

AUTHENTIC

SUMMER 2017 / 2018

MEN'S MAGAZINE

Andrew Stroud

REAL LIFE IN THE *FAST LANE*

WISE WORDS FROM

Charles Price

A conversation with

RAY COMFORT

PLUS

- Protecting Kids from Addiction
- Who wrote Hebrews? by Chuck Missler
- Streetlights - Hip-hop to the rescue



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AUTHENTIC

A Christian Men's Magazine? Seriously? Who would do that?

**The answer is simple:
Lee Hanson & Dave Firth**

It's been a long road but we're excited that it's finally here.

It all started ten years ago when I (Dave) had the privilege of helping my good buddy, Steve Legg, launch 'Sorted' the UK's only Christian men's magazine. I moved to New Zealand the following year but Steve and I kept in touch about different things and we even talked about launching a men's magazine out here. Well, since then I've been teaching a Bible-based Business Course at Capernwray Bible School and working as Communications Manager for Capernwray's parent organisation, Torchbearers International so the idea just sat on the back burner, until about four years ago, when through a strange

series of meetings with different people the idea suddenly started getting traction again. I'd mention the idea to prominent Christian leaders here in NZ and they'd say things like, "That's a great idea - how can we help?" It finally got to the point where the 20+ people I'd had serious conversations about it with, started to ask me, "So, when's the men's magazine happening, Dave?"

One of those people was my buddy Lee Hanson. Lee had directed a design agency for the last 10 years and we had completed many projects together. We spent many hours thinking, praying, planning, laughing (at the thought of doing this) and crying (at the thought of doing this). We both had full plates with work and ministry responsibilities so it was hard to see how this was ever going to happen...

When you feel like there isn't enough time in each hour - let alone day, week or month - you could argue that it's a bad idea to even entertain the thought of launching a Christian men's magazine, but that's where the importance of 'surrender' comes in.

Christ, not busyness, is Life (John 14:6). So it was as simple as 'surrendering' it all to Him and that's when it got exciting. Ideas, people, photographers, writers, funding, partnerships, advertising - all started flowing...

We have exclusive interviews with well known Christian Kiwis, brand new articles written from high profile Christian writers, authors and speakers, partnerships with the biggest NZ and international ministries and all of it just happened! We just sat back and watched. God is good - all the time. It's just that sometimes we are so busy doing things FOR God we forget what He promised: 'the one who calls you is faithful and HE will do it.' (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Everyone involved in this project is busy! But busy is a misused word. We always seem to have time for the things that are important, so when God calls you to do something He never does it without giving you all the time, resources and energy you need to do it. The problem is often we take on things that we shouldn't so we feel like we don't have capacity for this things of God!

Being Authentic is a calling - and

we're taking it seriously! Trusting in Christ no matter what. Not pretending, not conforming, not fearing, not running. Trusting Him to be who He says He is.

We also feel that Authentic Magazine is a calling too. A quarterly men's magazine that is scheduled to run for just two years, so that's 8 issues. Of course, if the Lord leads then it will continue beyond that point, but right now, the plan is just for the next two years. We recognise that everything belongs to Him (Psalm 24:1). We know that. We are simply stewards, but we're thrilled to be part of what He is doing.

We hope you enjoy the first edition. There's seven more on their way very soon!

You can find out more about the vision for Authentic Magazine and how you can help, by visiting our website - www.authenticmagazine.co.nz. There are LOADS of ways you can get involved so please have a look and get in contact.

We really are incredibly grateful for all the help we have had in realising this vision. I realise this isn't the Oscars but Lee and I would like to thank a few people formally for their support over the last few years...

Firstly, our wives, Shae and Marsha. They are amazing. Trusting us with big decisions and to keep our eyes on Jesus. Thanks girls - we love you.

Steve Legg, Editor of 'Sorted' magazine in the UK. Seriously, one of the nicest guys I know and easily the funniest! Thanks Steve, mate. You are an absolute legend and a genuine follower of Jesus. Thanks for all the help and support. Can't wait to get you out to NZ :)

I've just realised what a big list this is

going to be (and we're on deadline) so I'm just going to freewheel it and go with a list of names:

Ryan 'the name giver' Kilfoil, Mike Brewer, Mark & Robyn Gardiner, Craig Johnson, Mark Powell, Chris Thomas, Eric Ludy, Gary Gilpin, Andrew Linton, Andrew Fraser, Peter Sun, Bradd Trebilco, Ron Matsen, Peter Bichan, Jon & Debbie Lee, Ric Boyd, Al Belcher, Rob Heebink, Jeremy Lind, Bob Waliszewski, Wayne Mulqueen, Michel Bell, Paul Curtas, Charles Price, Werner Schreiber, Tyler Boyd, Greg Stier, Neels Janse van Rensburg, Jeremy Suisted, Richard Davis, Lew Meyer, Dave Mann, Glen Foreman, Ray Comfort, Andrew Stroud and the man who can make anyone look good, photographer, Daniel Treat.

Thanks guys, for all the encouragement, support, prayer and advice. We are so blessed.

As I mentioned earlier, I had the privilege of seeing the UK's first Christian men's magazine launch in Belfast, Northern Ireland ten years ago. Now 'Sorted' produces around 50,000 copies every second month and is reaching hundreds of thousands of men in the UK and around the world.

But this isn't 'Sorted New Zealand' - it's 'Authentic', New Zealand's first Christian men's magazine. A unique vision, for a unique place; but we are so encouraged by Steve Legg's faithfulness to the vision and calling that God gave him for Sorted. We are inspired to trust in our Lord and Saviour... and see what happens!



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



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By Carlos Rodriguez

You know that warm feeling after you spend time with God? A bit of prayer, a bit of Bible reading (plus a lot of trying to re-focus back on the prayer and the Bible reading). But then you get the sweet satisfaction of holy accomplishment?

It makes you feel lighter, more spiritual, somewhat righteous. And then you ask yourself, "Why don't I do this more?" Well, I don't do it more because of Netflix.

According to Revelation 17:5, Netflix is, "The great mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."

Ok. Ok. Maybe I exaggerate a little. But in the Jesus vs. Netflix battle, it seems like Netflix is winning my time and attention!

When television arrived back in the 1950's, a lot of respected pastors called it the Devil's Box! Yet, 60 years later a study conducted by the Barna Group proved that Christians who practice their faith watch more TV than non-Christians. Church-goers have actually become one of the main audiences that Hollywood is looking to entertain. Movies and TV shows strategise limiting cursing/vulgarity/atheism so they don't alienate the main consumers (us,

Christ-followers). And still, other shows over-do the cursing/vulgarity/atheism... but we still watch them (you know, because we're non-religious).

I don't know about you, but I love to be entertained! I watch anything and everything. I love the news, stupid videos on You Tube, three hours of ESPN and lots of Facebooking. I love romantic comedies, super-hero-nerdy-sci-fi movies and even the weird independent cinema that makes no sense whatsoever.

I have spent a full hour browsing through the Netflix gallery just to see what's available. I have also gone through full seasons of a show in a matter of days (with two kids, a wife and a full-time job to maintain). I have even started watching a show, not really liked the beginning, but kept watching, as if to force myself to get into it... so I could have another show to watch.

If I would invest that much effort into

my time with God... my face would probably radiate with the manifest glory from heaven (or at least I would have a couple more bible verses memorised.)

Netflix seems to be winning the battle. And I feel like I'm not alone. Because I know people who have changed their diets completely based on a Netflix documentary on food. And I know for sure, that if I am having trouble relating with a new person in church, all I have to do is start taking about what I am currently watching on Netflix, and like a miracle of human connectivity... BOOM! We are best friends forever.

So how does Jesus compete against all the noise and the distractions? How are we able to turn down the entertainment in order to turn up the awe and the hunger?

I think we're desperate to be inspired. We want out of our consuming, selfish, all-about-me prisons, so we

wander off in entertainment looking for a purpose. Our real life stories are lost in the dullness of every day routine. Our religion has become mundane and easy to figure out. So our hearts are in a legitimate search for the story.

It's why we turn to Netflix.

However, Jesus was and is the ultimate entertainment. Yes, he is Saviour, Servant, King, Lion, God, Lord, but He was also a masterful storyteller. He brought the deepest revelations and turned them into visual stories about wandering sheep, ungrateful sons and bad farming.

Not only was He a genius with his words, He was also creative with his miracles. He was challenging to the establishment. He was provocative with his decisions. And it was impossible to fit Him into a box of understanding and rational. Still is. He is literally untamable, radically spontaneous and comfortable with making us uncomfortable.

IF MY CHRISTIANITY
DEPENDED
ON ANYTHING BUT CHRIST
HIMSELF,
IT'S NOT CHRISTIANITY

He is far and away the greatest movie, story, mystery, drama, comedy, thriller that ever was. And it's time to tune in.

In his glorious book *Dangerous Wonder*, Mike Yaconelli wrote, "I want a lifetime of holy moments. Every day I want to be in dangerous proximity to Jesus. I long for a life that explodes

with meaning and is filled with adventure, wonder, risk, and danger. I long for a faith that is gloriously treacherous. I want to be with Jesus, not knowing whether to cry or laugh."

Yes, it's great to watch movies, it's just better to live a life that could become one. It's ok to be content consumers, it's just better to be content creators who become the influencers to a broken generation. There is nothing wrong with amusement, it's just that we were created for something more than entertainment. And the story of Jesus could be our own story. It was designed to be our story. So we remain hungry for it to become it.

I think Hollywood seems like a legitimate distraction from Christ because we have taken the imagination out of the Gospel. We have lost the wonder of the Good News and reduced it to a set of suggestions for ethical living. And while slumbering in the comforts of Western-Christianity we have forgotten that the Scriptures are dangerous and mysterious. That the Kingdom of God is full of drama and intrigue. That it's the real life... raw, unedited and weirdly perfect.

Maybe the problem for me is that I have reduced Jesus to something that can be competed with; as if sin, or Netflix, or temptation, could be a match for his person or his love.

What would happen if I stopped quantifying my relationship with Him to the measure of how much I pray or read or fast or sing? The truth is that if my Christianity depended on anything but Christ himself, it's not really Christianity, it's Carlosanity (and God knows that religion would be the weirdest-cultic-reality-TV-show ever!)

"But this King, filled with goodness and mercy, far from chastising me, lovingly embraces me, makes me

eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the keys of His treasures and treats me as His favorite. He talks with me and is delighted with me in a thousand ways and He forgives me and relieves me of my bad habits without talking about them." The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence.

Jesus is not contained inside our religious efforts. He is too big, and too wise, and too much of a Friend of Sinners to be limited by that. He won't stop being who he is because of the things you decided to watch, or do, or say.

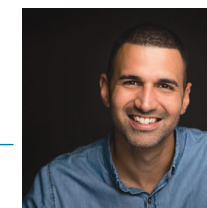
But there is a mystery to be discovered. An adventure to be lived. His presence is truly exciting (and available at all times). I have discovered that Jesus is comfortable sitting next to me while I watch Netflix. He's not intimidated by the competition. It's not even a contest really. While Netflix gets a couple of hours of my attention, Jesus has won my heart eternally.

So no thank you Netflix, I will not watch the next episode. Today I will set my eyes on the author and perfecter of my faith and connect with him in the journey of sonship, sacrifice and surrender.

Today I know that God is not waiting for me to get to heaven in order to start my episode one.

No one's ever seen or heard anything like this, Never so much as imagined anything quite like it—What God has arranged for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9
| 



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



Christmas

FABLES, MYTHS & FAIRY TALES?

By Chuck Missler

Each year at Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. After the New Year, we struggle to remember to add a year as we date our checks, which should remind us that the entire Western World reckons its calendar from the birth of the One who changed the world more than any other before or since.

Yet, it is disturbing to discover that much of what we have been taught about the Christmas season seems to be more tradition than truth.

When Was Jesus Born?

Most serious Bible students realize that Jesus was probably not born on December 25th. The shepherds had their flocks in open fields,¹ which implies a date prior to October. Furthermore, no competent Roman administrator would require registration involving travel during the season when Judea was generally impassable.²

If Jesus wasn't born on December 25, just when was he born? Although the Bible doesn't explicitly identify the birthday of our Lord, many scholars have developed diverse opinions

as to the likely birthday of Jesus. (It reminds one of the rabbinical observation: with two Jews, you have three opinions!) See our briefing, The Christmas Story: What Really Happened for more information.

Then Why December 25th?

The early Christian church did not celebrate Jesus' birth, and therefore the exact date was not preserved in festivals. The first recorded mention of December 25th is in the Calendar of Philocalus (A.D. 354), which assumed Jesus' birth to be Friday, December 25th, A.D. 1. This was subsequent to Constantine's Edict of Toleration in A.D. 313, which enabled the persecuted Christians to exchange the rags of hiding for the silks of the court. But the predictable expediency to adopt the inevitable

cultural changes caused many of the former pagan rituals to be adapted to their new "Christian" trappings.

The date of December 25th, which was officially proclaimed by the church fathers in A.D. 440, was actually a vestige of the Roman holiday of Saturnalia, observed near the winter solstice, which itself was among the many pagan traditions inherited from the earlier Babylonian priesthood.³

Babylonian Traditions

All forms of occultic practices have their origins in the original city of Babylon. Isaiah Chapter 47 clearly brings this out. Most of what we associate with pagan Rome had its origins in ancient Babylon. Babylon is mentioned in over 300 references in

the Bible; it is even alluded to three times in Christ's own genealogy.

The Tammuz Legend

Tammuz, the son of Nimrod and his queen, Semiramis, was identified with the Babylonian Sun God and worshipped following the winter solstice. As the days became shorter and shorter through the winter, they become the shortest at the winter solstice, about December 22-23. Tammuz was thought to have died during the winter solstice, and was memorialized by burning a log in the fireplace. (The Chaldean word for infant is yule. This is the origin of the "yule log.") His "rebirth" was celebrated by replacing the log with a trimmed tree the next morning. Sound familiar? (Jeremiah 10 contains an interesting verse which talks about trimming trees, etc.)

There are numerous other examples. The wassail bowl, the mistletoe (a fertility rite), and others are documented in such works as Alexander Hislop's, The Two Babylons. When Babylon was conquered by subsequent empires, this entire religious system was transplanted, first to Pergamos under the Persians, and then to Rome. As the pagan Roman (Babylonian) religious system was integrated with Christian ceremonial observances, many of our current traditions surrounding Christmas emerged. And it appears that an "ecumenical" integration of all the world's religions, including the ancient Babylonian occult forms that presently masquerade as the "New Age," is destined to be the final religious climax.

The Throne of David

There is another aspect to keep in mind this Christmas season. As we recall the prophecy in Micah that prescribes that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, notice the

entire verse:

But thou, Bethlehem ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

Also, as we recall that other familiar prophecy in Isaiah, note again the whole verse:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the Throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

Isaiah 9:6-7

The "Throne of David" is not just an Old Testament concept. Remember the Angel Gabriel's promise to Mary:

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Luke 1:31-33

But did Jesus ever actually sit on David's throne? He couldn't have. It didn't exist at that time. Jeconiah was the last of David's line to sit on the throne. (Remember, the blood curse on his line.⁴) Herod, appointed

by the Romans, was an Edomite ("Idumean"). He wasn't even Jewish.

At the moment, Jesus is sitting on His Father's Throne. The question is, will He ever sit on David's throne? Will the promise that Gabriel announced to Mary also be fulfilled? Of course. (And it may be sooner than we think.)

Keeping Christ in Christmas

Christians today tend to fight the ongoing secularization of their holidays. Some have rejected anything to do with them, saying they are not Biblically ordained. Others have tried to go back to keeping the Jewish feasts instead. It should be pointed out that the New Testament doesn't really ordain anything other than the Lord's Supper. But it does not prohibit it either, and under grace Christians are free to honor different days if they wish.

Those families who want to keep Christ as the center of Christmas may find it easier to do by understanding the various symbols that have been used to celebrate Christ's birth through the ages and using them to retain the uniqueness inherent in the mystery of the incarnation: the birth of the Son of God. For instance, at Christmas we remember the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh presented by the Magi.⁵ These prophetic gifts celebrated his deity, priesthood, and death. When He returns to establish His kingdom, He will be presented only with gold and frankincense.⁶ There will be no myrrh: His death is now behind Him.

Let's make this season a real celebration. What are you giving Him this Christmas? Is there something in your life He would like to see you part with? |



■ Written by Chuck Missler. See more articles by Chuck at Koinonia House - <http://www.khouse.org>



*"I just knew that
Jesus was right
there knocking and
I said 'Yes Lord,
I do surrender;
I give you my life',"*

'Real Life' in the *Fast Lane*

By Dave Firth

NZ & World Superbike Champion, Andrew Stroud, talks openly about racing, faith, family and the man behind the famous Kiwi bike that changed racing.

Walking into the house we're greeted by Andrew sweeping the floor. He looks up and smiles, "Just trying to get tidied up!" His son Caleb, one of the ten Stroud kids, is in the kitchen and offers us a coffee. Although, he assures us he's only had one day of barista training, he makes a pretty good flat white.

Andrew returned from Malaysia just a few days ago having been supporting his eldest son, Jacob, 18, who's following in his father's footsteps – racing motorbikes.

Just before we start the interview Andrew interjects and says, "Before we start, can we have a word of prayer?"

So New Year's Eve is going to be a big celebration for you this year?

"Oh, you mean my 50th? My father's 80 in December too.

Not really. I've never fussed too much over birthdays but Karyn wants to plan something. We're going to do something with dad as well. It's someone else's birthday too," he thinks for a moment before his 17 year old shouts from the kitchen, "My eighteenth!" (Caleb will turn 18 three days before his dad's 50th)

You retired from racing in 2013. What do you enjoy doing most now you're not racing full time?

"Good question! Well, I've got two boys, sometimes three, that love racing bikes. I've just been to Malaysia and spent a week over there with them, helping them. Really, I could just do that - by the time you've organised the machinery, the bikes and maintained them, then organised some sponsorship and sorted the travel it could end up being full time if we did it properly and wanted to go to that level."

"Racing's been such a big part of my life so ditching that has been hard. And finding something to do that's anywhere near as interesting, exhilarating and exciting as racing a superbike is hard. It gets your attention. It just has to. You've got no option. my desire was to be more available for the family. I didn't want to be owned by racing.

You know, Scripture says you can't serve both God and money, and racing's got more of a pull than even money. It's got the excitement and the adrenalin!

I've been around hundreds of racers in my day and they're all pretty much living for the next race. There's the saying, 'Life is racing and the rest is just waiting'. So it can be addictive.

Even more than that, it can become the centre of your life. But that's the place where God should be. It's the first commandment: 'You shall have no other God's before me.' (Exodus 20:3)

How hard was it to step away from racing?

About 15 years ago we were with friends in England – our pastor's son and his wife – and we had a great prayer time one night and we were praying, 'Lord, if there's anything stopping us getting closer to you can you show us?' Straight away, as soon as we prayed that...straight away...I could see it really clearly, God showed me, I was holding on to racing tightly in one hand, really tightly like it was mine and I owned it. I didn't want to let it go. That it was everything to me, really. I just knew that he wanted me



to open my hand. I'd been striving for this for so long.

So it took all the trust I had to open my hand. I thought I'd have to let it go for good. So I opened my hand but I could tell it was still sitting there. Just like it was a gift he'd given me but to be a steward of it rather than to act like I owned it.

So it was definitely different after that. I didn't let it control me. I'd choose what I did. It turned things around and I got a better perspective on life's priorities. God needs to be first! And I saw racing for what it was – that it had become an idol for me.

Tell us about your faith and how you came to put your trust in Jesus Christ.

"I remember going to the front in

church when I was about 8 or 9 years old. I always believed in God but when I was about 25 years old I had an offer to do 500 Grand Prix in Europe, which is the pinnacle of motorcycle racing, and I also had an offer to race in America, with the factory Ducati team.

I wasn't sure which one to do. The offer from America had a lot of money and a lot of promises to go on to GPs and stuff, so I went with the American offer. Unfortunately, that fell through so I phoned the guy back about the 500 Grand Prix and he said, 'Oh, sorry, we just signed up a Scottish guy', so I was left with neither option.

At the same time mum had paid for me to go to Summer Harvest for Christmas, at a Christian camp up

North. My sister was going and my friend, so I thought I'd take my jet ski and my motocross bike and go and do some training.

Well after 4 days up there, when Bill Subritzky was speaking, I ended up going up the front, getting on my knees in front of about 1,500 people and giving my life to the Lord. By then I was already doing World 500 GPs and World Superbikes. It was a hard thing to do at the time. Very hard really because of my pride. But that was the first step.

I didn't really feel any difference at the time, but a couple of months later my sister started having these home groups and she asked me along to one. Afterwards as I was sitting in my bed I remembered the verse, 'Behold, Here I am. I stand at the

"THE CROWD WERE ALL ON THEIR FEET CHEERING, WONDERING HOW THIS HOMEMADE BIKE FROM NEW ZEALAND COULD COME OVER TO EUROPE AND DO SO WELL."

door and knock...' (Revelation 3:20) and I just knew that Jesus was right there knocking and I said "Yes Lord, I do surrender; I give you my life", and I seriously felt different then. I was overwhelmed with joy and peace!

The next morning mum came in and said, "What happened to you last night?" and I was still a little proud to tell her that she'd been right all along and after years of praying for me that I was saved, but I overcame my pride and told her.

I went out and bought the whole bible on tape and listened to it all the time, travelling around the world, going racing, in aeroplanes. I couldn't get enough of it.

In 1995 you won the BEARS series on a Britten, three weeks before John Britten died. How significant was that for you and is it true that John put his faith and trust in Jesus before he died?



It was an amazing time really, that whole period. The bike in itself – it was quite incredible how it unfolded. To be able to design a whole motorcycle, to design every part and then build it as well, all within about 10 months, with not much of a budget and such a radical design as well.

It had nothing conventional; no frame, front and rear suspension attached to the engine, all carbon fibre which was just starting to be used in the America's Cup yachts.

You know, at the very beginning of Genesis it says, "In the beginning God created..." and I think God always had his hand on John's life and gave him that creative ability, whether John knew it or not.

The first time I raced the bike was at Daytona. It was really the fastest bike out there and even though it stopped with two laps to go it still made headline news around the world. It was only 0.1 of a second off the outright lap record which had been set the year before by Doug Polen - who won the world superbike championship as well on a factory Ducati.

So we went back two years later in '94 and won both the races there, also setting the fastest top speed of any motorcycle that had ever been to Daytona which was 189 mph. We then went back and won again in '95. John's whole purpose in building the bike, his goal, was to win at Daytona, so he knew it need to be very powerful, light and aerodynamic. He designed the bike with all those things and made it all work, so it was great that he saw it all come to fruition.

Then in '95 the team carried on from Daytona, the World Series and did another six rounds in Europe and I did the first one, I think, in England but John couldn't come to it, he said he felt a bit tired but didn't know why.

I asked my wife Karyn (who was just a friend then) to pop round to his house and give him some flowers. So the day that he got the results from the tests she turned up with flowers from me which he saw as a sign. So he called me up and said that he saw that as God knowing the situation, the timing, he was overwhelmed, he could hardly talk on the phone, he couldn't believe it.

He said, "I have cancer and I've been told I've got three months to live. I believe in Jesus and I love people can you pray for me."

He just wanted to pray and read the bible and know more. He was so





JOHN BRITTEN AND ANDREW STROUD AFTER WINNING AT BATHURST IN 1993

excited about his faith. He said, "If this cancer doesn't get me I want to be a preacher like Billy Graham!" and I just wanted to win every race of the rest of the series for John.

The second to last round was at Brands Hatch, the World Superbike round, so the place was packed – 60,000 plus spectators - and we won the race, first and second on the Brittens, and the crowd were all on their feet cheering, wondering how this homemade bike from New Zealand could come over to Europe and do so well.

It was great because TVNZ came over and filmed it so John was able to watch it at home in his bed. There was an amazing response.

We won the World Series – first and second on the Brittens.

John had asked me when I was coming home. I'd planned on staying in Europe for another month or so, but I called the airlines and they were all booked up for the next three or four weeks. The next day I got a call that there was one seat available, it was leaving the next day and going to arrive in Christchurch.

Well, I wanted to fly in to Auckland and spend a few days there but I didn't know how close John was, so I flew straight in to Christchurch and walked in to John's room. He was very emotional seeing me - I think there

was a TV crew and some reporters, the mayor – so I spent the whole week, his final week, with John. He wanted me to stay in the bed next to him and read the bible with him, pray with him and talk with him about God.

How was that different to your relationship with him prior to this?

"It was on a whole new level.

Really like brothers! The day before he passed away he was lying in his bed, we didn't know if he was conscious or not. We were just holding his feet and praying. John suddenly opened his eyes and said, "So much joy, so much joy. I finally found it but it cost me everything to get it."

It was an amazing thing to see and hear. He finally saw that eternity is the big picture!"

How did you handle the funeral?

"So the funeral was at the Cathedral in Christchurch. There was over 2,000 people there. I spoke, but I was terrified of public speaking back then so people were praying for me, flat stick.

TV3 and TV1 were both there filming and it was totally packed. I'd ridden the Britten bike through the street with the hearse behind me, the streets lined with people.

When I got up to speak and I couldn't open my mouth. It was about ten seconds before I said anything. Then I felt God's presence and I was able to share

some thoughts and bible verses which were shown on national TV, so that was pretty cool. Since then, I've been able to share the story at hundreds of schools, churches and other non-church events."

Of all your wins and trophies, which has been the most significant?

"Winning the World Series on the Britten, just because of the story behind it. And because it was a New Zealand effort – the underdog taking on the world."

Apparently Karyn knew you were the man she'd marry a few years before you knew. Is that right?

I'd known Karyn for years as friends but one day she felt God telling her she was going to marry me.

Three years later, not long after John died, we were sitting on the couch praying and we ended up holding hands, but even then there was a process before we got married.

Her friends were asking her, "Are you sure this guy's the one? He races motorbikes and you've got all these other guys asking you out." She found it hard. In fact, she went ice skating one day with the youth group and she was getting on really well with one of the male youth group leaders. Karyn knew that he wanted to hold her hand so she prayed,

"Lord, please show me if I'm really supposed to wait for Andrew Stroud because I quite like this guy and he'd be fine!"

Well, just as they were about to hold hands this boy skated through the middle of them and busted them apart. After getting her balance back she saw that the boy had a Britten motorcycle jacket on and 'Andrew Stroud' was written on the back. I'd even hand signed it! So, she said, "Oh sorry, I've got to go!"

She had a few moments like that – where God made it really clear, but I had to get the same myself! I remember, during one conversation, while Karyn was talking a lot, nervously, suddenly I could see right into her heart and see what an amazing and beautiful girl she was. Right then I knew God was showing me she was the girl I was going to marry. Now we've been married 20 years and we've got 10 kids!

Wow, that is a big family – I read somewhere that you reckon you've changed around 50,000 nappies. Are you a 'hands on' dad?

"Yeah, totally. One of the best things about being paid to race motorbikes is that I've been able to be with the children. When we've gone racing in New Zealand we've taken them all with us most of the time.

So yes, 10 kids and our youngest is 3 and she's still in nappies at night so it's 50,000 and counting!"

What advice can you give to men about keeping Christ at the centre of work, family and life?


"Constantly work at it. The more time you spend getting to know your heavenly Father and the more time you spend reading the bible, the more he shapes us and the more we surrender to Him.

Prayer is so important. When you meet God in prayer it changes you. It encourages us to let go of the things we think are important in the bigger scheme of things.

It's also good to be accountable to somebody, to encourage each other and point you in the right direction."

Finally, we have to ask - how many speeding tickets have you had?

"I don't know, maybe half a dozen in 30 years. Actually, maybe that's on the light side! Maybe 10. I'd say under a dozen. Plus one or two overseas"

What a top bloke. A genuine follower of Jesus transformed by God's grace. It was a real pleasure to meet Andrew and was a great reminder that whatever skills and passion God gives us, we have the privilege and responsibility of giving it back to Him – after all, it's His anyway! | 

Andrew Stroud Fact File

Background Information:

Andrew married Karyn in 1997 and they have 10 children: Jacob, Caleb, Maddy, Jesse, Isabella, Mac, Joseph, Lucia, Ameer and Elsie.

He started racing in 1986 and won his first championship in 1988 in the NZ 250 Production class. For the next ten years he competed internationally against the world's best, riding for various Superbike and Grand Prix teams.

He first rode the New Zealand-built Britten V1000 at Daytona in 1992.

In 1995, Stroud won the inaugural World B.E.A.R.S Series (British European American Racing Series, now part of AHMRA) on a Britten bike, three weeks before his friend, John Britten, died. Also in 1995 and on a Britten, Stroud won the European Pro-Twins at Assen. Soon after he put a Kawasaki Superbike on position for the World Endurance Championship round at the same track. In 1997 he won the American AMA formula Xtreme Championship.

Career Statistics

- 41 x World Superbike races
- 20 x FIM 500 GP races
- 4 x Suzuka 8 Hours races
- 1 x Isle of Man race
- 3 x 24 hour World Endurance Races

First win:

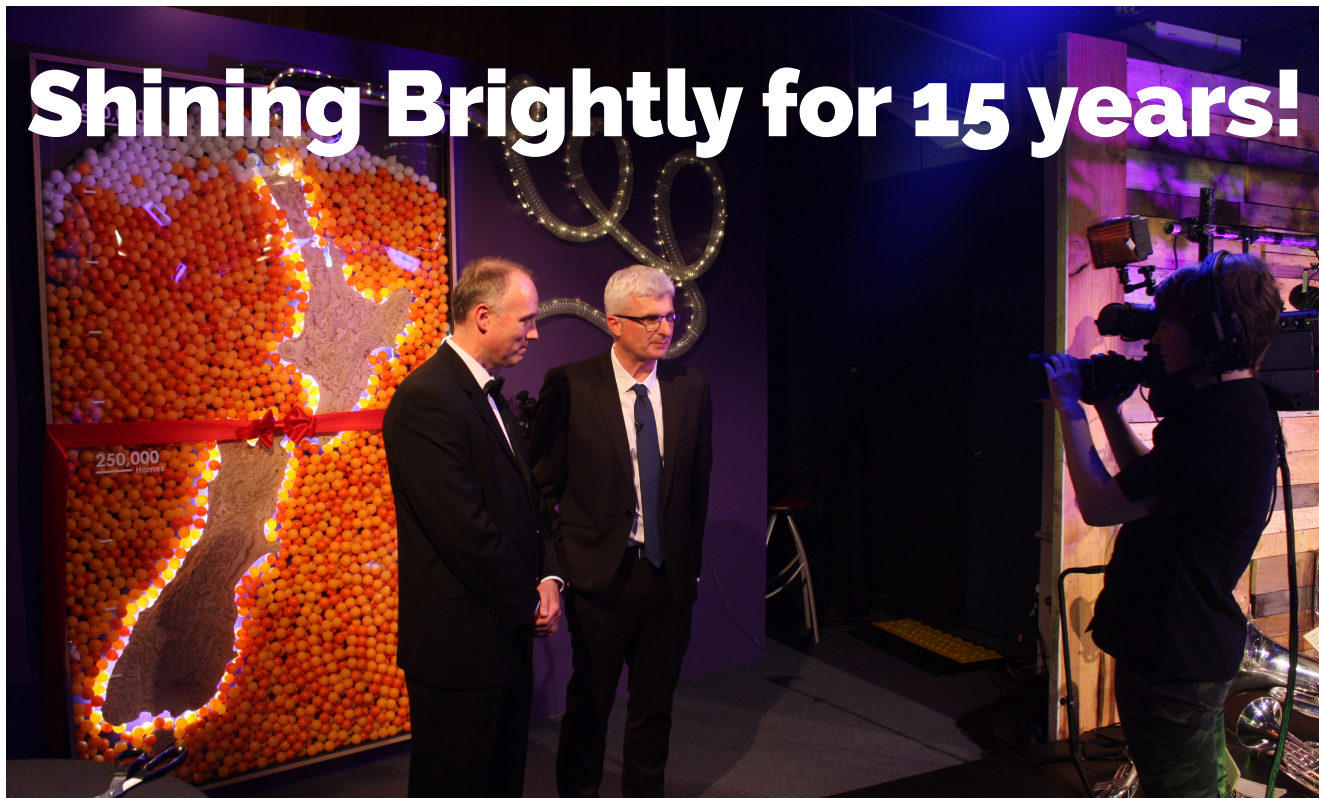
NZ 250 Production class (1988)

Major Wins:

- 9 New Zealand superbike national championships
- World B.E.A.R.S Series (1995)
- European Pro-Twins at Assen (1995)
- Battle-of-the-Twins at Daytona (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997)
- American AMA formula Xtreme Championship (1997)



THE STROUD FAMILY



Shine is New Zealand's Christian television channel programmed by Kiwis for Kiwis. It was launched nationwide on the 1st December 2002 and God has been using it to change lives ever since.

Shine is part of the Rhema Media family, together with three radio networks and two daily devotionals.

The Rhema Media story began in 1961, when a passionate young Christian and radio enthusiast, Dick Berry, felt mandated by God to start Christian radio in New Zealand. Dick said it was as if God was saying, 'I want you to tell people about me. I want you to establish Christian radio and broadcast the good news about me.' Feeling totally unworthy, but knowing he had to be obedient, he started his campaign to broadcast

the good news of Jesus through media to New Zealand. It would take 17 years to get a permanent licence to broadcast but, in 1978, the first of these radio networks, Rhema, was launched. Since then this ministry, through God's leading and favour, has expanded to include two more radio networks (Life FM and Star, both launched in 1997) and two daily devotionals (The Word For Today, launched in 1995, and the youth version, Word For You Today in 2010).

These victories for Christian media in New Zealand were won as a result

of many people who were obedient to God stepping out in faith into new, seemingly impossible and often hostile, territories.

In 1999, Freedom TV, a Christchurch Christian TV station, was birthed. In 2002 Rhema Media was gifted Freedom TV and renamed it Shine. In December that year, Shine, the first nationwide Christian television channel was launched via the digital satellite broadcasts of SKY Television. Shine was instantly made available to 360,000 Kiwi households. Another great victory.

The aim of Shine when it launched was to do just that: shine. The name Shine is inspired by two verses: Isaiah 60:1, which says, 'Arise and shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you;' and Matthew 5:13-16, in which Jesus talks about letting our light shine. Chief Executive of Shine at the time, Denis Delaney, said that 'Shine desires to be salt and light in the New Zealand community.'

A viewer from the early days of Shine said: 'Your channel feeds my spirit and soul. I was going to cancel SKY TV but now I won't as your channel feeds goodness into our home.'

As with the earlier establishment of Rhema Media's three radio networks, God moved in miraculous ways to cement this television network into the New Zealand media landscape.

Over the years, Shine has offered a rich mix of programmes to viewers of all ages. The goal is to have as many NZ-produced offerings as possible, along with the best up-to-date international programming.

The acquisition of these programmes is not always easy, and generally comes at a high financial cost. Michael Brown, Director of Visual Media at Rhema Media, says, 'We work hard to get access to the best movies, drama, and teaching series from New Zealand, and around the world.'

Unlike the major media organisations in New Zealand, Rhema Media is not funded by the Government or large advertising incomes. Rhema Media was birthed by and exists today largely as a result of the financial generosity of thousands of New Zealanders, through their giving during the year and at annual appeals.

Rhema Media's founder, the late Dick Berry, encapsulated the ministry's heart: 'Rhema [Shine] is God reaching people through people. His love, once born in our hearts, reaches out to


others... it's the desire for people who have found Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, reaching out to other people in this land to tell them the Good News that Jesus saves.'

The team at Shine receives many stories testifying to the power of this Christian influence in their lives and in those of their families.

Martin expressed his thankfulness for Shine's involvement in a breakthrough in his family: 'Two years ago my father-in-law became ill and was housebound. All he could do was watch television. My mother-in-law is an avid watcher of Shine. My father-in-law ended up watching Shine every waking moment. The messages preached did their work and, at 82, he called on the name of the Lord. He died last month as a believer. Never think that the work you are doing is bearing no fruit. My wife and I thank you for your faithfulness in broadcasting the Christian message to our nation.'

Michael Brown, Director of Visual Media at Rhema Media, is excited about the future of Shine. He says, 'Thanks to God, Shine is now freely available to every home in New Zealand. We are looking to extend that reach through strong catch-up on-demand platforms and mobile apps.' He continues, 'Shine is committed to being New Zealand's Kiwi Christian channel. That means being a channel that's relevant to Kiwis, with programmes strong in family values and full of the hope of Jesus. We look forward to what God is going to do through Shine in the next 15 years!'

Shine TV is available on Freeview channel 25, Sky channel 201 or can be watched online at: www.shinetv.co.nz

If you love Christ-centred Bible teaching you can watch our good friend and Authentic writer, Charles Price on the 'Living Truth' programme on Shine TV on Tuesdays at 3pm 

GOD IN WORK



Culture is when a group of people regularly performs a set of beliefs and practices, and form an identity from it.

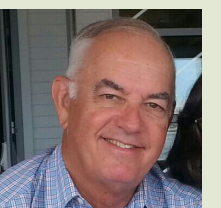
The workplace is a culture, because it is where people connect through common beliefs and practices and share a common identity in ways they work together and relate to each other. Christians are said to be citizens of God's kingdom, with a new set of beliefs and practices. They are called to be ambassadors sent into their earthly cultures, like the workplace, to represent their Lord and bring His influence into them.

So, would you say that the beliefs and practices of God's kingdom are influencing you, and having an influence on your work culture? Or are the beliefs and practices that dominate your work environment influencing you?

Think about it – *"We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal (to people) through us..."* (2 Cor 5:20).



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





Hugh Jackman meets Jesus

By Carlos Rodriguez

Hugh Jackman is leaving the X-Men, instead taking the Road to Damascus. His recent movie “Logan” was his last as Wolverine. Next year he will star in a new film, based on the life of the Apostle Paul.

The movie will be among the most high-profile Hollywood Christian production since Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. It is a Warner Brothers motion picture that will be produced by Matt Damon, Ben Affleck and Hugh Jackman himself.

Jackman who is a student of transcendental meditation, previously attended the international School of Practical Philosophy. But he told *Parade* magazine in 2009 that he was raised by a devout, born-again Christian man, who met Jesus in a Billy Graham crusade.

When Hugh was 8 years old, his parents divorced and his mother moved back to England. But he grew up watching faith in action. He compliments his dad by saying, “What he did was herculean, to bring up five kids with a full-time job!” And every time Billy Graham would come do a crusade in Sydney, Hugh Jackman was in attendance. He was not interested in going but his father was convinced

by the promise, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” – Paul in Acts 16.

The award-winning actor is now playing the man who wrote the very words that gave his father hope.

Hugh also had this to say about his dad, “He takes his religion very seriously, and would prefer I go to church. We’ve had discussions about our separate beliefs. I just find the evangelical church too, well, restrictive.”

Restrictive?!? Ouch. That word is in contradiction to the Good News; for it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. – Paul in Galatians 5. Yet once again, the church is known for its restrictions, not its freedoms. And once again a talented young man, who was raised in a Christian home, decides to follow a different way.

How is it that our message of peace, hope and joy has been so contaminated?

We true believers need to raise the volume! The time has come for arts and permission to be our sound, for smiles and hope to be our style, for freedom and love to be our beauty. We’ve had enough of Christ being misrepresented by a few Christians. It’s time to love hard, sing louder, and preach Christ crucified.

You see, Jesus lived among the broken. He shared his meals with the ungodly, was never stuck inside the prison of “religion” and is true freedom and everlasting joy.

When society restricted people from touching the sick, Jesus healed them. When holy men restricted themselves from being with sinners, Jesus befriended them. And when the religious system restricted people from having access to God the Good Father... God the Perfect Son, came in the flesh to be among them, to love them, to save them.

**RESTRICTIVE DOES NOT
DEFINE CHRIST. NEITHER
SHOULD IT DEFINE US.**

So why is that a man who was exposed to the ultimate truth has chosen not to believe? No doubt, it’s his choice. But there’s also the possibility (as with many of our unbelieving family and friends) that the “truth” that was presented to Hugh Jackman was just the ethics of the Christianity. The rules of Western Christianity. The sad modifications of what otherwise should be a happy, exciting faith.

The Gospel Paul talks about God’s perfect statement of love and grace, Christianity is just our response to that message. The Gospel is

the Good News of Salvation, to all people, everywhere. Christianity is the imperfect expression of the people who receive and acknowledge this news. While the Gospel is the finished work of Christ, Christianity is just the unfinished work of men.”

This Christ is not interested in making Christianity famous. He cares about being Jesus (Salvation) to the infamous ones. He’s passionate about the homeless drunk who stole your cell phone, the young girl stripping at the club, the rich man snorting cocaine, and the famous actor who’s searching for the truth in every philosophy there is.

Has God has hired Matt Damon, Ben Affleck and Hugh Jackman, to preach the gospel?

Because the story of Paul is different to the stories of Moses, or David or Noah. These Old Testament narratives have become another “fantasy” genre in Hollywood. They make for great spectacle. They move the Christian masses. But they stay away from the ultimate message of Scripture.

However, making a movie about the Apostle Paul is a whole other ball game. This is the story of a religious man (a murderer and a terrorist) who has an encounter with the glorified Christ and ends up writing 40% of the New Testament. His story is the Gospel in its purest form.

It has a life of religion and sin, transformed to a life of revelation and sacrifice. It’s the story of a man who thought he knew the truth, until Truth Himself knocked him out in love.

Hugh Jackman gets to play this role. And as all great actors do, he will immerse himself into the life


and writings of Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul.

I have no doubts, God is getting ready to knock Wolverine out too. Join me in praying for a radical encounter. I’m believing that the testimony of Hugh’s father, combined with the revelation of Scripture, will become a louder voice than the restrictions and the judgments of the story he was once told.

Jesus is the desire of the nations. Every human being alive (whether they recognise it or not) is hungry for an encounter with Christ. The church has sometimes given the world religion and rules and cheese, so they have been confused. They assumed wrongly. They disregarded Jesus thinking that they had already encountered him.

But the Savior is on a mission to win the hearts of men. He will do whatever it takes to save the lost. He paid too high of a price for grace to be wrongly translated by us. Because, “God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” – Paul in 1 Timothy 2

Jesus stands in the centre of culture and Hollywood is paying attention And maybe, just maybe, the promise made by God, via Paul, to Hugh’s dad, will be fulfilled, “You and your household will be saved.” I pray and I hope. Because God meets us where we are, not where we should be.

FYI: Jackman recently declared: “I’m a Christian. I was brought up very religious. I used to go to different evangelists’ [revival] tents all the time. When I was about 13, I had a weird premonition that I was going to be onstage, like the preachers I saw.” 



■ Written by Carlos Rodriguez. Father, husband, author and blogger.

How to protect kids from the grip of addiction

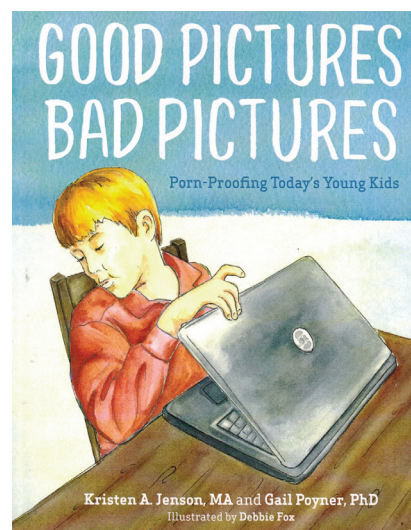
By Joshua Duvauchelle

In some ways, working at Focus on the family NZ is like being a parent on mass, we're concerned with the family, a lot of them including yours.

Faced with an overwhelming avalanche of evidence about the harms of pornography to children and the associated ills later in life due to early exposure, we found ourselves with the desire and the material to put another tool into the hands of parents in the fight against early sexualization of children.

After spending many years serving Men in New Zealand with the Valiant Man programme, we were ready to help mum and dad protect their kids. One of our former board members who had a interest in helping, came across the book "Good Pictures Bad Pictures" and gave me a call about it, it was like a God send, this was exactly what we had been looking for and several phone calls, Skype meetings and letters later, we went to print with a completely New Zealand based version of this best seller.

Good Pictures Bad Pictures is a comfortable, illustrated read-aloud story book that parents read with their children. It is a story about a mum and dad who teach their child what pornography is, why it's dangerous, and how to reject it. Written for 5 to 10-year olds, it explains the workings of the brain, how addictions can develop, and, most importantly of all, it gives children a strategy that includes practical steps to take if they are



confronted with pornography.

Parents will appreciate this resource to porn-proof their kids because it makes a difficult discussion easy and empowering. How? By teaching kids simple concepts about the brain and the process of addiction, and by giving them a specific strategy for keeping safe from the poison of pornography. Many parents also use this book as a powerful tool for sexual abuse prevention!

What makes Good Pictures Bad Pictures so unique and invaluable is that it equips children with important knowledge and a practical strategy for proactively dealing with pornography before most have even had a chance to be exposed to it.

It only takes a few taps on a mobile device for a curious young child to find an endless supply of deviant, hard-core, and addicting pornography—all for free. Unfortunately, many young kids are being exposed to pornography without the slightest clue that it can damage their developing minds.

The 5-point CAN DO Plan teaches kids how to avoid the brain-warping images of pornography and minimize the troubling memories of accidental exposure that often tempt kids to look for more and lead them into a dark and destructive addiction. To stay safe in the digital age, kids must install an internal filter in their own brain. Good Pictures Bad Pictures shows them how.

This book is already a bestseller overseas, and parents are calling it "an amazing work" and "a great way to talk to children about pornography without the awkward, uncomfortable feeling."


The team at Focus NZ are already using this resource with our own families and we can testify to just how effective it is - which is the very reason why we sought permission from the authors to publish this special NZ edition of Good Pictures Bad Pictures.

Testimony from a NZ Mum

"We've just read 'Good Pictures, Bad Pictures' to our boys 7, 9 & 10.

It explains how the brain works in a simple way, and gives an excellent practical way for kids to deal with the probability of being confronted with pornography.

Instead of burying our heads in the sand hoping our kids won't encounter porn, this book is a great tool that enables parents to be proactive and tackle the 'what ifs' head-on. With the teen years on the horizon, it's empowering to be straight with our kids, to start conversations, and set the foundations for very open future communications - about extremely difficult topics! We can't afford to be passive in this day and age - we have to protect our kids from being chewed up and damaged by the world. I cannot recommend this book enough."

As part of an overall strategy to help families Thrive, Focus on the Family NZ is committed to both increasing the awareness of this family destroying issue in society and providing solid resources to tackle it at every turn, we offer an enormous amount of resources around this topic at our website, seminars to Church and school groups. 

Find out more at:
www.family.org.nz



■ Written by Joshua Duvauchelle. Focus on the Family NZ

A FREE & EASY WAY TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

By Lee Hanson

If your home is like mine you will have a number of devices wirelessly connecting to your home modem. In the past protecting the family PC was enough, but since smartphones and tablets have become common-place, the access to nasty material has become an even larger problem for kiwi parents.

Plus, it's not only your kids you have to worry about. Your kids friends are probably also bringing devices into your home.

The solution is to put filtering on the home modem itself, rather than each device, and it's actually easier than you might think.

Hello, OpenDNS Family Shield

OpenDNS has a solid (and free) way to filter all the traffic coming into your home. How it works is by changing the location (IP address) of where your modem looks to find websites. By accessing the internet via OpenDNS, pornographic (and virus-laden) sites are blocked before coming into your home.

The process is:

- 1 Log into your modem (if you get stuck call your internet provider)
- 2 Change the DNS server settings to the family shield IP addresses below:
208.67.222.222
208.67.220.220
- 3 Restart the router and Internet access is now filtered

For detailed instructions visit:
www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/

By Ian Thomas

IS YOUR FAITH EXCITING?

There are few things quite so boring as being religious, but there is nothing quite so exciting as being a Christian!

Most folks have never discovered the difference between the one and the other, so that there are those who sincerely try to live a life they do not have, substituting religion for God, Christianity for Christ, and their own noble endeavors for the energy, joy, and power of the Holy Spirit. In the absence of reality, they can only grasp at rituals, stubbornly defending the latter in the absence of the former, lest they be found with neither!

They are lamps without oil, cars without gas, and pens without ink, baffled at their own impotence in the absence of all that alone can make man functional; for man was so engineered by God that the presence of the Creator within the creature is indispensable to His humanity. Christ gave Himself for us to give Himself to us! His presence puts God back into the man! He came that we might have life — God's life!

There are those who have a life they never live. They have come to Christ and thanked Him only for what He did, but do not live in the power of who He is. Between the Jesus who "was" and the Jesus who "will be" they live in a spiritual vacuum, trying with no little zeal to live for Christ a life that only He can live in and through them, perpetually begging for what in Him they already have!

Christ Himself: the content of Christian Faith

There is something, which makes Christianity more than a religion, more than an ethic, and more than the idle dream of the sentimental idealist. It is this something, which makes it relevant to each one of us right now as a contemporary experience. It is the fact that Christ Himself is the very life content of the Christian faith. It is He who makes it "tick." "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:24). The One who calls you is the One who does that to which He calls you. "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). He is the very dynamic of all His demands.

Christ did not die simply that you might be saved from a bad conscience, or even to remove the stain of past failure, but to "clear the decks" for divine action. You have been told that Christ died to save you. This is gloriously true in a very limited, though vital sense. In Romans 5:10 we read, "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." The Lord Jesus Christ therefore ministers to you in two distinct ways—He reconciles you to God by His death, and He saves you by His life.

This, however, is but the beginning of the story, "for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, (now an

accomplished fact,) we shall be saved (as a continuing process) by His life" (Romans 5:10). The glorious fact of the matter is this no sooner has God reconciled to Himself the man who has responded to His call, than He re-imparts to him, as a forgiven sinner, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and this restoration to him of the Holy Spirit constitutes what the Bible calls regeneration, or new birth. Titus 3:5-6, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." The One who calls you to a life of righteousness is the One who by your consent lives that life of righteousness through you! The One who calls you to minister to the needs of humanity is the One who by your consent ministers to the needs of humanity through you! The One who calls you to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, is the One who by your consent, goes into all the world and preaches the gospel to every creature through you! **IA**

[YOU MUST] TRUST CHRIST, NOT ONLY FOR THE DEATH HE DIED IN ORDER TO REDEEM YOU, BUT ALSO FOR THE LIFE THAT HE LIVES AND WAITS TO LIVE THROUGH YOU

Taken from Ian Thomas's book The Saving Life of Christ (Zondervan Publishing House. ©1961) and Ian's foreword for Bob George's book Classic Christianity (Harvest House Publishers. ©1989).



By Joshua Duvauchelle

DE-STRESSING Christmas

As Christmas rolls around, it can be either a season of cheer or a season to fear. The stress of the holidays, with all its planning, negotiating - whose parents should you visit this year? And the financial strain of gift-giving can make you want to pack away the mistletoe. Don't let Christmas pull you and your spouse apart. Instead, careful planning can help de-stress the holiday so you have more time to truly celebrate the gift of Christ together.

The Giving of Gifts

The gift-giving tradition can put a lot of financial and emotional stress on a couple. On the Holmes and Rahe psychological stress scale, Christmas traditions are listed as more stressful than minor law violations, and financial difficulties rank equal to the death of a close friend. Combined? Bah! Humbug!

Set a budget: Keep the "ghost of Christmas past" from haunting your credit card statements and your thoughts. Look at your finances together and create a realistic spending limit for the Christmas season. Account for any upcoming

expenditures you may have in the new year. Marriage therapist Marion Goertz recommends enlisting an objective third party if you and your spouse can't agree on a budget.

Make a list and check it twice: Work with your spouse to decide who you'll bless with gifts. If your budget is tight this year, don't be afraid to take cost-cutting measures. For example, you could give one gift per family instead of one to each individual.

Get creative: You don't have to buy your presents from the mall. Baked goods and handmade crafts can be budget-friendly and memorable.

Don't wait until December 24th: Last-

minute shopping is rushed, stressful and often offers up nothing but the slimmest of pickings. Keep an eye out for sales all year and store the gifts until Christmas. "Christmas . . . doesn't sneak up on you," writes David Ramsey, author of The Total Money Makeover, saying that there's no reason for not being prepared. If you plan in advance, you'll save money and cut down on stress.

Visiting the In-Laws

Decking the halls is great. Decking your in-laws? Not so much. Holiday stress, paired with disagreements with or about your spouse's parents, can make you want to climb up the

AUTHENTIC | CURRENT ISSUES

chimney. Annie Chapman, author of *The Mother-In-Law Dance*, says that anyone who's been married for longer than one Christmas knows just how taxing it can be. But don't let it spoil your egg nog!

Talk to your spouse: Disagreements with or about your in-laws can make your spouse feel threatened or defensive, and likewise for you if your spouse doesn't get along with your parents. Make it clear that you love your spouse unconditionally and that any holiday tensions, big or small, don't change that.

Take a break: At a family gathering, don't wait until you're so frustrated that you engage in a verbal conflict. If things start grating on your nerves, take a break and step away from the situation. A walk outdoors or a quick jaunt to the store can give you the breathing space you need to calm down before things get out of control.

Plan ahead: Waiting until the Christmas season to announce

that you're not planning to attend Christmas dinner can create disappointment or resentment in your in-laws. Plan your holiday schedule with your spouse months in advance and alert each set of in-laws about your plans.

Look inward and upward:

Sometimes, it's not the in-laws who are grumpy and disagreeable. You may not be able to change them, but you can change yourself and your personal reaction to situations. Pray and meditate on God's Word and ask for discernment, patience and wisdom.

Enjoying Christmas Together

The fake snow littering the shopping malls, the Christmas songs in TV commercials and the everyday busyness of the holidays can diminish some of Christmas' peaceful glory. Rediscover the true meaning of the holidays together as a couple.

Discuss expectations: Everyone has a different childhood tradition or

expectation that defines the holiday for them. Talk to your spouse about the seasonal practices and traditions that mean a lot to you. Together, you can create new traditions that encompass both of your expectations so no one's left feeling like the holiday lacked a little lustre.

Share the to-do list: Whether it's stringing the lights or hanging the stockings, share the common Christmas tasks. Not only does it make the work fly by faster, but it's also an opportunity to spend time together, enjoying another treasured aspect of the Christmas tradition.

Be generous: By blessing others during Christmas, you can capture the true essence of Christ's birth. From serving at a local soup kitchen to volunteering in your church's Christmas performance, getting involved in the community reminds us all of what Christmas really means. |A



A CONVERSATION WITH Ray Comfort

By Dave Firth

Well-known Kiwi evangelist Ray Comfort is relentless of his sharing Christ to the lost. Authentic Magazine's Dave Firth caught up with him to see how things were going and to talk about what's holding Christian men back from sharing their faith.

What memories do you have from growing up in NZ?

Sue and I read what's happening in New Zealand every night. I know things have changed in recent years, but growing up in New Zealand for me it was one of a safe, happy, and carefree childhood. We lived opposite a beach and I spent most of my life in the ocean, and then making tree huts, and as I got older, I was deeply into the surfing scene.

How often do you get back to NZ and when you do what do you get up to?

Since coming to the US in 1989, I've been back to New Zealand 14 times. This was mainly to see my parents and my sister, and to get some good

food. I'm talking about cream buns, meat pies, real fish and chips, and other things that are not available in the US.

Tell us about Living Waters and what you spend your time doing these days.

Living Waters started in 1974. A friend named Marcus Ardern gave me the artwork for the first addition of a free paper called, "Living Waters." I had it printed, and we gave away hundreds of thousands of copies. Around the same time I started printing gospel tracts.

I also produced a surf movie back in 1972, was born again the same year, and sometime later I began producing films. Over the years we

have printed hundreds of millions of tracts, and I've kept producing movies. Our YouTube channel has more than 48 million views, which really encourages me. We have access right into the heart of this godless world, through the Internet.

Sharing our faith seems to be a real challenge for Christian men. Why do you think we are so uncomfortable sharing the good news of Jesus when we'd be quite happy to share that McDonalds is doing 'Buy one, get one free'?

Many are held captive by their fears because they haven't been equipped to share their faith. Living Waters exists to come beside such people and help them to overcome their fears. One of the best ways to do



■ Written by Joshua Duvauchelle. Focus on the Family New Zealand. www.family.org.nz

this is to listen to a free teaching on LivingWaters.com called "Hell's Best Kept Secret." It's on the right side of the homepage, and it will really help. I also suggest not to pray for less fear. Pray for more love. That's what's lacking if people are going to Hell and we couldn't care less.

Would you take a different approach between evangelising in NZ and America?

There is little difference. We took our production team to Europe and preached the gospel in 13 countries in 13 days, and filmed 13 episodes for a television program (Season Four). We did this to show that the biblical gospel is relevant to all cultures.

I think the only difference would be, the kiwi accent. Americans love it, that makes it easier to talk to them.

We've seen some of your amazing video testimonies (atheists, punks etc) but what is the most dramatic conversion you've been involved in?

The most dramatic conversion I have ever seen, is my own. I was made a new person overnight! The first time I was born, it was radical. I didn't exist, and then I did. My new birth was just as radical. That was 45 years ago, and I am still shaking my head in amazement at what God did in my life.

Where do you think is the best place to evangelise (workplace, socially, on the street)?

Undoubtably the best place to evangelize is anywhere you meet strangers. It's very hard to witness in your workplace, to your family, or to your neighbors. This is because if you offend a stranger, you've lost nothing. If he calls you an idiot and says that he will never talk to you

again, you've lost nothing. But if that happens with your family or your workplace or your neighbors, you've lost everything. That's why it's scary to talk to those you love.

How do you speak to lost relatives who aren't interested in Christian things?

Very carefully and gently, then back off, and become rich in good works. Be extremely loving to a point where you give them gifts when it's not Christmas or their birthday. Good works speak volumes to loved-ones. A bottle of sparkling nonalcoholic grape juice for no reason, can speak louder than 1000 sermons.

You've been involved in lots of high impact projects over the years but what has been the most rewarding personally?

We produced a pro-life movie called "180." It shows eight people, who are pro-abortion changing their minds in a matter of seconds and becoming a pro-life, because they were asked one question.

The most rewarding thing to come out of that, has been mothers showing up at the ministry holding babies that are alive because of

the movie. They were planning an abortion, watched "180" and change their minds.

Now you're based in California these days but Kiwis can still learn and study with you and the Living Waters team via the School of Biblical Evangelism. Tell us about that?

LivingWaters.com is set up to equip Christians to share their faith biblically. Much of the material on the site is completely free. We have audios, videos, gospel tracts, movies and a whole lot of other things to help you. We also have the School of Biblical Evangelism. It has 18,000 online students. I would suggest subscribing to our YouTube channel. That way you can be kept up-to-date with our new productions.

Authentic Magazine exists to grow Christian men in their faith and give them tools and resources to share their faith with their friends. What do you think about that?

I think it's wonderful. I hope you have great success. You'll need a lot of prayer and a strong will, because encouraging Christians into what Spurgeon called the "irksome" task of evangelism, is like bathing wild cats

and trying to floss their back teeth at the same time. God bless you for doing this.

We know the Bible is very important to you. A lot of Christian Men struggle to read the Bible. What advice can you give them about getting back in to God's Word?

I have been reading the Bible every day without fail for the last 45 years. I thought every Christian did that. But I was wrong. Most are lazy and undisciplined and love their belly more than their Bible. They wouldn't go a day without feeding their stomach, but they will go a week without reading the Word.

If we profess to love God, we should listen to what He says. Say to yourself, "No Bible, no breakfast." Then keep your word. There are times that I wake up in the morning and my hair is messy, my face is pale, and I could kill a house-plant from 20


paces with my breath. I don't feel like reading my Bible. But I don't go by feelings. I'm no longer my own. I am bought with a price. I'm a soldier of Christ. Therefore, I discipline myself to daily read the War Manual.

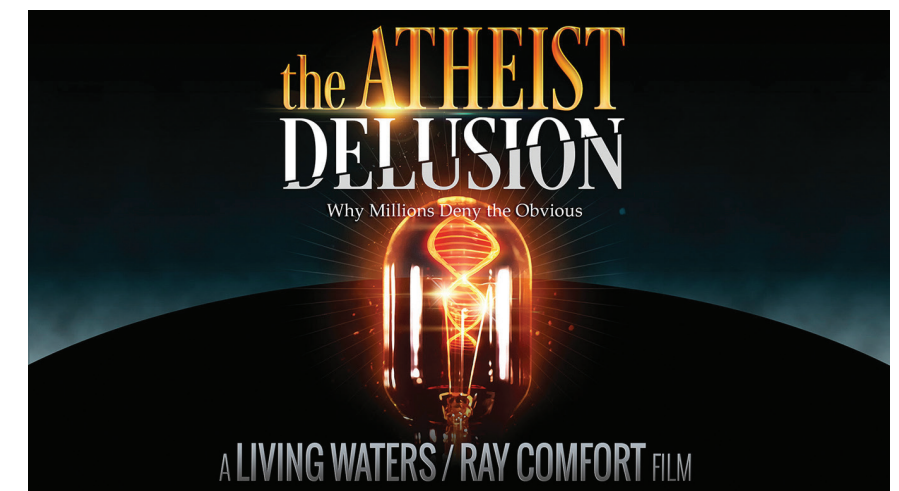
Sorry but I have to ask...Marmite or Vegemite?

Marmite for sure. I'm a Kiwi through and through. We watch rugby every

week. Love it. Love the All Blacks. Love New Zealand.

Ray, you're a top bloke and a huge encouragement to Christian Kiwis. How can we support the work you're doing or how can we get involved?

Pray for us, subscribe to our YouTube channel, reach out to the lost while we still have time. | 



THE ATHEIST DELUSION IS AVAILABLE TO WATCH FREE ON YOUTUBE





Who wrote Hebrews?

By Chuck Missler

The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the two greatest theological treatises of the New Testament.¹ This letter is, in a real sense, the "Leviticus" of the New Testament, detailing how the Lord Jesus Christ is both the fulfillment and the successor to all that had gone on before.

The extreme dilemma of the Jewish Christians - especially while the Temple was still standing - was their extreme predicament. They had been drawn from a divinely appointed religion, with divinely appointed priests officiating in a divinely appointed Temple, accomplishing a divinely ordered service, all of which had been ennobled throughout their entire history.

How could believing priests and Pharisees remain "zealous of the Law"? It was, after all, the Jewish world that had crucified Christ and was repudiating Him.

This letter was clearly aimed at the people who were now Christians but had come out of Judaism. It focuses on the background that they came from, and tries to demonstrate how Jesus was a fulfillment of those

things; in fact, he superseded those things. Jesus is the very fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Authorship

Who wrote the book of Hebrews? Hebrews is an unsigned book and there are many theories, but the available evidence, we feel, seems to justify a Pauline ascription.

Apollos? Some suggest that Apollos wrote this epistle, although there is not much evidence to support the theory. Furthermore, Apollos was from Alexandria, and yet even in Alexandria in the earliest times the book was associated with Paul. So, if Apollos was the author, somehow he didn't even convince his own hometown.

Barnabas? Others ascribe the book to Barnabas, but here again there is no evidence to support this theory.

There are some spurious writings (that are not regarded as authentic) that were attributed to Barnabas, but their style is so different from the epistle to the Hebrews that if one can conclude that the writings attributed to Barnabas were at all indicative of Barnabas style, he clearly didn't write the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Paul? There are many stylistic reasons that point to its Pauline authorship.

Pauls Special Mark

If one recognizes that there were apparently forgeries of Thessalonian letters being circulated, then several passages become clearer.²

Thus at the end of that letter, Paul includes a sort of special mark, a token: The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in

every epistle: so I write.

2 Thessalonians 3:17
Note how Paul is emphasizing that he has signed the letter with his own hand (most were probably drafted by an amanuensis or secretary). He would include a sign at the end so they would know that the letter was really from him.

So what is this signature or style item that is included in every letter?³

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
2 Thessalonians 3:18

And how does Hebrews end?
Grace be with you all. Amen.
Hebrews 13:25

Why is this so impressive of Paul's style? Because the word "Grace" does not even appear in the other epistles!⁴

The Trilogy on Habakkuk

The key verse in Habakkuk is:
The Just shall live by faith.

Habakkuk 2:4. This verse became the primary banner that inflamed the Reformation. It would seem that Paul penned a deliberate trilogy on this very verse.

Who are "the Just"? The Book of Romans answers the question (Cf. Rom 1:17). How then "Shall [they] Live"? Galatians shows how we are to live -- called out of religious externalism (Cf. Gal 3:11). "By faith..." What is the epistle on "faith"? This Epistle to the Hebrews (Cf. Heb 10:38)!

As a former systems engineer and technologist in the information sciences, I tend to favor evidences that reveal an architecture and integrity of design, and it is this unique characteristic of the entire Bible that has been the foundation

of our ministry.

Thus, it is the apparent trilogy of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews, dealing specifically on Habakkuk 2:4, that causes us to lean strongly on the inference that Hebrews was authored by Paul. (If it should turn out that it was by another, then this very design becomes an even more impressive "fingerprint" of the Holy Spirit!)

Other Stylistic Evidences

In Romans 8:35-39, Paul lists a number of things that can separate you from the love of Christ. He lists seven things, and then 10 more, for a total of 17.

In Hebrews 12:18-24 we find a similar list: Again there are seven things, and then 10 more, for a total of 17. And in Galatians 5:19-21 there is also a list of 17 things.

(Again, it is Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews that evidence a similarity of style.)

Paul also favored the Greek word, *huioi*, "sons," rather than a similar Greek word, *teknon*, which other writers use, which means "children."

The "witness of the Holy Spirit," discussed in Romans 8:16 and Hebrews 10:15 also hints at a common authorship.

In Hebrews 13:18, the writer says, "Pray for us." There is only one epistle writer that makes that specific request: none other than Paul.

The Role of Timothy

In Chapter 13 of Hebrews, there is a reference that notes that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was accompanied by Timothy.⁵ We know from a number of epistles that Timothy accompanied Paul.⁶ We do not have any record of him

accompanying anyone else. While that does not mean that Timothy exclusively accompanied Paul, we do not have any evidence of him accompanying any other writer.

Why Anonymous?

So if Paul did write the book, why would he keep it anonymous? From Acts 9:15 we know that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. While the Gentiles were his primary mission field, he also had an intense burden for his own brethren.

Looking at Paul's life, it is clear that Paul would sooner or later write an epistle to the Hebrews.

So why would he write one and keep it anonymous? Because every time he tried to address them there were riots. They were prejudiced against his ministry; he was distrusted by the Jews because he had converted to Christianity.

He never recovered the confidence of the Jewish side; they reputed his apostleship and also feared his attack against their ancient rituals and ceremonies.⁷

Nowhere in the book of Hebrews does Paul assert his apostleship, unlike his other epistles, but instead he builds his entire thesis uniquely from basic Jewish arguments from Old Testament passages. He exalts Christ, not his own apostleship.

There are reasons in the text that we could infer that the book was probably written after Paul's first imprisonment, but before his second arrest.⁸

It was clearly written prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. The impending destruction of the Temple may have been one of the reasons that God had Paul show them how they needed, as Christian believers, not only to accept Christ,

but to come out of Judaism.⁹

Peters Testimony

Peter also seems to allude to this letter in 2 Peter 3:15-16:

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you...

2 Peter 3:15

Peter here ascribes a letter written by Paul to the Hebrews. But the other 13 Pauline epistles all went to Gentile churches. So if Hebrews was not written by Paul, then there is a missing letter written by Paul to the Hebrews.

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:16

Here Peter is commenting on Paul's letter, saying that Paul had written some things that were hard to understand (indeed, the difficulties in Hebrews 6 and 10).

Pressing On to Maturity

The primary focus of this letter to believers is to press on to spiritual maturity.¹⁰ For anyone serious about their spiritual growth, both the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Hebrews are absolutely essential to thoroughly understand.

And is there any priority or commitment that is more important -- or urgent -- in your own life? Pray about it. |A|

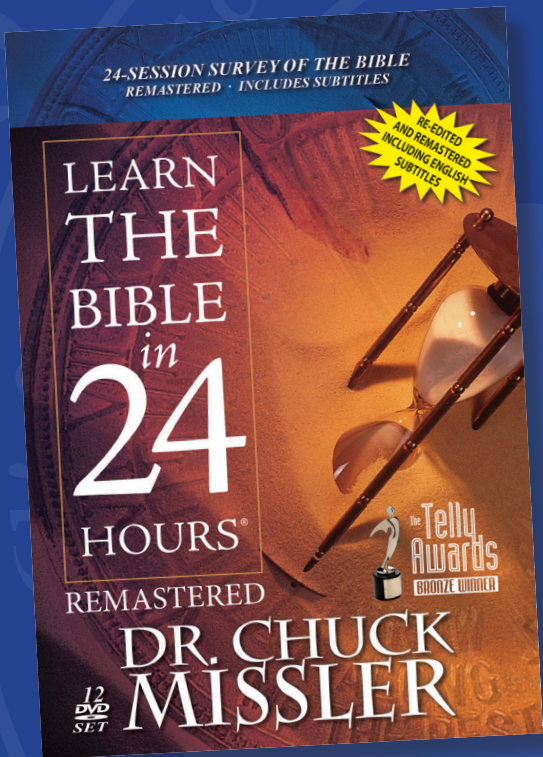
1. The other most essential is, of course, the Book of Romans.
2. Thess 2:2.
3. Rom 16:24; 1 Cor 16:23-24; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25.
4. Except in 2 Peter 3:18, where it is used as an instruction or exhortation and not as a salutation or blessing as here.
5. Heb 13:23, 25.
6. 2 Cor 1:1; Col. 1:1 and 1 Thess 1:1.
7. Acts 21:27-28; 22:17-22.
8. Heb 13:23.
9. Cf. 1 Cor 9:20; Acts 9:15.
10. Heb 5:11-14; 10:32-39

■ 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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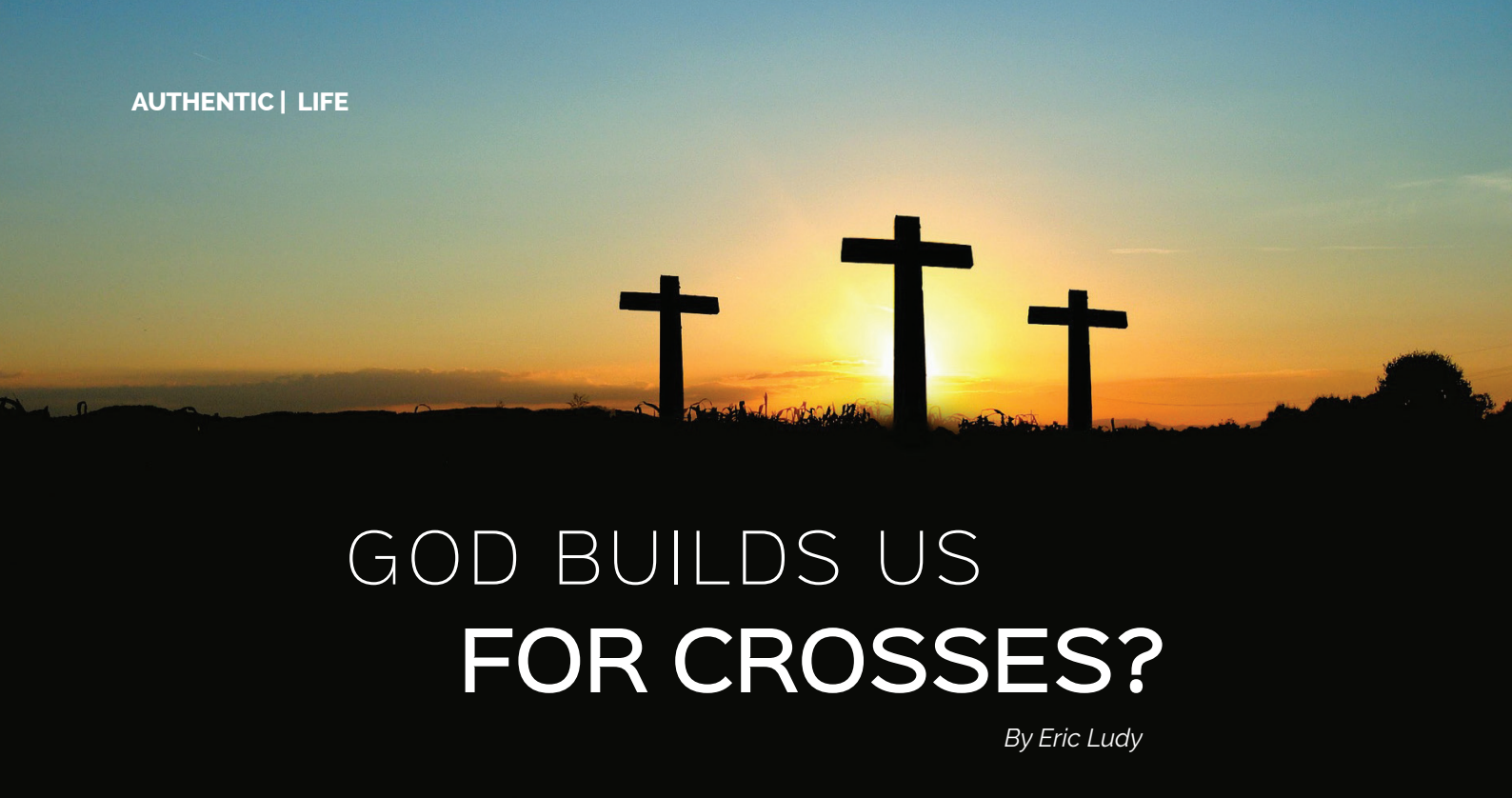
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GOD BUILDS US FOR CROSSES?

By Eric Ludy

We've all said things that we wish we could retract and somehow cram back into our mouths. Well, I made a quick statement in my latest blog entry that garnered some extra attention from all the die-hard phraseologists out there.

And it was the strangest thing, even after looking back over the statement, I still thought it a good one. However, there were a few amigos who wished they could somehow cram the words back into my mouth (or in this case, my keyboard).

To me it wasn't that controversial of a statement, it just seemed like a rather obvious thing. But often, things that make total sense to us, don't translate the same to everyone else around us.

I said, "God builds us for crosses."

Most of those concerned about my provocative statement weren't concerned about the rest of my blog, in fact they liked it, but they were concerned of what people might conclude if such a statement was left unclarified.

"Ludy, it sounds like you are saying that God erects two pieces of woods, removes some long painful nails from

his toolbox, and then delights to crucify us."

How come when I repeat the words, "God builds us for crosses," that isn't what pops into my mind?

"God builds us through crosses," was a great suggestion from one of my good friends. By exchanging "for" with "through," that uncomfortable zing can certainly be avoided from the statement. However, the statement would then only partially express what I believe.

You see, whereas I believe that God builds us through crosses, I also believe God builds us for crosses. No, I don't believe that God seeks to strip us naked, scourge us, torture us, openly mock us, and kill us. Such hellish behavior is wholly the enemy's business. God isn't the inventor of crosses, and he isn't the one who wields them as an instrument of suffering and death. But our God is the One who can take this horrible device of persecution and turn it into a supernaturally charged instrument

of life. He takes what the enemy means for evil and turns it to a profound good.

What was Jesus built for?

I realize that there are various things you could shout out as an answer to that question.

"He was built to demonstrate the glory of the Father!" someone might say.

"He was built to live out the human life to perfection so that we could see the perfect pattern of righteousness!" Someone else might add.

"He was built to save us from our sins." Yet another might throw into the hopper.

All very good answers, and perfectly valid answers to my question. However, there's something specific I'm fishing for.

Drum roll please . . .

"He was built for the Cross."

He was built for that One great Day – that Day when the sin of the whole world would come crushing down upon His shoulders. He was built to not faint, to not falter at Gethsemane. He was built to keep standing and march forward with audacity even when betrayed to His face and abandoned by his closest friends. He was built for endurance, for long-suffering, for the awful brutality He would endure at the end of the Roman whip. He was built to go as a Lamb silent unto the shearers. He was built to succeed in the most dreadful of circumstances, the most harrowing of trials.

JESUS WAS BUILT FOR THE CROSS. HE WAS BUILT FOR THAT DECISIVE MOMENT. HE WAS BUILT TO WIN.

What is a Soldier built for in training?

For the ease of furlough? No - for the dread of D-Day, the shock of Omaha Beach.

A soldier is built to remain standing under the greatest physical and mental strains. He's built to be a hero amidst the greatest difficulties when other men might fail. He's built to come out the other side of that bomb blast in one piece.

What is a rugby player built for?

The comforts of the off-season? No - for the pressures of the Rugby World Cup Final. He's built for the final ten with the clock running down and the ABs four points down – he's built for exploits, for the guts to rise up when the chips are down. He's built to get that ball over the try line in the face

of the greatest obstacles. He's built for victory NOT defeat.

What is a Christian built for?

For the sweet songs of worship amidst the congregation? For the tender words of love shared between the beloved? Yes, but there is more.

Like Jesus, a Christian is built to win. God doesn't build losers, He doesn't craft failures. He's interested in victory. And so He constructs his men and women out of the stuff that gets them through this life in triumph.

He builds us for Gethsemane, for rejection, betrayal, slander, shame, and ridicule. He builds us to keep walking when all around us falter. He builds us to stand Athanasius Contra Mundum when everyone about us sides against the Living God. He builds us to receive the cat of nine tails without forsaking our King and without relinquishing our mission. He builds us for those two pieces of lumber ruthlessly pressed down upon our shoulders and splintering our skin with agonizing pain. He builds us for the enemy's nails, the enemy's pain, and the enemy's worst. He build us to rise victorious, to remain faithful, to not cower in the season of greatest trial.

Now, to be quite honest, in some ways I'm taking a dimension of the Christian life and putting it under a magnifying glass. For, though it is true that God builds us for crosses, He also builds us for the life in-between, which might not always be made of splintery wood.

So, in all fairness, you could say, "God builds us for today!" I mean, after all, what's the good of being built for some day way in the future, when we can't even make it through the trials facing us today. You could say numerous other things, equally as true – For instance, "God builds us for

His pleasure; God builds us to bear much fruit; God builds us to bear the image of His Son; God builds us to be holy; God builds us to worship Him; and God builds us to effervesce with overwhelming love, extraordinary joy, and indescribable peace."

You see, the Christian life is a bit too grand to stick into one small phrase. The small phrase may be true, but it might only be a piece of an even greater truth.

So, should I have said, "God builds us for crosses?" I think so. It's a mighty truth, a stunning reality. But could I have said it in such a way that didn't cause the entire point of my last blog to be obscured.

Probably.

One of my beloved phraseologist friends suggested, "God prepares us for crosses." Hmm. God prepares us for crosses. That's pretty well put. It's true, and yet, it doesn't carry around all that unnecessary mental baggage causing people to envision God erecting crosses and crucifying His children on them.

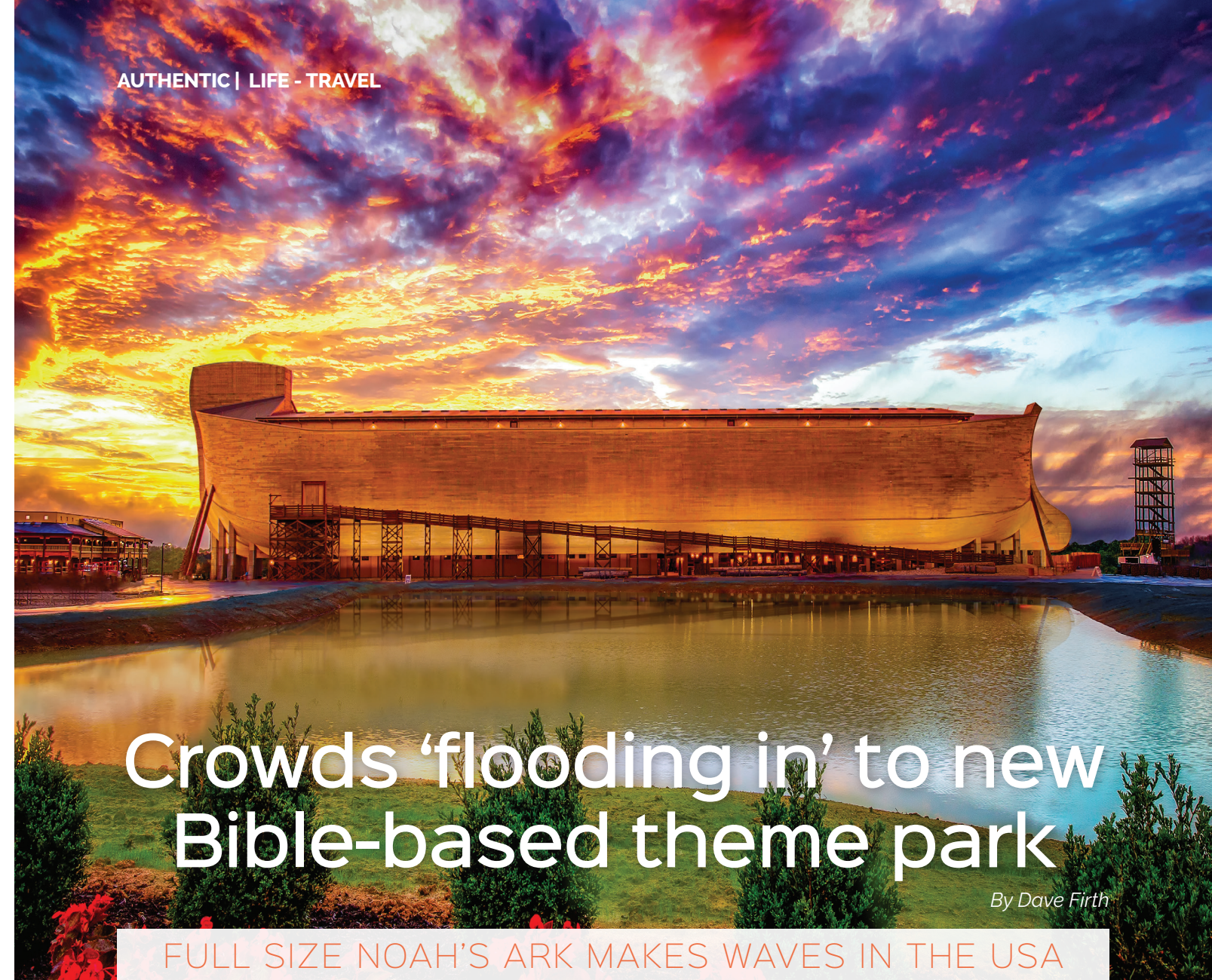
The grand Truth of Heaven isn't always that easy to communicate down here in this sin-encrusted world. Words can often be trip-ups rather than tools aiding us in our efforts.

However, even though we might not say it perfectly, I think we should still speak it. And if we realise we could have said it better, we apologise for our inadequacy, and we say it better the next time. But we live in a world that is dying for lack of Truth, so speak we must, even if our words still lack that final polish.

IA



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



Crowds 'flooding in' to new Bible-based theme park

By Dave Firth

FULL SIZE NOAH'S ARK MAKES WAVES IN THE USA

This July, the internationally renowned 'Ark Encounter' theme park celebrated its first anniversary as it continues to welcome thousands of guests each day to the massive 510-foot-long reproduction of Noah's Ark. If you find yourself in the States and have always wanted to experience something of what Noah felt, standing on the ark - this may be the place to go.

On the completion of its first year of attendance, the impressive visitor traffic is still increasing. A nationwide TV and billboard advertising campaign in the USA, and word-of-mouth buzz being generated by visitors are prompting more and more people from around the world to travel and see the stunningly large

Noah's Ark. And New Zealanders are loving it too!

The life-size Ark and its nearby sister attraction, the Creation Museum, have become major international tourist destinations. Almost every day, several nations are represented; in addition, reporters from all over the

world regularly tour the Ark.

"What strikes me as I walk through the large parking lots of both attractions," observes Ken Ham, the visionary behind the theme parks, "is that about 95 per cent of the vehicles have out-of-state license plates. On a given summer day, more

than 10,000 guests, traveling here in thousands of vehicles, will visit one of our attractions. The words I hear the most from guests in describing their encounter with the Ark are 'amazing,' 'awesome,' 'way beyond our expectations,' and 'spectacular.' It's become a huge tourist hit."

The attractions are owned and operated by Answers in Genesis (AiG), a Christian ministry founded by Ken Ham. Ten weeks after the Ark opened on July 7, 2016, the Ark, it had already welcomed 325,000 visitors. That figure is significant because a study commissioned by the State of Ohio predicted that if the Ark Encounter were a 'creationist attraction' (and it is), it would draw only 325,000 visitors the first year.

Even though the Ark did not open until the middle of the tourist season in July of 2016, it has still seen 1 million visitors in its first year. AiG

predicts that the second year's attendance will be closer to 2 million, based on several factors: hundreds of motor coaches are booked to visit (organized by numerous tour companies), other group bookings are also increasing, people now having ample time to plan their vacations to the Ark, and other encouraging trends.

While this part of the USA has many excellent attractions, the Ark and museum are unlike most of them in that they draw about 95 per cent of visitors from outside the local area. Internationals make up a growing percentage of visitors so if you're thinking of visiting the States, look up the Ark Encounter - tell them you read about it in Authentic Magazine and see what happens (we honestly don't know what will happen but they really like us and we really like them so it's always worth finding out!)

The Ark Encounter was built to answer the most-asked questions about the account of Noah and to present the Gospel of Christ. This theme park is not just about entertainment, but also about presenting the Christian message. "The Ark is a reminder," said Ham. "To remind generations of the truth of God's Word. It's our way of presenting this to the world."

Located just south of Cincinnati, Ohio, the Ark Encounter is within a day's drive of almost two thirds of America's population. In addition to the full-scale Noah's Ark with three decks of world-class exhibits in over 120,000 square feet, the campus of the Ark Encounter theme park includes the Ararat Ridge Zoo (with petting zoo), zip lines, live entertainment, a 1,500-seat themed restaurant, and fair-trade shopping. You can find out much more at ArkEncounter.com.



And for more information about the incredible work of Answers in Genesis, including masses of information about the subject of Creation vs Evolution, visit www.answersingenesis.org

And watch out for the next edition of Authentic magazine where we will have an exclusive interview with AiG founder, Ken Ham, about his life's work – showing a lost world how ALL of the Bible can be trusted and points to Jesus! |A

WHAT PEOPLE THINK:

"An undeniable spectacle, and it must be seen to be believed."

Chicago Tribune

"The Ark is remarkable. It's some of the best wood-working I've ever seen."

Jimmy Carter, Former US President

"We recently made a trip overseas and one of the things we did was visit the Ark Encounter. It was amazing. The Ark is a grand museum but it is also an interactive and educational experience. At the end, the gospel is clearly and effectively presented, leaving each individual with no doubt about who Jesus is and what it means to be saved. This visit was the highlight of our year, and it honestly exceeded our expectations. GO! You HAVE to see this, and watch the Scriptures come alive!" Dale, Geraldine, NZ

ARK ENCOUNTER®

STATISTICS:

The Ark is the largest timber-frame structure in the world

- It is 510 feet long and 50 feet tall (that's 155m long by 15m wide).

- It has had over 1 million visitors in its first year of opening

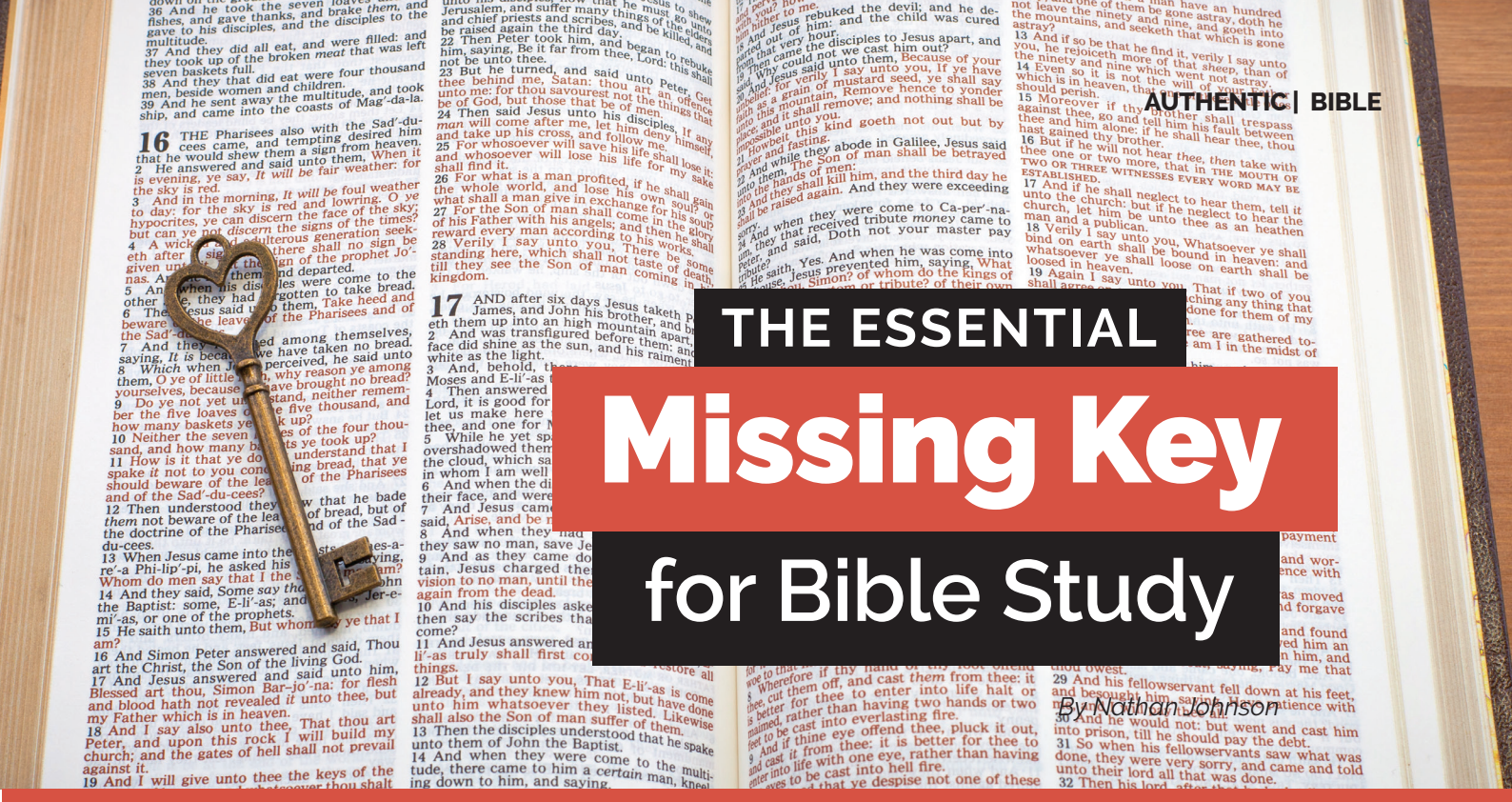
- It cost over \$100m US Dollars to create.

- Over 3.1 million board feet of timber was used in the construction of the Ark.

"Words can't express how you feel when your eyes first look on the Ark. You have to go there to see it for yourself. It's amazing, breathtakingly big, biblically authentic, faith-building, and wonderfully evangelistic."

Ray Comfort, Living Waters





AUTHENTIC| BIBLE

AUTHENTIC| BIBLE

Word -> Sentence -> Paragraph
-> Chapter -> Section -> Book ->
Corpus -> OT/NT -> Canon

To take our example again from
Ephesians 3.20:

- Words “exceedingly abundantly”
- The context for these words is the sentence of 3.20-21: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”
- Which is located in the paragraph (which is the prayer Paul prays) in 3.14-21
- Found in the section which makes up chapter 3
- Which sits in a larger section of Ephesians 1-3 (in Ephesians there are two major sections, chapters 1-3 and chapter 4-6).
- The context for this larger section is the entire book of Ephesians
- The next layer of context for Ephesians is all of Paul's writings (the Pauline Corpus) Which sits in the New Testament.
- Whose context is the entire Bible

How can I study in light of the context?

I realize you could forever get lost in context. If I was studying the two words above and wanted to really see it in light of the context, I would have to read the entire Bible to do a study on those two words. Probably not very practical (though incredibly beneficial). So let me give you a few thoughts to think about context in your personal study:

Read what is before and after. At the very minimum, if you are studying

a text, make sure you read what is before and after your passage.

Never pull a single verse out. Even if you are using it as supplemental reference, make sure you know the context of the passage.

Study words, topics, and concepts throughout the book, corpus, and Bible. If you come across a word or concept and want to dive deeper, make sure you look at how that word is used throughout the book you are studying, how that author uses it across his works (for example, how does John describe “belief” throughout all of his writings, not just in one), and even how that word shows up throughout the rest of the Bible.

Study expositionally. One great way to help you always stay in context is to study through a passage or book. I've been studying Ephesians for a while but as I get to the next verse, because I've already studied the previous verses, it is real easy for me to see the new passage in light of the overall context that has been building up to that point.

Check your conclusions with the context. When you are done studying, I would encourage you to go back and “check” your work against the context of the passage and against the entirety of Scripture. If you conclude that a passage tells you that you should commit adultery, I am rather sure you got off somewhere – because the entirety of Scripture declares the opposite. Scripture doesn't contradict itself so make sure your concepts and conclusions are in line with all of Scripture.

Context. Context. Context. Now go study ... in context. |A



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2018 ALL BLACKS ITINERARY

2018 Steinlager Series France

First Test v France:
Eden Park, Auckland
9 June 2018

Second Test v France:
Westpac Stadium, Wellington
16 June 2018

Third Test v France: France
Forsyth Barr Stadium, Dunedin
23 June 2018

2018 Investec Rugby Championship

Vs Australia:
Eden Park, Auckland
25 August 2018

Vs Argentina:
Trafalgar Park, Nelson
8 September 2018

Vs South Africa:
Westpac Stadium, Wellington
15 September 2018

England

The long awaited test match against England at Twickenham

All Blacks vs England
Twickenham, London
10 November 2018

Going to print we do not yet know the venues for the away legs of the Investec Rugby Championship.

What can we expect from the All Blacks in 2018?

By Barrie Hanson

In 2017 the All Blacks had more new players co-opted into their ranks than normal. Steve Hansen not only sought out new young players to join the squad but brought in some older experienced hands to bring composure and balance to the side.

What was the objective?

Nothing has changed since Steve Hansen took over. These comments at his appointment outline his focus as a coach.

"Steve's winning record is unsurpassed in the modern era. Since becoming Head Coach in 2012, he has recorded 52 wins in his 57 Tests to date, with two draws and just three losses. That's remarkable and unparalleled in international rugby.

"While Steve has a fantastic winning record, equally positive has been his intuitive ability to continue growing the team through meticulous selection and rigorous preparation, and to inspire the players to reach even greater heights."*

This year has seen some difficult matches and some disappointing results. The best in the UK were on show when the Lions visited and a draw and a loss were definitely character-building but consider what the coach said following the series:

The All Blacks certainly didn't get the rub of the officiating green in Wellington or Auckland, but Hansen took a more diverse view.

"We could have won if we'd taken the opportunities we created. It was an average way for it to finish, but that's sport. We've got to accept that

and move on and get better at what we're trying to do.

"If we reflect on what's been really for us, we've introduced two 20-year-olds (Jordie Barrett and Rieko Ioane), another couple of young backs (Ngani Laumape and Jack Goodhue), and we played some positive rugby last night. In the first two tests we didn't play enough rugby.

"From a long-term perspective it's been a good series. It's put us under a bit of pressure, some adversity, and we've had to deal with that as a group."

It is fair to say that when it comes to the All Blacks it is always about continuous improvement. When we look at the recent results – a narrow win in South Africa and a loss to the old foe in Australia we have to realize that ALL teams in both hemispheres are improving. The Northern tour will also show where the team is in terms of development. Southern hemisphere teams often struggle on tour and we will not easily forget Ireland's historic victory last year in a hurry.


So what is the plan for 2018?

It would be easy to say more "experimentation" but I do not think that will be the case. The focus is always, I repeat, always on the World Cup and as that will only be a year away. I believe we will see a more settled group of players. Steve Hansen has so much experience and he knows what he is looking for in his players. He is not slow to criticize where skills are missing

and in the heat of competition within the All Blacks camp only the truly committed survive.

However in 2017 we have seen a number of players cement their place in the squad. I am convinced that "newbies" Jordie Barrett, Rieko Ioane, Damian McKenzie, Nathan Harris, Kane Hames and Liam Squire will become fixtures in the larger squad next year.

When our "legends" retired following the last World Cup we were facing a huge challenge. I remember one commentator quoting the many hundreds of caps that were missing with the retirement of such great players. These gaps are not easily filled. The skill sets that we came to expect from these players are not easily matched and Steve Hansen has said that these can only be developed over time and under pressure.

Expect to see higher standards next year. Expect to see the same faces more regularly. Expect to see a hardening of the focus. After all in 2018 the World Cup is next year! 

* Source: <http://www.allblacks.com>.



By Dave Firth

PLAYING HARD & STANDING FIRM FOR JESUS

Tyler Boyd, at just 22 years old has an impressive record.

He has played for Waikato FC, New Zealand under 20's, for the Wellington Phoenix, five games for the All Whites and is now playing in the European Champions League.

In June 2015 Tyler left the Wellington Phoenix and joined Portuguese club Vitoria Guamaeres.

He talks to us about the challenges of being on the other side of the world, competing at the highest level and keeping his eyes, not just on the ball, but on Christ!

So, Tyler, when did you first realise that you were good enough to play professionally?

"Since I was three years old I 'believed' I could be a football player. But I grew up in America for the first 10 years of my life and never watched football on TV as a kid. It was just me with a ball.

Football wasn't as popular as basketball, baseball and American football but I just always loved football. When I was 4yrs old I told my parents I was going to be a professional footballer. I'm not sure they believed me then but that's all I wanted to do. I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

"I think it was when I was 13 or 14 and I was training every day, it hit me and I honestly believed that with the support around me and with God's help I could be a professional. I didn't have doubts. I believed. I had faith."

What's the difference between rugby players and football players?

"I think both are great sports. but seeing as I spent the first 10 years in America, rugby wasn't really an option.

That's a hard one. I could offend so many people whatever I say so I think I'll just leave it there (smiles)."

What position did you play when you first started kicking a ball?

"Oh, all over the field. Dad played me everywhere except goal.

But every coach that ever got hold of me would play me up front but I didn't really care as long as I was playing football."

A little bird tells us your mum and dad are your biggest fans. Explain the impact they've had on your life and career?

"Huge. I wouldn't be where I am without them. They took me to training; just being there for me, showing up to every game as a youngster, and being my inspiration. I owe them a lot.

I'm still at the beginning of my career and there's much more work to be done but I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if it wasn't for my mum and dad, that's for sure.

And along with my parents I have to mention my academy coach, Declan Edge and my agent Vlado Bozinoski. They've both been huge a huge part of my life "

As well as other footballers, who else do you look up to as examples in life?

"Definitely my parents. I was born and raised in a Christian home so that's where I get my morals from - my ethics. You could even say work ethic and desire to succeed.

My role models were my parents and, yeah, some other footballers; David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo in his later years.

Also Stephan Curry. He's been a huge encouragement. He's a solid Christian and he leads by example. He plays for God and he's not ashamed of his faith. He puts it out there on the table and I think it's amazing what he's doing."

So you mention your faith and growing up in a Christian home, how has your faith remained strong in such a crazy and demanding sport with all the pressure?

"I think the more pressure there is and especially during the hard times, the stronger my faith in God has been. These last few years it's been hard. I've been away from New Zealand and haven't had my family near me or my friends so I've had to rely on God and he's been my stronghold, my rock.

I START EVERY DAY WITH HIM
AND I'M USUALLY AS HAPPY
AS CAN BE.



When I have worries or anxieties I can just give them to him and then I can relax again. I start every day with him and I'm usually as happy as can be. It's been hard at times but that's what's made my faith stronger too."

What advice would you give to young Christians that are thinking about becoming professional footballers?

"Love what you do. Love the game. For me it was all about hard work, dedication and I also had faith that it would happen. I believed that if God wanted it to happen then he would put me there and surround me with the right people in my life for it to happen. I pray this a lot; I came into the world with nothing. I brought nothing into the world. God gave me the talent. He gave me these parents and the people around me. If God wants it to happen, and if you're prepared to work hard, then it will happen."

Talk us through how you handled the excitement and emotion when the opportunity came for your dream move to play in Europe?

"In Ecclesiastes 9:10 it basically says there's 'No work when you're dead' so I want to work hard! I never wanted to be mediocre. I always wanted to do my best - always striving, working harder!

I want to give 100%. I know it says in Colossians 'Whatever you do you should work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord'. Well if you're doing something for God you wouldn't give 80%, so no matter what I'm doing I want to be giving 100% because I should be working for Him. You should always give your best every time.

If I have a bad attitude about something or I really don't want to go to training then I remind myself 'Who am I working for?'"

What was your first impression of Vitoria Guamaeres? (Gee-mah-range)

"Great club. Very passionate. The fans are amazing. They threw flares, shouted and cheered.

It was really amazing and I am proud to play for them. The city is beautiful too. There's a bunch of castles around so it's very different to New Zealand."

Dedication is really important in football. What has been the hardest thing you've had to sacrifice?

"Sacrifice? Hmm, probably just being away from home. Since I was 17 I've been out of the house, on my own but now I'm literally on the other side of the world! It was a 40 hour trip to get back to NZ all in, so it's a long way away.

That's been the hardest thing – just being away from friends and family."

Best goal ever?

"Um, well a couple of seasons ago I actually scored a bicycle kick while playing for Vitoria reserves not long after I arrived in Portugal. That was probably my best goal ever.

But probably the best goal I've ever seen was [David] Beckham's goal for England against Greece that sent them to the World cup. I think it was 2001. It was a great goal but the pressure must have been insane. He just took his time and placed it perfectly in the top corner."

Soccer has changed a lot and kids see everything on the TV. What do you think about the swearing, diving and ref abuse that has crept in to the professional game?

"Yeah, I think it's important to be as honest as you can. You see a player like [Messi] and he's one of the best in the world but he stays on his feet even when people kick him and push him because he's an honest guy. It's important to be honest in everything you do."

Are we allowed to ask what your dream club (to play for) would be?

"I think Barcelona! They've been so successful and I think that's down to the mentality they have. They're such a tight knit crew. The football they play is always beautiful."

If you had a week off and could go anywhere and do anything, what would you do?

"That's easy. I'd go home. New Zealand. It's so far away so I'd take any chance to go back."

What would you do if you weren't a soccer player?

"That's such a hard question. It shows how much I always wanted to be a footballer!

Maybe something with fitness. Or I'd work with my dad as his apprentice. He's a horse chiropractor so I'd ask him to teach me!"

Have you made any good friends since you joined the club in Portugal?

"There's one guy called Joseph – he's from Ghana. I ended up living with him which has been awesome. He's a solid Christian so we can keep each other accountable and do some study together, pray together. It's like in Proverbs 27:7 it talks about 'iron sharpening iron' so it's really good to have someone sharpening me."

In June this year you moved to Tondela on loan. How was that and what have been the highs and lows so far?

"It's a great club full of amazing people. I've enjoyed the challenge so far of playing in the first division.

The only low about my time here has been being away from the people in Guimarães. I've created some good relationships there and it's a couple hours away so I don't see them often."

You've been in Portugal for 2 years now. Have you mastered the language?

"Yeah I can understand everything that is spoken to me and I can also speak well. I learned the language by myself so my grammar in Portuguese isn't perfect yet, but I can have a full conversation without any difficulties."

What do you miss most about New Zealand?

"New Zealand is so beautiful and there are a lot of things that I miss, but I miss my family and friends the most."

Ty – thanks so much for doing this article for the first ever edition of 'Authentic'. If we send you a few copies of the mag will you give it to your teammates? (we will check)

"I sure will." | A



Would you send your child to a Christian School?

Shaun Brooker is Principal of Hamilton Christian School and the deputy chair of New Zealand Association of Christian Schools. He writes this thought provoking article.

The Parable of the Holden Owner & the Ford Service Centre *By Shaun Brooker*

A friend from Church asked me today, 'Why would I send my daughter to a Christian School when it is so much cheaper and closer to send her to the state school down the road, they are both schools after all'

I told him of a man called Harry, who saved up for years to buy a brand new Holden HSV Sports car. At over \$100,000 it was his pride and joy. Every weekend Harry would meet with other Holden owners and talk about their cars and encourage each other. They were so happy and grateful for their cars that they even sung songs about them and whenever they got the opportunity to they tried to tell Ford owners what they were missing out on, invite them to their meetings and try to convert them.

Harry was so protective of his new Holden and at first he would sacrifice nothing to be sure his Holden only

got the best of everything. However with insurances and the rising cost of petrol it was expensive to own a new Holden. But as every new car owner knows it is very important to keep the car serviced. This meant the car would be in fine form for a long time and with regular servicing the car was bound to be a classic Holden one day.

Just down the road from Harry there was a Ford Servicing Centre. It was very good at servicing Ford cars, the workshop was shiny and had all the newest gadgets. Most of the people who worked there were very good at servicing Fords and there was even the odd worker who was secretly a Holden lover and was there trying put a little bit of Holden in the cars they serviced. Some Holden lovers knew this and sent their beloved Holden babies to this Ford Service Centre with the hope that one of

their fellow Holden lovers might service their car. However, the real reason some Holden lovers sent their babies to the Ford Service Centre did so because it was close and most importantly because the government funded the Ford Service Centre it was much cheaper than the Holden Service Centre across town.

When it came time to start servicing his car he considered the Holden Service Centre, but because of the location and the extra cost in sending it across town Harry chose to send his car to the Ford Service Centre. Harry knew the Ford Service Centre would only use Ford parts on his car, in fact, Holden parts were very much forbidden at the Ford Service Centre, but it was closer and cheaper.

What was good was that once a week for half an hour some people

from the Holden Club were allowed to come in and show videos of Holdens. They showed pictures and told some stories about Holdens from many years ago. They even sang some songs about Holdens, sort of. They were only really able to sing songs about tires, towbars and paint jobs, definitely no stories or songs about the intricacies of what made a Holden a Holden. They weren't even allowed to talk about the main Holden symbol and what it really stood for.

Harry even knew that at the Ford Service Centre there were some rough individuals and there was a good chance that his baby would be roughed up a little. Actually, the fact that his baby was a Holden in a Ford's world meant there was an even higher chance of some damage, but Harry hoped that the damage would not last, after all he reminded himself, it is cheaper and closer at the Ford Service Centre.

After a few years, Harry found his baby was changing. Not all the time, but sometimes when his baby got hot it made noises like a Ford, actually sometimes it even drove a little like a Ford, but worst of all for Harry sometimes it would not start on Sunday mornings when it was time to go to the Holden Club. He didn't really think too much of it as it happened to all sorts of Holdens. Harry had even heard of this happening to a Holden that was serviced by the Holden Service Centre!

One such Sunday morning, instead of walking himself to the Club he decided to get to the bottom of what was going on. He spent a lot of time digging around. Everything looked fine on the surface, but when he looked deep in the car he found some of the parts had been replaced which he hadn't realised. There were Ford parts all over the place! Some of them didn't look like they even fitted well and had to have been beaten into place. As Harry closed the bonnet, wondering what he could have done differently he realised for the first time that the Holden badge was starting to slip, just a little.

Why would you send your child to a Christian School when the school down the road is closer and cheaper?

The answer seems relatively straight forward to me. |A

■ Shaun Brooker - Principal of Hamilton Christian School. www.christianeducation.org.nz



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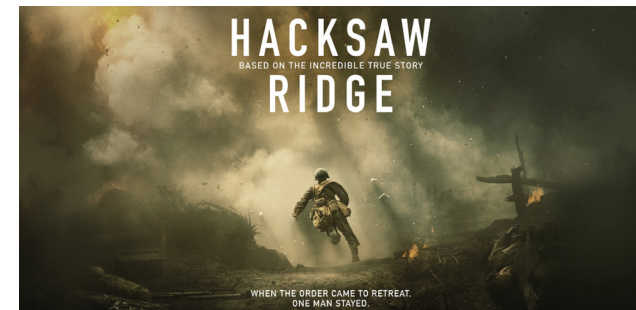
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MOVIE

REVIEWS

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It's the waning months of World War II. Germany has surrendered but Japan fights on, contesting every inch of land with ferocious tenacity.

The U.S. turns its guns on Okinawa, just 340 miles from Japan. It pounds the island with fire as soldiers and marines scurry ashore. Japanese soldiers hide underground, determined to push the Americans into the ocean. Hacksaw Ridge is one of the island's most contested points, and soon the ground lies smoking. Bodies litter it like autumn leaves; blood pools in foxholes and footprints; sounds of agony fill the sky.

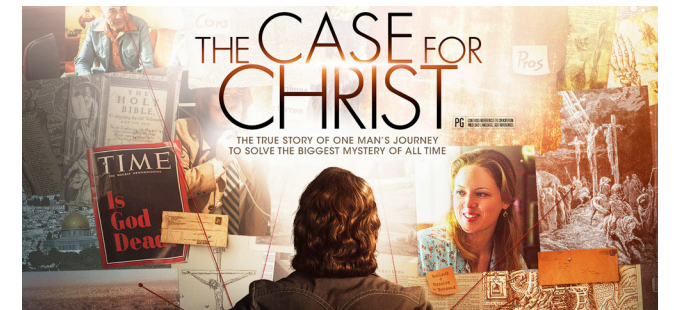
But into that black, blasted game board scurries one slight, skinny man. He carries no gun: Indeed, he fought the U.S. Army for the right not to. Bandages, not bullets, fill his pockets. He alone seems to walk upright in this land of crawling, screaming flesh. He alone dares all in this doomscape of the dying.

"Please Lord," he prays, his clothes soaked in the blood of others, his hands ripped open from the burn of rope. "Let me get one more."

Desmond Doss finds another man, almost dead—skin torn away, muscles ripped, bone exposed. He gives the man a shot of morphine—American, Japanese, doesn't matter—and hoists him to his back, returning to the face of a cliff where, below, lies sanctuary. There, at the top of the ridge, he secures the man to a rope and slowly lowers him down, the rope cutting deeper into his hands as he does. Once the man is down, Desmond breathes deep and turns his head again to the smoking ruins of Hacksaw Ridge.

"Please Lord," he says again. "Let me get one more." |A

For a full review (including content warnings) - visit pluggedin.com



Facts—solid, substantial, incontrovertible—are the only currency the rising young reporter trades in. "We are atheists," he tells his young daughter, Alison, before bed one night. "We believe in what's real, what we can see and touch."

Lee and his young wife, Leslie, once shared the same skeptical perspective on facts and superstition. But when Alison nearly chokes to death and is saved by a conscientious Christian nurse at a restaurant one night, it rocks Leslie's belief system to the core. Alfie, the nurse, tells the couple that she had a sense that she needed to have dinner at that restaurant that night. It wasn't luck or coincidence she was there, but Jesus' plan so that Alison might be spared.

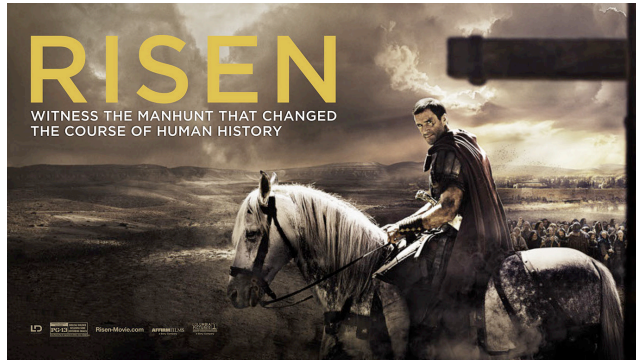
Lee laughs it off. But Leslie tracks down Alfie and begins going to church with her. Soon she tells her hard-charging, just-the-facts-ma'am husband, "I felt something. ... I talked to Jesus. I told him that I want him in my life."

Lee responds to Leslie's new faith with a toxic mixture of contempt, anger and alcohol. Then he decides that the only way to "save" his wife from drifting further into what he considers a cult-like faith is to prove to her, once and for all, that Christianity cannot possibly be supported by the facts.

One of Lee's mentors, fellow reporter and atheist Ray Nelson, is confident Lee's efforts will yield the result he wants. "You present her with the facts," Ray says, "and I'm sure she will find her way back to the truth."

And so the award-winning investigative journalist launches into a passionate—and secret—crusade to disprove his wife's nascent faith by proving, he hopes, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ never happened. |A

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"I'm yet sticky with filth."

So the Roman tribune Clavius tells a messenger when he's summoned to appear before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. No matter, the man says. Pilate summons you. And when a man with the power Pilate wields summons you, obedience is the only option.

"I have a situation," Pilate tells the tired and dirty Clavius, who's just returned from a battle in which he and his troops put down yet another insurrection of angry Jews. The "situation" involves the execution of a man named Yeshua, one who claimed to be the Messiah, one who claimed He would rise again in three days after His death.

"I had to crucify him," Pilate says nonchalantly.

Still, Pilate is anything but nonchalant when it comes to putting down the stubbornly persistent Jewish uprisings. And he is determined to make sure nothing so scandalous as a "resurrection" occurs with Yeshua.

And so Clavius is given the task of making sure Yeshua's body is put in the tomb ... and that it stays there.

But when Yeshua's body doesn't stay where it's supposed to, and two drunken guards don't want to talk, well, Clavius isn't happy. And neither is Pilate.

"We must find a body," Pilate orders his subordinate. "Find the corpse of this cursed Yeshua before it rots."

Clavius sets off to search, and he does find something. But it most certainly isn't a corpse.

Risen accomplishes something quite remarkable: It tells the familiar, timeless story of Jesus' death and resurrection from a fresh vantage point. The result is a movie that invites viewers to look at our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, not from an insider's perspective, but from an outsider's; through the eyes of someone with no reason to believe and every reason to be skeptical about the mind-blowing miracles that have just been performed.

And the story here is one that may very well prompt many moviegoers to see the one called Yeshua through fresh eyes, just as Clavius does. |A

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Through their reviews, articles and discussions, they hope to spark intellectual thought, spiritual growth and a desire to follow the command of Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ"

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SUMMER FAMILY MOVIES



A dazzling, mysterious star has appeared in the heavens. That blazing object prompts three wise men and their camels—Deborah, Cyrus and Felix—to begin the long journey toward, well, actually, they don't know quite where. But they're convinced the celestial sign portends the birth of a king.

Someone else has taken anxious notice of the star too: King Herod. It means something. But he's not sure what. The unexpected arrival of the three visitors from the East only amplifies his paranoia, especially when they carry on about bringing gifts for a king—a different king than Herod.

Back in Nazareth, the birth of Mary's baby is now fast approaching, but she and Joseph must take a long trip to Bethlehem for a census ordered by Herod. Little do they realize that their craven ruler has ordered a speechless, ogre-like henchman and his two fearsome dogs to track down the identity of this would-be king ... and end his reign before it begins.

Thankfully, Bo makes the perilous journey with them, fulfilling a bigger destiny than he could have guessed in his wildest donkey dreams.

Hollywood has often taken liberties with beloved biblical stories in ways that have riled the faithful. The Star, thankfully, will not be joining that list. This film tells an imaginative and sweet version of Jesus' birth—from the point of view of animals—while remaining faithful to the biblical narrative. Tyler Perry, one of many A-list stars to lend their voices to this production, said of it, "This is such a clever and genius way to tell the real meaning of Christmas. I was honored to be a part of it."

Apart from some intense moments of perilous pursuit that might be frightening to very young or sensitive viewers, the film's only other content issues all have to do with occasional bathroom humor—usually courtesy of Dave the dove.

But those moments are only very mild concerns in a film that's otherwise admirably focused on retelling the familiar story of our Savior's birth from a fresh perspective. |A

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Former child star. It's a phrase that communicates a lot in three short words, cultural shorthand for a species of entertainers whose fame-filled formative years have since morphed into something ... less.

And it's exactly what Gavin Stone is. The former child star of Family Life reaped fame and fortune for his role as Chippy on that sitcom, especially for his T-shirt worthy tagline: "Don't look at me!"

But when the show ended and Gavin grew up—chronologically speaking, at least—that tagline became a sardonic prophecy sadly fulfilled. People weren't looking at Gavin anymore. And when they did, it wasn't because he was playing a beloved television character.

This former child star is back in his hometown of Masonville, Ill., now. And, as usual, he's in trouble: After drunkenly trashing a hotel there, Gavin's been sentenced to 200 hours of community service.

Gavin's community service assignment seems to be about as far removed from his experiences as it could be: Masonville Bible Church. Gavin meets the pastor, Allen Richardson, and begins mopping up those 200 hours of service. Gavin hasn't mopily mopped long, though, before he wanders past the megachurch's large auditorium where there are drama auditions taking place. And it's evident to him that the would-be cast is in need of some divine intervention itself.

Soon Gavin—who's convinced he would be God's gift to this amateur church production—is auditioning for the role of ... Jesus. Never mind that he doesn't know much about church or the Bible or the character he wants to play. Never mind that he lies to the pastor and his play-director daughter, Kelly, about being a believer.

No, never mind any of that. Gavin's just desperate to be in the spotlight one more time—even if it's in an Easter production at a local church. Little does he suspect that the role he covets will providentially shine its own penetrating spotlight on his broken life and needy soul. |A

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STREETLIGHTS BIBLE

THE HIP-HOP MINISTRY TOOL THAT'S CHANGING EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUTH MINISTRY!

By Dave Firth

When Esteban Shedd, Loren La Luz, and Aaron Lopez were teenagers in Chicago, they surrendered their lives to Christ. Although they didn't know each other yet, these life-transformations took place at roughly the same time. A few years later, at Moody Bible Institute, the three of them met, became friends, and began putting their musical talents to use in 'missional' hip-hop bands.

The idea for the ministry came when Esteban was a junior at Moody. He was discipling young guys at his church and doing a Bible study with them. "It was hard to get these young men to interact with the Word of God," he recalls. "The Bible was difficult for them to understand, to identify with, and to read. The experience was too much like school."

So he decided to go back to his home recording studio and try to bridge the illiteracy and communication gap with audio.

"These were brilliant young men made in the image of God. They could rattle off thousands of words from their favorite rapper or lyricist. But there was a lack of communication due to education, broken school systems, broken families... They were not able to interact with the Word. So I recorded Acts 2 and 3."

He came back the following week and told them to get their Bibles out... but then he pressed play on the CD player!

"It was like night and day! Everyone paid attention. Some of them closed their eyes, some read along because it was bridging what they

were seeing... Everybody interacted with the spiritual questions and discussions. And not just the basics. They started going deeper and deeper into the spiritual meat of the text."

That kicked off the idea of meeting the need of illiteracy, biblical illiteracy, and bridging the communications gap.

After finishing up at Moody, Esteban and Loren were leading a 10-piece, hip-hop group. "It was really taking off," Esteban says with a smile. "At the height of its success, the Lord was saying, 'Give it up. Give it up because I'm going to birth a greater thing.' You know how the Lord works, he doesn't show you the whole blueprint. So we gave it up."

They spent about a year praying and thinking and talking about what

might be next. During that time, Esteban's sister told him: "Remember that vision for Streetlights? That's needed. It's needed across the world. You need to do that."

Stepping out in faith, Esteban founded Streetlights. Before long, he brought Loren and Aaron on board. Their first project was the creation of a highly-original audio Bible, word-for-Word Scripture scored to tasteful Hip Hop beats and made for the purpose of giving the listener a powerful, 'on-the-go' way to internalize the spoken Word of God (listen to it here). Next, they began developing curriculum to help people understand and apply the message of Scripture.

Perhaps as unusual and innovative as the art they are producing is the business model they're following. "We have a 'freely given' model," Esteban explains. "We want no barriers for people to access the Word of God and the teaching of the Word of God. Since we started, that has been a core conviction."

Esteban uses the young men he was discipling as an example. "They're not going to pay for the Word of God because that's not where their primary interest is. They might not even have the money. And the Gospel was freely given. We want to emulate that. Many people have said, 'Man, go profit!' But we said, 'No.

We're ministry driven, freely given, and God's gonna provide.'

There's passion in his voice as he says this and I can tell that this guy and this ministry are for real. They are honestly concerned with getting God's Word out to people in a format they can understand and engage with. (Which just happens to be Biblica's mission as well.) They also seem willing to do whatever it takes to make that happen. Which I can't help admiring and respecting.

An amazing addition to the Streetlights portfolio is their new app. Users can access and listen to the audio Bible. It has been downloaded over 30,000 times in more than 20 countries since its launch in March 2017. Plus, over 40,000 people, in 85 different countries, have downloaded their audiobooks from their website.

"It shows that it's meeting people right where their culture is communicating – with direct to palm teaching, learning, and hearing."

"Hip-hop culture is a great conduit of expression," Esteban explains. "It can express the Word of God and the Gospel. It's a worldwide culture. It's a culture that has influenced all musical genres, all big cities... It trickles into suburbs and rural. It's been international for the last four decades. It's time for the Church to

catch up and use it – not abuse it, but use it – natively and let it express the goodness of God."

God is clearly up to something with Streetlights – something big. He is using Esteban Shedd, Loren La Luz, and Aaron Lopez to creativity speak His message to young people in a language they can appreciate and comprehend.

ABOUT STREETLIGHTS

Who Are We:

We are a Missional Production House comprised of 'Digital Scribes' - Creatives, Teachers, Musicians, Filmographers who translate and teach the Word of God.

Vision:

We want to see the generations influenced by street culture transformed by faith in Jesus Christ and grow deeply in God's Word regardless of background or learning barrier.

Mission:

Through multimedia translation and teaching, Streetlights strives to illuminate the Word of God to the generations influenced by street culture worldwide, while we mobilize other creatives to join us in this Gospel ministry.



Target Audience:

We focus our ministry towards reaching the generations influenced by street culture worldwide which distinctly are characterized by the following aspects:

- Age Range: 14 - 40 years old
- Learning Style: Primarily oral & visual learners & multimedia consumers
- Education: Often represent high rates of illiteracy & educational barriers impeding read-only learning
- Platform: Prefer to learn through audio and video formats primarily through mobile devices & stream
- Value: Place high value on 'artistic, street-based cultural learning' in the forms of music, film, spoken word and multimedia campaigns.

■ Interview with Dave Firth - Authentic

MISSIONAL PRODUCTS:

Streetlights Audio Bible

We offer multimedia resources to translate the Word of God through various missional product lines. Our flagship product is the Streetlights Audio Bible - Word-for-Word Scripture scored to a tasteful Hip Hop soundtrack and made for the purpose of giving the listener a powerful, 'on-the-go' way to internalize the spoken Word of God.

Streetlights Teaching

Our multimedia teaching product line has two main mediums; 'Corner Talk' devotionals geared toward individual 'direct-to-palm' learning & thematic volumes of Curriculum aimed at the discipleship study. Multiple devotional series and volumes exist for both Teaching mediums comprised of the merging of dynamic audio, video and written components.



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THE JOB NO-ONE WANTS

By Eric Ludy

It's considered by many that the book of Job is the oldest book of the Bible. Whether it was written before Moses, no one knows, but the story itself seems to have taken place long before Moses' time. Anyone who has spent time studying the book of Job knows that this book, whereas it is a profound declaration of God's power and glory - is a rather uncomfortable book to read. Why? Because we are all afraid of being Job.

Just listen to this story:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil?

Now, why in the world God is spending even a moment of His time bantering about with Satan is one of the befuddling things about this story, however, what usually grips our attentions is this whole notion, "hast thou considered my servant Job?" That could easily read, "hast thou considered my servant, Eric?" or "hast thou considered my servant, Hillary?" or "has thou considered my servant (insert your name here)?"

It's funny, but whereas most of us would love to be noticed by God, applauded by God, and selected by God for the most important tasks,

there is a very large part of us that does not want God bringing up our name in conversation, especially with Satan, the enemy of our souls. After all, for those of us familiar with the story, Job goes on to lose everything - his children, his estate, his livestock, his health, and his dignity, all because of this crazy conversation that in all of our minds was ill-conceived on God's part in the first place.

Long and short, there isn't hardly a one of us on planet earth that wishes to be Job. Sure, he sounds like a wonderful man, but most of us are willing to forgo the "wonderful" description to avoid the "misery" that this man incurred.

I have spent a lot of time thinking, studying, and praying about this man's life. I recognize that there is a part of me that wishes to back away from being made available to God in such a manner. There is part of me that wishes to remain anonymous in Hell. There is a part of me that just utterly resists the notion of publishing my address on Satan's

bulletin board with a message that reads, "Bring it!"

But this cowardly part of me is growing lesser and lesser with every passing month. And there is another part of me that is awakening, finding its legs, and discovering its growl. There is an ever-increasing Bravehearted part of me that is wanting precisely what Job had. In fact, if I could say it succinctly, I want to be just like Job.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not wishing for the enemy to have unhindered access to my children, my estate, my livestock, my health, and my dignity - but I am wishing for my All-powerful God to have unrestricted license to do with my children, my estate, my livestock, my health, and my dignity anything that He deems fit - for His glory!

The book of Job is a book about God's glory. We always look at it as a book about an abused man. But this whole drama isn't about a man, but about this man's God.

Satan had tarnished both God's glory and His honor.

Satan was seeking to undermine the faith of the inhabitants of Heaven in their Sovereign King.

Right there at the beginning of the book Satan claims that followers of God, such as Job, only follow Him out of lust and not love. Before all the hosts of heaven Satan threw down the gauntlet, saying that God's servants only serve because God bribes them with health, wealth and prosperity; thus implying that God was not loved as a benevolent master but was rather, little more than a well-to-do dictator who bought the favor of His subjects with His coin.

*Who would answer this challenge?
Who would rise to the occasion and
wipe the spit from off God's face?*

The answer is - Job. After all, who else could really do it? Job was the subject in question. Did He serve God for love? Or did he serve for profit?

"Remove your protection from him and he will curse you to your face!" Satan screamed. But God knew Job. He knew his servant. And he knew the stuff that he was made of.

"Everything he has and everything he is I will place within your hands." God replied. "But you are wrong. Job is perfect. And he is upright in all his ways. And though you bring all the weight of the world down like a hammer upon him, he will shun evil and he will choose good. You will fail. And he will defeat you."

God wagered his entire reputation on the faithfulness of one man. That man was Job. And he - was God's champion.

The grandstands of heaven must have hushed with the awe of holy angels as they silently watched while, Satan, the Prince of the Principalities and the Powers of the Air, brought his worst against tiny Job, God's lone defender in this cosmic conflict.

Those watchers from the portals of glory must have leaned in with anxious expectation as the end of round one was called. Job's estate lay in ruins, his livestock gone, his wealth taken, and his children dead. Satan stood back panting and winded with effort as he waited to hear the doubt-filled cry of outrage and angst that must issue forth against God from the soul of a man who has suffered the loss of so much within the space of so few hours.

But to the grinding of Satan's teeth and to heaven's everlasting joy, the Bible records that Job, God's man - though beaten and bloody, though vexed and tempted to curse God and die - Job fell down upon the ground and worshiped God saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.."

The shouting in heaven must have sounded like peals of thunder.

Not only had Job valiantly taken everything that Satan threw at him and not cursed God, but Job had actually blessed him!!

To many an onlooker Job may have seemed to have been struck down without cause. But in reality it was Job who had struck the mortal blow against Satan and against his lies about God and about his children.

With no small grief, God had allowed this man to be spent, without him even knowing why, so that both heaven and earth would know with certainty, from the moment of Job's triumph over Satan unto the end of the ages, that God is no dictator, and that His servants serve Him for love's sake and for love's sake alone.

Down through the years, many have looked upon Job's suffering with wagging heads and called it pointless. But heaven knows better.

Job was heaven's champion.

**JOB STOOD WHEN EVERYTHING
IN HIM WANTED TO FALL.**

JOB HAD THE MANLY STUFF.

DO WE?

Could our God lean as heavily upon us? Could we be trusted with such a sacred task as defending the honor of God? Are there those among us of whom God could say, "Satan, you may do your worst but he will not bend; you may bring in your biggest guns she will not break; they have built their house upon a rock and they shall not be moved. They shall run and not grow weary; they shall walk and not faint. For I know them. They are my sons, they are my daughters, they are my servants, and they will not fail me."?

This is the stuff that changes the world. This is the stuff of the Bravehearted Gospel

|A



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

A GREAT MAN IS NOT SELFISH WITH GOOD NEWS

By Lew Myer

There is a classic little story of some lepers in 2 Kings 7. These men were sharing the hardships of a city under siege by the Aramean army so they decided to surrender to the enemy only to find that the enemy forces had abandoned their camp overnight in panic. These fellows ate and drank, and not being short on business acumen, grabbed gold, silver and clothing to hide for themselves. Then it struck them that their newly found wealth was in jeopardy. The Bible records the conversation in their moment of insight.... "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves."

And this is a day of good news. We are living in a world surrounded by people that are in dire need of good news. There is a deep cloud of unhappiness over the world that is the result of alienation from our creator. The result is rebellious and destructive behaviour, and a sense of hopelessness. Worse than the prolonged anguish of facing starvation in a besieged city, people are only a few heartbeats away for eternity and the judgment of God. Hebrews 9:27 shows the great divide between the truth and all eastern religion. "It is appointed to people to die once, and then to face judgment." That is our reality check. That changes the value of material goods. It changes everything. In view of this the suppression of the good news through apathy is a great crime.

There are really four requirements for a man to be an effective faith-sharer. Your story, a life that speaks, his story and a mouth that speaks.

My story about coming to know Christ is a story no-one can argue

with because I am the world's expert on me, and who can challenge a world expert? To know your story and be able to relate relevant parts of it in a way that makes sense to a hearer is a powerful tool. This was the basis of the growth of the Christian faith. People had seen Jesus alive after being dead, and had experienced his forgiveness and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

A life that speaks. In all my lecturing about evidence for Christianity, my most important point to students is this. 'The greatest evidence for Christianity is an authentic Christian life.' In other words, a life that has Jesus in his rightful place as Lord, and that is lived in his power. Seeing that impacts people at a deep level, as if a voice is saying "That is how you ought to be living. That is what you were designed for." The authentic Christian life speaks louder and clearer than any sermon.

His story is really quite simple. A young child can understand it and believe it. The basis of the good news that saves is outlined for us in 1 Corinthians 15: 3 – 5. Explicitly it is this. Christ died for our sins, was buried and was raised to life on the third day. Implicit in the pivotal sentence is the following.

God exists, we are sinners who need saving from the consequences of our guilt, Jesus voluntarily became our substitute and accepted the judicial consequences of our guilt in his own experience of crucifixion. That his sacrifice on our behalf was complete and fully adequate for our total rescue was demonstrated in God raising his Son to life. Therefore, he

is the Son of God with authority over death and is worthy of our trust and allegiance. He has both the power to save eternally all who come to trust him, and the love to want to save us.

A mouth that speaks is more difficult for some than others. The verbal expression of our faith needs to be done with wisdom and discretion.

As the old metaphor goes, 'Don't knock over the beehive to get the honey out.' My advice is to live the authentic life, and the questions will soon come. Drop clues into natural conversations that you are an unashamed Christian. They will be watching. They will be processing it. That takes time.

Answer their questions humbly and don't do an information dump on them. Be natural. Be relaxed. Laugh with them. Take an interest in what is important to them. Offer to pray for them on some issue. Share bits and pieces. Be happy to take them just a little step closer each time. Stop before they want you to stop so they will feel they can ask you anything else without getting a full sermon. Talk in private if they are embarrassed to discuss with others around. Have some good small literature available when appropriate. Like on a golf course where your distance from the pin and the place of your ball determines your choice of club, your choice of tool should be based on where they are in their spiritual journey. A dvd on evidence for design in nature is a great tool for the beginning. A booklet explaining the faith decision is a good tool for later. |A



■ Lew Meyer is the National Director of OAC Ministries (an interdenominational evangelism organisation)

WISE WORDS FROM CHARLES PRICE

Wisdom is supreme

'Fake news' and 'alternative facts' are part of our world. How do we really know anything? Knowledge and understanding keep developing. Dietary recommendations today are changed tomorrow. The 'science' of a previous generation is debunked and replaced by the 'science' of a new generation. The world is not flat as was once supposed!

There is however, something that does not grow stale or need review: Wisdom. It is as ancient as life and as lasting as time. We have Information Technology but not Wisdom Technology. We can download information, but not wisdom. Proverbs 4:5-7 says "Get wisdom, get understanding... Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding".

What is wisdom?

Wisdom is not about intellectual capacity but about moral disposition. You can be a clever fool! You can know a lot but not know what to do with what you know. The book of Proverbs, written by Solomon, whose name is a byword for wisdom, is dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom. He himself is credited with

writing three thousand proverbs, seven hundred and fifty of which appear in his compilation, along with a collection of 'the sayings of the wise' that make up the rest of the book. He was a busy man!!

His compilation of Proverbs are all pithy statements essentially about relationships, priorities and humility. Wisdom gives a compass. Knowledge and information may help us understand the road of life, but wisdom is the compass that determines our direction along that road. The right direction is more important than the speed of travel. It is better to go slowly in a right direction than quickly in a wrong direction. Wisdom keeps us on the right track.

More important than anything we do, or any thing we possess, are the relationships we enjoy. We may

dream about doing things and possessing things, but as ends in themselves they are empty. As the old saying goes, 'No one on their death bed wishes they spent more time in the office!' It is people, not things, who measure our value. Relating well to our spouses, our children, our parents and our neighbors are all ingredients of wise wholesome living, and when these are absent, there is an emptiness in our souls. No wonder the wisdom of Proverbs is all about relationships.

Where is wisdom?

Solomon tells us the source of wisdom: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). The 'fear of God' sounds intimidating, but fear a natural and positive emotion arising in the anticipation of danger, and moving to avoid it. The anticipated

trouble is to be god-less. To fear him therefore is not to run away from him, but the reverse, it is to seek for him and find him.

The book of Proverbs not only teaches us the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom but that there are many benefits that derive from this. For example, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1.7), the fear of the Lord is a secure fortress of our children (14.26), the fear of God helps us to avoid evil (16.6), the fear of God enables us to shun evil (3.7) the fear of God causes us to hate evil (8.13), the fear of God coupled with humility brings wealth, honour and life (22.4) the fear of God leads to life in its fullest richness (19.23) and the fear of God adds length to life (10.27). The fear of God is the starting point, it is the 'beginning of wisdom'. It has to be built on of course, through a lifetime of good and bad times, in plain sailing and rough storms.

Interestingly, Wisdom is feminine in Proverbs. "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom ... for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. ... She is a tree of life to those who

embrace her" (Proverbs 3.13-18). Hence, 'Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you... Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor.' (Proverbs 4.6-9). Wisdom carries the intuitive, nurturing qualities of women, and men are to desire her, pursue her, romance her, and love her. Let's be honest, wisdom is not natural to the self-obsessed man. Proverbs is essentially a man addressing his son. Twenty-four times he prefaces important statements with, 'My son...'. But the father is inviting feminine virtues into the relationship, and saying 'Son you are not adequate alone'. 'Seek her... embrace her... she will present you with a crown of splendor'. If we are fortunate, we receive compassionate, tender, nurturing wisdom from our grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and neighbors. I would suggest that it is in these relationships that wisdom is nurtured and understood.

A prerequisite to searching for wisdom is knowing we lack it. James writes in the New Testament, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all

without finding fault, and it will be given to him' (James 1:5). Humility is therefore an essential part of wisdom.

The first time the Bible ever speaks of 'the fear of God' probably defines it. Abraham towers among the aristocracy of the old testament. God promised him a son. Twenty-five later his wife Sarah gave birth to Isaac. When Isaac was still a boy, God 'tested' Abraham and told him to offer his son in sacrifice on Mount Moriah. This is a barbaric thing to us, but in the broader pagan culture of the time it would not have been a completely alien idea. Isaac was the son through whom all the promises God had ever made to Abraham would be fulfilled. From him would come a nation, and ultimately a Messiah. Now Abraham is asked to put a knife into the son he loved, and thereby into every promise God had made to him.

God's purpose (it later transpires) was not that Abraham would go through with this, but that the depth of his trust in God would be tested. Early the next morning, he set off, taking Isaac and the materials, he needed on a three-day journey to Mount Moriah. Once there, he built an altar, laid a fire,

bound his unsuspecting son with rope and laid him on the altar. With the sweat of anxiety on his brow and deep pain in his heart he took his knife, held it above Isaac ready to strike, when he heard a voice: "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (Gen 22:11-12)

The punch line of the story is: "Now I know that you fear God". If the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, how is that fear demonstrated in what Abraham does? Abraham's actions go beyond obedience. Abraham had obeyed God many times before, and in the beyond is found the beginning of wisdom. It is trusting God with consequences he did not know nor could anticipate. It is walking blind, yet trusting there is a mind at work beyond our understanding. On his journey Abraham had worked out a best-case scenario, "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead" (Hebrews 11:19), but whether he would raise Isaac or not was not determining Abraham's actions. He might raise him, he might not. But in walking blind he trusted, however tentatively, that God was somehow 'beyond' what he could see.

How do we live wisely?

Life leads us down unanticipated paths. We set off with clear ideas of where we are going, but are thrown curve balls all the time. Expectations are punctured and deflated. Plan A derails with no Plan B. So, what do we do? Panic? Hope for the best? Withdraw into isolation? Shrug our shoulders? Keep calm and carry on?

Solomon anticipates this wisdom



key to life when he encourages us: 'In all your ways acknowledge him (God), and he shall direct your paths' (Proverbs 3:6). In other words, don't be as concerned about the direction and nature of the path as about acknowledging God on the path, whether we see or understand his ways or not. Our security will not be found in where we are going, but who we are going with.

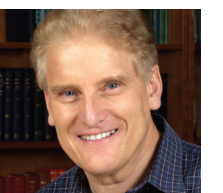
When our children were small we were setting off on a journey from England to Australia. Our one-year old daughter had no capacity to understand where we were going or what we were doing. We bundled her into our car, took her to the airport, boarded an aircraft, spent something like twenty-four hours on the plane, got off in an unfamiliar environment and not once did she show any anxiety or concern. The reason was simple. She wasn't interested in where we were going, only who she was going with. As long as mum and dad were there, we could go to the moon for all she cared!

We don't really know where we are going and all the pit stops and diversions we may face along the

way, but neither do we need to. Our confidence comes from knowing who we are with. This is the fear of God. This is acknowledging him in all our ways.

The ultimate source of wisdom, according to Paul is "Christ Jesus... has become for us wisdom from God" (1 Cor 1.30). The life of Jesus Christ in us, his mind, his heart, his disposition is implanted in us, enabling us to live in the power of his life, and face every situation with his resources.

This gives us the ability to know stability in instability, trust in confusion, and life-giving relationships when all is crumbling. But wisdom doesn't grow on trees. Wisdom has to be looked for, developed and lived out in the nitty gritty of life. Information may be readily accessible, and knowledge can be tested. Wisdom cannot. There are no PhD's in wisdom, but the simplest person may find it. No wonder Solomon wrote, "Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (Proverbs 4.7).



■ Charles Price has been the Senior Pastor of The Peoples Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada since 2001, with a congregation of 4000+ people. You can watch Charles Price on Shine TV.



Changeable church signs aren't used much in NZ
- that's probably a good thing.

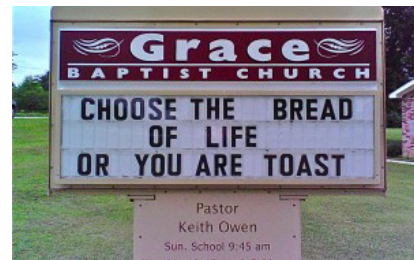
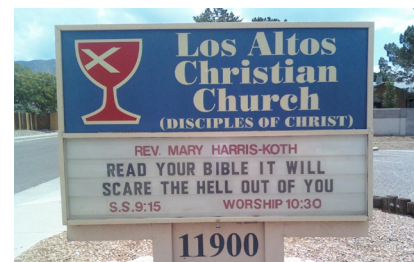


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