, doing the inevitable. This is now the thing you have got to realize; you cannot



have My life for your program. You can only have My life for My program!”

Such a life, Ian Thomas would often declare, is not a life of inactivity but of Christ-activity. It is not what you can do for God but what He can do through you. “It is all in Christ, you see; and all of Christ is yours!” Would you be willing to surrender everything and pray, “I do not want any other program, any other kind of life, but the one that You Yourself are prepared to live in and through me!?”

Ian Thomas died in 2007, at age 92, after decades of being a vessel through which God had full access to live His life. In the course of those years, Ian Thomas preached around the world and wrote several books, including: Saving Life of Christ, The Mystery of Godliness, and The Indwelling Life of Christ – all highly recommended.

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

“Make sure it is God’s trumpet you are blowing - if it is only yours it won’t wake the dead, it will simply disturb the neighbours.”

— W. Ian Thomas —

THE CRUCIFIXION

by Chuck Missler

Good Friday or Good Wednesday?

**I have often been asked this question about Good Friday:
"How can there be three days and three nights between Friday and Sunday?"**

The observances of Good Friday and Easter Sunday have perpetuated the traditional chronology that the crucifixion took place on a Friday, that the Lord's body was buried on that day about 6 p.m., and that he rose from the dead early on Sunday. There are some, however, that feel this tradition is at odds with the Scriptural record. It also seems to conflict with certain prophetic and legal facts.

THREE DAYS

The first problem is reckoning "three days" between Friday evening and Sunday morning. I once co-hosted a TV show which had the famed apologist John Warwick Montgomery as a guest. This issue came up

and John rendered the traditional rationalization, pointing out that the Jews reckoned a partial day as a whole day.

I turned to my co-host and explained, "You must remember that John is an attorney, and that's the way they bill." (John almost fell out his chair laughing; he didn't realize that I was aware of his distinguished legal background.) But the difficulty remains. Our Lord's definitive statement is one of the problems:

"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40

The mention of nights as well as days makes it hard to render this as simply an idiom rather than a statement of fact. Further, when Paul declares the resurrection of Christ to be "according to the Scriptures" in 1 Corinthians 15:4, it is difficult to conclude that he wasn't citing Jonah 1:17. Intensifying the issue, the "three days" was a principal issue at the trial of Jesus.

"Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus... At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This [fellow] said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." Matthew 26:59-61

What did Jesus really say? "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will

raise it up", John 2:19. The same phrase reoccurs in the gospels a dozen times.¹ It also seems to frequently reoccur in prophetic patterns.²

THE SABBATHS

Nowhere in the Gospels does it assert that Christ was crucified on a Friday. In Mark 15:42, it refers to "...the day before the sabbath." This may be the root of the misunderstanding. The Jews had other sabbaths in addition to the weekly Shabbat (Saturday).

There were seven "high sabbaths" each year; the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th of Nisan, being one of them.³ Further, Matthew 28:1 should read, "At the end of the sabbaths,"⁴ implying a plurality of sabbaths that week.

If Passover, the 14th of Nisan, fell earlier in the week, the 15th could have been any day prior to Saturday, the weekly sabbath. "When the sabbaths were past" would, of course, be Sunday (actually, Saturday after sundown).

THE JERICHO JOURNEY

Another problem with a Friday crucifixion is John 12:1: "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany..." (from Jericho). The Friday view would make six days earlier the weekly Shabbat, and on this day such a journey was legally out of the question for a devout Jew.

SUMMARY

As for the Friday or Wednesday issue, there are many good scholars on each side of this controversy. I personally have become rather cynical toward any traditions that are not supported by Scripture. Good Friday is the "traditional" view. The Wednesday Crucifixion is known as the "reconstructed view." The important thing is that the tomb was empty. The authorities made sure that this was indisputable. Indeed, He is risen! | **A**

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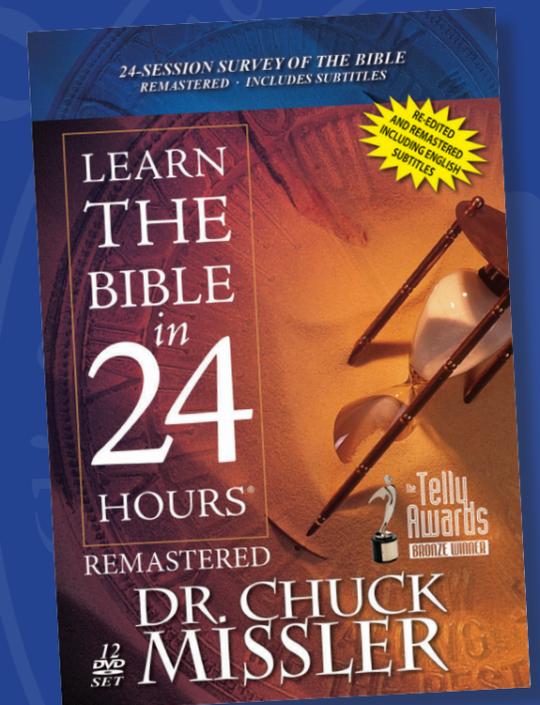
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■ Chuck Missler is an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He is the founder of the Koinonia Institute and lives in Reporoa, NZ



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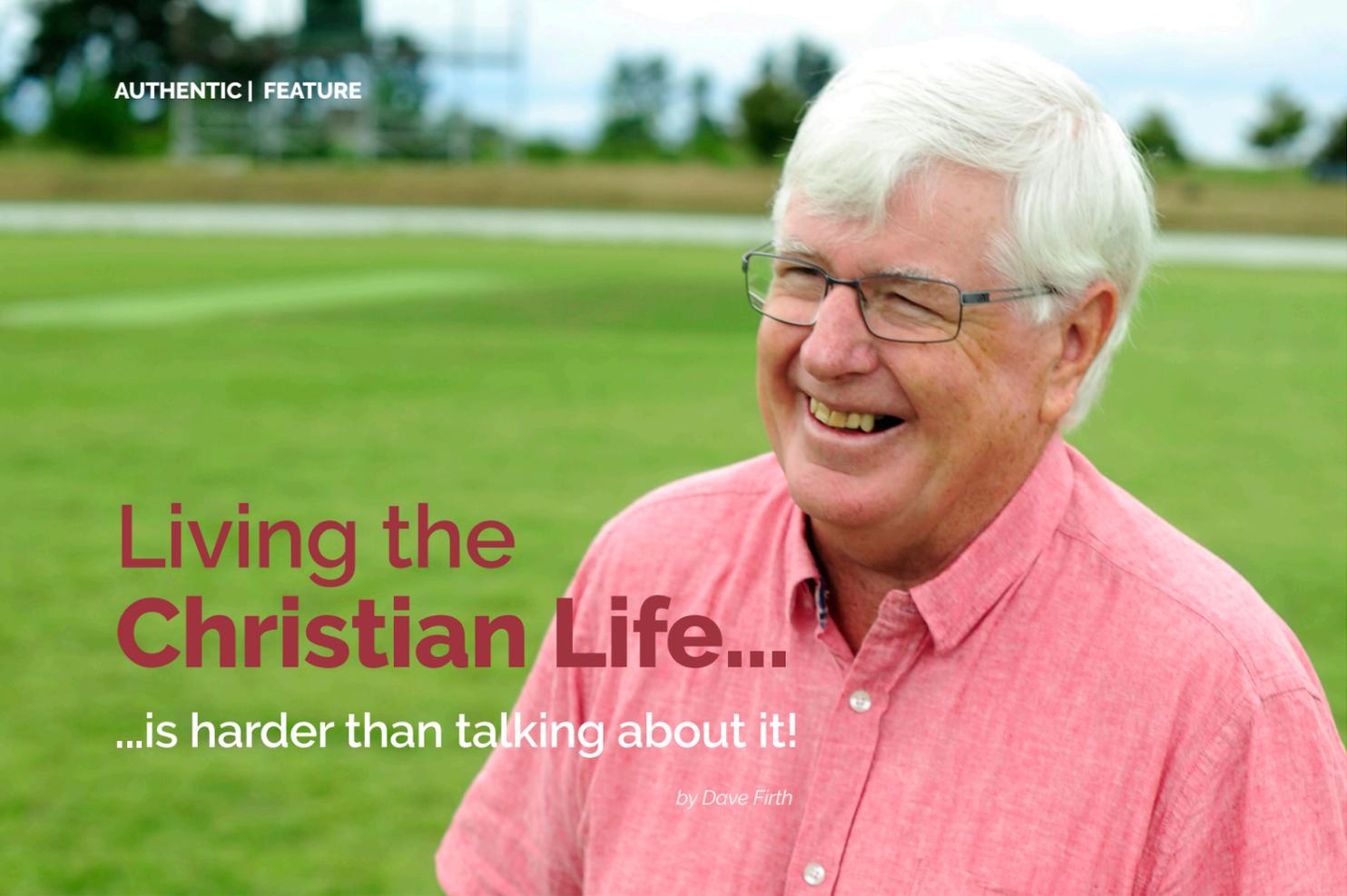
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Living the Christian Life...

...is harder than talking about it!

by Dave Firth

When we arrive at the Kaipaki Sports Centre we walk in to find ex-New Zealand international cricketer, John Parker, sweeping the floor after a busy six-a-side cricket tournament the day before.

John's heart for the community is evident from how he talks. The centre isn't about him. He wants to give back to the community and in doing so 'live out' what he believes is a life changing discovery – that God made us, loves us and wants to know us!

We caught up with him to ask specifically about how being a Christian has changed his view on life, cricket and culture...

How did you first get into playing cricket?

"We lived in a community called Kaipara Flats - about an hour north of Auckland.

In New Zealand communities in those days, it was really about who was the most energetic person in that community and if they were a swimmer we'd have all swum. If they were a golfer, we'd have all played

golf. If they were a rugby player, which they all were, we'd have played rugby. Well, the person round the corner, Arthur Hatfull, was a cricketer, so he got my two older brothers into cricket and I tagged along.

So that's how it started. I had to play in a men's team (with full-grown men) when I was nine years old, because that was the only option. I faced grown-up bowlers, but I never batted last. They knew how to treat you, so

I'd bat at six or seven. If they couldn't get you out their egos would take over and they'd bowl a lot quicker!"

As a cricketer you obviously had to bat but what about bowling?

"I bowled to the degree that I'd have loved to face my own bowling! (smiles)

I wasn't very good. I managed to get a test wicket with a full toss and a wicket in an ODI (One Day International), mainly because the

batsman was tired after whacking me out the district the ball before. So the next ball he didn't hit quite as hard and it was caught about one millimetre inside the boundary.

Somebody once wrote that my bowling was better in theory than in practice and my victims could be counted on the fingers of an incompetent saw miller."

Is that why you were a wicketkeeper?

"Yep, I did do a little bit of wicket keeping. That started up in Kaipara Flats when I filled in one day as a wicketkeeper and did that for a while, so when it came to test selection they asked if I'd ever kept wicket. Well, I said 'yes'. They didn't ask for how long or how good I was. I was then picked for the England tour and they made me reserve wicket keeper. They didn't ask me many questions (thank goodness) but I didn't tell them a lie either – I just didn't tell them the full truth!"

So how did a small town Kiwi boy end up playing cricket in England alongside the world's greatest cricketers?

"I was the luckiest person to ever play Country Cricket – there's no doubt! Everybody else was a superstar. Big, fast bowlers that bowled at a thousand miles an hour or batsmen that were already proven internationally, but I hadn't even played first class cricket!

Martin Houghton who was the national coach then, and he coached coaches – something that is sadly lacking these days – he was the most fantastic operator that I'd ever come across.

We became friends and I played in the same club as him in Auckland. I broke some 'Under 20' records for a tournament in New Zealand and he saw some potential in me and

SOMEBODY ONCE WROTE THAT MY BOWLING WAS BETTER IN THEORY THAN IN PRACTICE AND MY VICTIMS COULD BE COUNTED ON THE FINGERS OF AN INCOMPETENT SAW MILLER

liked my enthusiasm, so he said he'd organise me a one month trial over in Worcestershire, England.

I'd trained as a teacher and I absolutely loved it, but this amazing opportunity came along (which in those days was incredibly rare). In fact, there'd probably only ever been 4 or 5 guys that had done that and they were all internationals.

So I had to give up being a teacher and go over there for a month. So, yeah, it was very much a back door entry into professional cricket."

You moved to England to play for Worcestershire. How did you adjust to playing at the top level of your sport?

"Well, because I wasn't a superstar I had to play for the second team for one season and for the club & ground team for a season, then stay for the winter.

After this I was able to play in the county team the next season. But at the end of that season there was a game against India that I could play in. India had just beaten England for the first time ever in England and so here we were, playing India in the last game and they had to win this to be undefeated on the tour.

India made 402 for 2 and the chairman of selectors, Wing Commander Shakespeare, comes over to me and tells me that if I got some runs I could stay and if I didn't I was going home.

Well, I managed to get 91 runs so they said I could stay!"

"Same thing happened the next year when we played Australia. If I made runs I could stay. Well I did make runs so on it went and finally they said, "OK, We'll sign you."

So they did and I ended up having this career! Imran Khan was my flat



1973 WORCESTERSHIRE SQUAD WITH JOHN PARKER (THIRD FROM LEFT, BACK ROW) AND IMRAN KHAN (FIFTH FROM LEFT, BACK ROW).

mate during the winter and we went down and changed his bowling action for him because he wanted to be a quick bowler rather than a medium pace bowler. It was a lot of fun. He actually mentioned it in his book and we've been good friends ever since.

So it was a remarkable entrance into professional cricket, clearly orchestrated by the Lord and something that never happened to anyone else, ever!"

So looking back you see God's hand in it all but did you realise that at the time?

"My mother was God's best mate! She was an amazing lady and we were brought up in the church but we spent some time wandering in the 'wilderness', although we always believed in God.

In my fifth year in England I was driving through the countryside and I had one of those amazing moments where things became clear - I just knew I had to get out of cricket.

I knew how good I was and I was pleased with that but it became incredibly clear that cricket wasn't the only thing in life for me.

I came to the conclusion that God had given me more talents than to just play cricket and so within six months I was finished."

So how did that change you?

"I still made plenty of mistakes in business and my personal life. My first marriage didn't work out which was more my fault than hers. I was



still searching for who I was and how I fit into things.

I had a sports retail shop, which was an absolute disaster from a business perspective, because I wasn't that interested in making money, but it was an excellent training ground for learning how to serve people.

We had the most inventive sports shops you could ever imagine. Areas where you could hit hockey balls against foam walls, a volley board where you could try a tennis racquet or a squash racquet out, an area where you could hit a cricket ball without damaging anything so you could try a cricket bat out. It was absolutely fantastic but did it make any money? Not on your nelly!

So we began creating regional sports trusts in New Zealand and started Sport Waikato.

I was drawn into sports consultancy and became involved with

organisations all over the world. Again we didn't make a lot of money but we had a lot of fun and learned a lot!

I guess we're always going through learning times where God is preparing us for the tiny roles we have in His grand plan."

You seem far more interested in lessons learned than money. Is that true of you generally?

"Fortunately, I think, money's just not of any interest to me at all.

It's only a means to an end. My mother and my father would often say, "You're born naked, you die naked and you can't take it with you!"

If you look at the Bible, God often chose ordinary people, fisherman and carpenters, all sorts of incredibly ordinary people to spread the good news. It wasn't the rich folk or the academics!

When Jesus said that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich men to enter the kingdom of heaven, that says a lot really. You can't worship money and God. So the bible is full of messages about where money should fit in."

Your faith became real later on in life. At what point did it become personal and life changing?

"For me it was progressive really. I don't really remember a moment. About 7 or 8 years ago I remember talking to Peter Thomas from Capernwray and he was really helpful. We had lots of good chats. He had an amazing ability to always say what I needed to hear.

As a young person I was very observant. I'd go to a church and see farmers all dressed up, but then they'd go home and swear at their wife and kick the dog and it just wasn't real.

It just didn't fit for me and I think a lot of young people still struggle with that today. They notice that what is said is different from what people do and I think it has more of an impact.

Well, Peter was a genuine Christian. He had a great sense of humour and he cared for people. Just a great guy to be around. He and his friend Clyde have become great friends of mine."

As you look back, you seem to be very assured of God's hand on your life over the years. How does that impact you as you look forward?

"It's fantastic really. I feel I can absolutely relax and trust that He's in charge. There's no pressure on me. So if I'm working on something and it doesn't work out I can just trust that He's got something else in mind. I don't feel I have to impress anyone really. The only person who's opinion really matters is God.

My wife often says how she's amazed that I don't care about what anybody thinks - and I don't. I never have really. I've been taught a few lessons over the years through being shouted at by 35,000 people all at once - you learn to put that into perspective - but even that was God

slowly getting me to a place where I can trust Him and say, "It's over to you." And that's why I find praying interesting because I don't ask for things. I just talk to Him and trust Him with whatever He's doing. So my expectations are high because I trust Him and He's in charge!"

You're involved in a few charity projects including the Kaipaki Centre (a renovated sports centre near Cambridge). What's your motivation for this type of work?

"We were brought up in a state house, and it wasn't flash. But as far as Mum was concerned it was the best place you could ever have had. She didn't care less what other people thought of our house. There was always baking and she always had visitors. It was a warm family home. Mum would say, "A House is a roof over your head. Your home is where your family is."

Life has to be more about other things. I've never really taken life too seriously.

Jeremy Coney and I have had a bit of a pact over the years, that we'll

never have a serious nine to five job and so far, we're both 66 and we've succeeded so far! The reason for that is so often we can work to get money, then just buy things that aren't that important. So why don't we work to make communities better and to help people. People just seem a lot more important.

Clyde and I spent about 20 hours the other day mowing lawns and preparing for a six-a-side cricket tournament at the centre, but it wasn't so we'd get thanked.

In fact most people probably wouldn't even notice. But we got pleasure just knowing we were doing it for others to enjoy. And it made us both smile that God was watching and that He appreciated it."

I'm sure you've got hundreds of stories to tell about life. What's your favourite story?

"Well, the bible is full of stories. As a young person I read the bible from cover to cover and I thought I was going through the motions, but these days in my bible study with these guys that know their bibles inside out, I often find that I've retained a



IMRAN KHAN WAS MY FLAT MATE DURING THE WINTER AND WE WENT DOWN AND CHANGED HIS BOWLING ACTION FOR HIM BECAUSE HE WANTED TO BE A QUICK BOWLER RATHER THAN A MEDIUM PACE BOWLER. IT WAS A LOT OF FUN.

lot more than I realised. Part of the reason is because of all the stories. That's how I retained so much.

Now, if you mean 'cricket stories' then there is one that always makes me smile, but not because it makes me look good 'cause it doesn't!

Ian Botham was a young 18 or 19 year old when I first bumped into him. He was playing for Somerset.

A few years later, when it was my last game and the season was petering out, we went down to Somerset. Botham's a few years younger than me but he says to me, "Go on, Dag [Parker's nickname], I bet you're too scared to hook the first ball you get." "Cause he knew I wasn't a hooker, you see. I always just cut it and ducked it, but I said, "Oh, yeah. Right-o, I'm on". Well I learned a severe lesson. Unfortunately, Botham was bowling and he bowled me a yorker first ball. I went back and across to hook it and totally missed it and got all my poles

■ You can get in touch with John and find out more about the Kaipaki Community Sports Centre at www.kaipaki.com

knocked over. He just dropped to the ground laughing. In fact, he was still laughing about it in the changing room afterwards."

You mentioned earlier that you go to a weekly Bible Study. Do you still do that regularly?

"6.45am every Friday morning! There's just a few of us but it's fantastic. I meet with these guys that know the bible incredibly well. I don't think I'll ever know the bible that well. I'm more of a story person, so I'm not sure I help them very much but they

really help me. It is a good mix though because we're all different. I've got a story for every situation so that seems to help.

We're wading our way through John's gospel at the moment and thoroughly enjoying studying and seeing how Jesus taught his disciples. There's some great leadership lessons in there too! What a gift that the Bible is written in a way that we can all get something out of it."

Ed: Amen to that! | 



THE BULGING LEFT BICEP

A four part series by Eric Ludy



The Return of Majesty

Something is missing in Christianity today. For years I've tried to put my finger on it. And then when I finally caught it beneath my finger, I spent another few years just trying to articulate precisely what it was that I had caught.

Sometimes I want to call it "The Ancient Grit"—then other times it seems more appropriate to call it "The Manly Stuff" or "The Rack of Glory"—my wife, Leslie, refers to it as "The Old-Fashioned Authority"—whereas I often just term it, "The Oomph." But, with all these wonderful descriptors, there are moments when just the word "Majesty" says it all. So, that's where I'm landing.

Hey everyone! We are missing "The Majesty."

In New Zealand there is majesty all around. But, if you remove the mountains from the South Island something drastically changes. Modern Christianity is like the South Island minus the mountains. It's

lacking something very important. And it is that very "majestic something" that I'm aching to see return to the the Christian plains. For we have a dying world that is booking trips to "Christianity" in order to take a glimpse at these legendary peaks as touted in the Bible, but when they drive through it they just aren't seeing it.

When I read the Bible I hear a Voice. It's a booming Voice—like the sound of a mighty waterfall—like the sound of a thousand peals of simultaneous thunder proclaiming, "I am your God, bend the knee!"

In this sacred Text I see this God's power, I witness His awesome faithfulness, and I behold the rescuing and renovating strength of His

Almighty Right Hand. I stand in awe at the foot of the Cross and peering inside the empty tomb I fall to my knees in stunned wonder. And I ask myself a question . . .

"What is the proper response to such a God as this?"

For some reason, my honest answer to that significant question sounds strange within the corridors of the modern Church system. For it would seem to me that this Almighty God deserves our everything—our every moment.; our every talent; our every penny; our every decision; our every thought; our every affection; and our every bit of trust.

And yet, the version of Christianity

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that most of us are familiar with doesn't demand our everything. Instead of offering our everything it offers up to God our excuses, as if our excuses could somehow satisfy Him. Instead of offering our every moment, we give God the excuse that we are just too busy. Instead of offering our every talent, we give God the excuse that unfortunately our talents are already in use, leveraged to prosper our own personal reputations. Instead of offering every penny, we give God the line about God already having all He needs, so why would He need my pittance? And the excuses continue until we all "really love God and really appreciate His sacrificial work upon the Cross," however, our everything still belongs to us.

Simply put, we are missing "The Majesty"—or for the sake of creating a segue into the real meat of this article, I'll say it this way . . .

We are missing "the bowman's bulging left bicep."

In the 14th century England there was a strange phenomenon throughout the land. You could call it "The Bowman's Bulging Left Bicep" phenomenon. At the time, England boasted a nearly impregnable and unstoppable military force and this was due primarily to the strength of its bowmen. The secret weapon of the English in those days was known as the English Longbow and it was the desire of the King of England that every single man in the entire English realm give his life to the mastery of this ancient instrument of war.

The professionally-crafted, war-ready Longbow stood over six feet in height and to bend such a bow in order to send forth its deadly arrow would demand nearly superhuman strength. A hunter's bow today demands a pull strength of nearly 50 to 60 pounds. And only those of a more stout physical bearing can usually muster that. But the Longbow

FOR THE THREE FOOT ARROW THAT SHOT FROM THIS HUMAN CANNON ISSUED FORTH WITH SUCH FORCE THAT IT COULD FLY WITH ROCKET-LIKE SPEEDS AND WITH BULLET-LIKE ACCURACY FOR DISTANCES OF OVER THREE RUGBY FIELDS, WITH SOME ARROWS ACTUALLY TRAVELING WITH PIN-POINT ACCURACY UPWARDS OF 800 YARDS.

of the 14th century was something altogether different than today's bow. The common English Longbow would demand a pull strength of 180 to 200 pounds and some, even upward of 250 pounds. And only a man who was trained from his youth to bend such a bow could actually pull off this startling athletic feat.

But though the Longbow demanded a nearly superhuman pull, its power in battle was likewise of near supernatural effect. For the three foot arrow that shot from this human cannon issued forth with such force that it could fly with rocket-like speeds and with bullet-like accuracy for distances of over three rugby fields, with some arrows actually traveling with pin-point accuracy upwards of 800 yards.

England's enemies sought to design armor to withstand these arrows, but the force behind these arrows could often pierce even the stoutest knight's armor. One record actually states that the arrow of an English Longbow pierced through a four-finger thick wooden door of a castle and killed the guard standing on the other side.

England had something in the Longbow that simply could not be easily mimicked by other nations. The reason was because Longbow training was an intimate part of English life. If the men of a nation had not grown up pulling the Longbow then, there was no possible way that they could just start doing it effectively in battle overnight. They may esteem the power of the Longbow, but they

couldn't imitate it in real battle without decades of practice and preparations.

The English culture fostered the formation of mighty bowmen. Every young boy was given a baby longbow by his father to begin learning the art form of archery. And throughout his life, he was trained on the difficult pull. When the boy mastered the two-foot longbow, he would move to the three-foot bow, and the necessary pull strength would be even greater. And when he mastered the three-foot bow, it was time for the four-foot. This matriculating process continued throughout his maturing years. And with every subsequent longbow height arrived a greater test, a harder pull, a more sizable challenge. But please don't even think of feeling sorry for these young boys and the challenges they were encountering in their Longbow training. Certainly this was hard work. It was daily, and it was difficult. Repetition after repetition. Difficult pull after difficult pull. And yet these boys were not sorrowful in their training, but privileged. For these young English boys were seeking to enter the service of their beloved King. And in light of that prospect, this passing pain was actually deemed a pleasure.

And out of this Bow-centered culture arose the strange phenomenon that I mentioned earlier. For there was an identifying characteristic to every true bowman in England. And it could be seen in his left bicep. Just above his left elbow swelled a vast deformity, an unusually large lump of strength. To every surrounding nation, unfamiliar

with the significance of the bowman's importance, this bulging mass would undoubtedly be deemed disturbing, odd, even ugly. But in England, this deformity was the symbol of its might.

So, how does all this Longbow legend effect our discussion on today's version of Christianity?

Modern Christianity is caught in the midst of a great war, but it would seem that we are missing our historic weaponry and strength. We are not ready for this battle. We have not grown up in a culture that fostered the formation of the bowman's bulging left bicep. And therefore, we find ourselves esteeming the strength and power of the Longbow, but without

a clue as to how to pull the ancient bowstring.

Many of us mean well. We spend our entire life satisfying the cravings of our flesh and then we hear the battle sound. We grab our six-foot tall longbow from our Scriptural coat closet and rush into the tempest with all the zeal of an ignorant toddler running headlong into the belly of a poised and positioned Sumo champion. We are felled to the mat in a matter of seconds. We have not been trained in how to wield our ancient weaponry.

If we really are going to see the tide of battle turn, then I suggest we begin to once again pursue the return of

this heavenly majesty. Let's start familiarizing ourselves once again with the ancient Longbow described in the Scriptures. We may need our Father in Heaven to start us on little baby Longbows, but I yearn to see the Church once again pull the impossible bowstring and shoot the unstoppable arrows at the Kingdom of Darkness.

As it says in the Bible, the gates of hell shall not prevail against us.

So, may the bowmen's left biceps once again bulge with supernatural fervor and readiness. |A

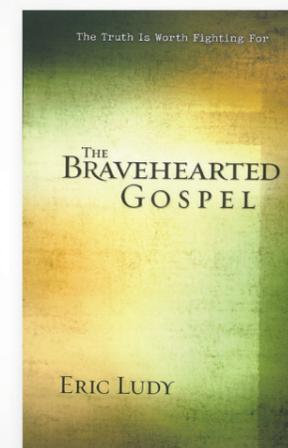


■ Eric Ludy - is a pastor, author and the president of Eilerslie Mission Society. www.Ericludy.com

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 1 Samuel 2hrs 45mins
 2 Samuel 2hrs 18mins
 1 Kings 2hrs 47mins
 2 Kings 2hrs 40mins
 1 Chronicles 2hrs 56mins
 2 Chronicles 3hrs 2mins
 Ezra 58mins
 Nehemiah 1hr 20mins
 Esther 40mins

Job 2hrs 49mins
 Psalms 7hrs 38mins
 Proverbs 2hrs 45mins
 Ecclesiastes 48mins
 Song of Songs 32mins

Isaiah 5hrs 47mins
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 Lamentations 36mins
 Ezekiel 4hrs 25mins
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Hosea 51mins
 Joel 22mins
 Amos 43mins
 Obadiah 7mins
 Jonah 11mins
 Micah 33mins
 Nahum 14mins
 Habakkuk 16mins
 Zephaniah 17mins
 Haggai 9mins
 Zechariah 47mins
 Malachi 15mins

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 2hrs 55mins
 Mark 1hr 55mins
 Luke 3hrs 10mins
 John 2hrs 20mins
10hrs 20mins

Acts 2hrs 55mins
 Romans 1hr 18mins
 1 Corinthians 1hr 10mins
 2 Corinthians 38mins

Galatians 25mins
 Ephesians 25mins
 Philippians 18mins
 Colossians 18mins
1hr 26mins

1 Thess 15mins
 2 Thess 10mins
 1 Timothy 20mins
 2 Timothy 15mins
 Titus 10mins
 Philemon 5mins
1hr 15mins

Hebrews 1hr

James 20mins
 1 Peter 22mins
 2 Peter 12mins
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 2 John 3mins
 3 John 3mins
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 1 Timothy 20mins
 2 Timothy 15mins
 James 20mins
 2 Peter 12mins
 1 John 20mins

READ THESE BOOKS IN 10 MINS OR LESS!

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 Haggai 9mins
 2 Thess 10mins
 Titus 10mins
 Philemon 5mins
 2 John 3mins
 3 John 3mins
 Jude 6mins

CHRISTIANITY AND THE

Celebrity Effect

by Jeremy Suisted



In 1995, Jonah Lomu tucked the ball under his arm, lowered his shoulder and ran over English fullback Mike Catt. I watched, a nine year old kid, transfixed. I'd seen rugby players side-step and out-pace their opposition - but I'd never seen a player completely flatten their opponent. It was glorious.

New Zealand rugby fields resounded with young boys calling out, "I'll be Jonah Lomu!" Newspapers showcased the iconic image on their front page, and news broadcasters ran the highlight in a lingering slow-mo of destruction. Jonah was king.

Only a few months after this momentous occasion, I was on a family trip to the luges at Rotorua. As we waited in line for a gondola to take us up the mountain, I saw a large hulking figure in front of us. It was him. Jonah Lomu.

Standing with his family, helping them on to the gondola. I was stunned. I

watched as his wife boarded - and as he looked at the weight limit and decided to go up the mountain on his own. He waited for the next gondola to come past - and my Dad then bravely uttered the magic words - "Jonah, do you mind if my son rides with you?"

The next five minutes were a blur. I was in the presence of rugby royalty. My tongue was tied, my eyes were wide, my throat was dry. We talked rugby, we sat in silence, and once we arrived at the top - he waited for my family to arrive. We said our farewells - and Jonah Lomu was gone.

For the next week, I felt like the biggest kid in all of Cambridge. My time in Jonah's presence was electrifying. It made me feel special, with a unique story - and it validated who I was. I was the kid who had ridden with Jonah.

There's something about being with a celebrity that is empowering. Although we know that they are flesh and blood - just like me - there is still a difference and mystery that they hold. They seem to live in a different world, shape large groups of people and perform in ways that we can only dream about.

Their power reaches wide, with psychologists referring to the "celebrity effect" as a way people make decisions. Simply put - when we see a celebrity endorsing a product or world-view, we're more likely to follow their lead. This is why McDonald's paid \$6m for Justin

ALTHOUGH WE MAY SCOFF AT THE POP EXAMPLES, THERE IS A DEEP PART OF US THAT YEARNS FOR THE SUCCESS WE SEE IN OTHERS. SO WHEN THE ALL BLACKS ARE SHOWN DRIVING A FORD, OR RICHIE MCCAWE ENDORSES A HOUSE-BUILDING COMPANY - WE TAKE NOTICE.

Timberlake to say, "I'm loving it", and why Pepsi forked out \$50m for Beyonce to dance while drinking their soda.

Although we may scoff at the pop examples, there is a deep part of us that yearns for the success we see in others. So when the All Blacks are shown driving a Ford, or Richie McCaw endorses a house-building company - we take notice.

Perhaps the more insidious element of celebrity is the 'appeal to popularity' fallacy, that philosophers and social scientists critique. In the simplest sense, humanity tends to believe that - "Everyone's doing it, therefore it must be true."

When a celebrity is involved - that adds weight to the argument, and is why we see famous people chirping up on topics they have no expertise in - such as politics, economics and morality.

But - what do we do when a celebrities come to faith? What would be a wise way to react?

Unfortunately, the typical Christian response to a reported celebrity convert is gushing and gloating over their new trophy. In the early 2000s, a burgeoning Kanye West came on the scene, with his hit track Jesus Walks.

Kanye featured on Christian magazines, with each group rushing to claim Kanye for the kingdom. Their delight at a hip-hop star's faith was expressed by thoughtlessly affirming every action - and suddenly putting Kanye as a possible role model for Christians (a position that did not last long).

This isn't a new phenomenon. From Bob Dylan's saved period, through to Jim Carey's recent expression of faith - the typical Christian response is an excitement, and a rushing to make the celebrity a spokesperson for faith.

And normally - this is a position that they didn't ask for, and one that does not last.

For these celebrities, this appears to become an added weight. A young believer, with another aspect of their life suddenly thrust into the spotlight, often cannot bear the burden of the scrutiny of their faith and morality. As Christians and secular media alike scramble to dissect and understand their beliefs, it usually results in a broken person at the end.

Unfortunately, so much of this brokenness is caused by well-meaning Christians, excited to have "celebrity effect" supporting their faith. This passion to showcase the new Christian is ultimately a dehumanising endeavour - as the individual, made in the image of God, is transformed into a trophy to show to the rest of the world. And that's not what people were created for.

Case in point - in 2012, a little known director named Jason Russell released a short documentary called Kony 2012. The film focused on Ugandan war leader Joseph Kony, raising awareness of his atrocities and seeking to have him arrested by the end of 2012. Russell, a Christian living in California, had no idea of what would happen next.

The film exploded online, reaching over 100 million views in six days. From March 5-12, 66% of Twitter conversations were about Joseph Kony, and more people were talking about the film than the new iPhone.

Suddenly, Jason was thrust into a world of celebrity. Reflecting on this time, Jason said, "On the one hand, there was Bono saying Jason Russell deserves an Oscar, and Oprah wants to fill stadiums for me, and Ryan Seacrest wants me on American Idol. And on the other, there were people saying, 'These people think they're white saviours trying to save Africa', and 'the money goes to corrupt

UNFORTUNATELY, THE TYPICAL CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO A REPORTED CELEBRITY CONVERT IS GUSHING AND GLOATING OVER THEIR NEW TROPHY.

places', and 'there is a special place in hell for you'.

Jason rushed from interview to interview, responding to critics and attempting to clarify his position. His life was showcased under the media attention that celebrities receive. Until finally - he broke.

Ten days after the release of Kony 2012, Jason had a public breakdown and was hospitalised for several weeks. The weight of intense scrutiny and public opinion on his purpose, faith and actions was too much. And as we get this glimpse at life in the public eye, perhaps it is less surprising that when celebrities proclaim a turning to faith - they often don't go the distance.

So, what is a healthy and wise response when we hear of our cultural icons deciding to follow Jesus?

Firstly - we should be excited at the hope of the story. The apostle Paul was imprisoned and heard rumours of people coming to faith in the wider world. What was his response? "The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice."

Paul rejoiced when he heard that Christ's name was getting air-time. Although the motives may not always have been solid, Paul knew that Jesus can work through thousands of ways, in thousands of places. So Paul rejoiced.

But - notice this - Paul's rejoicing was praise to God. He wasn't rushing to

tell the world about who had come to faith. Instead, he was praying - delighting that God was working in unlikely places, and - undoubtedly - praying for these new young believers.

See, Paul wasn't against fame. He leveraged his own influence to get access to different parts of society - and he knew that those with a loud public voice could be influential for the gospel. But Paul also knew that being a public figure with a public faith was tough going. That's why he urged the church in Thessalonica to live quiet lives.

So, Paul would celebrate glimpses of good news, and would be in prayer for the new members of the faith. What if we followed this lead? What if - instead of turning celebrities into poster-boys for Jesus - we instead actually got down on our knees and prayed for them? We resisted the

temptation to dissect their every sentence and portrayal, and instead sought to care for the human?

Because - ultimately - that is who they are. Beneath the flash and muscle, each person - whether celebrity or chronically uncool - is an image bearer of God. Celebrity and fame are fleeting, made by us and gone with the next cultural wind. But our deeper identity is an eternal truth that endures long after the paparazzi's flash.

When we look to Jesus, we see a man who resisted the trappings of celebrity. He refused to play the celebrity game, instead seeking a life that was surprisingly ordinary. His crowd was working-class tradespeople, everyday mothers - even the down-and-outs.

He talked to people in restaurants and on the road - not in stadiums. And he entrusted the spreading of

his message to fishermen and tax collectors.

Not many in the early church were wise, not many were strong, not many were popular or rich. In God's eyes - none of those things matter. God delights in working through the small and insignificant, who are focused on Him and His kingdom.

Because at the end of the day - God is just as interested in the athletes and celebrities as He is in your next door neighbour. God wants all to find their true life and purpose in Him.

So avoid the fallacy of popularity, and seek instead a posture of prayerful thanks. Praise God for the hints of good news, pray for the lives of those who begin a turn to faith - and don't turn a blind eye to God's work amongst the everyday and ordinary. | 

■ Jeremy Suisted works as an Innovation Consultant, as well as a part-time Old Testament lecturer, copywriter and speaker. Read more from Jeremy on his website www.jeremysuisted.com

GOD IN WORK

CHARACTER

by Paul Curtas

God's strategy is still the same... He is calling for light to shine out of darkness.

Christ describes us as the light of the world, and not the sound of the earth. Yes, we should speak the gospel, but according to our Lord the character of a Christian should be like light. There is a stark contrast between the speed of sound and the speed of light. The speed of sound travels at 786 mph or 1,236 kilometers per hour, about one kilometer

in three seconds or one mile in five seconds. On the other hand, the speed of light travels at 186,282 miles per second.

Never underestimate the velocity and impact your actions and attitudes, that reflect the Lord, have in your workplace.

Consider this: "You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"

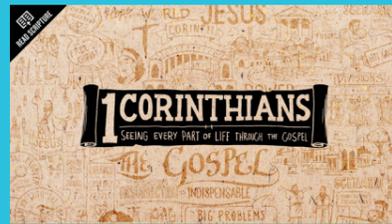
(Matt 5:14-16)

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

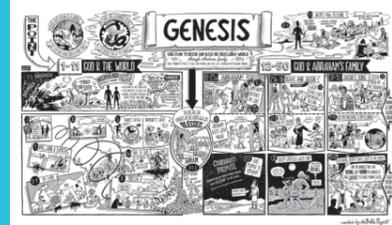


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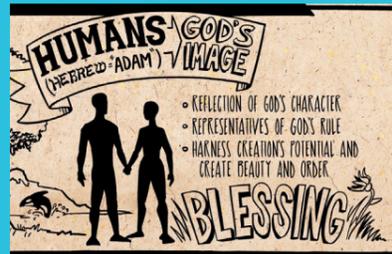
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DOWN TO EARTH WISDOM FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

Playing The Fool

by Charles Price

Back in the 14th century, the engagement of King Richard II of England to Anne of Bohemia was announced by an enthusiastic but uneducated scribe, as having taken place on March 32nd. They had only known each other for a very short time, but as March 32nd is really April 1st, it became known as All Fools Day. True story or not, fools really do exist, and folly is an epidemic.

It's more natural to be a fool than to be wise, as I know from personal experience. 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child' says Proverbs 22:15, and smart parents recognise that and help their cute offspring root it out before it takes up permanent residence.

The fool is not classified by his mental capacity, but by his mental attitude. If you educate a fool, you make him a clever fool, but a fool nonetheless. The fool appears in the Old Testament Book of Proverbs under several guises. Fifty-six times he is called 'The Fool', eighteen times the 'Mocker' (or scoffer), twelve times the 'Simple', and they have a first cousin

'The Sluggard', who is mentioned thirteen times. That's ninety-nine appearances of this family of fools. In Proverbs, wisdom is generally feminine, but the fool is always male. Oops! Not sure if that is significant!

How do you know a fool when you see one (apart from looking in a mirror)? There are several characteristics they (we) share in common.

Firstly, a fool has opinions about everything.

"A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinions" (Prov 18:2).

The very thing the fool thinks portrays

his wisdom - his opinions and his confidence in them - actually exposes his foolishness. "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice." (Prov 12:15) Opinions are good to formulate, but the fool closes his mind to any other input, and his opinion becomes dogma. It is his mouth that primarily gives him away, "A fool's lips bring him strife and his mouth invites a beating. A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul." (Prov 18:6-7)

I once saw on a pharmacy wall in Australia, "Rather keep silent and be thought a fool, than speak and remove all doubt". I understand that originated with Abraham Lincoln.

SECONDLY, A FOOL THINKS TROUBLE IS SMART!

Here are just a couple of statements: "A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct" (Prov 10.23) and "The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it" (Prov 27.12). Most people check the destination before getting on a train, but the fool doesn't look at consequences. Trouble is a "good laugh" for a fool. It is an expression of his creativity.

THIRDLY, A FOOL SHOWS LITTLE RESTRAINT.

That is especially true verbally, for "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." (Prov 29.11) He is always ready to let people have 'a piece of his mind', which he thinks is clever, but doesn't realise that "the mouth of the fool gushes folly" (Prov 15.2).

The fact that his mouth "gushes folly" sounds like a severe attack of verbal diarrhea! He is quick to speak and slow to listen, has much to say and little to learn. He is at his most venomous when he is angry, for he has no restraints or discipline in place and of course, no ground for being wrong!

FOURTHLY, A FOOL DOESN'T RESIST TEMPTATION.

Basically, he wants immediate gratification, and he wants it 'NOW'. If he has an appetite he will try to satisfy it, whether for food, money, or sex and Proverbs talks about all three, telling us he will go for gratification, like an ox going to slaughter, a deer stepping into a noose, or like a bird darting into a snare. It is NOW he is interested in.

This is a particular pressure of modern life. The slogan of a certain credit card in the UK used to say, naming the card, it "... takes the Waiting out of

IF A FOOL WANTS EVERYTHING NOW, THEN IN THE HOME HE NEEDS TO LEARN PATIENCE, TO LEARN THE MEANING OF 'NO' AND 'WAIT' AND 'LATER'. TO HAVE TO SAVE POCKET MONEY TO PURCHASE SOMETHING A CHILD WANTS IS TO SOW SEEDS OF WISDOM FOR A LATER HARVEST!

Wanting". And fools signed up for it! All of this, is "a highway to the grave." (Prov 7.27)

If these are some of the characteristics fools have in common, Proverbs also tells us there are correctives available to surround ourselves with, to help avoid the folly we naturally gravitate to.

FIRSTLY, FROM OUR FAMILY AT HOME.

Here is a statement every parent should take seriously: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him" (Prov 22.15). We are born with a nature that has bias to folly. Our cute little babies have cute folly in them. For this reason, our homes are the first environment in which we learn wisdom.

If a fool has opinions about everything and is always sure he is right, then in the home a child needs to be able to talk, to know they are listened to, to discuss and exchange ideas without being defensive. We listen by being listened to, and that means conversation in the home. Perhaps its a reason why we need to eat three times a day, because around the table a family can talk.

In our age of technology this is crucial for wholesome family life. Smartphones, television, instant connectivity with a world outside saps conversation, destroys creativity,

presents an unreal world, and creates an appetite for what is unavailable.

If a fool wants everything NOW, then in the home he needs to learn patience, to learn the meaning of 'No' and 'Wait' and 'Later'. To have to save pocket money to purchase something a child wants is to sow seeds of wisdom for a later harvest!

"An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end" (Prov 20.21). This is not just true in big things in adulthood, but in little things in childhood too. Children need to grow up slowly, and we rob them of the delights and memories of childhood when we rush them and give everything too quickly.

A solicitor friend of mine told me about a girl he was representing in court for a crime she had committed, and her parents said to him, 'We don't know why she has done this. We have always given her what she wants.' That's precisely why she was in trouble!

Its good for our character growth to have to do what we don't like doing, and to not always get what we want. As a teenager, I was working in a summer job when one of the workers said to me, 'You are not enjoying this are you?'. I replied, 'No I am not'. He said, 'Good, it will build character in you.'

We learn to build this kind of character in our home, with our parents. Every parent sets appropriate boundaries around their children that adjust with growing maturity, but developing wisdom in our children means we need to be clear about what to do when the boundaries are broken. "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother." (Prov 29.15).

Wise discipline works! It creates secure boundaries, it creates the self-discipline needed for life and it helps drive out the folly within us.



"When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge." (Prov 21.11). Some of us didn't have a loving home environment that made this learning easy for us, but for those of us who are now parents, it is our privilege and responsibility to create an loving, secure environment that produces wisdom.

SECONDLY, FROM OUR FRIENDS IN THE WORLD.

If the first safety net to root out folly is our family, the second is in good friends. Here is a great word about friendship: "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (Prov 27:6). As one translation puts it: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

Beware of those who flatter us and think we can do no wrong. Real friends encourage us, but also rebuke us when needed. And real friends are willing to receive rebuke. The pain of rebuke, is more rewarding than joy in flattery, "He who rebukes a man will in

the end gain more favour than he who has a flattering tongue." (Prov 28.23).

True friendship is strong enough to give rebuke and big enough to accept rebuke. Proverbs has a lot to say about marriage, and open, honest, kind dialogue is an essential ingredient. To not listen to, or accept rebuke is to be a fool.

THIRDLY, FROM OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

God our father does what good fathers do, he disciplines us for our good, to make us wise. Most of the book of Proverbs, is written as a father addressing his son. At one point he says, "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." (Prov 3:11-12).

What is the Lord's discipline? It can be anything that pulls us up and makes us think again. The New Testament, commenting on this verse says: "Endure hardship as discipline; God is

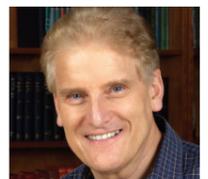
treating you as sons." (Heb 12.7) The source and substance of the hardship is not the point here. It may not be that God engineers hardship, but that hardships as part of life always have a potential to teach us better things, and deepen our understanding, our experience and wisdom.

We generally learn more through our tears than we do through our laughter and under the guiding hand of God, the hardships in our life can be our friends rather than our enemies.

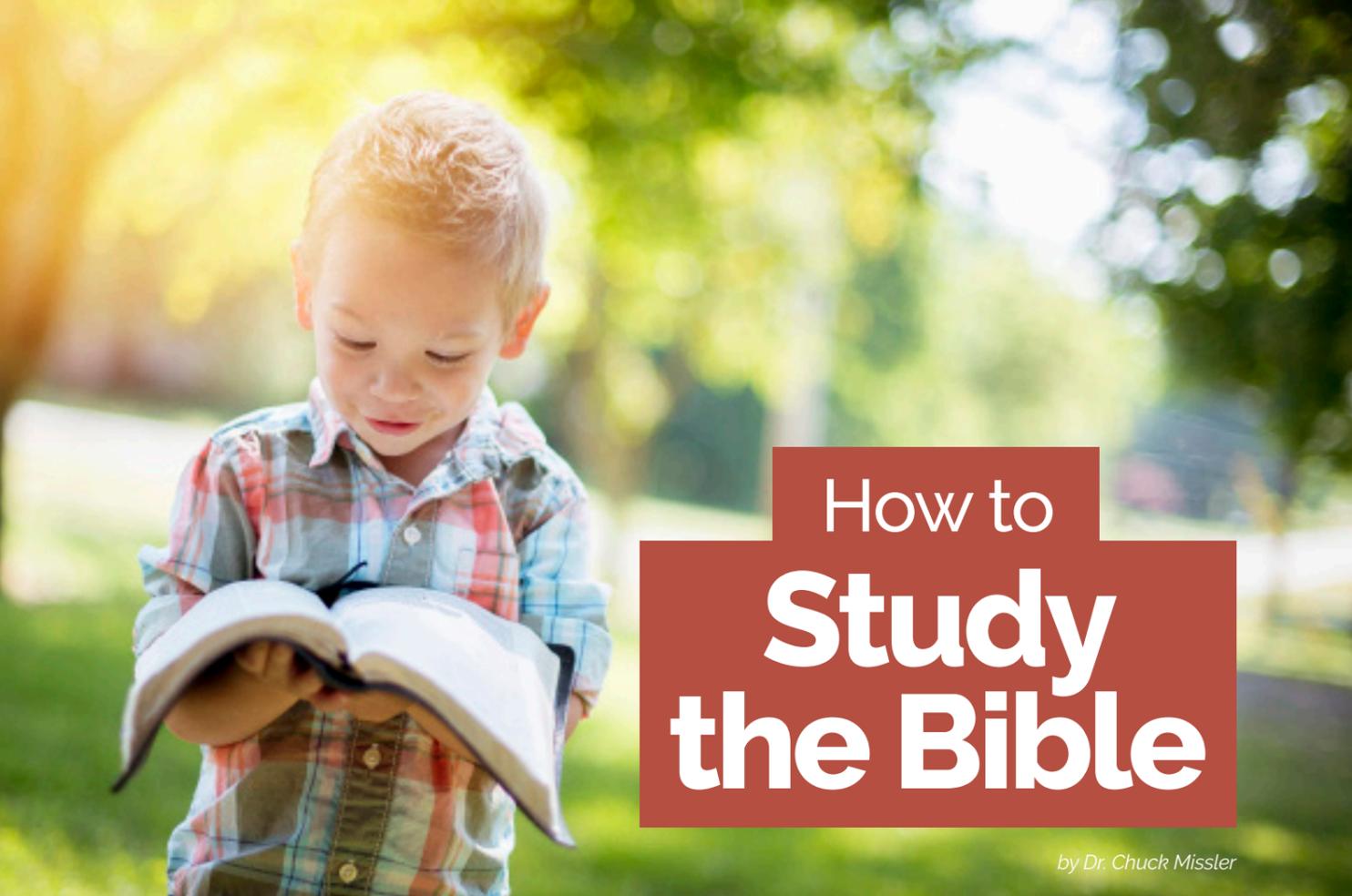
Hardships can be a means to wisdom as we relate them to a loving, heavenly father.

Folly is in the hard drive of our lives. Let's be honest about it, face it in ourselves, and allow good, godly influences to help us live wisely in this folly endemic world.

Having written this, I sit back and feel like Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, "I am speaking as a fool" (2 Cor 11:21). The Scripture really is a mirror. |A



■ Charles Price, Minister at Large, The Peoples Church, Toronto, Canada and Living Truth TV and radio. Watch Charles on "The Living Truth" programme, which can be seen daily on Shine TV (see www.shinetv.co.nz for screening times)



How to Study the Bible

by Dr. Chuck Missler

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

That's quite a statement. If we really believe that, it should change everything. We realize that the Bible is not the random jottings of ancient Hebrew sages, but a portal — a portal into the heart of our Creator. The Word of God is given to instruct and correct and guide us,^[1] but it is also a weapon to protect us from the enemy of our souls.^[2]

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

The Bible is by far the best-selling book of all time, yet thousands of Bibles sit on shelves year after year gathering dust. When we come to realize the true nature of the Bible, we understand what a terrible waste that is. We live in a world filled with deception, and the best way to recognize a lie is to already know the truth. We need to know this book that God breathed through His prophets and disciples. We need to know what it says and how to wield it in our own lives. I often say that the Bible is a message by one Author from outside our time domain, but it's vital to know why I say that and how it's true.

How should we study the Bible?

I'm going to make some personal remarks in this book. I've been studying the Bible for more than sixty years, so I've developed my own viewpoints on matters. However, nobody should accept anything just because I've said it or because some

other Bible teacher has said it. You have a much better tutor than me readily available to you through the person of the Holy Spirit. Research and study the Bible for yourself to determine what it says — from front to back. My foundational verse on Bible study is Acts 17:11, which tells us about the people of Berea, who:

"...were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11

We are in a predicament as human beings. We are plagued by a general spiritual blindness. Most of us cannot see past the atoms of this world into the dimensions beyond us, the dimensions of angels and demons, or of the spiritual warfare that takes place on our behalf. We get a peek in 2 Kings 6 and Daniel 10, but we cannot see the full reality ourselves.

Too many of us think of Jesus Christ as that broken carpenter hanging on a cross. We do not fully appreciate that the man who rose again on Resurrection Sunday is the King of the universe, through whom all things were made. (John 1:3) As we study the Bible, our greatest discovery will be a growing appreciation for the person and identity of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Creator and Lord of all things.

THE AGE OF DECEIT

It has become increasingly politically incorrect to be a Bible believer. It's strange to realize that many church congregations are embarrassed by people who take the Bible seriously. Our culture is apathetic to the very idea of truth. It used to be the dream of American mothers and fathers for their children to go off to college and learn, to become good thinkers and moral people able to distinguish right from wrong. Today, students go to college to be told there is no right and wrong. They are told, "You have your truth and I have mine." The value of relativism has had tragic consequences.

Satan was a liar and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and his goal is to deceive us. The only remedy, the only inoculation we can get to protect us from deceit is for us to do our homework. Benjamin Franklin is often misquoted as saying, "a jack of all trades and a master of none." It's actually, "a jack of all trades and a master of one." In other words, an educated person should know a little about everything, but know everything about one thing. If we are Christians, we should be a master of the Bible. We should know it inside and out. As Christians, we don't just represent ourselves. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ, and it's vital that we represent Him faithfully. We cannot do that well if we do not know the Bible — and not just parts of the Bible taken out of context, but

the Bible as a whole.

It's my premise that we cannot understand God's Word by spending 45 minutes at it once a week listening to a sermon (which may or may not dig into the Bible at all). We need to be involved in dedicated personal study.

PREREQUISITES TO STUDY

I'm going to suggest there are a couple of preconditions you should have in place before you start your study of God's Word. These are important. We want to get all we can out of our Bible study. We don't want it to be a dry lump of wordy onion-skin papers that hit us in the face but don't dig deep into our hearts and souls.

First, ask Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life. This is vital, because when the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us, He is the one who leads us into all truth. In John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again, and that applies to all of us. People who aren't saved can read the Bible and learn from it, but it's the Holy Spirit who brings the Bible to life in our minds and hearts:

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:

but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:17

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:" John 15:26

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." John 16:13

Many people don't realize that God wants to give us the Holy Spirit, just as a father wants to give his children good things. We need His Spirit, and He is more than willing to fill us. We just have to ask.

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:10-13

We might have a big experience



when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us — we might feel His love and power fill us. Or, we might not feel anything at all — yet the Holy Spirit is there, ready to do His work in us. Either way, we know that His presence is one request God will absolutely honor when we ask, because it is always good.

A second precondition is that we should always open our Bible study with prayer. It's important to remember that Bible study is a spiritual issue as well as an intellectual one. God gave us brains, and He wants us to use the minds He gave us, but we are also on a spiritual battlefield. We should always open with prayer.

A third part of preparation is obedience. We want to be under the tutorage of the Author of the Bible. God will reward our obedience with further insights. Obedience is a prerequisite, and we want to be pre-committed and surrendered to Jesus Christ as we embark on this study.

NO SHADOW OF TURNING

Scientific explanations are always changing. That's the reality of science. As more information comes in, the stories change. Nothing is ever 100% proven in science, and all scientists know this. It was once thought that the speed of light was infinite, until the 17th century Danish astronomer Ole Rømer discovered from his observations of Jupiter's moon Io that light had a finite speed. If we compare a physics course using 1950s textbooks to a physics course today, the differences would surprise us. Neanderthals have long been regarded as hulking, stupid cave dwellers, but archeological finds have demonstrated that Neanderthals were as intelligent as modern humans (if not more so).^[3]

Unlike scientific "facts," the truth never changes. That might seem

an odd thing to say, but scientific facts are based on our limited observations and knowledge about the world, and truth is based on reality itself. Our understanding might change, but the truth never does. What's more important, God never changes. There is no variableness in Him — no "shadow of turning."^[4] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.^[5]

What does that mean for us? It means that God is dependable. It means He doesn't stop being who He is. His love is everlasting, and so is His Word. His promises three thousand years ago still stand today. Our circumstances change. Our culture changes. The world changes, but God doesn't. In the 8th century B.C., Isaiah declared that God's Word lasts forever, and nearly 900 years later, the apostle Peter affirmed that truth:

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:8

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Peter 1:24-25

God accomplishes His purposes in His time — in "the fullness of time" — but He accomplishes them. When Jesus fulfilled a multitude of Old Testament prophecies, He was fulfilling promises that God had given 400-4000 years earlier. When we consider that 2000 years have passed since Christ's birth, remember that God gave a ram in Isaac's place on Mt. Moriah as a type of Christ nearly 2100 years before Jesus was born. 'God exists outside of time. A thousand years are as a day in the eyes of God.'

The Bible is filled with end-times prophecies about Israel, yet 200

years ago there was no nation of Israel. Scholars habitually allegorized those prophecies, because Israel hadn't existed as a nation since the early years of the Roman Empire. Then in 1948, Israel declared its independence. Within a century, Jerusalem went from being a dingy backwash part of the Ottoman Empire to a cup of trembling for all the nations of the world. Suddenly, the ancient prophecies about end-times Israel came to life again.

Yet, the purposes in God's heart never changed. He never changed. Our limited perspectives got a step up in 1948, but the God of the universe, the King of eternity knew during all those intervening centuries exactly what He had in store for Israel and for the salvation of the whole world.

As we read the Bible, we need to remember that God doesn't change. His power, His love, His goodness and truth have everything to do with His unchanging character and very little to do with physical appearances. We live in a broken world doomed for ultimate destruction. We are faced daily with spiritual warfare that can hide its face behind the physical bodies that cry out in front of us. Yet, the Bible blazes the constant light of salvation to our dying world. We need to know it. We need to study it and understand it as our source of spiritual food.

During the middle of World War II, two Dutch sisters managed to smuggle a Bible into the Nazi's Ravensbruck concentration camp. Corrie ten Boom relates that time in her 1971 book *The Hiding Place*, saying:

From morning until lights-out, whenever we were not in ranks for roll call, our Bible was the center of an ever-widening circle of help and hope. Like waifs clustered around a blazing fire, we gathered about it, holding out our hearts to its warmth and

light. The blacker the night around us grew, the brighter and truer and more beautiful burned the word of God.

When we grasp the truth of the Bible and then obey it, it always leads to more truth. Most people are spiritually starved, and they don't

even know what the Bible says. They believe the propaganda campaign against it. They believe the lie that God is a violent, cruel, capricious being — or they believe the lie that He is a big soft, Santa Claus character in the clouds. A love for the Bible requires knowing the Bible — and knowing the Bible leads us to a

fuller, truer and greater knowledge of God. Ultimately, knowing God leads to loving and adoring Him. When we discover how truly good and wise God is — when we discover His incredible strength and love — we can hardly help but grab hold of Him with all our hearts. |A

1. 2 Timothy 3:16
2. Ephesians 6:17
3. Villa, P., Roebroeks, W. (2014) Neandertal Demise: An Archaeological Analysis of the Modern Human Superiority Complex. PLOS ONE 9(4): e96424
4. James 1:17
5. Hebrews 13:8
6. Scholars offer many drawn-out dating schemes for the Old Testament. To find the date of Isaac's near-sacrifice, we can do simple Bible math. Adding king reigns from the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. to Solomon's reign puts Solomon's

7. Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8
- 4th year in 1015 B.C. Solomon's 4th year was 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1). The Exodus took place 430 years after Jacob's family went down into Egypt (Exodus 12:40-41). Jacob moved to Egypt at age 130, living there 17 years until he died at 147 (Genesis 47:28). Isaac was sixty when Jacob and Esau were born (Genesis 25:26). According to Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews* (1.13.2), Isaac was almost-sacrificed by Abraham when he was 25 (35 years before the twins were born). This basic math places the Akedah, the near-sacrifice of Isaac, in 2090 B.C.



■ Chuck Missler is an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He is the founder of the Koinonia House and lives in Reporoa, NZ

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The Valiant Man

In early Feb 2006 I can remember thinking about the level of use of pornography by Christian men, I knew there was some, but I thought it couldn't be that much, we were better than that. The following day we received a copy of The Valiant Man promotional DVD from Careforce ministries in Australia and I decided to take it home to watch the content for review. I was simultaneously shocked and empowered by Dr Allan Meyers message of disaster and hope, backed by clinical research and sound methodology. I thought "We have to get this out there, this has got to go around the country"

Jump ahead one month and Barna Research released their damning statistics claiming around 50% of Christian men in the US were regularly looking at material considered to be pornographic and most of them were alarmed and wanted stop, but were struggling to find a way out. What started out as an idea became a burning intense resolve, this had to stop, we had to act!

As men we live in a highly sexualised porn-saturated culture, where the pressure to fall victim to a distorted

vision of male sexuality is extremely pervasive and intense. Falling prey to a distorted sexuality can have profound and lasting harms for our marriage, our family and our own personal wellbeing.

Valiant Man is a programme created by Dr Allen Meyer specifically designed to respond to these pressures, in order to restore and strengthen the sexual integrity and spiritual vitality of men.

Valiant Man is a 10-session programme (usually run over ten weeks) for males over the age of 16 which explores the following topics:

- A vision for manhood
- The arena of healing
- The sexual man
- The origin, power and purpose of sex
- The cycle of addiction
- The understanding man
- Retraining your brain
- Taking a stand
- Guarding your heart
- Realistic expectations

Upon completion of the programme men will understand the struggles of normal male sexuality, as well as

knowing that they are not alone in this struggle and that sound and realistic strategies for building a healthy male sexuality in their lives are available to them.

Easy to run and setup in your church, you just need two facilitators for a group of 6-8 participants, full group training DVD included, and you normally recover the cost of the course in the first session. Most Churches are running this once or twice a year ongoing.

If you're someone who is serious about addressing the sexual struggles in your life, or you're a Christian leader who wants to equip the men in your church with effective tools and strategies to live out an authentic, Christ-centred and life-giving male sexuality, then Valiant Man is definitely the programme for you!

Focus on the Family NZ supplies all of the resources for this programme, printing and producing locally.

Phone us on 0800 200 362 or email community@family.org.nz



3 PRACTICAL STEPS TO Courageous Living

By Dare 2 Share Ministries

A psychology professor at a prominent university knew her students expected a terrifyingly long, final exam. Being the psychology professor that she was, she decided to toy with her students' minds by writing a single question on the final exam. As the students filled the room and turned over the one-page exam, they all glanced around in amazement.

The professor's insidious smile widened as she observed her students' reactions. At first, they all looked relieved, but as the difficulty of the question dawned upon them, the once relieved faces sagged into consternation—all, that is, except for one student.

After reading the question, this particular student twiddled with

...AS SCRIPTURE HAS SHOWN,
GOD HAS A HABIT OF USING
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EXTRAORDINARY THINGS.

his pencil for a minute and began tapping it innocuously on the side of his forehead. He scribbled something quickly on the test, walked up and handed his paper to the professor. With a stern face he stared her straight in the eyes and then raised the corners of his mouth into a half smile. Then he lowered his gaze and confidently walked out of the classroom door.

The professor still staring at the paper began to chuckle and wrote "100%" on the top of the student's test. The question: "What is courage?" The student's answer: "This is."

There are a lot of moments in ministry when we are tempted to think that we, or the people that

we lead, aren't capable of doing courageous things. For whatever reason, the warped views of sin can cause us to look at others or ourselves and think negatively about our capabilities.

However, as Scripture has shown, God has a habit of using "weak" and "ordinary" people in order to achieve courageous and extraordinary things. If you want to develop a 'Gospel Advancing Ministry', embrace the fact that ordinary people can live courageously through the power of God.

Here are three practical steps that will help BOTH leaders and students live courageously.

1. EMBRACE YOUR INNER UNDERDOG

Everyone loves the story of an underdog. There is something about an ordinary person who lives a courageous life that draws us in. Ordinary people are just that—ordinary. When we see someone ordinary, at some level, we identify because we see ourselves. So when an ordinary person does something courageous, it encourages us to believe in ourselves, and invites us to do the “unlikely” or “impossible.” Encourage your leaders to model a life worth following. Challenge them to share their courageous stories with the students they lead.

One of the most courageous things any person could ever do is hold onto their convictions. Help your teenagers realize that being

GOD IS WHERE TRUE STRENGTH AND COURAGE LIE, AND WITHOUT HIM, EVERYTHING IS JUST WORLDLY HUMAN POSTURING THAT PROJECTS A FALSE IMAGE OF STRENGTH.

courageous doesn't always mean rushing into a burning building. Sometimes being courageous simply means living out your faith in situations where there may be costs and consequences, i.e., you may be ridiculed or your popularity could take a hit.

True courage is living out your Christian convictions no matter the cost.

2. SEE WEAKNESS AS STRENGTH

Believing that God “chose things that



are powerless to shame those who are powerful” turns our conventional human wisdom on its head (1 Corinthians 1:27). People just don't normally think that way. When we think of what is powerful by secular standards, images of fit physiques, powerful job titles and wealth usually come to mind. Yet Christianity sees straight through these false ideas of strength. It teaches that God is where true strength and courage lie, and without Him, everything is just worldly human posturing that projects a false image of strength.

Help your adults and students see their “weakness” the way God sees it—as the very thing that will help build His kingdom. There are a lot of students who have been told that they are “no good” or “untalented,” but when you show them that God uses the weak, they are encouraged to strive toward greatness—in dependence on Him.

3. CREATE A STORYTELLING CULTURE

For millennia humans have gathered around the campfire to tell stories of courage. Why? Because they inspire us! Try to create a culture of courage by capturing stories. Students need

to see that being courageous is more than what we see in a superhero film.

Take time during your regular youth group meetings to discuss how someone has lived courageously. This will inspire everyone, including your adult leaders, to live differently. It will also provide great opportunities to pray for your students and encourage them along as they live courageously for THE Cause of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). Once your students are energized to live courageously, equip them to make disciples with some simple resources like the Life in 6 Words App or website (www.lifein6words.com).

Living courageously is not easy—if it was, then it wouldn't be courageous. But within Christianity, we find the greatest example of courage in Jesus. He, against all odds, stood up for the sake of all humanity. While some may say that we could never accomplish such greatness, remember what Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works” (John 14:12).

Let's dare to bravely and live out this courageous truth. |  



I'm bothered by cultural change! Our nation has rejected Christian values – and it's the main reason families are breaking down and our kids are getting hurt.

No price can be put on the damage being caused, and as one who came from a family that (like many) didn't quite have it all together I understand first-hand something of the effect that family challenges can have on a person.

But something ‘un-did’ that damage for me. My mum became a Christian. At age eleven I remember seeing the sunshine that had come into her eyes, and knowing that I needed whatever it was that she had.

It was Jesus – and the following divine experiences that I had as I reached out to him changed my psychology and my life!

What I've worked out since is that, if we want the world to change, we can't expect to be able to sit back and wait for someone else to do it. And this is what has motivated my wife and I to do things like the Hope Project. We simply decided to trust God and act.

I reckon that learning how to think differently is the birthplace of things like this. As we continually seek to interpret the world around us as if from God's perspective (Romans 12:2), we gain insight on how we could respond. It's about how we think, and it defines so much of who we are, and of what we're able to do.

Here are three quick thoughts on how to bring real change to things – whether a nation, or community, a church, a workplace – or your family.

1. AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW CULTURE CHANGES

Culture doesn't just change. It is changed! There are events or people or forces that apply pressure – and over time this changes things. So we won't change culture through a single event or action. What will be changed as a result of us first changing our own thinking about what we do, how and why. We then begin to exert pressure in a given direction – and, if we've read the culture right, change will follow with time.

2. BELIEF THAT THINGS CAN CHANGE

I think this belief is one of the most fundamental things about the Christian faith. We're called to change the world for the better – and Christianity quite uniquely gives us the hope that God has a plan (Gen 12:1-3, John 3:16, Matt 20:19), and is with us to help (Matt 28:20, Acts 1:8).

God specifically wants his Kingdom to come on earth. We ask for this every time we pray the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:10). We need to believe that because

God is at work in us, ‘impossible things’ can be changed through us (Matt 19:26)!

3. IDENTIFY WHAT WE HAVE A HEART FOR - AND STARTING DOING SOMETHING!

I'll share a secret. In many things I've done I've not heard a specific ‘voice from God’ saying to do it. Instead, I just had a growing sense of conviction within me that something needed doing. Eventually that feeling was strong enough that I knew that I wanted to act – and that I'd regret it if I didn't try. I wish God did just speak in a loud voice and tell us what to do – but he doesn't often do this. What he does do is give us his Word (the Bible), brains that can think, hearts that can feel, and hands that can work!

In short – if we can become confident enough that God loves us, we'll stop being so scared of failure. This enables us to get past ourselves, to see the needs, and to try something! Better to die trying than not try at all, right? Well – maybe not always, but I think there are things that are worth a bit of sacrifice.

What could you sacrifice for? |  



Dave Mann is the director of Shining Lights Trust and initiator of the Hope Project. Dave desires to see NZ transformed by Jesus Christ and creates tools, resources & opportunities to help churches/ministries engage in clear-thinking and meaningful ways! www.alltogether.co.nz

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LIVING IN FOCUS

By Jeremy Suisted

WHAT NOW?

When I was an 8 year old boy, I used to eagerly await for Sunday mornings to watch What Now – one of the most fantastic shows on New Zealand television.

I'd watch celebrities get gunged, follow the hilarious parody Serial Stuff, and hope my name would be pulled out to win a prize from the mailbag. It never did.

So, you can imagine my joy twenty years later, when I was helping at a Youth Camp and realised one of the fellow Youth Pastors – and the camp speaker – was none other than Anthony Samuels, former host of What Now.

After my initial fan-boy-ness wore off, I distinctly remember Ants teaching the teens a key rhyme.

“What you think about, you become. What you think about, you become.”

500 teenagers were singing along to this – and it really struck a chord with me. What we think about, we become. Or, as theologian G.K. Beale says, “We become what we worship.”

IN THE DITCH

A few years before this, I had a low-speed car accident which resulted in my car slowly gliding into a ditch. It was frustrating. Afterwards, as I relayed the story to my Dad, he said, “What were you looking at?” “The ditch,” I replied. It was then that Dad taught me a valuable driving lesson. Fix your eyes on where you want to go, not on what you're trying to avoid.

Why? Because where you look – there you go. If your car is losing control – look for the gap you are wanting to drive to. Don't look at the car you're trying to avoid.

What we focus on matters – whether we're driving or living. Our focus

determines what we think about, daydream about – even our actions and how we perceive the world.

Although the validity of the study has been criticised, researchers Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson showed that if teachers were led to expect enhanced performance from their students, then the children's performance was enhanced.

Simply put – teachers were told their class was a 'gifted class'. In reality – this was a normal school class, with the regular distribution of IQ and education ability.

The teachers, however, focused on the students' potential – teaching them as if they were fantastic learners. The students responded, growing their grades by a much higher degree than the control group.

What we focus on, determines our attitudes and actions.

CHOOSING OUR FOCUS

So, how do we choose our focus?

I note in the gospels, Jesus is often described as withdrawing in the morning to pray and meditate. It seems Jesus knew his focus was important – and so wanted to begin each day with his focus on his mission and his God.

To learn from Jesus, I think we can begin our day with a few simple habits encouraging us to choose our focus.

Firstly, we can journal. I've been using a simple digital journal for two years – and love it. Each morning, I simply note down a few thoughts about what I am grateful for.

Sometimes these are simple – a lovely meal I had the day before; a fantastic sleep; a good laugh with a friend.

And yet, by writing down what I am grateful for, my mind focuses on the good. Slowly, over the weeks, I discover I am becoming a person

focused on being grateful – and seeing the good in others, and in bad situations.

Because – let's be honest – every person has the capability to drive us mental. There's not a lovely group of good people, and a separate group of bad. Our close friends and family can frustrate us – or we can choose to focus on the good. Journalling has helped me focus on gratitude – and it's slowly shaping who I am.

And secondly – and closely related to this – I'm learning the value of writing down what I'm praying about.

I wrote about the value of praying like a child in a blog post, a few weeks ago – and have loved putting this into practice. At the end of each journal article – I note down what it is I would love to see God do in my day.

Some of it is the stuff I'd love to see Him do in me. Other times it's stuff I'd love to see Him do for others. Some times it's little hopes and dreams I have.

But as I write them, and pray them – I recognise then I am also focused on them – and expectant of God to be at work.

For example – if I fire off a vague morning prayer about sharing my faith – I'm likely to forget about it within a few minutes of life starting.

But if I write this down, and pray it – my eyes are focused on my prayer. I remember this, and am much more focused and expectant on God to work around me.

So, today – what are you focusing on? When you think of others – are you thinking of the frustrations, or their finest features? When thinking of your week – do you perceive the struggles, or the gratitude? As you begin your day – do you start with a focus on blessings and goodness – or with complaint and annoyance?

What you think about, you become. What are you thinking about? **IA**

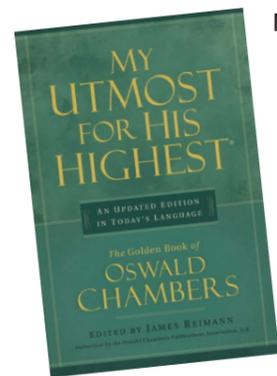


■ Jeremy has a fascination with exploring the intersection between faith and life, and loves sharing his thoughts and observations with others who are interested in looking deeper and closer. www.jeremysuisted.com



BOOKS WORTH READING

If you can only read one book - read the Bible, if you have time for more check these out.



MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST

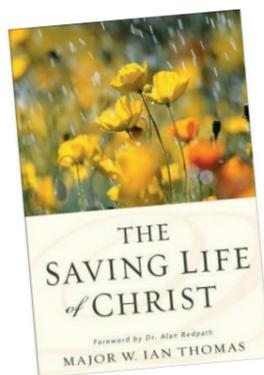
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A proven, best-selling devotional for many years. Over the past century, Oswald Chambers' writings have inspired countless people to drink deeply from the biblical truths that he so passionately championed.

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and they trigger something in your soul leaving you forever changed. The biblical thoughts and themes that Chambers delivers in this book will resonate with you as you seek to grow your faith.

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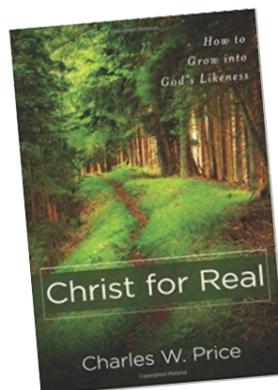
THE SAVING LIFE OF CHRIST

by Major W. Ian Thomas

Founder of Torchbearers International and Capernwray Bible Schools, Major Thomas points out in this book just how many dedicated people, ministers Sunday School teachers, and the like, have come out of the old life but never gone on to the full,

joyous life in Christ. He writes with fresh insight into many Bible passages, and challenges Christians to walk on and take the victory that is already won.

Available from Capernwray NZ - www.capernwray.org.nz



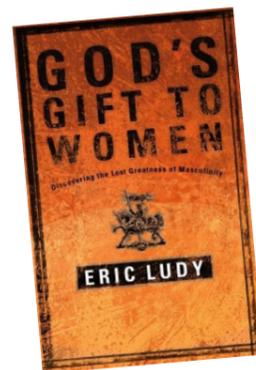
CHRIST FOR REAL

by Charles Price

In Christ for Real, widely respected Bible teacher and pastor Charles W. Price shows us how to move from living for Jesus to living with Jesus as a part of our very being. When we let God remake us in His own image, He replaces our sense of failure and frustration with a sense of fulfilment and spiritual satisfaction.

This book is a refreshing "second wind" for anyone who has experienced a lack of spiritual fulfilment, or for those who lead and teach others.

Available from Capernwray NZ - www.capernwray.org.nz



GOD'S GIFT TO WOMEN

by Eric Ludy

Deep within the rugged soul of every young man, there is a warrior in search of his sword and a poet in search of his pen. But heroic, prince-like masculinity is something most women only dream of in today's perverse and self-serving world. With contagious

passion and boldness, Eric challenges you to forsake modern male mediocrity for Christ-built, warrior-poet manhood- that will capture the heart of a woman and change the course of history.

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AUTHENTIC | BUSINESS

Professionalism

from a Biblical Perspective

By Annie Jester

Professionalism is one of the most highly valued principles that exist in the business world. Over three years of attending university for business leadership, I have probably been taught more about the topic of professionalism than anything else.

Professionalism is a performance standard, performing in a way that meets and/or exceeds the standards that are set for you through your behaviour, attitude, and how you present yourself. The challenge with professionalism is that the standards set for us at work or at school are often unrealistic and seemingly unattainable. Professionalism is harder to achieve than one may think. When you look at all of the most respected and well-known organizations around the world, they usually pride themselves on having impossible expectations for their employees and their business in general. They see this as a way of weeding out the "weak" and being left with "the best of the best".

When we hear the word professionalism, we automatically think of it in a business world context. But what would happen if we looked at professionalism from a biblical

perspective? God also sets impossible standards for us, and the Bible is actually full of people and situations that exemplify professionalism in different ways. Through the Old Testament especially, God clearly communicates the standards he has for his people. Similar to how you're given a set of guidelines and expectations when you go to school or when you start a new job, in Exodus 20:1-21 God gives the people of Israel a strict set of guidelines in the form of the ten commandments. This is not the first time God communicates his high standards to his people, and it is certainly not the last time, but it is the most clear. You can also see God communicating his expectations of the Israelites in Numbers 2-4 with regard to the tabernacle and how it is to be cared for and transported. The book of Leviticus is full of direction from God as to how the Israelites should behave, laws about sacrifice,

Priesthood, uncleanness, holiness, and worship. God lays it all out for his people, and yet time and time again we see the Israelites disobey God's commands and fail. Exodus 32:7-8 says, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Go down, for your people, whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" No matter how clear God's standards are to us, we will always fail to meet them on our own because without God we are sinful and imperfect people.

Similarly, in the business world, there is so much emphasis on meeting high performance standards. We are told that in order to be successful, we have to be extraordinary. This means



having standout performance, getting perfect grades in university, and going above and beyond what your teachers or employers expect of you.

Going to school for business I have learned that there is an understanding in the world of commerce: only the strongest and most determined people, the most professional people, survive or succeed. You will notice that the majority of people give up on becoming “successful” business people these days because the standards are simply too high, and the remaining people who are determined enough to stick to the course, eventually burn out trying.

The difference between professionalism from a business perspective and professionalism from a biblical perspective is that in the secular business world you are expected to have the capabilities,

skills, and motivation to succeed all on your own. You often hear the phrase, “you either got it or you don’t”. From a biblical perspective, you are expected to accept the fact that you cannot succeed on your own and you need to rely on God’s strength to achieve the performance standards that are set for you (whether that is at work or in your personal relationship with God). No one’s “got it”. God knows that we can’t meet his standards on our own (Romans 3:22-26). That’s why he urges us to come to him, admit our weakness and put all our trust in his capabilities rather than our own. (Isaiah 55:1, John 7:37, Revelation 22:17). 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” God calls us to embrace our weakness, and allow his strength

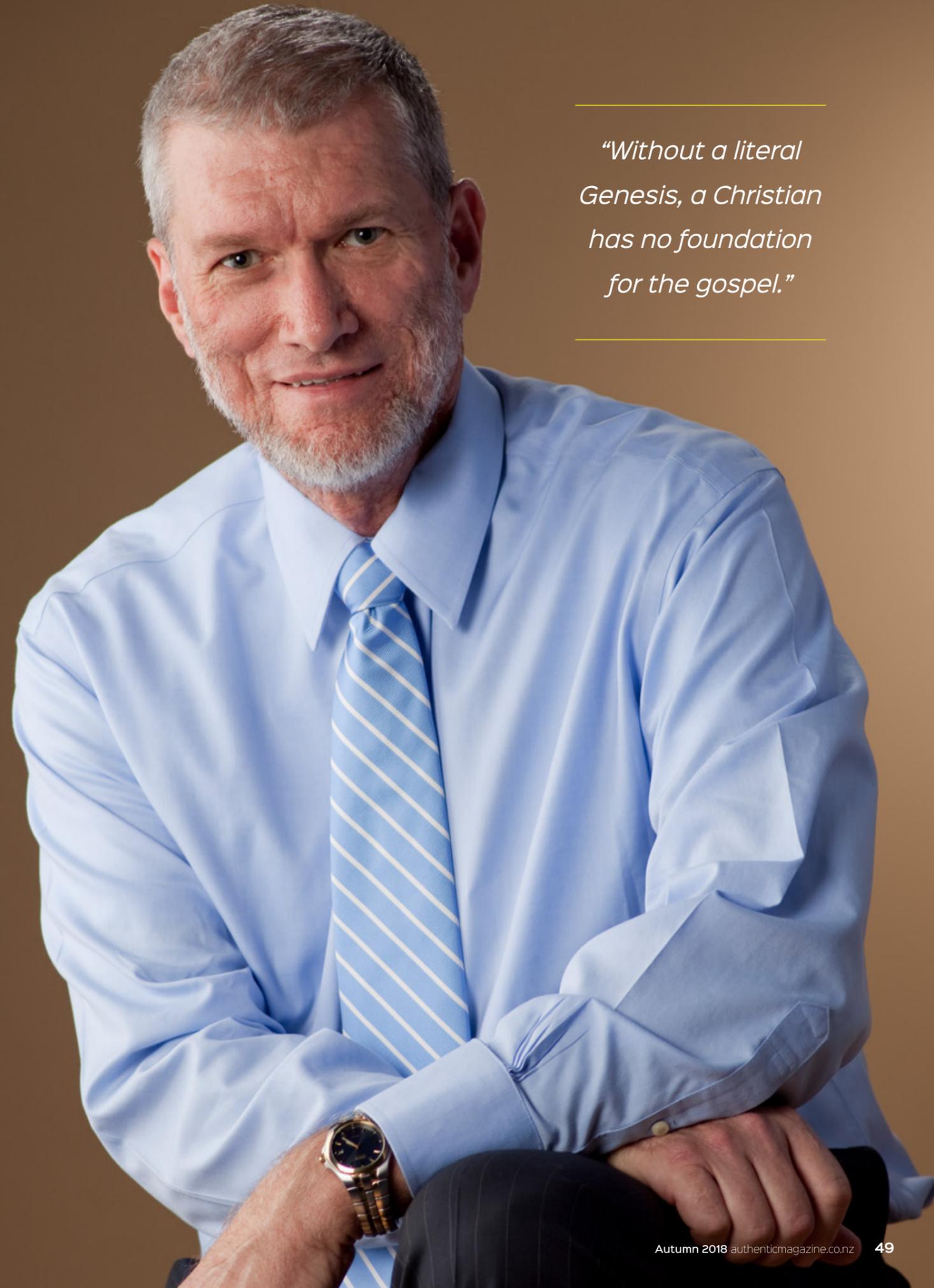
to carry us. Can you imagine how different our world would be if everyone relied on God’s strength rather than their own? No one would burn out, and I would be terrified of what people could accomplish.

The point is, we need to follow God’s direction to achieve professionalism instead of following the world’s outline for success. So often, we separate our professional work from our faith and relationship with God. We see them as completely different things when we should see them as connected. If we let God take over every part of our lives and rely on him to meet professional and biblical standards, I know we will find ourselves “succeeding” a lot more than we would on our own. “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5. | 



■ Annie Jester lives in Orangeville, Ontario, Canada. She has a degree in Leadership and Organizational Management at the University of Guelph, in Orangeville Ontario.



“Without a literal Genesis, a Christian has no foundation for the gospel.”

Talking Creation with Ken Ham

By Dave Firth

Australian Ken Ham is the president of Answers in Genesis (AiG), and a leading apologist, who focusses on science to affirm the truth of the biblical account of the creation of the universe. Dave Firth caught up with him in the following interview:

When did you first realise you were going to spend your life being mocked, ridiculed and attacked for defending Biblical Creation and God's account of what happened 'in the beginning'?

When I gave my first presentation on biblical creation and apologetics at a church in Dalby, Queensland, Australia, in 1975, I had no idea how controversial such a topic would eventually become in the culture, and even in the church.

As a Bible-believing Christian teaching science in a government school, I found that many of my students were telling me the Bible wasn't true because of what their textbooks taught about evolution. Therefore, I wanted to make sure these students were taught how to think about science correctly and to understand that evolution was just a belief system.

I considered it prudent to alert and teach people in churches about evolution thinking and how to handle questions about origins. I wanted to direct them to the Word of God, beginning in Genesis, and the salvation message.

After I spoke at a Bible study that same year, I was burdened to discover that most people in the group didn't think there was any problem for a Christian to believe in millions of years or that God used evolution. They had all sorts of doubts and questions about the days of creation and fossils. Then the more I began speaking in churches over the years, I experienced that many people were becoming very angry at what I presented.

EVEN TODAY, THE BATTLE OVER THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD IS NOT JUST IN THE CULTURE — IT'S ALSO WITHIN THE CHURCH.

So, in 1977, my wife Mally and I set up a creation-apologetics bookstore called Creation Science Supplies in our home. It was the embryonic beginnings of what eventually became the Answers in Genesis ministry. As the organization grew and became known as the Creation Science Foundation, and as I spoke in schools and other public places,

I began to experience considerable opposition from outside the church.

As the influence of this new creation-apologetics ministry grew in the church and culture as a whole, the opposition from both also increased. Now, I can easily understand why the secular world opposed what we were teach concerning the truth of God's Word and the gospel. After all, the Bible makes it clear that the human 'heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked' (Jeremiah 17:9). Also, I recognized that 'people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil' John 3:19. However, it was the opposition from within the church, and particularly from many Christian leaders and academics, that really laid a burden on my heart. From a human perspective, it's easy to respond to the world's mocking and scoffing with grace, because I understand these people are lost and going to a Christ-less eternity. But I must admit, I find it hard to extend the same grace to those Christians who oppose biblical creation and undermine the authority of the Word, leading generations within the church away from the Word of God and the gospel.

Even today, the battle over the

authority of God's Word is not just in the culture—it's also within the church.

Some Creation organizations are known for making 'Creation' the most important thing and simply seek to prove others wrong rather than to share Jesus. AiG seems to have a constant focus on Christ, correct?

My parents had a heart for reaching people with the gospel. We moved around Queensland a lot. My father was a school principal and was promoted about every three years, so we moved to a different town for a bigger school. My parents invited missionaries from Open Air Campaigners to run programs to reach kids and adults with the gospel message.

My parents also started Sunday schools in towns where there were none. In fact, it was at one of these church evangelistic meetings that my parents helped organize, that, in response to a challenge from the OAC evangelist, I committed to be a missionary for the Lord and go wherever He wanted me to.

I wanted to reach people with the saving gospel. After all, that's the most important message in the entire universe! That's why the ministry of Answers in Genesis has always had an evangelistic thrust. Yes, AiG is an apologetics ministry—but we teach apologetics to overcome the attacks of the world on the Scripture, so that people will take God at His Word, not just in Genesis, but in all of Scripture. Then we pray that they will understand and respond to the saving message of the gospel.

One of the statements I've often made since the inception of this ministry is this: 'There's no point in converting people just to be creationists. Creationists will end up in Hell just like an atheist if they don't trust in Christ for salvation'. I know

some Christians are content just to have intellectual arguments about the origins issue concerning the scientific disciplines such as astronomy, geology, biology, anthropology, chemistry, and so on. And there's no doubt God can use such arguments in a person's life. However, the Scripture makes it plain that we are to go out and give answers (1 Peter 3:15), contend for the faith (Jude 3), and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15), not just get involved in scientific discussions.

I WANTED TO REACH PEOPLE WITH THE SAVING GOSPEL. AFTER ALL, THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE! THAT'S WHY THE MINISTRY OF ANSWERS IN GENESIS HAS ALWAYS HAD AN EVANGELISTIC THRUST.

Often, a common response to the creation debate is 'well, it's not a life or death issue'. How do you respond to that?

Of course, nowhere does the Scripture teach that a person has to believe in six literal days or a young earth to be saved. The Bible makes it very clear that salvation is conditioned upon faith in Christ alone. But nowhere does the Bible teach a person has to believe that Jesus walked on water, miraculously fed thousands, and healed the blind, or that a man was swallowed by a big fish to be saved! However, if someone claiming to be a Christian denied some of the miracles of Christ or the miracles in the Old Testament, like the crossing of the Red Sea and creation, because they claimed science said such things couldn't happen, we would challenge them. They were denying the clear teaching of Scripture and undermining the authority of the Word of God.

We would explain to them that by

questioning the Bible's authority, they were opening a door for those they are influencing to reject other parts of Scripture, perhaps even eventually the doctrine of the resurrection. This undermining of Scripture could lead someone to reject God's Word totally and plunge into total unbelief.

Really, that's what we at AiG are saying regarding the book of Genesis. If we take Genesis as written, and acknowledge that Genesis is quoted by Christ (Matthew 19) and the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15; Romans 5), it is obvious that God created in six literal days about six thousand years ago. However, many Christians have been indoctrinated to believe they must take the secular belief of millions of years and add that belief into Genesis. By doing so, Christians who compromise like this are taking something outside the Bible, based on man's fallible ideas, and adding it into Scripture. We earnestly believe, and have seen it happen and has been confirmed by careful research about recent generations, that it can lead generations on a slippery slide of doubt and ultimately into unbelief.

I have always positioned AiG to be a ministry that emphasises the authority of the Word of God from the very first verse. We are an evangelistic, biblical authority ministry!

Why do you think that Christians have such a hard time taking the Biblical account of creation literally?

When I answer a question like that, I think about the very first attack in this world. It was an attack on the authority of the Word of God starting in Genesis. In Genesis 3 we read where the Devil, in the form of a serpent, came to Eve:

'Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say,



KEN HAM OUTSIDE THE ARK ENCOUNTER THEME PARK

"You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" ... For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:1,5).

The Devil's attack was to create doubt regarding the Word of God, so that this doubt would lead to unbelief. He also tempted Eve, that she and Adam could be like God—in other words they could be their own god.

We've all inherited that sin nature of Adam. As sinners, our propensity is to doubt God's Word and be our own 'god', wanting to decided truth for ourselves. We have a sin nature that causes us to want to listen to outside influences rather than the actual revealed Word of God. Really, we all have a pride problem—we are very susceptible to being influenced by what others say, rather than taking God at His Word. Jesus warned about this sin of pride that we all have, as

we read about the religious rulers: "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43).

Secondly, because the majority are on the broad road, Christians should understand that the majority of people will be against us. When it comes to the topic of origins, I believe many in the church have been brainwashed by secularists into equating scientific advances in technology (e.g., airplanes, cars, fast computers, mobile phones, etc.) with the question of origins. Secularists use the word 'science' to describe both. However, the word science means 'knowledge', and the question of origins and modern technology involve two different types of science. A study of origins involves what we call historical science (or origins science)—beliefs about the past. Technology involves what we call observational science (or operational

science)—based on using our five senses in the present, along with experiments that can be repeated, to develop our technology.

I believe many Christians have succumbed to the pressure of the secular world to think that if they reject the belief in millions of years (historical science), they are rejecting the science that built our technology. But this is simply not true. Secularists know if they don't have millions of years, they can't propose their ideas of naturalistic evolution. An old age for the earth is absolutely necessary for those who believe in molecules-to-man evolution.

Also, the Devil knows that if Christians take man's fallible ideas, like millions of years, and use them to reinterpret the clear Words of Scripture, this opens a door to create doubt that could lead to unbelief, particularly for the coming generations.



THE ARK ENCOUNTER AND CREATION MUSEUM HAVE ATTRACTED MILLIONS OF VISITORS

It's also important to understand that the belief in millions of years came out of naturalism—from those naturalists who wanted to explain the fossil record by natural processes. The belief is that the fossil layers were laid down millions of years before man existed.

Now, when Christians take these supposed millions of years and add them somewhere in Genesis and before Adam was created, they now have a major problem! You see, in the fossil record you can see much evidence of diseases like cancer, brain tumors, arthritis, etc. Also, there are fossil thorns, supposedly millions of years old. And there's evidence in the fossil record of animals eating each other, and of course, a record of much death and bloodshed! Thus, for a Christian to accept these millions of years, they are believing that there were diseases like cancer, death, bloodshed, thorns, and carnivory before Adam.

Think about it: after God made all life and Adam and Eve, He said that everything he made was 'very good'.

Therefore, you would have God calling cancer very good as well! Also, the Bible makes it clear that thorns came after the Curse—not millions of years before! And how could there be the shedding of blood millions of years before sin, when because of sin, God tells us 'and without shedding of blood there is no remission' (Hebrews 9:22)? Also, Genesis 1:30 makes it very clear that animals originally were vegetarian, and so was man (Genesis 1:29). Humans were not told they could eat animals until after the Flood (Genesis 9:3).

My challenge to Christians is this: we need to accept Genesis the way it was meant to be taken—as historical narrative. This is how Jesus, and others throughout the Old and New Testaments, took Genesis (e.g., Matthew 19).

For those who are skeptical about the 'evidence' for either Creation or Evolution, what are some of the ways you would encourage them to find answers to their questions?

Answers in Genesis is a content-rich ministry. On our staff, we have scientists, writers, researchers, speakers, and many other professionals who oversee and disseminate our content and target different age and knowledge levels. We have also developed ways to disseminate that content, so anyone can have easy access to it.

Over the years, we have discovered the most-asked questions people have about the Bible, particularly in Genesis and the topic of origins. We have put together answers to these questions and disseminate them in various forms; here are some of the ways:

The Answers in Genesis websites, including AnswersInGenesis.org, are some of the most-accessed Christian websites in the world. About 30 million users a year will visit our websites. We feature several thousand articles

on differing topics, available for easy access using our powerful search engine. For those who seek cutting-edge technical material, we have an online peer-reviewed research journal called Answers Research Journal.

There is a special website for children, AnswersInGenesis.org/kids.

AiG produces the world's leading Christian worldview/creation apologetics magazine called 'Answers', and it has won many prestigious awards. It is available in print and digital editions.

AiG has produced literally thousands of resources, including:

- 4-year Sunday school curriculum titled 'Answers Bible Curriculum', now used in over 10,000 churches
- Vacation Bible School programs that are in the top three VBS programs in the world, used by 5,000-6,000 churches a year
- Dozens of DVDs
- Books, such as the best-selling creation apologetics books in the world, 'The Answers Books' (volumes 1-4); the best-selling 'The Lie: Evolution', which other than the Bible is the 'textbook' of the AiG ministry; hundreds of other books, curricula, etc.

The two world-class attractions, The Creation Museum and The Ark Encounter in Northern Kentucky, reaching the public with themed exhibits that are of Disney quality or above. Millions of people have visited these attractions that have helped make Northern Kentucky a major tourist destination in the USA. People come from all over the world to visit these attractions. (See CreationMuseum.org; ArkEncounter.com.)

We're interested in the truth, and living as we were created to live. How significant is understanding the Book of Genesis in the life of the Christian?

Directly or indirectly, every doctrine of Christian theology is based in Genesis chapters 1-11 (e.g., marriage, clothing, meaning of death, sin, and the promise of a Redeemer, etc.). Genesis 1-11 is like the foundation of a house, and the rest of the Bible is like the walls and the roof of the structure. To help us better understand this concept, let's consider two topics that are very culturally relevant right now:

1. Marriage/gender. In our whole Western world, issues regarding same-sex 'marriage', transgender, teaching gender in schools, etc., permeate legislatures, the courts, and the media. As Christians, how do we deal with these topics?

It's only if we believe in a literal Genesis that we have a foundation for our world view, including marriage. In Matthew 19, when Jesus was asked about marriage, he quoted Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24, that God created male and female (Adam and Eve) and the creation of the first marriage, when He created Eve from Adam's side. Thus God, not the government or the courts, nor any of us, created marriage—and it was designed to be one man for one woman. So, marriage is actually a Christian institution.

Now if two men or two women, or any other combination, decide on some sort of sexual partnership that is not marriage, from a biblical perspective, it is, just like adultery and fornication, sin. But if Genesis is not literal history, then marriage can be whatever anyone wants it to be! That's why it's so important that Christians stand on a literal Genesis, as did Jesus in the New Testament in various passages.

2. Abortion is another topic that remains a hot one in western cultures. What's the Christian response to abortion? Taking Genesis literally, we know that humans, not animals, are made in God's image. Also, from biology, we know that when an egg is

fertilised, all the genetic information for a human is present. It's a unique combination of information—different from the mother and father, but coming from the mother and father. No more genetic information is added. So, at the point of fertilisation, the egg is a 100 per cent unique human being, made in God's image. So, yes, abortion is murder.

Think about the fact that generations of people have been taught that man is just an animal and evolved from animals. So, if you can get rid of a spare animal like a cat, why not get rid of spare children by abortion, as we're all just supposedly animals?

3. I could go on and on and point out many things about morality, such as the only moral basis for humans to wear clothes comes from Genesis, when God killed animals. The first blood sacrifice as a covering for their sin was a picture of what was to come in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin, and clothed Adam and Eve. In fact, how can anyone understand the gospel without an understanding of original sin, which was the fall of Adam as recorded in Genesis, and the entrance of death (as recorded in Genesis), and thus the need of a Saviour (first taught in

MY CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS IS THIS: WE NEED TO ACCEPT GENESIS THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE TAKEN—AS HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.

Genesis 3:15)?

Without a literal Genesis, a Christian has no foundation for the gospel.

During the live debate with Bill Nye 'the Science Guy', we thought you were very gentle with him. He was clearly on the ropes and looking desperate, but you chose not to 'finish him' with a solid right hook. Why were you so kind and have you spoken to Bill since?

First of all, I would say the only really 'solid right hook' is God's Word! After all, 'So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ' (Romans 10:17). That's why I clearly presented the gospel at least three times in the debate.

Now, evidence is important. It can show that we can defend our faith, and that the Bible does explain the



KEN HAM WELCOMES BILL NYE TO THE ARK ENCOUNTER

world—and is confirmed by science. But when discussing origins, all evidence is interpreted based on one's world-view. So, what some people might consider the 'silver bullet' or 'right hook' regarding the best evidence, Bill Nye would, and did just that, merely interpret it within his secular world view. He refused to acknowledge that his interpretation was incorrect.

Secondly, I realize that people like Bill Nye are lost. If he continues as he believes, Mr Nye will spend eternity separated from God. I recognized that the god of his world has blinded him. We shouldn't be surprised at all with those of the world who mock and oppose us. We should expect that.

So, I didn't take any of his condescending statements about me, from a non-Christian, personally.

At the same time, I must admit I have a hard time hiding my emotions when Christians oppose me for standing on a literal Genesis. I can get upset when I believe they are undermining the authority of the Word of God.

What has been the most challenging moment of your 24 years heading up AiG?

That's an interesting question. I will only answer generally. As a ministry, and with me personally, we've had many attacks from atheists, atheist groups, Christian leaders, and so on. Many in the news media continually attack us by spreading lies and misinformation in many anti-Christian,

agenda-driven news reports. In fact, I've seen such articles in New Zealand newspapers. I just groan when I read the many misleading or false statements.

It's also always a pressure living on the edge financially as a ministry, but God has blessed mightily over 24 years. We rely so much on God's people to support us. Also, it's not always easy to find the right staff.

Given all that, however, I would say that the most challenging moments for me have been attacks from within the ministry. I think just about every ministry leader and senior pastor I've spoken to has suffered similar attacks from within. It's a warning that the Devil can use the most unlikely people to attack a ministry in a way you never thought possible. It's a warning to be on guard regarding the sin of pride that the Devil can use to his advantage.

Any ministry that stands firm on God's Word, regardless of what others say, gets a big thumbs up from us. Thanks for defending the Bible and providing great resources to lead people to the truth of Jesus Christ. What can our readers do if they want to explore this topic in more detail?

Thank you so much for this opportunity to be covered in your new publication. Your encouragement means a lot to me. Sometimes it's easy to focus on negative attacks, forgetting the enormous positive

impact the AiG ministry has had on people's lives around the world.

I would encourage your readers to go to our main website, AnswersInGenesis.org. From there they can access all our other websites and find out about the numerous outreaches of AiG and our two world-class attractions. I also want to add that we now have all of our resources available for mail order from our bookstore in Australia. Your readers can find the contact info for this new Australian bookstore by going to our main website and, on the right side, change the country setting to Australia.

Also, our supporters tell me they were blessed to watch a recent TV interview I had with a secular reporter. Just Google 'Ken Ham MoxieTalk Kirt Jacobs' and you'll find out more about AiG and me personally in this TV interview.

Lastly, any chance you or one of the team will be crossing the pond to come and see us in New Zealand any time soon?

We would love to do that. Church leaders on your North Island have recently contacted us about a speaking tour.

As we ramp up our ministry in Australia over the coming months, we hope to be able to bring a team to NZ for a major apologetics conference. Perhaps you would like to help us do that! |A

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

— Genesis 1:1-5 —

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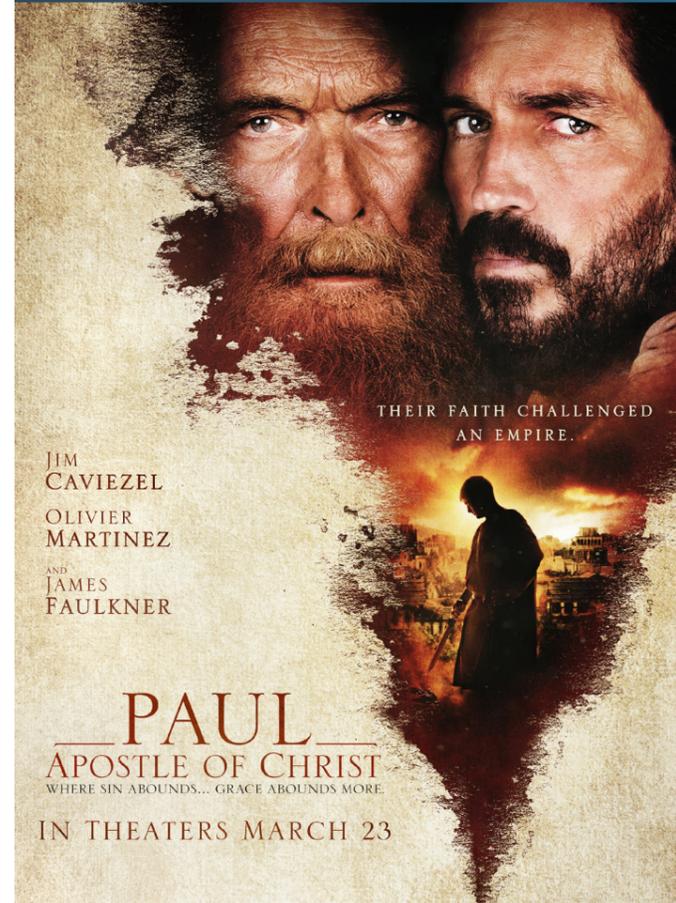
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Daily broadcasts from the US around family issues. Links to more information around the topics discussed.

PLUGGEDIN

Check that movie you are about to watch, to make sure there are no nasty surprises. Protect yourself and your family from bad content.

MOVIE REVIEWS



"PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST, is a thrilling, epic story of the man who persecuted the early church and then became its greatest evangelist. This movie brings to life on screen the powerful story of a man who changed the course of history through his committed faith, yet at great cost to himself,"

Director and Screenwriter Andrew Hyatt said. "The film shows what a deadly, dangerous place the Roman world was for the early Christian church, and it shows how Paul prepared the faithful to continue living out their beliefs in the face of it."

PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST is the story of two men. Luke (Caviezel), as a friend and physician, risks his life when he ventures into the city of Rome to visit Paul (Faulkner), who is held captive in Nero's darkest, bleakest prison cell. But Nero is determined to rid Rome of Christians, and does not flinch from executing them in the grisliest ways possible. Before Paul's death sentence can be enacted, Luke resolves to write another book, one that details the beginnings of "The Way" and the birth of what will come to be known as the church.

Bound in chains, Paul's struggle is internal. He has survived so much—floggings, shipwreck, starvation, stoning, hunger and thirst, cold and exposure—yet as he waits for his appointment with death, he is haunted by the shadows of his past misdeeds. Alone in the dark, he wonders if he has been forgotten . . . and if he has the strength to finish well.

Two men struggle against a determined emperor and the frailties of the human spirit in order to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ and spread their message to the world.

"We committed to create a film true to the biblical account of Paul's life but also one that is dramatic and engaging," said Producer T.J. Berden. "The trials faced by early Christians and their faith and bravery in spite of them will amaze audiences."

'Paul, Apostle of Christ' is scheduled for release in New Zealand on 29th March 2018 (TBC) |  

Those Philistines were such jerks Just ask any Old Testament denizen of ancient Israel, and they'll tell you. Every time the Hebrews start to make waves in the Fertile Crescent, here come the Philistines to spoil the party. Collectively, they were like that sand-kicking bully from those old Charles Atlas ads—constantly kicking sand in Israel's face.

Thankfully, God had Israel's back. Whenever the Philistines got too big for their B.C. britches, He'd select a hero—sometimes a judge, sometimes a king—to show these pesky pagan worshippers who was really boss.

But some of these divinely selected champions had problems of their own. Take Samson: a guy so strong that if he'd kicked sand in Charles Atlas' face, good ol' Chuck would've sheepishly picked up his blanket and moved down the beach.

Samson's been a big deal from birth: God told his parents he was to be a Nazirite, which came with an important set of conditions: He couldn't drink alcohol. He couldn't touch corpses. And he could never, ever cut his hair. He was, literally, born to be a hero. But Samson's not sure if that's who he wants to be.

Oh, sure, he doesn't like his Philistine overlords: King Balek can be pretty ruthless. His son, Rallah, is seven times worse: Rallah makes the Joker look well-adjusted.



But hey, the Philistines aren't all bad. Why, Samson knows of a cute little Philistine girl named Taren—a lady he'd like to get to know better. (Wink, wink, nudge, nudge.)

As his people clamor for someone to snatch them from the grasping fist of the Philistines, Samson just wants to shake hands. Can't we all just get along, he wonders. "We do not need a judge," he says. "We need peace."

Because really, how much can one guy do? Samson may be pretty strong, but it's not like he can take on the whole Philistine army with a donkey jawbone or something, right?

SPIRITUAL CONTENT

Given that Samson is a biblical story, it shouldn't surprise us that Samson would be rich in spiritual content.

As mentioned, he's been set aside for God since birth, though he sometimes bristles at the fact that his whole life has apparently been scripted for him. "It is His will" someone tells Samson. "But it is not mine," Samson retorts. He prays that God might give him a sign that he's really on the track that God wants him to be on.

The movie emphasizes that Samson's great power comes from God, that his impressive locks are purely secondary. (The cutting of Samson's famous hair, however, does render him painfully vulnerable, in harmony with the biblical tale.) Whenever he needs to do something seriously impressive, Samson prays, and he's filled with God's power.

The Philistines also become dutifully impressed with Samson's strength once they witness it for themselves. "His God is with him!" someone shouts when Samson starts swinging his donkey jawbone. "He's invincible!"

CONCLUSION

Pure Flix has made a serviceable adventure story here. It's got some content issues, but you'd expect that considering the source material. Indeed, Samson throttles back the sex and violence from what it could've been, making this a PG-13 movie that a good chunk of the family might be able to watch—and hopefully talk about afterward—together.

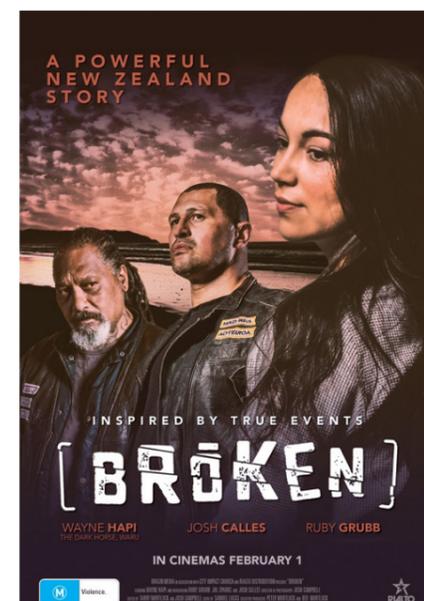
This review is an excerpt. For the full review visit pluggedin.com | A



Logan an ex-gang leader, has left the gang life to raise his daughter Tori. When Tori is murdered by an opposing gang in town, Logan must choose between forgiveness or revenge as things quickly escalate towards an inevitable gang war.

When a friend and I went to see Broken, the debut film from Tarry Mortlock, I must admit, my expectations weren't high. But from the outset I was pleasantly surprised.

Broken is a modern re-telling of the true story of Tarore, a young girl murdered on 19 October 1836. Tarore's copy of the Book of Luke was stolen during her murder. Uita, the leader of the raiding party that killed her, later came to know of the book's contents and asked forgiveness from Tarore's father, who all the while had refused to seek revenge during a time of great conflict.



BROKEN IS BEAUTIFULLY FILMED WITH WIDE SWEEPING LANDSCAPE AND OCEAN SHOTS AND A MOVING SOUNDTRACK. THIS FILM NOT ONLY SHOWCASES THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE SECLUDED EAST COAST BUT IS WORTHY OF A FILM WITH A MUCH HIGHER BUDGET.

The Broken film focuses on the main character Logan (Josh Calles), having left life in a gang, is drawn back in when his daughter Tori is murdered by rival gang, the Pouakai. He is faced with the internal struggle of how to cope with his loss in a sub-culture where revenge is expected and violence is the norm (the trailer suggests a film rife with gang violence but this thankfully is not the case).

While the film doesn't directly present the Gospel or discuss salvation, these themes are alluded to and there is certainly a 'church' and Bible component to Tori's personal journey prior to her death.

Broken is ultimately a story of loss, repentance and forgiveness. Perhaps from a more humanistic place rather than any spiritual conversion in Logan, but there is certainly a suggestion that he is on a path to something more transformative.

Despite a cast of mostly first time actors, combined with a first time director, and dialogue that is somewhat stilted

and lacking in spontaneity, Josh Calles (Logan) brings a depth of emotion and a palpable rage to his character. Calles, who is also a local policeman in the area the film was made and Wayne Hapi (rival gang leader Cruz) who was a one time gang member himself, bring an element of authenticity to this gritty story.

Although Broken doesn't have many Maori character names and terminology, overall the film is a good attempt at delving into a complex subject matter.

In terms of production value, Broken is beautifully filmed with wide, sweeping landscape and ocean shots and a moving soundtrack. This film not only showcases the natural beauty of the secluded east coast but is worthy of a film with a much higher budget.

Broken is a film that will certainly appeal to a wide audience. Mortlock's passion and dedication to portraying a New Zealand story with forgiveness as its central theme, certainly show through in this beautiful debut film. | A



Thanks to Ondrej Paska (See Matthew 14:24-33)
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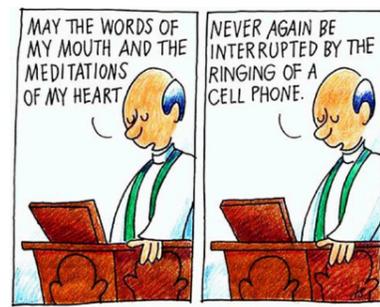
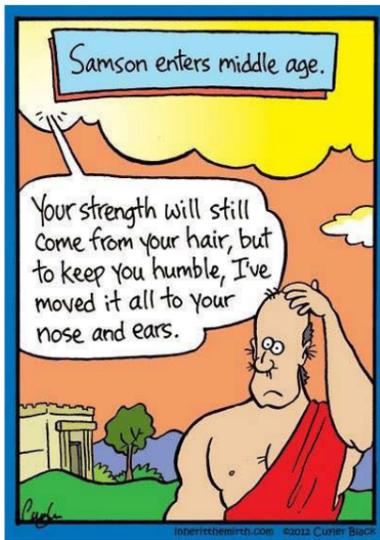


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