

AUTHENTIC

SUMMER 2018 / 2019 ISSUE 5

MEN'S MAGAZINE

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Mark Powell
shares his story

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Read the Bible

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Roland Alonzo
unveils the Manta5 project

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- 40 Years of Youth Ministry
- Authentic Parenting
- Who were the Magi?



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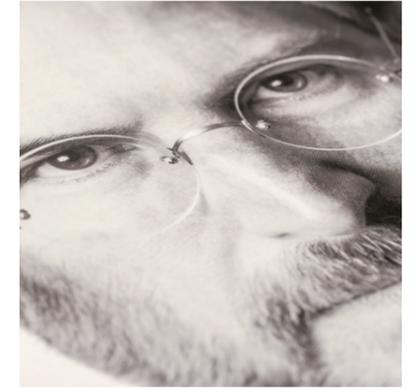
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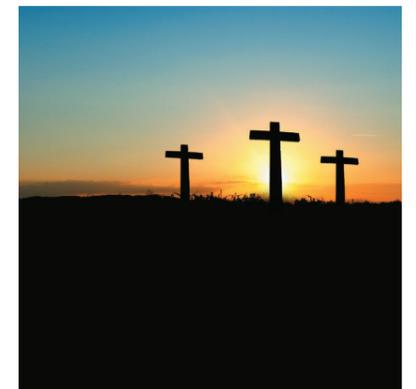
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AUTHENTIC

“Number 5 is alive!”

(C'mon, please tell me somebody remembers the movie 'Short Circuit' from 1986?)

The last few years of this 'authentic' journey has been really interesting. It's challenged me in several ways. Am I really the same at home, at Church, at work, with my friends, with my family, when I'm alone? Does my behaviour change depending on what I'm doing and who I am with?

Authenticity is a quality that you can't really see in yourself. It's much easier to see it in others. You can watch their lives and see if it matches up with what they say. You can observe someone's behaviour in different settings and see if there is a consistency. When we see it, it's attractive. There's something about knowing a person is genuine that gives us a desire to trust them – or even follow them!

It's a great question to challenge yourself with: *Am I the same, all the time?*

In Hebrews (13:8) we're told that, *'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.'* He doesn't change!

When He lived on earth, as a man, did He change his character depending on who was around or what He was doing? Nope.

He did change His behaviour according to the different things He did and the different people groups He addressed. But this was to communicate clearly and

effectively. He used language, references and illustrations that would be understood by the different groups He spoke to (children, adults, pharisees etc). But He never 'faked it'. He was authentic. Always.

I was recently browsing through the daily offers on the 1-Day website (one of my regular pastimes) and I noticed some 'faux' plants on special offer. Well, as you can imagine, I got quite excited. Our new offices are almost ready to move into and the thought of having some plants around seemed like a great idea. Plus real plants can get messy and need watering, so these would be perfect!

But then I realised...they're fake!

How could I buy fake plants for the offices of Authentic? It would be wrong!

It sounds like a small thing, but it made me realise how easy it is for us to slip in to normal, worldly behaviour that conforms to what the world says is ok. We want things easy and we try and avoid responsibility – even simple things like watering the plants!

I mentioned our new offices. Just so there's no confusion, we don't have loads of money! We formed the 'Authentic Christian Trust' last year to oversee this magazine and



the media company we launched to support Christian ministries in NZ. At the same time we met an amazing man called Justin Kim.

Justin is the General Manager for All World Mission – a Korean Christian ministry that owns and operates the old GLO bible school property in Te Awamutu. He had been in NZ for almost three years and the facility was quite neglected, so he had put it on the market.

Long story short, we prayed together and he felt the Lord nudge him that they shouldn't sell the property. We both felt that God had a plan but we didn't know what it was (obviously the Lord was operating on a 'need to know' basis – and we didn't need to know!)

So, we moved our small team of four into the property, found some old desks and it became our HQ.

After some amazing things happened, the Lord provided the significant funds and people

needed for a full restoration of the property. As a result, Calvary Chapel Bible Institute will be moving in and operating their Bible School from the February 2019.

The Authentic team will use some of the unused offices in one of the renovated buildings and the whole site will now be known as 'The Ark'.

If you want to know a bit more about it, you can look it up on Facebook or go to the website: www.theark.nz

With this being issue 5 of Authentic Magazine we now have a big decision to make. There are only three issues left after this one, according to the original vision that God gave us for this project (8 issues over 2 years). This is the last issue that new subscribers can purchase an annual subscription (4 issues over 12 months).

■ Dave Firth is the Editor of Authentic Magazine, a lecturer at Capernwray Bible School, speaker, husband, father and follower of Jesus Christ.

We need your feedback. We want to prayerfully discern what is next for Authentic. Was the first 2 years simply phase one? Are we now moving on to the second phase? If so, what does that mean?

James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus writes this:

'Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."' (James 4:13-15)

Please pray with us and for us.

Whatever happens, we're excited for it!

Connect with Authentic

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



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About Calling

by Shaun Brooker

Such a curious thought, that I would have a calling on my life. A purpose. Knowing you have a calling can be the most fulfilling aspect of living. Yet, not knowing what that calling is can be paralyzing. It can be what wakes you up in the morning, but it can equally be what keeps you awake at night.

Calling is something that I very much wrestled with over the years. Am I doing what God wants me to do? Am I all God designed me to be? What should I do next in my career? So many questions in the past, but it is now something that I have absolute peace with. Did I receive some prophetic message? A 'writing on the wall' moment? No. Just a better understanding of what God wants for all of us, and especially for me.

Let's start with the calling that you and I have in common. His Word is full of clues about our

calling. In Genesis, it is made clear that we are called to take care of and rule over the earth and all that is in it, this is the Creation Mandate, and it applies to all of us. Furthermore, in Matthew, we are told to go into all the earth and to make disciples. This is the Great Commission, and just like the Creation Mandate, it applies to all of us. We are also told to love the Lord your God with everything that you have and to love your neighbour as yourself.

As you consider your calling you can be sure that the purpose that

God has for you will include all of the above. If you are wrestling with whether something is your calling and that something works against your purpose to fulfil any of the above you can be assured it is not what you are designed for.

Does that mean that all of us need to be Ministers? No...and yes. No, in the sense that we are certainly not all called to be employed by a church, preach every Sabbath and have a name badge with the label 'Minister' on it. However, we are all called to do the work of a minister. We are indeed called to

share the hope that we have in us, we are to love the Lord and to love each other.

God will no doubt call you to a purpose. For me, it is Christian Education. The thought of working with hundreds of children and dozens of teachers certainly is not appealing to everyone, but for me, this is my sweet spot, this is where I find fulfilment. Now, I find myself in a particular Christian school; this is important for someone who finds his purpose in Christian Education. However, I never received a 'writing on the wall' or a 'Road to Damascus' experience to move here. So what happened

that I find myself uprooting my family and shifting to a new school?

It was all about the freedom that I found in my calling.

This is an important aspect to calling. While God will call you to a purpose, rarely does he determine the place, not never, just rarely. Within this purpose we have freedom. In my situation, I was pretty much living the dream in Christian Education. I was at an amazing school, people came from all over the country and even from abroad to see what we were doing at school. I was invited to present our story and philosophy at both Christian and secular education forums and conferences and importantly, my family was very much settled. I was comfortable.

I was then asked to take up a new position in a school that would require me taking a difficult step away from my comfort and to begin the process of leading change once again. At first, it all seemed too difficult and too much like hard work...I had after all put in all the blood, sweat and tears (with the help of many amazing people around me of course) and I was reaping the reward of that work. Leading change is ugly, people get stretched, people often get hurt, and it is hard work, why would I willingly do that again? Especially if I was fulfilling God's calling on my life already, I was fulfilling God's calling on my life by being in Christian Education after all.

The reality is that your calling is not just about purpose, it is also about growth. As my last boss used to say, 'what can I do today to be of more use to Him tomorrow?

If you find yourself at a crossroad and you are looking for answers about your calling, a 'writing on the wall', of course, seek the Lord in prayer and talk to those around you whom you respect. However, also keep in mind that we are designed to grow. Seek out the purpose that gives you fulfilment and pursue opportunities to grow, to be of greater use to Him tomorrow.

Keep your eyes on the purpose God has designed you for and hold loosely to the 'place' (location) and even your 'plan' for that purpose. As stated in Proverbs 16:9, plan your course but allow God to direct your steps. The more that you understand your purpose the more agile you can be with the 'plan' and 'place' side of fulfilling your purpose.

A central theme of calling is freedom. Yes, God has designed you for a purpose but He gives you freedom within that calling. You can take it easy, or you can seek the track which leads to growth. I chose the growth path. There were many details within this path that I hadn't sorted out. However, as He does when we 'let go and let God', He took care of every last detail. So, a central theme of calling is the freedom to choose either comfort or growth.

Choose well. | 



■ Shaun Brooker is the principal of Hamilton Christian School - he is a speaker and author on Leadership, Education and Technology. For more information visit www.christianeducation.org.nz



Mark Powell

Keeping Focussed

By Dave Firth

After 13 years in various positions within the Warehouse Group, the final 5 years being Group Chief Executive, Mark Powell stepped down in February 2016 to focus his time and energy in other areas. Dave Firth caught up with Mark to see how stepping down from leading one of NZ's most important companies has changed his view on life, faith and business.

Going from being a coal miner in Wales to being the CEO of one of New Zealand's largest retail companies is a bit of a cool story. Did you ever think life would go the way it has done?

I would never have imagined how my life has turned out; in all ways - family-wise, work-wise, faith-wise and location-wise. Growing up I never imagined leaving South Wales. I was the youngest of five in a working-class environment.

My parents divorced when I was about 8 and there was no Christian influence. I thought I would work locally, in the steelworks or as it turned out in the coal industry.

I would never have imagined being married to Maria for the last 28 years, having two wonderful daughters, a strong faith in Jesus Christ at the centre of my life and living in New Zealand - never mind being CEO of a public company!

The turning point was leaving Wales in 1986 after the coal industry quickly collapsed after the 1984/85 national strike and essentially starting again, then meeting Maria...

Being able to understand 'blue collar' workers can be a challenge for CEOs. How have your past experiences helped you get the most out of the people you work with?

Most definitely! The good thing about mining is that you have to do all the jobs to get your mine manager's certificate. You literally had to work a year on the coal face! Genuinely caring for front line workers is critical for any business, they are the people who do the real work, and in retail, even more so as they are the people who meet real customers!

You came to faith later on in life through an Alpha course (I'm a big fan of Alpha!). Who invited you to do the course and what impact did it have on your life?
My wife Maria had a strong faith when she was young, but like many people, had drifted away when she went to university. But she never lost her faith and when our daughters were about 5 and 6, she started to go to church with them. I was ok with that, as long as she didn't go all weird! It also gave me Sunday morning to go to the gym. But, when we emigrated to New Zealand in late 2002, I agreed to go to the local church, Whangaparaoa Baptist, with my wife and daughters, who by then

were 9 and 10. I'd never been an atheist. I always thought there was 'someone' there, but I knew nothing about Christianity really.

In early 2003 the church ran an Alpha course and Maria persuaded me to do it with her. I didn't have a radical 'conversion moment' on the course, but a journey started and at some point in that journey I knew this was true, both in my head and in my heart!

Being a Christian in a competitive marketplace must have its fair share of challenges. What has been the hardest thing you have had to deal with?

Hmmm, I'm not sure that it has any more challenges than for a non-Christian. Certainly it means that you have to wrestle with ethical dilemmas in the knowledge that there is an ultimately objective right and wrong approach and with a desire to honour God in doing that.

But also, you can do that in the knowledge that business success and failure are not what's really important, doing the right thing

before God is more important This is very liberating, since ultimately if you've wrestled well and honestly, you can rest in God's grace.

In the midst of your Warehouse career you managed to train as a Pastor and got yourself a Masters in Apologetics. How did your employers feel about this and how did it influence you.

I'm not sure how my employer's felt really. When I did the Theology degree and pastoral training at Carey, I stepped down as a full time executive and did a one day a week advisory role. They must have felt okay because they coaxed me to come back as CEO of Warehouse Stationery in early 2009 and they were even comfortable with me staying one day a week as an Associate Pastor at Whangaparaoa Baptist while I did that. Then after that I continued to do the Masters in Apologetics (slowly over eight years!) but in terms of myself, the influence has been huge. As a leader it made me far more purpose and people focused, giving a far greater significance to what I was doing.



During your time as CEO of the Warehouse Group you oversaw a \$100m refurbishment in the 'red sheds' as well as several high-profile acquisitions including Noel Leeming and Torpedo7. For the average 'Christian in business' these things might seem a bit daunting. How do you keep calm and focused in the midst of such major decisions?

Ultimately in business you need to have a clarity of purpose, principles and priorities, and to make decisions within the context of that. You try and make those decisions on a well-informed basis, but also ultimately recognising there is risk, and that in hindsight some of those decisions may not be successful. If your identity is wrapped up in being seen as successful by the world, or in maintaining status and position, then you may be focused on yourself rather than doing the right thing.

Calmness comes from being comfortable that you have balanced speed and deliberation to come to a well-informed decision. In retail in particular speed is competitive advantage and perfectionism and fear of failure leads to procrastination. No decision can be the worst decision. When I took over at The Warehouse, we were way behind in online retail with barely \$10 million in sales so we had to move quickly. Five years later we had New Zealand's largest online retail business with over \$170million in sales! With that speed you accept it's not perfect but ultimately, calmness and focus comes down to where you place your value and identity - in the eyes of the world or in Jesus Christ!

You will have done lots of speeches, interviews and presentations over the years and you've been teaching the Bible for

some time now. How does talking about your faith compare with being the CEO of the Warehouse?

In many ways they are similar, both are about Purpose, Principles and Priorities, but ultimately faith is far more important. It's about the real meaning of life and our eternal destiny!

What was the highlight of your time working for the Warehouse? (surely it wasn't the red uniform!)

I wore the company shirts of The Warehouse, Warehouse Stationery, Noel Leeming and Torpedo7 with pride and to identify with our front-line teams - it also made it easy deciding what to wear in the morning (I had to buy some new clothes when I finished!). It's hard to pick one highlight but the highlights would definitely include introducing The Career Retail Wage for our front-line teams, which significantly increased their pay, growing the online business, buying Noel Leeming and seeing the growth in the executive team. Two women from that team have now gone on to be CEO's of other businesses, which is great to see.

Being a "workaholic" might seem to be a prerequisite for a CEO with all the pressures and responsibility that come with the job. What part did your home/family life play in your role and how did you set boundaries?

Having a 'personal' clarity of purpose, principles and priorities guides this. Time management in line with those is critical. Rhythms of busyness and rest allow space to balance work, for home and family.

So, what have you been doing since you stepped down from your role as CEO of the Warehouse Group?

Since I stepped down I've prioritised my working time into three areas where I believe I can

best use my gifts to help others flourish; these are business/commercial boards, Christian not-for-profit boards and personal speaking/teaching.

My time is pretty much evenly balanced between all three. In the business/commercial area I'm on the board of ASX listed JB Hi-Fi and NZX listed Kiwi Property Group, plus being on the board of Trinity Lands, a farming group owned by three Christian charities, and on the advisory board of Stihl Shop. In the Christian not-for-profit area, I'm Chair of The Venn Foundation, and a board member of The Parenting Place and Carey Theological College.

In the personal speaking and teaching area, I am part of the preaching team at Whangaparaoa Baptist, speak regularly at other churches, organisations and events, usually on Leadership or Apologetics, and I teach Apologetics at Carey as part of the Applied Theology degree there. So, all in all, I'm still reasonably busy, but not too busy!

What is it about apologetics that really caught your attention?

When I came to faith the key question for me was "is this true?" I didn't want to just follow a helpful delusion! So, for me, it is important to know not just what we believe, but why we believe it as well. What are the reasons to believe that Christianity is the best explanation of reality that Christianity is true?

This is where apologetics come in - a contemporary apologetics of the heart and the head - which takes the evidence of not just science, reason, logic and history, but also human experience, direct apprehension and basic intuitions, to assess what is true about the big questions of life, such as; Where do we come from?, What is

the purpose of life?, What is a good life?, What happens when you die?, Does God exist? and Who is Jesus?

With so much going on how do you prioritise the big things? Do you have any routines that help you stay grounded and encourage wise decision making? Priorities flow from having personal clarity of the general purpose and principles of life, applied to my own particular context, my gifting and experiences. This is how I arrived at the three priority areas mentioned earlier. To these three areas I'd add time with family and time with God, giving five priority areas. In terms of decision making, having these five clear priorities, allows me to say no to things that don't align.

Then it allows me to prioritise my time. I am a planner. I like a rhythm. A rhythm to the year, with holidays booked well in advance, a rhythm to the month, week and day that allows sufficient sleep, gym time and time in Scripture and prayer in addition to all the 'doing'. I believe good planning of time actually gives you more flexibility and freedom.

You're a proud Welshman so we're assuming you sing like an angel and love rugby. Is that a fair stereotype?

Yes, I love rugby, I should have said as well that that good time management allows time to watch rugby! I did sing with the Auckland Welsh Choir for a few years. I can't really sing but the choir was big enough for me to hide!

People say Wales is a lot like New Zealand - but with more sheep! What do you miss the most



about Cymru (The Welsh word for 'Wales' literally means 'friends' or 'companions')?

Hmmm - I'm not sure. I love New Zealand and I left Wales over 30 years ago. It's still part of who I am, and I enjoy catching up with old friends when I visit, but I don't really miss it. Probably being able to go to some of the 'blood and thunder' local derby rugby matches at grass roots level would be one thing I miss. Although I don't miss playing in them. In those days boots and fists came flying from everywhere and there were no TMO's if the ref missed it!

My nose still reminds me of a local derby where I got caught from behind with a good 'un, but I did get him back later (oops, is that Christian?)

You seem to have an incredible capacity when it comes to work and ministry. What would you say to people that struggle to keep the balance in these two areas of life? It's simple. Prioritise!

Authentic Magazine is committed to encouraging men in New

Zealand to live the Authentic Christian Life (ie. allow Christ to live His life IN us). How would you encourage NZ blokes to do this?

I'm not sure I'm the best person to offer advice here, but what immediately comes to mind is that the authentic Christian life starts with having your identity in Christ, His Grace and in knowing and trusting in God's character and His ultimate plan. This brings a Godly perspective, rather than a human perspective, and leads to real freedom. Freedom from worrying about worldly praise, success, status, money, possessions and what the future holds.

How important, would you say it is for Christian men to have other men around them to encourage them in their faith and life?

I think it's important to have confidants that you can discuss issues with. People who will speak honestly into your life. In my case, in reality, that person has mostly been a woman - my wife - but I think having men around is also really important. I'm involved with men in a few different contexts, who encourage me in faith and life. | 



■ Dave Firth is a husband, father, bible teacher and communicator. He loves the Lord and has a passion for His Word. For more info visit www.davefirth.org



Steve Jobs Doesn't Believe in You!

By Jeremy Suisted

There's a great story in Richard Rumelt's book, 'Good Strategy/Bad Strategy' that has been tickling my imagination for the past few weeks. Rumelt – a senior professor at UCLA's Anderson School of Management – was at a top technology event, along with the Dean of his college.

Suddenly, they found themselves talking to Steve Jobs – at the time, the CEO of Apple. Jobs asked them who they were, and what Anderson School of Management specialised in.

"We are the management school that seeks to develop transformative technology companies, that can make change at a global scale," the Dean proudly announced.

"Have I heard of any of the companies your graduates have created?" Jobs inquired.

The Dean paused. He then quietly said, "No."

In true Jobs-ian fashion, Steve stated – "Well, you've failed, then."

Rumelt tells this story to cut to the point about strategy – if your strategy isn't working, it's failing.

"A GREAT BUSINESS STRATEGY IS VALUELESS IF IT'S MERELY WORDS ON A DOCUMENT, OR AMBITIOUS GOALS CARVED ONTO THE WALL."

A great business strategy is valueless if it's merely words on a document, or ambitious goals carved onto the wall. The value

of a strategy is in the action – and the results can be seen (or not) when we honestly look at an organisation.

Simply put, Steve Jobs saw that the UCLA School of Management were saying they did one thing, but in reality doing another. The truth was in their actions, not in their words.

More recently, I've been reading the excellent 'Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief & Behaviour' by Steven Garber. Although over 20 years old, this book cuts with a scalpel-like precision to a key weakness among people today – an inability to unite our belief with our behaviour.

We have assumed that belief is something that is simply taught through an educational program. If you want someone to believe something – you just have to teach it well. If they can then recite back to you what they've been taught – they believe it. Within this framework, belief is primarily cognitive – it is shown by our thoughts, and our ability to communicate the right thoughts correctly.

However, the limits of this approach are seen all around us – regardless of your faith background. People believe that giving to charity is important, yet donations are decreasing. People believe that healthy eating is important, yet obesity is increasing.

I remember walking with a young guy once, talking to him about God's power and how God works in the world around us. We'd



talked about prayer, healing and miracles. I'd explained my belief with Scripture and logic. We strolled across our church car park, about to re-enter the building, when he stopped and looked over my shoulder.

"We should go pray for that guy," he said.

Behind me was a man on crutches, limping out of the adjacent medical centre, heading back to his car.

My young person was keen to go pray. I was reluctant. I could communicate a belief of God's power much more powerfully and eloquently than he could.

But who really believed in God's power?

Belief is shown by our actions, not by mere verbal assent or cognitive agreement. That's why Jesus didn't just teach on the mountainside, but also went out and lived his convictions.

At one step, this is a hard challenge to us all. It seems easier

to mentally agree with the fact that God is in control, that money is not everything and that the Kingdom of God is found among the weakest of society than it is to embody this.

And yet, this understanding that belief is shown and developed by action is also profoundly liberating. Because you can start growing that belief now.

If you want to start believing in the generosity of God, you can be generous. Today. You don't need to wait till you believe it more. It is through acting generously that you will learn to believe in generosity.

If you believe that worship is central to life, you can start acting more worshipfully today. Perhaps you don't feel it. That's OK. Because belief is shown by and grown through action.

This is the liberation of action. Our beliefs both grow and are shown as we act upon them. And may this set us free, today, to act out the beliefs we truly believe are important to life. | 



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



Audacious Faith

By Eric Ludy

The idea of “spiritual audacity” has really been on my mind recently. Not long ago I recorded a podcast entitled “Now that’s audacity!” and here I go again rambling on about it.

First let me define “audacity” for you out of the Official Ludy Dictionary:
 au-dac-i-ty [aw-das-i-tee]

Absolute, ridiculous trust that when you step out and do crazy things for the Glory of the Almighty King, God will come through for you. For instance – when you stand up against 9ft tall giants without any armor on your skinny little vulnerable body and you walk out in the field of battle without a sword to

fight him with, God helps you make an absolute fool of the growling, mocking man-beast warrior.

I’ve been gaining a measure of audacity lately. Not a lot, just a little. Sort of like a small blob of honey in the middle of my toast. It’s enough to make me realize I need a lot more. And it’s also caused me to do a lot of thinking about why this attribute of the Christian life has gone missing in our modern day.

Audacity is the one of the main ingredients in the whole notion of faith. Without it, faith just doesn’t really work – it sort of mopes around like a toothless, declawed lion.

“AUDACITY IS THE ONE OF THE MAIN INGREDIENTS IN THE WHOLE NOTION OF FAITH.”

Just do a quick perusal of the Bible and you will see this crazy audacity all over the place. Here’s a quick “top ten” list of some of Leslie’s and my favorite biblical moments of bewildering audacity:

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #10

Caleb, at eighty years of age, claiming Hebron, the Mountain of the Giants, as his inheritance in the Land of Promise. Not only did He want it (which is audacious enough), but he personally led the battle formation that climbed the mountain and destroyed the giant-men that lived there.

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #9

Samson picking a fight with a

thousand Philistines and using a donkey’s jawbone to destroy every last one of them.

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #8

Joab climbing up the gutter of Jebus ahead of all the troop of David and being the first to jump in amongst a throng of enemy soldiers and strike the mocking Jebusites on the cheek. That’s brash!

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #7

Elisha, when told by the mighty Prophet Elijah to ask for anything and it shall be done, Elisha asks for a double portion of the power and anointing of Elijah.

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #6

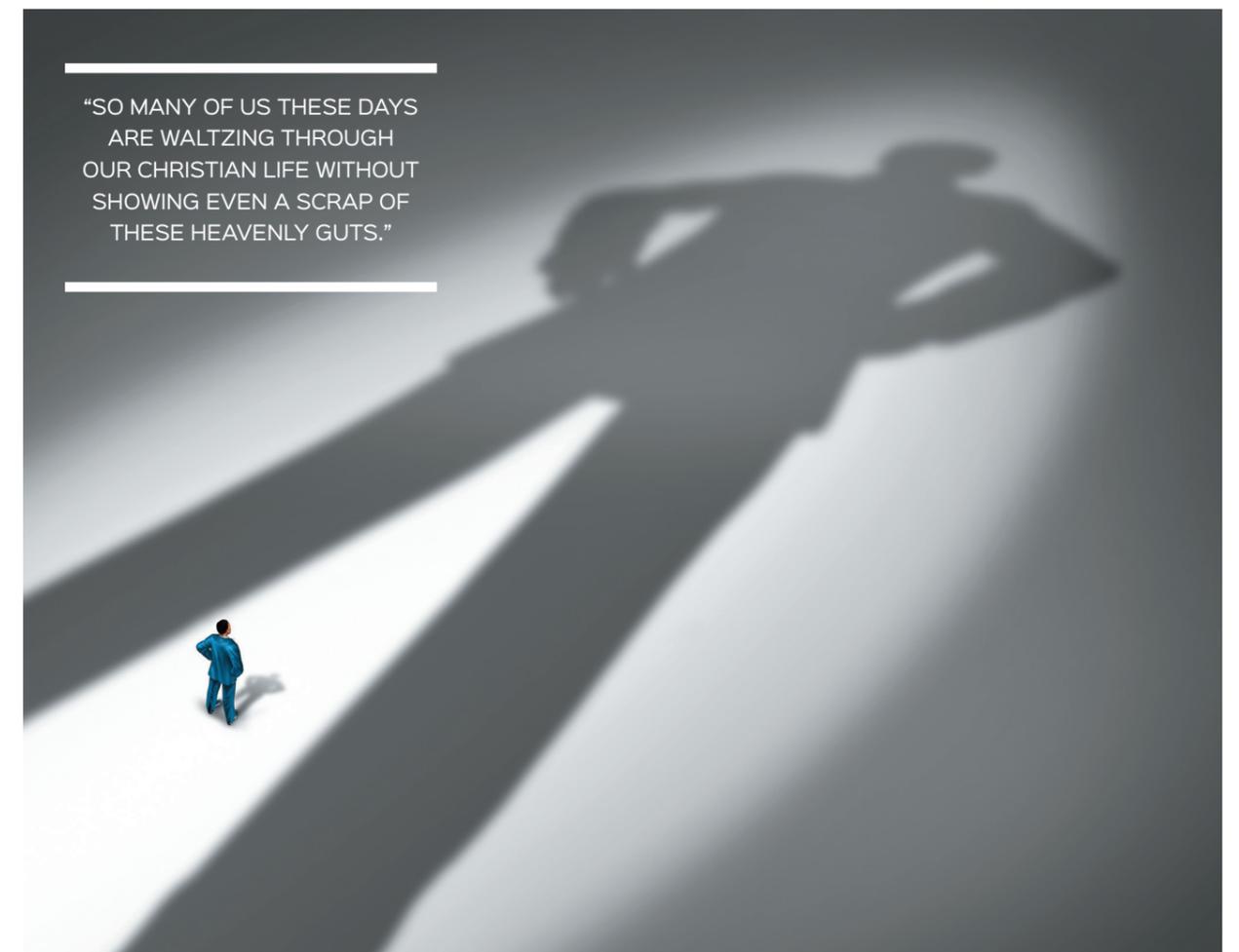
David, while still a youngster, running after a lion while it has food in its mouth, grabbing it’s mane, breaking its jaw, and gaining back his lamb. Who in their right mind would ever do such a thing?

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #5

Benaiah jumping into a pit with a lion on a snowy day and killing the riled beast.

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #4

David and Abishae sneaking into the camp of Saul at night while he was surrounded by his mightiest warriors and brashly stealing his spear and water cruse. That’s not just audacious, that’s hilarious!



“SO MANY OF US THESE DAYS ARE WALTZING THROUGH OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE WITHOUT SHOWING EVEN A SCRAP OF THESE HEAVENLY GUTS.”

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #3

David going into hand-to-hand combat with Goliath, the greatest warrior of his generation, without armor and without a sword. And he doesn't enter the fray with a sheepish anxiety, he sprints with ferocity at this man-beast and kills him in a matter of seconds. Most of us I don't think truly realize how amazing this scene was – it was the epitome of audacity!

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #2

Jesus deliberately choosing to stay away from Bethany until Lazarus had not only died but had been rotting in the tomb for four days. It's then he shows up and has the guts to say, "Roll away the stone – Lazarus come forth!"

AUDACIOUS MOMENT #1

God, in open mockery of the power of Darkness, sends forth his son into hostile enemy territory as a helpless little Baby. God defeats Sin, Death, and Satan while gagged, bound, stripped naked, and nailed to two pieces of wood. The entirety of the Gospel is the audacity of God to actually die a criminal's death and openly mock the powers of this world as a helpless little lamb of sacrifice. It's truly amazing!

It's sort of hard to only pick ten, because there are so many juicy stories of audacity packed into the pages and stories of Scripture. For instance, I'm not even including Jashobeam fighting off 800 Philistines all by his lonesome; Elijah picking a fight with 400 prophets

of Baal on Mt. Carmel; The three mighties breaking through the Philistine Garrison in Bethlehem to get King David a drink of water from the well; King Josiah romping through the land of Israel turning to dust anything and everything that was an abomination to His God; Peter commanding a man who has withered legs to stand up and start walking; or Paul after being smashed to death with stones, rises back to life and heads right back into the city that just stoned him – the stories are simply amazing!

So many of us these days are waltzing through our Christian life without showing even a scrap of these heavenly guts. Because, for many of us, we are afraid that if we step out and really trust our God in a specific fashion, that we will be disappointed, and thusly disillusioned.

However, faith is built through the practice of audacity. David ran after a hungry lion and learned that God backed him up. Then he lunged after a hungry bear. Then, when the Giant stood in the Valley of Elah he was confident and ready to whip out a whole new batch of audacity for the occasion.

Today the church is filled with something Jesus termed "oligopistos," which translates into our language as "little faith." In other words, we fret, we tremble, and we are paralyzed to inaction when the enemy boasts. We believe that God is there, we just don't have any confidence that He is interested in championing our cause in this particular situation.

"IT'S HIGH TIME THAT WE GOT OUR SWAGGER BACK AND STARTED ACTING WITH A CHRIST-CONFIDENT AUDACITY."

But God is our champion. And He is waiting for someone in this generation to trust him with a Davidic swagger, an Elijah-esque confidence, and a Paul-like indomitable assurance. Little faith won't get the job done in the church today. We are in need of the real thing, known as "pistos" – Faith.

If you find yourself trembling today before a boasting Goliath – whether it be lust, fear, anger, debt, frustration, despair, suffocating pride, or something else just as vile – just know that our God is in the business of bringing such giants down to the earth with a thud.

We as Christians have been pushed around long enough. It's high time that we got our swagger back and started acting with a Christ-confident audacity.

I've tasted just a little of this heavenly stuff, and let me tell you, it's good. And, to be honest, it's also quite fun.

If anyone's interested I'll be in the Valley of Elah today at high noon, with five smooth stones and a slingshot in tow, looking to pick a fight with a giant.

Who's with me? |A

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



Stepping out of the boat...on to a bike?

In Jonah-like fashion, Roland Alonzo (a bicycle designer amongst other things), wasn't exactly keen to jump straight into the water when Guy Howard-Willis, co-founder of Torpedo7 (sold to The Warehouse Group in 2013) first mentioned his vision for a commercially-viable hydrofoil bike. We caught up with Roland to find out how the 'Manta5' project came about.

Your story is a fascinating one. You moved to New Zealand in 1985. What motivated you to come to the Land of the Long White Cloud?
I met this feisty South-Cantabrian while I was in the Philippines with YWAM. We were both in the same discipleship training course and we became good friends. Special-relationships (dating) was not permitted during the school and so we honoured that and kept

our feelings to ourselves - only revealing how we felt at the end of a second school term.

A few months after she had gone back to New Zealand I did some soul searching and finally proposed to her in the only way I could at the time - via an old fashioned postage-stamped letter. We got engaged when she rang back by long distance dial-up phone (no

internet in those days). A good friend later suggested that I go over to Aotearoa so we could see if our cross-culture relationship remains true irrespective of which country we're in.

After we got married and two years of thoughtful consideration, we finally decided to settle down in New Zealand for good, and raise a kiwi family.

What were some of the challenges growing up in the Philippines?

Even as a young child, I was always making and building things. I was never short of ideas but I remember being frustrated because I didn't always have the means to build what I wanted. Limited resources is always a challenge, so I had to learn how to build things correctly from the very first go. I often only had one shot at it, not having the luxury to fix any mistakes.

I developed a type of situational awareness where I'm continually measuring progress against expenditure - whether it be time, funds, materials, or even enthusiasm - which isn't often thought of as a consumable, but it is! It's like this cosmic dance where timing is the foundation that determines the placement of everything, so all the elements had better converge in graceful pose when the music stops.

Enthusiasm is the currency that I keep an eye out for the most - because if the passion runs out prematurely, a recipe and all its ingredients won't morph into a cake by itself. Having this predisposition has served me well when embarking on creative projects, but if mismanaged the same predisposition can swing around and just as easily knock the wind out of my sails with stress and frustration.

Tell us about your faith journey and how you came to know Jesus personally?

I was born and raised in a religious family and culture, and although I never struggled with the idea of spiritual intimacy with God, I was never comfortable with ritualistic and ceremonial templates.

I was a troubled teenager and have messed-up in so many ways during high-school despite having every intention to do good to others. I was awkward socially and just couldn't get my act together. Even later in life, I just seem to unwittingly end up saying or doing something wrong that would upset even the ones whom I look up to the most.

The 70s and 80s were pretty volatile times and I inevitably got involved in the drug and heavy music scene. A drummer I knew died from an overdose (presumed intentional), and it rattled our circle of friends to the core.

The leader of that band went through an amazing life transformation when he had this so-called 'God experience' some time later. He got nothing but ridicule from me every time I examined the facts and challenged his story.

The peace I could see on his face was very offensive to me at the time, but I could not fault this strange humility I've never seen in him before. I baited him to retaliate but he never did. Instead he would quote scriptures which infuriated and comforted me at the same time.

Meanwhile, I continued to wander in life - unable to find purpose and direction, and after a series of crushing disappointments I began to drift into dangerous realms of hopelessness and self-resentment.

After having a succession of peculiar dreams weeks prior, I found myself picking a fight with God late one night. I didn't even realise the foolishness of what I was actually doing, so I was taken aback when an unexpected realisation set in while I was in the middle of a mock negotiation for an

equally absurd deal. At that moment, the significance and gravity of the crucifixion fell on me like a tonne of bricks, and I started to weep. Alone in my room with no one to guide me through what I would later be told was 'the sinner's prayer,' I just instinctively knew what to say in response to the revelation. When my self-destructive tendencies had ceased not long after, I then realised that my spiritual rebirth and restoration began that very night, ultimately changing the course of my life.

What was your first experience of designing bikes?

Amid those turbulent years back in the Philippines, a business acquaintance (who had a factory that produced bicycle frames) approached me and asked if I could design him a BMX bike.

My response was, "What's a BMX bike?" He reached into his car and showed me a magazine full of photos of these crazy airborne bikes with little 20 inch wheels with knobby tyres.

This was way back in the day when BMX was dismissed by most manufacturers as a passing fad that would never catch on. I've never built a bicycle before, but there were enough clues from the photographs for me to extrapolate and scale up something that resembled a BMX frame, and so I built one prototype from home in my Dad's humble garage workshop.

About a week later, my friend came back with a big smile on his face pushing this brightly painted fully assembled bike. I had actually already forgotten about it, and curiously I asked, "Well, does it work?" We both laughed when he answered, "How on earth should I know?" From there we found a group of underprivileged but

talented street kids who were making-do with decrepit bicycles trying to imitate the pro-riders they've seen in those American magazines. So we struck a deal, we give them as many bikes as they care to break and all they have to do is tell us what they disliked about them.

Turns out the early prototypes worked well straight off the bat, but I still needed to know where the cracks would occur if at all. This arrangement mushroomed into a full blown user-driven R&D programme that lasted over a year. I learnt so much from those boys, especially on how to interpret and assimilate subjective information.

As fate would have it, some of them ended up being pro-riders themselves when BMX racing exploded and matured as a recognised sport in that country.

So how did you first meet Guy Howard-Willis?

After about 18 years in the graphic arts and advertising industry, my early technical training gradually led me to do more and more work for clients that are involved in manufacturing. This eventually rekindled my passion for bicycle design, which led me to develop a race-proven downhill mountain bike with a unique rear suspension system.

Continuing from there, I came to see Guy at Torpedo7 about another mini pocket bike project I've been working on, but it didn't fit any of their product categories. I was just about to leave his office when Guy asked if I would be interested in working on a personal project he'd been keeping under his hat.

We now know what that is and what it looks like, but at the time



ROLAND ALONZO WITH GUY HOWARD-WILLIS

his idea of taking the cycling experience on the water seem too far fetched. Granted it's got to have a saddle, a handlebar, and pedals - that stuff I do know. However, I told Guy that I don't believe I'm the right person for the project because I knew nothing about hydrofoils - and besides, I have no interest in watersports, don't particularly enjoy the beach, and more importantly - I can't swim!

I said I could give it a shot if he really wanted me to, but watersports not being my thing is a clear handicap.

I really didn't expect to hear from Guy again, so I was surprised when I got a phone call from him about a month later. He mentioned that he happened to be in town and asked if we could meet up for lunch. He had been thinking about the project some more and felt that I was the right man for the job.

While he was sharing more about his vision, I couldn't help but notice that just about everything about what we ordered for lunch had gone wrong. Although the wait-staff were apologetic, further mistakes kept happening. We ended up having the same dish, so I knew he couldn't have enjoyed what he was eating.

It was wrong of me to have presumed a stereotype regarding his stature, because I didn't expect him to be so gracious and so forgiving toward the cafe staff. On the drive back to my workplace, he asked me questions about life and faith, and I was pleasantly surprised when he started to share the gospel with me... very gently, I might add.

When you first contemplated the idea of designing a bike that could ride on the water, what were your initial thoughts?

Down to its fundamental level, a pedal-power hydrofoil craft is not new. DIY enthusiasts have been making one-off contraptions for decades just for the love of it. A commercially-viable hydrofoil bike on the other hand is an entirely different matter.

First, Guy and I had to define what 'viable' means. Second, it was my job to make sure that our ideas are compatible with mass-production manufacturing realities.

The challenge here wasn't that we didn't know how to get started. The real problem was the infinite number of ways it can be done - and we'd have no way of knowing if we'd hit the mark or not (initially anyway). With no precedent and

AUTHENTIC | FEATURE

no existing market base, how can we define the design parameters? Imagine the questions Guy and I asked each other as we progressed through various exploratory iterations.

The answer to every one of them is "I don't know." Is this too small or is it too big? How much should it cost? Where is it going to be ridden? Who's going to ride it? Are they sports-fit or leisure oriented? What happens if they need to stop in the middle of a lake? Obviously if it's too light it would break easily, but when is strong enough too heavy? The list goes on and on.

When Guy and I first started, I foolishly estimated that we could reach 'proof-of-concept' stage in six months time, maybe eight... tops. By the time we past the eight month mark, the development phase started to feel like having to break through three brick walls with a small hammer, only to find ourselves standing in front of the fortress walls of Jericho! And there wasn't a single trumpet in sight!

How long was it before you had something to test in the water that represented a breakthrough?

It took about two and a half years before we had a prototype that could finally pull-off a predictable sub-launch consistently.

Without the ability to re-launch in deep water, our watercraft could never be deemed commercially-viable. We had been advised by experts in this field that this feature was impossible given the relatively short sprint duration and launching distance we required.

Think of it as a cargo plane having to take-off with the brakes left on (rider's submerged body creates a massive amount of



"...I HAVE NO INTEREST IN WATERSPORTS, DON'T PARTICULARLY ENJOY THE BEACH, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY - I CAN'T SWIM!"

drag). Overload that cargo plane with an unsecured payload that shifts unpredictably to and fro - then put it on a ridiculously short runway. Leave only one engine running and give it just 6-9 seconds worth of fuel (human energy depletion time on a manual version of the hydrofoil bike). Then fit an undersized propeller on that engine but restrict it so that it can't rev higher than idling speed.

Using the bumblebee as an analogy, there's no obvious logical reason why this thing should fly... but it does.

So did you personally get to test drive the bike?

No I couldn't, because I can't swim! At first I asked family members and random friends to do some test riding - just whoever was available when I needed a field trial. But receiving feedback from various

people proved to be inconclusive favours. Response data being subjective, really needed to come from one person.

Coincidentally, Clendon Greenway (our home group leader at the time) happens to be an avid surfer and wind-surfer, loves boats or anything that involves water, and is a strong confident swimmer. If that wasn't enough to qualify him as an ideal test-rider, his extraordinary commitment and perseverance proved to be paramount in enabling us to achieve our breakthroughs.

He was so generous of his time that he would drop whatever he was doing whenever I called. However, I began to get uneasy when weeks turned into months, and months turned into years. Our test sessions could only be during week nights, or Saturday afternoons - to privately hire the Windermere Polytechnic pool outside of public hours.

Both Guy and I tried to convince Clendon to accept compensation for all his time and effort, but he politely refused. When I asked him for the reason why, he simply said

that he had given me his word that he would help me whenever I needed him.

His belief in the project often eclipsed that of mine especially towards the end of the third year when my personal supply of 'passion' was running low. I often thought about giving up and to bin the project into the "too hard" basket... but how could I discard the countless hours this faithful man had gifted us in humble service?

Guy too was unflinching in funding the project so we simply owed it to each other to carry-on somehow and finish what we had started.

Now it is 7 years since that first conversation with Guy about the idea. How has life changed for you?

In due course, my wife and I moved to Cambridge to be closer to work, as well as family. The timing and setting was right, the Karapiro river being an idyllic birth place and stomping ground to raise this young kiwi hydrofoil invention. And Cambridge is base-camp and training arena for many of our country's olympic athletes.

Wow, has it been seven years? I know what you're thinking... we got the concept working and sorted at around year three, so why has it taken yet another four years (and counting) to get the bike released into the marketplace? Building a proof-of-concept prototype is relatively easy (can't believe I just said that), but it takes an untold amount of hard uncharted work to develop that design all the way to its final pre-production embodiment - whilst building a new company infrastructure around it.

Guy and I went through four more iterations to get to pre-production

point, taking professional advice along the way. Some of the advice brought invaluable advancement gains, but other recommendations just took us down into rabbit holes we shouldn't have burrowed into... in hindsight.

The process requires a whole team of marketing people, production engineers, patent lawyers, and collaborative meetings with various manufacturers and part suppliers both domestically and abroad. Then add to that engineering validation and certification procedures for every single component. All my CAD 3D models had to be painstakingly translated to 2D production spec drawings, numbering in the hundreds... then there's this invisible elephant in the room called production-tooling-cost (not for the faint hearted). So a transition phase needed to occur, beginning from Guy and Roland secretly working from a home garage workshop - to what has now become a start-up company called Manta5.

That's a big adjustment to tackle, to transition our headspace already heavily taxed with many critical R&D details, and then for us to spread into a larger resource mechanism with many moving parts and interactive human elements.

Sounds like it has really been a journey of faith. What lessons have you learned about trusting the Lord (with all your heart)?

When background stories are shared about how products are designed, they are often told from a perspective of strength, citing wealth of experience. And rightly so, because marketing and product design initiatives are cultivated in that sphere.

I hope that your readers can also accept that the very same story can equally be told from

the perspective of weakness, and a sincere reliance on divine providence... whether it be to find that missing piece of the puzzle, or to find an extra drop of perseverance, when 'digging deep' is no longer enough.

Besides Clendon coming into the scene when he did, there are many others that knocked on our door or became available just at the right time to bring in that certain 'something' that we needed.

Trust is a funny thing. Sometimes it wells up from within when the evidence of past occurrences insists that trust has been earned. You can sustain that trust provided things remain favourable. But then there's another kind of trust, a much harder one... where a full commitment is unconditionally given for no other reason than knowing that the other person leading you on, only has your best interest in mind.

It would be nice if I could say that trusting God with that sort of heartfelt abandon comes in an orderly step by step fashion. But for me it can get real messy and awkward every so often, and sometimes humiliating when my weaknesses and doubts are exposed for others to see.

God is creator, I could say that I am one of his inventions. Mercifully showing some improvement at the 60th iteration, I'm still hobbling around with issues here and there... but he is gracious and likes to fix the flaws thoroughly. Why he perseveres with me I'll never know, but I'm trusting that he'll get me through to 'production' one day when I'm finally ready. |A

You can learn all about this amazing project by visiting the Manta5 website: www.nz.manta5.com



Happy Hanukkah

- The “New Testament” Holiday

By Dr. Chuck Missler

As your Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah this year, let this commemoration also remind you that preparations are presently underway to set the stage for the final countdown.

Each year, around the time we prepare to celebrate Christmas, our Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah. This year it starts at nightfall on December 2nd and continues for eight days through December 10th.

It may come as a surprise to many of our readers that this holiday is alluded to in the New Testament. (Whereas Christmas is not: the observation of Christmas began in 354 a.d. from an adaptation

of established pagan holidays. While there are several defensible estimates regarding the birthday of Christ, we know it was not in winter: the flocks were in open field, indicating sometime prior to October,

In fact, Hanukkah highlights an historical event that Jesus Himself pointed to as the key to understanding the prophecies concerning His return!

THE MYSTERY IN JOHN 10

John Chapter 10 is, of course, the famous Good Shepherd discourse. It clearly speaks for itself and won't be dealt with here. Verse 22, however, seems to be a strange inclusion: right in the middle of this chapter the Holy Spirit notes the following:

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of dedication, and it was winter.

— John 10:22

Why is this reference here?

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR APPROACH

The most important discovery of my life was the insight that the Bible is an integrated message system. Although these 66 books were written by over 40 authors over thousands of years, we discover that they are a unified whole. Every word, every number, every place name—even the implied punctuation—appear to be the result of supernatural engineering.

The rabbis in Israel have a quaint way of expressing this. They say that we won't really understand the Scriptures until the Messiah comes. But when He comes, He will not only interpret the passages for us; He will interpret the very words; He will interpret the very letters; He will even interpret the spaces between the letters! I used to think this was just a colorful exaggeration until I re-read Jesus' own comments on the Scripture: *'Think not that I am come to*

“IT MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO MANY OF OUR READERS THAT THIS HOLIDAY IS ALLUDED TO IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.”

destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'

— Matthew 5:17-18

A “yot” or a “tittle” are Hebraisms: a “yot” is one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet that we might mistake for an apostrophe, or a blemish on the paper. A “tittle” is a tiny notation that distinguishes some of the letters. The phrase that Jesus used is equivalent to our “dotting an ‘i’ or crossing a ‘t.’” These words, from our Lord Himself, seem to verify the rather extreme view of the rabbis.

Thus we discover that every detail of the Bible is there by design. This insight opens an entirely new dimension of Bible study. Every time you find a “mistake” or “contradiction” in the Bible, rejoice: there is a discovery behind that ostensible discrepancy.

THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

Since we have concluded that nothing in Scripture is accidental or trivial, why does this detail in John 10:22 exist? What is the “feast of dedication”? The dedication is of the Temple, of course. But let's explore this further.

There have been only two Temples:

the original one built by Solomon, which was ultimately destroyed by the Babylonians, and Nehemiah's, which was built when the captives returned after the Babylonian Captivity. (This “Second Temple” was subsequently expanded by Herod and was the Temple in place during the New Testament period.)

Solomon's Temple was dedicated in the month of Ethanim, or Tishri.¹ This can't be the reference we're looking for since this was in the autumn. John 10:22 alludes specifically to a feast of dedication in winter. Nehemiah's Temple was dedicated in the month of Adar.² So this can't be it either since Adar is in the spring. Now we're really puzzled! The key to this riddle requires some important historical background.

AN HISTORICAL REFERENCE

A century earlier, in 168 b.c., the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV (“Epiphanes”)³ son of Antiochus the Great, became the successor of his brother, Seleucus IV (who had been murdered by his minister, Heliodorus), as king of Syria (175-164 b.c.). Antiochus was an eccentric, cruel and tyrannical despot. He undertook the total eradication of the Jewish religion and established Greek polytheism in its stead. The observance of all Jewish laws, especially those relating to the Sabbath and to circumcision, were forbidden under penalty of death. Representatives of the crown everywhere enforced the edict. Once a month a search was instituted, and whoever had secreted a copy of the Law or had observed the rite of circumcision was condemned to death. He pillaged the city of Jerusalem,

took 10,000 captives, stripped the Temple of its treasures, and built a pagan altar on the Great Altar of Burnt Sacrifices.⁴

On the 25th of Kislev (Antiochus' birthday), sacrifice was brought on this altar for the first time.⁵ He required a swine to be offered in every village.⁶ (If you know how the Jews feel about pork, you can imagine how that went over! But that's not all...) He also erected an idol to Zeus in the Holy of Holies.⁷ This desecrating sacrilege has a technical name: "the abomination of desolation."

MACCABEAN REVOLT

In the village of Modein, an aged priest named Mattathias lived with his five sons. When officers arrived to carry out Antiochus' decrees, Mattathias killed both the first Jew who approached the pagan altar to offer sacrifice and the royal official who presided, and Mattathias and his sons fled to the hills. This spontaneous revolt grew into a full-scale uprising: Mattathias and his five sons became the nucleus of a growing band of rebels against Antiochus.

Mattathias died soon after, leaving leadership in the hands of his son Judas, whose nickname "Maccabeus" ("the hammer") became the source of the popular name given to the family and its followers. Under Judas' brilliant leadership, what had begun as a guerrilla war turned into full-scale military engagements in which the smaller Jewish forces managed to defeat the much more powerful Syrian armies, and they succeeded in throwing off the yoke of the Seleucid Empire.

On the third anniversary of the desecration of the Temple, on the 25th of Kislev, 164 b.c., the



Temple worship was reestablished. The altar and all of the vessels used in the earlier sacrilege were destroyed and replaced with new ones, and the Temple was rededicated. It is this rededication that is still celebrated among the Jews to this very day as Hanukkah.

A KEY TECHNICAL TERM

The desecration of the Temple in 167 b.c. included the definitive event known as the "abomination of desolation." The term "abomination" in the Bible is a common term for idol worship. The "abomination of desolation" refers to the ultimate extreme form of idol worship: placing an idol on the most sacred spot on Planet Earth: in Jerusalem, in the Temple precincts, in the Holy of Holies itself!

So why did the Holy Spirit highlight Hanukkah by alluding to it in the New Testament? Because Jesus Himself pointed to this specific historical detail as the key to understanding prophecy concerning the Last Days.

A PRIVATE BRIEFING

Four disciples came to Jesus

privately, asking Him about His "Second Coming." His response is so significant that it is recorded in two of the Gospels: Matthew and Mark.⁸ (A similar account in Luke actually focuses on some different elements.) He opened this briefing with a series of "non-signs": certain things that will occur "but the end is not yet." Then He highlighted a critical event as the key to the prophecy:

When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whosoever readeth, let him understand), then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains; Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; Neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes.
— Matthew 24:15–18

In other words, when this event happens, it will be essential for them to get out of Judea immediately! (You are also "on the spot": if you read that verse you are under His orders to "understand"! Jesus' reference to the "abomination of desolation" was, of course, made two centuries after the historical event now commemorated at

Hanukkah. He was speaking of a similar event yet future.

OTHER ATTEMPTS FRUSTRATED

In about 40 a.d., Caligula ordered his image to be installed in the Holy of Holies. Petronius, his general in Judea, realizing how vehement the Jews' reaction would be, declined to execute the order. When Caligula found out, he ordered the death of Petronius. But Caligula died a few weeks later, and due to a mix-up at sea, the message that Caligula had died preceded the order for Petronius' execution, so he got off the hook. It is interesting how God intervened to prevent another desecration of the Temple from happening. Has it happened yet?

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

Just as Jesus had predicted, in 69 a.d. the 5th, 10th, 12th, and 15th Roman Legions, under Titus Vespasian, laid siege to Jerusalem. Over a million men, women and children were slaughtered in that terrible war. Finally, on the 9th of Av, 70 a.d., the Temple was destroyed.⁹ It was this event that Luke's account focuses on. Both Luke and Matthew highlight a group of signs, which Matthew dubs as "the beginning of sorrows":

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All

these are the beginning of sorrows.
— Matthew 24:6–8

Matthew's account focuses on what follows this group of signs.¹⁰ Luke focuses on what precedes these signs.¹¹ He warned his audience that when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, they were to get out of town and don't let any in the hills go back to town. Luke tells his audience that "this generation will not pass until all be fulfilled,"¹² and 38 years later—the same length of the generation that died in the wilderness—Jerusalem fell in 70 a.d.

A CRITICAL HIATUS

The Emperor Nero had ordered his general, Vespasian, and his son Titus, to use force to get things in Judea under control. They had conquered the towns in the Galilee and were preparing to take Jerusalem next. But then Nero died. In Rome, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius vied for the throne; in the subsequent confusion and ambiguity, Vespasian went to Rome and succeeded to take the throne as Emperor. His son Titus was left to complete the siege of Jerusalem.

During the hiatus, Christians, following the warnings in the Luke account, escaped to the mountains in Pella in Perea, and not one perished.¹³

THE HOLIDAY MESSAGE

The Holy Spirit put John 10:22 in the New Testament to highlight Daniel's famous prophecy and to focus our attention on this key milestone in the end-time scenario. When will the "abomination of

desolation" occur? When there is, once again, a Temple in Jerusalem. So as your Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah this year, let this commemoration also remind you that preparations are presently underway to set the stage for the final countdown.

What an exciting time to be alive!

'Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.'
— Habakkuk 1:5

Happy Holidays! |

NOTES

- 1 Kings 8:2. Ethaniam is the same as Tishri, or September-October.
- Ezra 6:15, 16. Adar is typically in early March.
- "Epiphanes" is an abbreviation of Greek: theos epiphanes, a designation he gave himself: "the god who appears or reveals himself."
- Josephus, Antiquities, XII v 4.
- 1 Maccabees 1:54,59.
- Josephus, Antiquities, XII v 4.
- 1 Maccabees 1:54; 2 Maccabees 6:1–7.
- Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13, 14; Luke's similar account was given to a different audience on a different occasion and did not focus on the same issues.
- The very day on the Jewish calendar that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple in 537 b.c.
- Matthew 24:8,9.
- Luke 21:12.
- Luke 21:32.
- Eusebius, Book III, 5.1.

■ Chuck Missler was an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He was also the founder of the Koinonia Institute. Chuck Missler sadly passed away in May 2018.





THE BULGING LEFT BICEP

A four part series by Eric Ludy



The Tillering of the Ready Bow

Most of us reading this have “jumped,” we’ve “sung,” we’ve “skipped,” and we’ve even “yodeled,” but most of us have never tillered. To tiller is to slowly and purposely bend wood into a desired shape.

Wood, by nature, isn't desiring to be bent. It resists this operation. And as a result, tillering takes time and patience. It's a little bit of movement every day. And if you rush the process, the wood will snap. And for a Longbow, that simply won't do.

Red oak, hard maple, hickory, poplar, and mahogany all are wonderful woods. But none of them are perfectly suited to becoming a Longbow in the hand of a Heavenly Archer. They all balk at tillering. But there is a very special wood that God designed specifically for such a tillering process. And that is yew.

First the Bow-maker would find a satisfactory stave of yew. He would then taper it from its middle to its ends in a slight oval shape. Then

the tillering would begin. One inch at a time, the bow would be bent. The Bow-maker would “teach” the bow its proper and most-useful shape, so that when it was fully drawn it would look like the segment of a circle. Or, as it was often said in the olden days, until it “come compass.”

It's important to note that the reason we have hope for the return of the Bowman's bulging left bicep is due to the fact that the Perfect Bowman has already appeared. This Perfect Bowman, wasn't just the most amazing Archer who hit the mark from ten thousand yards out, in and through a gusting wind, but He is also the great Bow-maker.

His Name . . . Jesus.

And though Jesus is God, the Great Bow-maker, He humbled Himself to become a common Bowman, a Longbow in the hand of His Father, and even the very arrow that pierced the heart of the Devil's power and authority.

Never forget this . . .

God has chosen “yew” (you). And He is desirous, able, and ready to bend “yew” into a state ready to push back the powers of darkness in this generation.

How does the grand old Book say it?

Faithfully is He who has called “yew,” who also will do it!

Let's let Him do it once again! | A



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



40 Years of Wandering...

Moses went up Sinai for 40 days, the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus spent 40 days in the desert...

Steve Adams has spent the last 40 years in youth ministry, primarily in New Zealand, pastoring Churches, running Christian Camps and now in a national role with Scripture Union, this regular Kiwi guy has made it his life's goal to encourage NZ's teenagers into a true relationship with Jesus.

We caught up with Steve to ask about his motivation for taking one of the hardest jobs on the planet!

So, if I ask you how it all began, can you remember back that long ago?

Well at 17 years old I had a love for introducing people to the Gospel - I wanted to see as many of my friends as possible come to know Jesus. That's where it all started.

So how did you get into youth ministry?

In 1980 I did a year at GLO Bible

School and then when I graduated, I went down to Fenton Park to help with the youth where I ended up as Youth Pastor.

After Claire and I got married, we then had a year in Aussie where I was working as a Youth Pastor with a church in Wodongo but we came back a year later to take up a position as director of Kiwi Ranch - a Christian Camp in Wellington.

We had a difficult time there and we left a few years later soon after our son, Chad, was born.

Then we went back up to Auckland and did the Assembly Bible School before heading off to Kawerau where we did Youth & Community pastoral work for the next 6 years.

We were then involved in the Lighthouse church plant in

Masterton and I worked with community youth for 4 years which was my first paid position.

What? How had you been earning money up until then?

I worked! I did a few things. I worked in forestry for a bit, maize, orchards, a bit of wood carving, worked in coffee shops, and a bit of real estate!

I also flipped houses! There was a guy who was going to burn a house down. So I moved it, did it up, sold it and made a bit of money!

Wow, you're a machine bro! So what happened next? Did life get a little simpler?

Not really. Although we did move to Hamilton where I worked as a Youth Pastor with Whitiora Bible Church when Brian Goodwin was the Pastor. We loved that and did it for 7 years but then we moved back down to Wellington to a new church called 'The Kings Arms'. We stayed there until 2012 when we moved to Tauranga and I started work with Scripture Union.

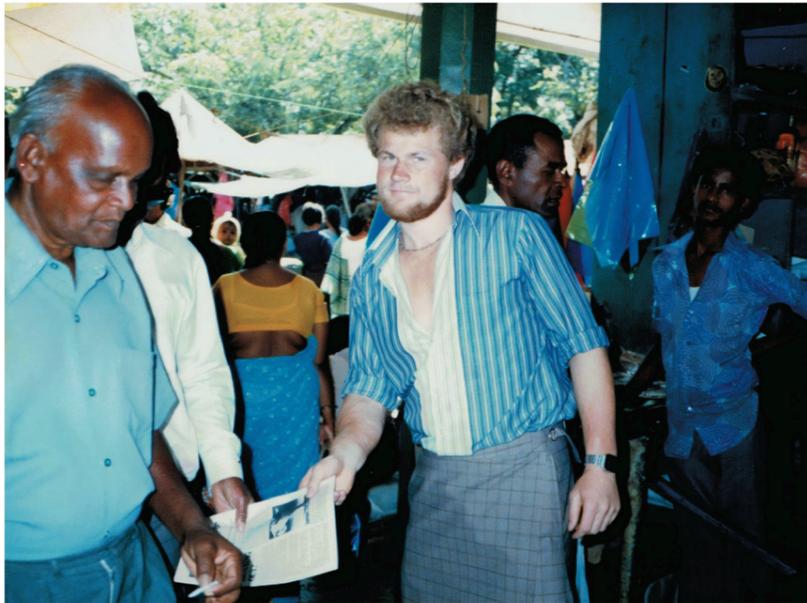
So what's your role for SU and how is it different to the other roles you've held?

Well I'm officially a 'Youth Consultant' so I do some mentoring and work with churches and pastors overseeing our Youth Leadership Development Programmes. I'm also the North Island Camps Facilitator for SU Camps and I do a bit of speaking and teaching.

Was it difficult moving around so much to serve in different roles?

Well, I've been married 33 years and we've moved 24 times!

I have a very patient wife. And that's the important thing really. It's a dual role - if something happened



'THERE WAS A GUY WHO WAS GOING TO BURN A HOUSE DOWN. SO I MOVED IT, DID IT UP, SOLD IT AND MADE A BIT OF MONEY!'

to my wife I'd resign the next day! Our family has always been in the ministry together. Although God did give me the vision when I was 16 and I put my knees on the carpet and said I wanted to work in full time youth ministry (and marry a nurse), my family have served alongside me - with me!

Was it hard balancing the pressures of Youth Work with a young family?

I always wanted to make sure my kids felt loved and that they weren't missing out. We made sure they felt part of the ministry that mum and dad were in. They blended in to our ministry.

Once when I sat them down to explain that we were moving again, my 15 year old daughter said "That's what we do, Dad - we work with youth!"

Both our boys have had a time as a youth pastor and our daughter has been involved in Christian Camping so it's been really encouraging for us.

Do you ever wish you'd got a proper job that earned you plenty of money?

Ha ha, not at all. We're so thankful to the Lord

Materialistically, we don't have much, but we've got three kids with great spouses that love the Lord. We're stoked about that!

What has been your biggest challenge in ministry?

Probably leadership struggles within the church. It seemed like every church we were involved in things turned to custard! Sometimes the expectations on us were insane. There wouldn't be a clear job description so the role just kept expanding. And the youth see it because it impacts them.

Young people are very susceptible to injustice so it hurts them when they feel let down. I always reacted to the injustice - that cost us some positions in churches - but we



'YOUTH JUST NEED IT BASIC SO WE SHOULDN'T COMPLICATE IT. THEY NEED TO SEE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS WELL AS HEAR ABOUT IT.'

always saw potential and worked to support these youth. They just needed someone to care.

How do you get fed spiritually?

Theology is important but if something doesn't have legs, I struggle! It needs to make sense. I have a love for the Word so personal study is very important to me.

I always try to never give the same message twice. Sometimes there might be a key issue you want to communicate but you can always refresh a message. It's important to keep it fresh when you're working with youth! I always say, "It's all about coming to maturity in Christ."

I tell them, "Your relationship with God needs to be right."

Youth just need it basic so we shouldn't complicate it.

They need to SEE the Christian life as well as hear about it.

We sometimes hear that the Church in NZ is shrinking. What is your view of the state of Church?

Well, simply put, the youth have lost value in who God is and what God says!

Morality and biblical principles are watered down. Their general feeling is, 'if it feels right do it.' It's got worse over the years. But now it's ridiculous. They feel free to do whatever they want and if anyone questions them they say, "Who are you to judge?"

And a lot of youth will quote verses but they don't read it the Bible! So they are often quoting God out of context - what they think He should have said!

Over the last 40 years I've seen so many trends and fads but at the end of the day every youth wants to feel loved and accepted. And now, with with Social Media, they want to be accepted but there's no human touch, just likes and shares!

What do you think about the impact of Social Media on this generation?

Anything can be used positively - but that doesn't justify it. Getting young people together is always better than using social media. Everyone has the desire to be liked so we have to be careful we're not promoting something that is unhealthy.

How do you view the role of parents as role models in their kids' lives?

My biggest frustration in 40 years of Youth Ministry is seeing poor parenting and the impact it has. Parents give you their kids and say, "For goodness sake, please do something with them!"

Behavioural issues are so often down to poor parenting. Parents opting out of their responsibility. The truth is that parenting can be hard at times - but you can't get out of it. It's your responsibility. You've got to work hard at it and not just sit back and give up.

How can we move them along and grow them into the people God has called them to be if we're not prepared to put in the effort?

Do you have any advice that all parents would benefit from?

So often parents say 'no' far too much. If you never say 'yes' to your kids they don't really listen to when you say 'no'. Say 'yes' when you can so they accept 'no' when you can't.

And don't make the small things big!

A classic example is if a kid comes home with a shaved head. Sometimes parents would go nuts. I'd say chill out - it'll grow back.

Sometimes there's better ways to deal with problems.

A funny example is when my oldest boy came home with his pants around ankles - all baggy and showing his underwear. He told me, "This is how we roll. This is normal." I said, "Well, it doesn't look good." So when we went to dentist together I pulled my shorts down. He shouted "Dad - pull your pants up!" But I just smiled and said, "That's how we roll!"

He got the point! 🙌

Scripture Union run adventure-based camps, youth programmes and produce innovative resources for leaders and churches in New Zealand. For more information visit www.sunz.org.nz

Right on Salvation... Right on Sanctification?

By Charlie McCall

To be wrong about some things means little, like being wrong about whether or not something is magenta or purple. To be wrong about other things means a great deal, like whether or not green means go and red means stop.

All would agree that being wrong about how to be saved means a great deal. Yet, people tend to give very little thought about whether or not they are right about sanctification. That's a mistake, being wrong about sanctification means a great deal, too.

A person is saved who places his trust (faith) completely and solely in the Lord Jesus Christ to save him. When a person trusts in Jesus to save him, he is receiving Christ. He is availing himself to the activity of another. He is yielding to the saving activity of the Saviour to do for him and in him what he cannot do for or in himself. It is as simple as that!

There is no difference whatsoever with sanctification. We are saved by the work of the Spirit through faith in Christ, we are perfected (sanctified) by the work of the Spirit through faith in Christ. It is as simple as that! We often think, act, and teach that the process of being conformed to Christ is a result of what we do: study the Bible, memorize it, go to church, tell others about Jesus, keep our temper in check, etc.

In other words, we are saved as a result of what Jesus does but we are sanctified as a result of what we do. But the Bible is clear: "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (Col. 2:6)." Having

"IN OTHER WORDS, WE ARE SAVED AS A RESULT OF WHAT JESUS DOES BUT WE ARE SANCTIFIED AS A RESULT OF WHAT WE DO."

begun by the Spirit, we cannot be perfected by the flesh (Gal. 3:1).

There is not one message of salvation and another message of sanctification. There's only one message. There is a lot of good that comes from memorizing the Bible, going to church, and telling others about Jesus, but can

anyone by these things deliver himself from sin? Can he by these things make himself less prone to sin? Can he by these things make himself right with God or good in the sight of God? Some good may come from these things but the works of the flesh are not the same as the works of the Spirit in response to faith. They are as different as Ishmael (a work of the flesh) and Isaac (a work of the Spirit).

Despite the good that comes from a life of self-discipline, the flesh can't achieve Christ-likeness. We received Christ for salvation, we must trust in Christ for sanctification. This is not a small issue. Paul says that the gospel

itself is in peril when we think that sanctification is accomplished by what we do. Obviously then, the gospel message is as much about sanctification as it is about salvation.

How big of a mistake is it to be wrong about sanctification? When we think that we contribute to our sanctification, Paul says we have deserted Christ, we are believing another gospel that is not from God, we're nullifying the grace of God, have become severed from Christ, have fallen from grace, have believed a distortion that is worthy of condemnation, are giving opportunity to the flesh, and are acting foolishly (Gal. 1:6-8; 2:21; 3:1, 4, 10; 5:1-2, 4, 13).

I'd say Paul feels pretty strongly about this! Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). God is at work in us to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Jesus is the one who will bring to completion the work that He has begun in the believer (Phil. 1:6). And when we see Jesus, we will be like Him (1 Jn. 3:2) because of what He will do, not because of what we will do. Salvation is the work of God. So is sanctification. We are saved by faith in Christ; likewise, we live and are sanctified by faith in Christ. The only proper response to the saving initiative of God in Christ is to say "thank you." The only proper response to the sanctifying initiative of God in Christ is also to simply say "thank you." We are saved and glorified exclusively by His activity. Why would we think that sanctification is by our activity?

Rest and rejoice in the assurance that by God's doing you are in Christ Jesus, who has become to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. No one, therefore, can boast in his sanctification any more than he can boast in his salvation. We can only boast in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:30-31).¹

¹ Charlie McCall is the director of His Hill – the Torchbearers Bible School in Comfort, Texas. To learn more about the ministry there visit www.hishill.org





Captivated by the Beauty of the Lord

By NR Johnson

I recently came across this great turn of phrase in a book I've been reading: "behold His irresistible beauty, remarkable splendor, and unfathomable love."

What a compelling thought!

The book went on to say, "It's essential that we become fascinated, gripped, and captivated by the Lord. If not, we will struggle with boredom, and our hearts will be vulnerable to pursue other things."

The beauty of the Lord.

For years I have prayed, "O Lord, capture my focus and captivate me!" In other words, "draw my attention to You and then enthrall me with Yourself." It is as the great song declares:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

I've found that to be true.

I found it interesting that three times in Scripture it mentions that holiness (a primary attribute of God) is considered beautiful.

Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! – 1 Chronicles 16:29b, Psalm 29:2, Psalm 96:9.

Holiness is not a list of dos and

"DO YOU SEEK AFTER THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD? DO YOU DESIRE TO BE CAPTIVATED BY HIM?"

don'ts, regulations to follow, or commands to keep. Holiness is merely God Himself. If I become captivated with Christ, I will become captivated with His nature (perfect holiness, love, etc), for that is Who He is.

As I was recently reminded, when we see the beauty of creation we are seeing an external picture (or a pale glimpse) of the true beauty of the Creator. As Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

Do you seek after the beauty of the Lord? Do you desire to be captivated by Him?

In Psalm 27, David says he has one passion and desire, "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4).

Is that your desire as well?

The Psalms also declare:

- Psalm 50:2 – "From Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines in glorious radiance." (NLT)

- Psalm 96:6 – "Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty [fill] His sanctuary." (ESV)

Jonathan Edwards once wrote that "the divine beauty of Christ bows the wills, and draws the hearts of men."

May Jesus woo and draw our hearts to Him as He captivates us with His divine beauty.

T. Austin-Sparks once wrote in his book *The Gospel According to Paul*,

When Christ really captivates, everything happens and anything can happen. That is how it was with Paul and with these people. Christ had just captivated them. They may have had their businesses, their trades, their professions, their different walks of life and occupations in the world, but they had one all-dominating thought, concern and interest—Christ. ...

*There is no other word for it. He just captivated them. And I see, dear friends, that that—simple as it sounds—explains everything. It explains Paul ... it explains these believers, it explains their mutual love. It solved all their problems, cleared up all their difficulties. Oh, this is what we need! **If only you and I were like this, if we really after all were captivated by Christ!** ... After all, nine-tenths of our troubles can be traced to the fact that we have other personal*

interests influencing us, governing us and controlling us—other aspects of life than Christ.

If only it could be true that Christ had captured and captivated and mastered us, and become—yes, I will use the word—an obsession, a glorious obsession! When it is like that, we are filled with joy. There are no regrets at having to "give up" things. We are filled with joy, filled with victory. ...

Oh, we need the captivating to wipe out our selves—our reputations, everything that is associated with us and our own glory—that the One who captivates may be the only One in view, the only One with a reputation, and we at His feet. This is the gospel, the good news—that when Christ really captivates, the kind of thing that is in this letter happens, it really happens. Shall we ask the Lord for that life captivity of His beloved Son?

Yes, I think we should. May the desire of our hearts be the captivation of Christ.

Know I am cheering you on unto that end. |  

* The book is "Insurgence" by Frank Viola. I'm only a few pages in and though I've enjoyed what I've read thus far, as a reminder, always read with biblical discernment.



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I SAVED CHRISTMAS

By Jeremy Suisted



A few years ago, I saved Christmas. Normally that would sound like a misleading headline, designed to grab a reader in and then impress you with my wit as I try to explain what I really meant.

But I do literally mean that. I saved Christmas. Father Christmas, to be exact.

I was on an American road-trip, with my great friend Jamie. We'd begun in the metropolis machine of New York, and had now driven our way across to Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was early December, and starting to get a bit chilly.

So one night, Jamie, myself and a few other Tulsian friends ventured downtown to hear some carol singing. We walked the city, saw the lights, and then came across Father Christmas, along with his wife – named, Mother Christmas, I think.

They were the real-deal. Both were delightfully old, and had faces that were warm and inviting. The

beard was legitimate, the wrinkles were real, and their smiles and rich Southern accents oozed authenticity.

We chatted to them both, shared our Christmas wish-lists, and then moved on to get hot chocolate. We wandered. And then, as we went back to our rental car to head off – we saw an unusual site. Father Christmas, trying to break into the car next to us.

At first, we were flummoxed. Wasn't Santa meant to travel by sleigh? And wasn't he meant to give gifts – not steal them?

But a quick conversation later, and we realised the problem. Mother Christmas had been getting too cold, so had taken one of their cars home. Only – she had both sets of

“FAR FROM BEING SMALL-MINDED – THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW OFFERS A PERSPECTIVE THAT INCLUDES SCIENCE – BUT GOES WIDER THAN IT.”

keys in her jacket – leaving Santa short of a ride.

He didn't know what to do – and was about to ask the police if they could assist him in breaking in. We had a better idea – and offered to take him home.

He jumped in the car, we put on appropriate Christmas carols – and had a delightful 20 minutes of taking Father Christmas home – knowing that we had done the world a favour.

Now, the more astute reader will note – that we were in all likelihood not carrying the real Father Christmas at all. Instead, we were carrying an ordinary man, who had lived in Tulsa his whole life.

And with them – I'd agree. Apart from one little word – 'ordinary.' See, according to the story of Christmas, there's a husband and wife who live a mystical life in the North Pole. They oversee a team of elves, who create toys – which Santa and his magical reindeer deliver across the globe on Christmas Eve.

According to the story of scientism – the belief that science is the only way of knowing – the person sitting in the car with us was a mixture of organic chemicals and compounds. His life was determined entirely by his environment and the way these factors drove his decision making.

And according to the story of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures – this man is one who bears the thumbprint of the divine on every aspect of his life. This is one who is no mere mortal, but is crowned and charged with possibility and mystery in their very being.

This is one thing I love about a worldview that transcends scientism, or materialistic determinism – it makes your world that much bigger.

See, pure scientism – think Richard Dawkin's atheism – says that what-you-see-is-what-you-get. There is no room for magic, for mystery or for miracle. It is all science and can all be empirically proven.

In all of human history – there cannot be one miracle. Not one

moment of enchantment. Not one sense of spiritual mystery. If there was – even just one little answered prayer – the entire scientism castle would come crashing down.

As G. K. Chesterton quipped, “If the cosmos of the materialist is the real cosmos, it is not much of a cosmos. The real thing has shrunk. The whole of life is something much more grey, narrow, and trivial than many separate aspects of it. The parts seem greater than the whole.”

Far from being small-minded – the Christian worldview offers a perspective that includes science – but goes wider than it. It acknowledges that science is a fantastic way of knowing – but it does not tell the whole picture.

It enjoys scientific discovery, and seeking to explore the order behind everything we see. And yet, it is open to those rules being broken and transcended – because it recognises that there is Someone bigger than science.

Thus we can have a neurosurgeon praying for his patient. The perfect marriage of scientific rigour and training, along with a recognition that perhaps there is another helper in the room. We can have philosophers who believe in miracles. We can have theologians who apply methods of science to their study of God – and then worship with heart-felt abandon at the one they enjoy.

This is the joy of life. C.S. Lewis also noted that believing in miracles doesn't mean disbelieving in science. Instead – we have to know the rules of the world, for a miracle to happen. It's the playful breaking of the rules that makes a miracle –

not an ignorance of them. We know that water doesn't turn into wine. That's what makes it so delightfully good when it does.

We know that sickness is fought by an immune system, and can be supported by medicine. That's what makes it so delightfully great when a miraculous healing occurs.

Blind people don't suddenly see. We don't get insights into what's going to happen. We can't scientifically discover what latent dreams lie on a person's heart.

We know this – and yet, we see it happen. This is the delight of mystery, and the beauty of the world. And we need a story of everything that includes this mystery and delight.

So maybe I didn't save Santa. Maybe I didn't save Christmas. But I did enjoy time with one who is made in the image of God, and one who contains more mystery and worth than science would ever allow.

And, who knows? As the book of Hebrews says, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

Angels in your workplace? Amongst the poor? On the side of the road, needing a ride?

That sounds more real to me, more than anything a scientism can tell.

Here's to mystery, the unknown and a life of faith and adventure – discovering as we follow. |A

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



GOD AT WORK

Knowledge vs Wisdom

By Paul Curtas

Knowledge is facts and information you have learned and stored. Wisdom is how you apply it in life's situations.

God tells us there is a difference between His wisdom and the World's wisdom.

Here is a litmus test God gives to distinguish between the two. (Proverbs 9:10)

- First, worldly wisdom can produce in our lives bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

Jealousy is focusing on what someone else has with a growing desire to have it. Selfish ambition is when my life become consumed with ME and my way above anything or anyone else. Both these end up bringing confusion and make life cheap (James 3:14-16).

- On the other hand, God's wisdom (truth from His Word) comes from above. When applied to our life it produces what is pure—clear, without

contradiction; peaceable—not disruptive but calming; gentle—not harsh but kind; reasonable—respectfully engaging; full of mercy—not demeaning but forgiving; and unwavering without hypocrisy—more than just a slogan we stand for... but something we live daily. (James 3:17)

Your ability to be an influence at your work comes as you adapt in your heart and apply through your life...God's wisdom. |A



5 Godly steps to annihilate your debt

By Carlos Rodriguez

I have zero skill for maths or planning. I'm also a slightly compulsive buyer. And I never feel like saving money.

By the time I was 27, I had more than 40 thousand dollars of debt, I was foreclosing my only property and had a credit score that was deep in the pits of hell.

However, today my wife and I are completely debt free. We make decent money, eat good food, give more than 20% of our earnings away, lead an amazing non-profit organization called TheHappyGivers.com and... we never lose sleep because of debt. #GraceGraceGrace

No wonder Jesus spoke about money so much. It was not so preachers would twist his words so they could get richer, it was actually because he cares about our lives and our health and our families (and

money has the potential to destroy or bless them all).

The average 15-24 year old New Zealander is nearly \$22,000 in debt. So maybe this will help my average Kiwi reader take that number down to zero. And because I have been on both sides of the spectrum, I want to share my 5 Godly Steps to Destroy Debt:

1. EVEN IF IT'S SMALL... START!

One of the hardest thing about debt is the suffocation that leads us to inaction. Sometimes the numbers are so huge that we can't help but feel small. But the easiest way to manage your debt and your money is to take it one step at a time—don't worry about being perfect.

Admit the failure, embrace the lesson and start moving in the right direction. Make that phone call to your bank and ask for help. Do a search online for a debt consolidation program. Talk to friends and family members who are more seasoned and ask them the hard questions.

I'm so grateful to my parents and in-laws for their generosity and wisdom.

"NOBODY MADE A GREATER MISTAKE THAN HE WHO DID NOTHING BECAUSE HE COULD ONLY DO A LITTLE."
— EDMUND BURKE

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2. BE BRUTALLY HONEST:

Debt turns good people into liars. The shame forces you to minimize how bad it really is. And although you don't want to linger on the mistakes, you have to zoom in and focus on the cracks that need fixing. Assess the damage (so you know what you're up against).

I use a website to help me track all my expenses. It's an online tool that keeps me accountable to our budget and allows me see how I'm doing with earning, planning and spending.

It's free and simple and you should try it today: mint.com

Lying to yourself got you here, the truth will set you free.

3. SPEND LESS THAN YOU MAKE:

Period. It's an automatic pay rise. The guy who help me start this blog, Dale Partridge wrote, "Act your wage because if you have to buy it on credit, you probably don't need it."

So go ahead, literally destroy your credit cards and trust God with your cash flow. Be bold and downsize (your home, your car, your meals). Find a side job or start selling your unused possessions online. Then, learn how to spend only on the things that matter... but more on that below.

"WE BUY THINGS WE DON'T NEED WITH MONEY WE DON'T HAVE TO IMPRESS PEOPLE WE DON'T LIKE."
— DAVE RAMSAY

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

4. KEEP SPENDING:

On the things you really love. Dealing with debt is like going on a diet. And God knows that the best diets are the ones that include foods that you love and enjoy (usually people stick longer to those).

The best thing we did with our budget was prioritizing for the things we liked as a family. For us, it's food and travel and adoption. That's where most of our money goes.

And I know it sounds slightly irresponsible to some, but to us, it's the investments we want to be making. So it really helps us not to get a mortgage, or a fancy car, or new clothes every month. That might be what you prioritize, and that's great, but it's just not us. And that has been the most freeing part about being debt free. Now we can invest even more in the things we care and enjoy.

5. TAKE A CLASS, READ THE BOOKS:

Lots of churches offer Finance classes, go to them. There are online courses to assist you along the way, sign up. There are multiple books that deal with debt and spending and managing finances, invest wisely.

Be proactive in taking and reading and learning. Educate yourself because that will shape you and encourage you to live this: "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:7-8

I'll finish with the book that started the journey for me: *I Will Teach You To Be Rich* by Ramit Sethi.

I know. Dumb title. I told myself, "No I don't want to be rich... I want to be holy, I want to transform the world, give to the poor etc" But I was amazed how ungodly I was with my personal finances, and how little world-changing I was going to achieve if I was in debt. This very non-Christian book was a God-send from heaven.

Since reading it I've been saving for retirement, growing my streams of income and becoming more of a giver (and less of a taker).

If I can do it, there is no doubt in my mind you can do it also (and probably better). Lead yourself, and your heart, and your wallet into a Happy Sonship, and trust God the Father to provide all that you need to be debt free.

I know He wants it even more than you do.

I'm rooting for you. Start today. *Destroy Debt Peace*.

* The best rated personal finance book ever: *The Total Money Makeover: Classic Edition: A Proven Plan for Financial Fitness* by Dave Ramsey.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:19* | **A**



Who Were the Magi? A Christmas Surprise:

By Chuck Missler



Each year as we approach the holiday season, our preparations for Christmas include revisiting the events surrounding the birth of Our Lord. Bethlehem,¹ the shepherds, and the angels are all familiar to us. But not much is generally known about the mysterious "Magi" who came to worship the infant Jesus. The following background may be helpful to stimulate conversations around the fireplace, as our thoughts turn to this incredible event from which we measure our very calendar.

TRADITIONS

Most of what we associate with the "Magi" is from early church traditions. Most have assumed that there were three of them since they brought three specific gifts. (But the Biblical text doesn't number them.) They are called "Magi" from the Latinized form of the Greek word magoi, transliterated from the Persian for

a select sect of priests. (Our word "magic" comes from the same root.) As the years passed, traditions became increasingly embellished. By the third century, they were viewed as kings. By the sixth century they had names: Bithisarea, Melichior, and Gathaspa. Some even associated them with Shem, Ham and Japheth, the three sons of Noah,

and thus with Asia, Africa, and Europe. A fourteenth century Armenian tradition identifies them as Balthasar, King of Arabia; Melchior, King of Persia; and Gaspar, King of India.

(Relics attributed to them emerged in the fourth century and were transferred from Constantinople to Milan in the fifth century, and



with profound and extraordinary religious knowledge. After some Magi, who had been attached to the Median court, proved to be expert in the interpretation of dreams, Darius the Great established them over the state religion of Persia.²(Contrary to popular belief, the Magi were not originally followers of Zoroaster.³ That all came later.)

It was in this dual capacity whereby civil and political counsel was invested with religious authority, that the Magi became the supreme priestly caste of the Persian Empire, and continued to be prominent during the subsequent Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian periods.⁴

THE ROLE OF DANIEL

One of the titles given to Daniel was Rab-mag, the Chief of the Magi.⁵ His unusual career included being a principal administrator in two world empires: the Babylonian and the subsequent Persian Empire. When Darius appointed him, a Jew, over the previously hereditary Median priesthood, the resulting repercussions resulted in the plots leading to the lion's den.⁶ Daniel apparently entrusted a messianic vision (to be announced in due time by a "star") to a secret sect of the Magi for its eventual fulfillment. But first, let's cover some historical background.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Since the days of Daniel, the fortunes of both the Persian and the Jewish nations had been closely intertwined. Both nations had, in their turn, fallen under Seleucid domination in the wake of Alexander's conquests. Subsequently both had regained their independence: the Jews under Maccabean leadership, and the Persians as the dominating ruling group within the Parthian Empire.

It was at this time that the Magi, in their dual priestly and governmental office, composed the upper house of the Council of the Megistanes ("magistrates") whose duties included the absolute choice and election of the king of the realm. It was therefore a group of Persian-Parthian "king makers" who entered Jerusalem in the latter days of the reign of Herod. Herod's reaction was understandably one of fear when one considers the background of Roman-Parthian rivalry that prevailed during his lifetime.

ROME ON THE RISE

Pompey, the first Roman conqueror of Jerusalem, attacked the Armenian outpost of Parthia in 63 b.c. In 55 b.c. Carssus led Roman legions in sacking Jerusalem and, in a subsequent attack, Parthia proper. The Romans were decisively defeated at the battle of Carrhae with the loss of 30,000 troops, including their commander.

The Parthians counterattacked with a token invasion of Armenia, Syria, and Palestine. Nominal Roman rule was reestablished under Antipater, the father of Herod, who retreated before another Parthian invasion in 40 b.c.

Mark Anthony reestablished Roman sovereignty in 37 b.c., and, like Carssus before him, also embarked on a similarly ill-fated Parthian expedition. His disastrous retreat was followed by another wave of invading Parthians, which swept all Roman opposition completely out of Palestine (including Herod himself, who fled to Alexandria and then to Rome). With Parthian collaboration, Jewish sovereignty was restored and Jerusalem was fortified with a Jewish garrison.

then to Cologne in 1162, where they remain enshrined today.) These are all very interesting traditions, but what do we really know about the Magi?

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE MEDES

The ancient Magi were a hereditary priesthood of the Medes credited

Herod, by this time, secured from Augustus Caesar the title of "King of the Jews." However, it was not for three years (including a five month's siege by Roman troops) that he was able to occupy his own capital city. Herod had thus gained the throne of a rebellious buffer state, which was situated between two mighty contending empires. At any time, his own subjects might conspire in bringing the Parthians to their aid.

At the time of Christ's birth, Herod may have been close to his final illness. Augustus was also aged, and Rome, since the retirement of Tiberius, was without any experienced military commander. Pro-Parthian Armenia was fomenting revolt against Rome (which was successfully accomplished within two years).

THE TENSIONS IN PARTHIA

The time was ripe for another Parthian invasion of the buffer provinces, except for the fact that Parthia itself was racked by internal dissension. Phraates IV, the unpopular and aging king, had once been deposed, and it was not improbable that the Persian Magi were already involved in the political maneuvering requisite to choosing his successor. It was conceivable that the Magi might be taking advantage of the king's lack of popularity to further their own interests with the establishment of a new dynasty, which could have been implemented if a sufficiently strong contender could be found. At this time it was entirely conceivable that the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, culminating in Daniel's writings (one of their own Magians), was of profound motivating significance.

The promise of a divinely imposed world dominion at the hands of a Jewish monarch was more than acceptable to them. (Their own Persian and Medo-Persian history was studded with Jewish nobles, ministers, and counselors.)

THE ENTOURAGE TO JERUSALEM

In Jerusalem the sudden appearance of the Magi, probably traveling in force with every imaginable oriental pomp and accompanied by adequate cavalry escort to insure their safe penetration of Roman territory, certainly alarmed Herod and the populace of Jerusalem.

It would seem as if these Magi were attempting to perpetrate a border incident, which could bring swift reprisal from Parthian armies. Their request of Herod regarding the one "who has been born King of the Jews"⁷ was a calculated insult to him, a non-Jew⁸ who had contrived and bribed his way into that office. Consulting his scribes, Herod discovered from the prophecies in the Tanach (the Old Testament) that the Promised One, the Messiah, would be born in Bethlehem.⁹ Hiding his concern and expressing sincere interest, Herod requested them to keep him informed.

After finding the babe and presenting their prophetic gifts, the Magi "being warned in a dream" (a form of communication most acceptable to them) departed to their own country, ignoring Herod's request. (Within two years, Phraataces, the parricide son of Phraates IV, was duly installed by the Magi as the new ruler of Parthia.)

DANIEL'S MESSIANIC ROLE

Living six centuries before the birth of Christ, Daniel certainly had an incredible number of Messianic prophecies. In addition to several overviews of Gentile world history,¹⁰ the Angel Gabriel told him the precise day that Jesus would present Himself as King to Jerusalem.¹¹ It is interesting that Daniel's founding of a secret sect of the Magi also had a role in having these prominent Gentiles present gifts at the birth of the Jewish Messiah.

THE CHRISTMAS GIFTS

The gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh were also prophetic, speaking of our Lord's offices of king, priest, and savior. Gold speaks of His kingship; frankincense was a spice used in the priestly duties; and myrrh was an embalming ointment signifying His death. In the millennium, He will also receive the gifts of gold and frankincense;¹² but no myrrh. His death was once and for all. What gifts are YOU going to give Him this year? Discuss it with Him. | 

REFERENCES:

1. For background on why it was Bethlehem, study the Book of Ruth, or our briefing package, The Romance of Redemption.
2. Oneiromancy, not astrology, is the key skill mentioned by Herodotus, I.107, 120; VII.19.
3. Encyclopedia Britannica, 7:691.
4. Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 4:31-34.
5. Daniel 4:9; 5:11.
6. Daniel 6.
7. Matthew 2:2.
8. Herod was Idumean (an Edomite), a traditional enemy of Israel.
9. Micah 5:2. (Revealed by Holy Scripture, not astrology.)
10. Daniel 2 and 7.
11. Daniel 9:24-26.
12. Isaiah 60:6.



■ Chuck Missler was an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He was also the founder of the Koinonia Institute. Chuck Missler sadly passed away in May 2018.



AUTHENTIC PARENTING

By Dave Firth

Do we ever ask ourselves what 'authentic parenting' looks like? How do we know if we're doing a good job? Who makes the rules anyway?

Disclaimer: Please don't think that I in any way am suggesting that I have got it all together and that I am the perfect model of a Christian parent!

Last year I was booked to speak at an event so I told my boys I was going to be to be talking about the authentic Christian life and I asked them what they thought an authentic parent was like. I asked for serious answers only!

Their responses were interesting:

- Calm
- Disciplines kids when they're naughty
- Treats them when they're good
- Takes showers
- Nice to kids

- Has self-control
- Reads bible to kids
- Protects kids from bad things
- Tells the truth

What a good list – I was impressed!

No mention of iPads, lollies or McDonalds! (Whose kids are these?)

It's interesting how we determine what is good. A 'good' parent according to our kids might be very different from what we think is a 'good' parent.

I try really hard not to make promises.

I took my eldest boy to a Father &

Son camp a couple of years ago, and I promised my other boy that I'd take him next year.

Unfortunately when the camp dates came around I had booked to go to America for 7 weeks so we couldn't go. He was gutted! (I took him the following year and he loved it!)

As parents we often make promises. We say we will do something and we try really hard to keep to our word but sometimes our word just isn't good enough!

The promise you make might be a genuine 'hope' but you are in no position to make a promise!

We can easily say things like 'I

won't let you down!', 'I'll never let anything bad happen to you!' or 'I'll be there by 4pm to watch your soccer game - I promise!'

I'm so glad that when my Heavenly Father makes a promise it's not like one of mine – where several factors (including my memory) can lead to me breaking a promise!

His promises are perfect!

It is so important that we instil in our children that God's promises are important.

A few years ago my friend had a baby that died at full term and was still born.

It was a heart-breaking time for them and for many of us that journeyed through it with them. But one day my friend and I were having a coffee and talking about everything being in God's hands and the realisation hit me, "My kids don't belong to me!"

"They're God's – they're just on loan to me"

The same applies for my mum (who went to be with the Lord when I was eight), my wife and my kids.

If you were looking after my daughter while I nip to the shops, when I get back you'd willingly hand her back to me – she's not yours!

Understanding we are charged with looking after His children (whether that's a spouse, child or friend) changes how we view them.

Authentic Parenting is simply pointing our kids back to their real Father!

So how do we decide what is good parenting?

"THE TV AND MOVIES WE WATCH DETERMINES THE STANDARDS WE SET FOR OUR KIDS AND THE TV & MOVIES THEY WATCH."



I mean, if I gave my kids everything they asked for they'd be dead several times over!

Doing what's right doesn't always make you popular.

With some things we seem to just know what is good or bad for our kids.

Jesus said, "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)

So we know the basics. Fish = good, snake = bad

But we also know that we make some good decisions and some bad decisions.

What are we drawing on? Where do we get our standards? Society? TV? What other people do? What our parents did? How do we decide what's ok for them to wear, watch, see, listen to?

I read some alarming stats recently from TV research group, Nielson, that basically said that NZ kids watch an average of 4 hours TV a day!

That's crazy! The TV is not a babysitter.

The TV and movies we watch determines the standards we set for our kids and the TV & movies they watch. Don't kid yourselves – your standards will drop without you noticing!



Last Christmas we watched Star Wars as a family for the first time. My eldest son was 12 at the time and he was shocked when a planet was blown up and, according to Obi-Wan Kenobi, "millions of innocent voices cried out in pain".

He wasn't used to seeing stormtroopers killed by the dozen either!

It made me realise that we've conformed to a standard that is worldly – not godly.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Church in Rome to say, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

Maybe we need to take a step back. Reevaluate what we accept as 'OK' and determine to make the Lord and His Word our focus and our guide for how we raise HIS children. |A



■ Dave Firth is a husband, father, bible teacher and communicator. He loves the Lord and has a passion for His Word. For more info visit www.davefirth.org

5 Ways To Work Out Of YOUR STRENGTHS

By Stephen Whitwell

You've heard it before. "You can be anything you want to be, if you just try hard enough". The intent is good, but the message isn't. It is a myth. It just isn't true. It's not possible. AND, it's not Biblical!

We can spend loads of hard-earned dosh attending seminars and training events to become better in areas where we think we should be stronger but end up more and more frustrated, and poorer for the effort. Bad investment.

One important thing I am NOT referring to here are character weaknesses. Of course, we are to and can, with lots of help, God's power and the right mindset overcome them.

The Apostle Paul says; But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10 NKJV).

Paul knew his strengths, he knew Who gave them, and he worked from them – to great effect!

A brilliant story, or fable, originally written by George Reavis in 1940 illustrates the issue.

"Once upon a time, the animals decided that they should do something meaningful to meet the problems of the new world, so they organised a school. They adopted an activity curriculum of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To

make it easier to administer, all of the animals took all of the subjects.

"The duck was excellent at swimming. In fact, he was better than his instructor. However, he made only passing marks in flying and was very poor at running. Since he was so slow in running, he had to drop his swimming class and do extra running. This caused his webbed feet to become badly worn, meaning that he dropped to an average mark in swimming.

"Fortunately, 'average' was acceptable, therefore nobody worried about it – except the duck.

"The rabbit started at the top of the class in running but developed a nervous twitch in his leg muscles because he had so much makeup work to do in swimming.

"The squirrel was excellent in climbing, but he encountered constant frustration in flying class because his teacher insisted that he start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down. He developed cramps from

"SO, DON'T BE AFRAID TO SPEND THE TIME AND MONEY IN GROWING IN YOUR STRENGTHS."

overexertion, so he ended up with a C in climbing and a D in running.

"The eagle was a real problem student and was severely disciplined for being a nonconformist. In climbing class, he beat all of the others to the top, but insisted on using his own way of getting there!"

There's a better way; it is to live life out of our God-given strengths. When we know our talents and abilities and do what we do out of that vast pool of resources, everything works better.

Here's '5 Ways To Work Out Of Your Strengths', and live life better.

1. KNOW WHAT YOUR STRENGTHS ARE.

When we say 'strengths' we're meaning a talent, ability, skill, something we can do we love doing, we can do easily, something maybe we can do better than others. It is the unique way we're wired up.

And we are all wired differently.

A weakness on the other hand is not a failure, or an ability that needs attention or an innate flaw to who we are. It is just an area that we are not as strong to function in as others.

It surprises me again and again that people even into later life still don't know what their strengths and weaknesses are. It took me years to discover or more importantly identify then accept the way I was wired up.

The first step to working and doing life out of our strengths is to know what they are, and there are numerous things we can do to discover them.

"WE SHOULD NOT BE ASHAMED OF THE STRENGTHS WE HAVE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME WE SHOULD NEVER FEEL GUILTY ABOUT THE WEAKNESSES WE HAVE."

Phil Pringle says this; "Whatever you are good at, is probably your gift". If we are good at something, if we love doing that thing, if we think about it a lot, if we read about, learn about it, devour information about it easily, if people comment that we're good at this or that, then, it's pretty clear those are our strengths.

Any investment into a course, life-coach, seminar or even sitting round the table with trusted friends and colleagues and asking them to be honest in sharing with you what they see as your strengths and weaknesses, is a wise investment.

2. ACCEPT THE PERSON YOU ARE.

Part of the issue we're up against here is the pressure to be what we think we should be, the person our parents or teachers thought we could be, or the dream we've carried for years.

Each of us are a unique person. We're wired up in a certain way. We have strengths, and weaknesses, that make us who we are. We should not be ashamed of the strengths we have, but at the same time we should never feel guilty about the weaknesses we have.

Own them, the strong points and the weak points of our talent pool. The mix and makeup of our talents – strong and weak – make us who we are today.



"THERE ALSO SEEMS TO BE A CULTURE IN OUR WORLD THAT EXPECTS US TO BE AN ALL-ROUNDER WHO IS GOOD AT MOST THINGS AND CAN PERFORM ABOVE AVERAGE ACROSS MANY AREAS."

3. RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO 'TRAIN OUR WEAKNESSES' INTO STRENGTHS.

When we know our strengths and weaknesses it is tempting to try to strengthen our weaknesses. We

think we should attend a seminar or get some coaching to 'make us better' in that area.

And while that may help, it can only lead to more and more frustration because we were never designed to be strong in that area.

There also seems to be a culture in our world that expects us to be an all-rounder who is good at most things and can perform above average across many areas.

Tom Rath in his excellent little book Strength Finder, says this: "At its

fundamentally flawed core, the aim of almost any learning program is to help us become who we are not. If you don't have natural talent with numbers, you're still forced to spend time in that area to attain a degree. If you're not very empathic, you get sent to a course designed to infuse empathy into your personality. From the cradle to the cubicle, we devote more time to our shortcomings than to our strengths."

Lets not do that.

Resist the temptation to train our weaknesses into strengths.

4. ENCOURAGE, INVEST IN AND FOLLOW THE DESIRE TO 'TRAIN OUR STRENGTHS' TO BECOME BETTER.

When I discovered that my strengths lay in administration, writing, reading, study, thinking, introversion, it released me from loads of self and culture-imposed baggage. I then knew why it was I loved to read, write, teach, think, philosophise, and be on my own.

I discovered that over the years I have 'come alive' at the possibility of any training, instruction and growth in these areas.

But the thought of learning and studying and doing things outside those areas makes me bored, frustrated, and I can't wait to be out of there!

I have discovered over the years that any investment in time and money into training and enhancing areas of my strengths and talents, pays huge dividends. I'm engaged, interested, passionate, and will stay up late easily at the thought of learning and growing in my strong areas.

So, don't be afraid to spend the time and money in growing in your

"PAUL KNEW HIS STRENGTHS, HE KNEW WHO GAVE THEM, AND HE WORKED FROM THEM – TO GREAT EFFECT!"

■ Stephen Whitwell has been a pastor for 33 years. He writes a monthly e-letter, Brief Word, which circulates worldwide. He has a passion for helping people discover who they are, and for writing and speaking about life! Stephen is married to Wendy and loves living in the Bay of Plenty and enjoys good coffee, fine food, his growing family (two incredible children and eight amazing grandchildren!), travel to anywhere at any time for no reason, connecting with people, studying writing speaking and teaching about life issues. He can be contacted at www.goodwords.nz.



strengths. Your family, your work, your organisation your church and you personally will be the better for it. Good investment.

5. OUTSOURCE OR DELEGATE TASKS IN OUR WEAK AREAS.

I know all too well, when you're leading an organisation with stretched resources, many times there is no one to do all the work that needs to be done, so, we just get in and do it. Whether we are good at it or not. It needs to be done so we do it.

That philosophy and work style works, for the short term. I know. But in the long term, it just does not. I know. It leads to burnout. I know! It happened to me.

There is a better way however.

I thoroughly believe that in the short (actually really very short) term, we can do things outside of our strengths. When we do, it is a demonstration of our true character.

But we must never use the knowledge of our strengths and weaknesses as an excuse for not doing stuff short term, if the short-term need arises. God's grace is available, for the short term, to do what is outside of our strengths.

For long term sustainability of our careers and relationships and everything really, we must learn the art of delegation and

outsourcing. If we're in a place where we have people resources, the best thing we can do when called upon to complete a task in the area of our weaknesses, is to get someone else to do it while managing the process, especially if the task is in their area of strength.

There are some jobs around the house I know I can do, but others I know it is best to call in an expert, pay them the money, and let them lose! The money paying them is money well spent. I am happy, the tradie is happy, the family are happy because the job was well done.

Successfully working and living out of our strengths means we will be comfortable to outsource and delegate tasks we know are not our strong points.

Five simple things to live life out of our strengths. Five ways to make life enjoyable, successful, and fruitful. The right people, doing the right things, at the right times, with the right resources (strengths), for the right reasons, simply means..., the right stuff happens! And God smiles!

The implications for our family, our career, business, our organisations and personally are absolutely immense!

So; "You CANNOT be anything you want to be – but you CAN be a lot more of who you already are" | 

DOWN TO EARTH WISDOM FROM PROVERBS

MONEY MATTERS

By Charles Price

If 'money talks', as the saying goes, the most common word in its vocabulary seems to be, "Goodbye!"

No wonder Solomon wrote, "*Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle*" (Prov 23:5).

A recent Gallup statistic puts the median annual household income worldwide (including extremes of wealth and poverty) at US\$9,733, (NZ\$14,600). New Zealanders overall are doing well with a mean income of \$49,000, (including the extremes).

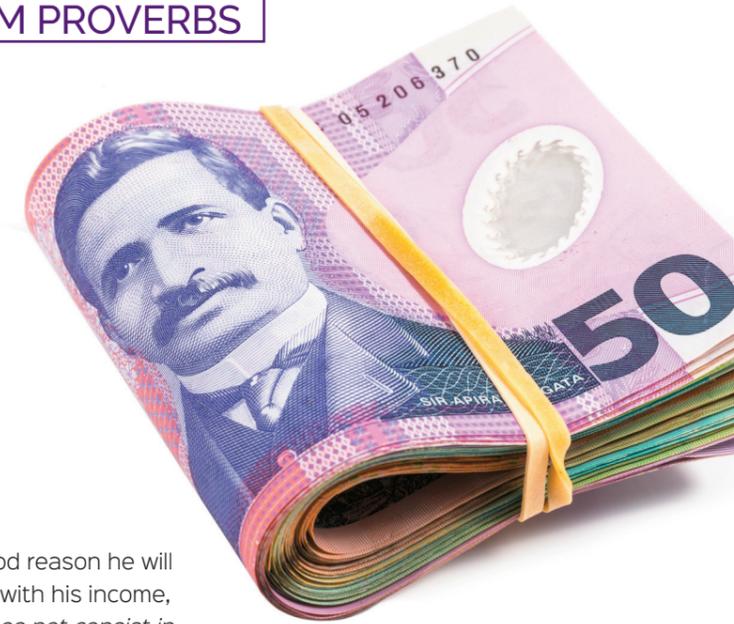
King Solomon, the main author and compiler of the book of Proverbs was one of the richest men of his day, obscenely so! 1 Kings 10:14 informs us "*The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents...*" 666 talents is 23 metric tons which is 50,705 oz which at current prices comes to an annual income of \$62,564,900. No doubt this exaggerates the value in Solomon's day, but today it would put him today into the top ten highest earners in the world, (but not give him the top slot, which is a whopping 98.5 million). In his wisdom Solomon was smart enough to write in Ecclesiastes 5:10: "*Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.*"

There is a very good reason he will never be satisfied with his income, for, "*A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*" (Luke 12:15). To define a person by their money is to devalue them. Twice the New Testament warns, "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Tim 6:10), and "*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have...*" (Heb 13:5).

For one thing, a love of money is built around a superficial value that money equals 'success' and contentedness, secondly, a love of money is founded on an illusion which goes something like this:

The more money I have, the more content I will be. The reality is, the more I have, the more I can lose, the more I can lose the more I have to look after it, the more I have to look after, the more worried I become about losing it. So, the very thing I thought would bring me contentment, brings anxiety. That's why "*whoever loves wealth is never satisfied*". Their value system is fundamentally flawed, in fact, corrupted.

Money may be a good servant, but it is a bad master.



THE REALITIES OF MONEY

We can't get by without money! We need homes to live in, food to eat, clothes to wear, vehicles to get around in, and the money to pay for it all.

Money is shrouded in both virtue and vice in Scripture. Solomon pleads for the supremacy of wisdom as being '*more profitable than silver*' and as an investment, it "*yields better returns than Gold*" (Prov 3:14), yet he also says the biproducts of wisdom are, "*Long life is in her right hand, and in her left hand are riches and honor*".

This does not mean the foolish die young and poor, but that wisdom not preoccupied with wealth may lead to a satisfying life with contentedness.

Solomon gives an illustration of money needing to be earned, "*Go to the ant you sluggard, consider its ways and be wise.... It stores it's provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.*" (Prov 6:6-8) Storing today for tomorrow, in the summer for the cold of winter,

is being responsible. Solomon's best advice on accumulating money is surely: *"Dishonest money dwindles away. But he who gathers money little by little makes it grow."* (Prov 13.11) If 'little by little' seems too little, then we might have a problem! Be warned: *"An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end."* (Prov 20.21) This is surely why gambling is a dangerous past time, or worse, an addiction. The lottery has been called a tax on the poor and the foolish, who want a quick fix to poverty and an unearned surge in their wealth. Winston Churchill said, "Parents should not leave their children money, but horses", meaning horses as the means to make money. If the father of the prodigal son had given him land, oxen, tools and a

few workers the story may have been a very different one. His immediate, unearned inheritance entitled him and corrupted him. So, a warning from Solomon, *"Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice"* (Proverbs 16.8). Ironically, *"A stingy man is eager to get rich."* (Prov 28.22) It's the stinginess of his heart that creates the appetite for more and more! Money is necessary but keep it all in balance: *"Do not wear yourself out to get rich. Have the wisdom to show restraint"* (Prov 23.4).

Wealth and possessions have a transient value. Job wrote, *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart".* Money loses its currency with our final breath. This was vividly illustrated to me many years ago when one of the world's

richest men of his day, Aristotle Onassis, died. On the morning he died, I read a newspaper article on Onassis with a box insert entitled, 'How Much Is He Worth?' They tried to estimate his vast assets.

After he died later that that day, I picked up a late edition of the same newspaper, which had the same box insert but with one word changed: "How Much Was He Worth?" It had moved from 'is' to 'was'. All his assets became past tense with his last breath. Interestingly, Onassis left the exact same amount I will leave when I die – everything! *"Riches do not last forever"* (Prov 27.24). Hence *"Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth."* (Prov 27.1)



THE RISKS WITH MONEY

Tim Keller in his book 'Counterfeit Gods' speaks of 'greed' as a 'spiritual addiction'. He says, *"money can become so much more than the means of exchange, it can become a powerful life-altering, culture shaping god that eventually breaks the hearts of its worshippers"*. He cites leading bankers in the USA and UK who committed suicide during the recession of ten years ago. Take away the money, and life was bereft of meaning. He says of counterfeit gods *that 'we get to the stage where we are driven to break the rules we once honored and to harm others and even ourselves to get it.'*

Turn money from being a servant to be a master and we set on a course which may seem to offer much but will eventually let us down. *"Whoever trusts in riches will fall."* (Prov 11.28) Material riches are intrinsically neutral but potentially dangerous. How do we know when they become dangerous?

Jesus gives a clue in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven ..."* (Matt 6:19-20). If his hearers were wondering where in those two options their 'treasure' lay, he gave them a test: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* To identify where our heart is, is to identify what our treasure is. David warned, *"...though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them."* (Psalm 62:10) To keep our heart healthily detached from riches is to plot a safe course. Hence Proverbs tells

"TURN MONEY FROM BEING A SERVANT TO BE A MASTER AND WE SET ON A COURSE WHICH MAY SEEM TO OFFER MUCH BUT WILL EVENTUALLY LET US DOWN."

us to: *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life"*. (Prov 4:23).

Wealth can be a means of exploiting the poor. *"He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich - both come to poverty."* (Prov 22:16) Wealth is about having choice, and the ability to choose, gives the ability to abuse. Therefore, *"Do not exploit the poor because they are poor"* (Prov 22.22), but in contrast: *"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor"* (Prov 22.9) and *"He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes receives many curses."* (Prov 28.27) This is not threatening, but a statement of moral law that *"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed"* (Prov 11:25)

THE RESPONSIBILITIES WITH MONEY

As a terrible master, but liberating servant, Solomon talks about the right use of money to enjoy and maximise its benefits. *"Honour the Lord with your wealth... then your barns will be filled to overflowing."* (Prov 3.9) Generosity provides sufficiency and giving away ensures we will always have enough! It may seem a paradox but is a true principle: *"One man gives freely, yet gains even more;*

another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (Prov 11:24-25) No one comes to poverty because they give away too much, for *"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor."* (Prov 22.9)

Living within our means and spending wisely will leave us content. I used to say regularly to my three children as they were growing up, the difference between content and misery is two cents! Earn a dollar and spend 99 cents and you will be content; earn a dollar and spend 101 cents and you will be miserable. I got the idea from Charles Dicken's Mr. Macawber in David Copperfield, and the principle stands us in good stead. It is the basic law of economics. Debt is expensive, disheartening and brings misery.

Solomon had a wise motto we can well take on board in, *"...give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."* (Prov.30.7-9) Not too much, not too little, just 'my daily bread'. Does that ring a bell? It was the prayer of Jesus, *'give us this day our daily bread'*. |A



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5 CREATIVE Ways to Read the Bible This Year That WON'T Be Boring

By Nathan Johnson

Several years ago at the start of a new year, I bounded awake excited to begin my brand-new Bible reading plan.

Sure, I had trouble following through in years past, but this was going to be my year! For the first few weeks, everything stayed on schedule, but then a curious thing began to happen—I'd get behind on a day here and there, eventually being weeks behind, stuck in Leviticus, and thinking about throwing in the towel. Have you been there?

If so, I can relate and after years of profitable Bible reading, I have five suggestions for you that will keep you engaged and not fizzling out this year. Obviously, nothing can replace discipline and diligence—two key elements in studying and reading Scripture—but these five creative ways to read the Bible may help you if you find yourself stuck.

1. SELECT ANEW

While I highly recommend having

one main Bible translation to study and teach from, I have found it helpful to occasionally change the translation I read in my daily reading. In doing so, I have found these benefits:

- a new translation can give a freshness to your reading
- it allows you to see and discover things you might ordinarily gloss over
- it changes the style and emphasis of your reading and can make it exciting to keep going

While I think a solid word-for-word translation is necessary for your Bible study, reading other translations has often given me a renewed love for reading God's Word.

2. START LISTENING

There are a lot of activities I do

daily—such as driving, exercising, cooking, etc—where I have the opportunity to listen to something at the same time. Whereas I could turn up the tunes, using these opportunities to listen to God's Word gives me a way to not only multitask but focus on Jesus throughout mundane activities.

Over the years I have purchased several audio Bibles—and here are a couple thoughts to consider when looking at getting one:

- what translation do you want to listen to?
- do you want one person reading the entire Bible or do you prefer multiple voices?
- do you want an audio Bible that is dramatized (where there are different voices, often a music soundtrack, etc—almost like a movie without the images)?
- how much do you want to spend?

Answering these questions up front helps narrow the options. Need a place to start?—check out ChristianAudio.com or Audible.com and search for “Bible.”

3. SPEED UP

Sometimes the reason we get bogged down in Leviticus and grow weary is due to the amount we read. Many yearly Bible reading plans only have you read a chapter or two from a book in the Bible and thus it takes weeks to get through a book like Leviticus, Jeremiah, or Obadiah (just kidding).

One great idea is to challenge yourself to read through the entire Bible in three or six months. It may take 30 or so minutes a day of reading, but you'll be surprised at how much the Bible comes alive. You'll see connections between books and stories that you can easily miss when reading slowly.

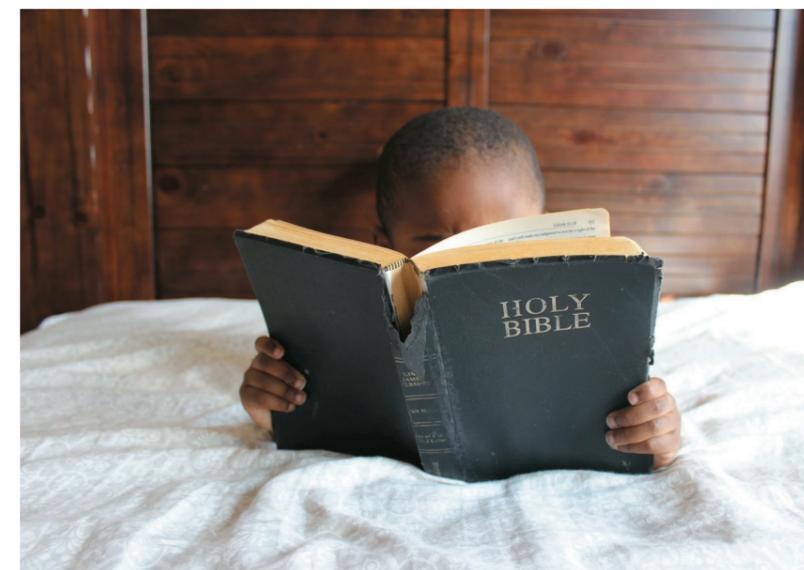
Two great ideas to get started:

- take the total number of pages in your Bible and divide it by how many days you want to read (90 days, 180 days, etc) and find out how many pages you need to read each day.
- determine a set amount of time you want to read each day and hold yourself accountable to keeping it

4. SLOW DOWN

In contrast, slowing down your reading has a way of reigniting passion for God's Word.

A good friend of mine will read the entire Bible the first three months of the year and then will choose one book of the Bible to slowly



read, meditate (chew on), and ponder for the rest of the year. Reading quickly gives him global context and framework, reading slowly gives him greater depth and understanding of a single book. Rather than have the pressure to read through the entire Bible this year, why not consider slowing down and only read through the New Testament (several times), or choose a book like Colossians and read it everyday for two months and then choose another book.

I've found that the best way to smell the roses is to not run by them quickly hoping for a whiff, but to slow down enough where I can stick my nose inside the petals and inhale.

5. STAY FOCUSED

Again, there is no substitute for discipline and diligence ... sometimes we just need to buckle down and be purposeful in our Bible reading and study whether we feel like it or not. But we mustn't forget one important truth: all of Scripture is about one thing.

Whether you read in the Old Testament or New, everything in the Bible is focused upon Jesus Christ. The Old Testament foreshadows His life and the purpose of the Cross, and the New Testament flows from this reality.

When you read the Bible, make sure you read it with the lens of Jesus. The Old Testament comes alive when you realize everything points to Him. The New Testament becomes more significant when you discover it's all about Jesus, the Cross, and His work (via the Holy Spirit) to form and shape within you with His character, attitude, and love.

Reading the Bible isn't suppose to be boring, it is not some ancient text we are to academically peruse, nor is it merely good moral stories that tell us how to live—it is the very words of God, they are truth, and they reveal Jesus Christ.

If you haven't decided on a Bible reading plan for this year, don't wait. A richness of intimacy and insight await you. | 



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INDIVISIBLE

Darren Turner had barely been commissioned as an Army chaplain when he learned that he was being deployed to Iraq in 2007. And that sudden transition, frankly, left him in a state of shock.

I mean, it's not that he wasn't eager to serve the soldiers in that war zone. He was. After all, plenty of soldiers need spiritual and emotional encouragement when the bullets start flying and loved ones are so far away. And it isn't as if he and his wife, Heather, hadn't already discussed this possibility. They had. In fact, they both agreed that they felt called to this very mission and ministry.

But leaving your beautiful wife and three beautiful children on the spur of a moment is tough. Really tough. Especially since they had pretty much just arrived at Georgia's Fort Stewart right after Darren's commissioning. They weren't even settled yet.

That, however, is what Darren signed up for. He gave his commitment to the U.S. government. But much more importantly, he gave his commitment to a higher Authority. If that's where God wanted him, then that's where he'd go.



War, though, demands a price. It doesn't matter if you're a grunt on the dusty streets of an Iraqi



village or a chaplain on his dusty knees: Sniper fire, explosive ambushes, mortar attacks and RPG missiles take a terrible toll on everyone involved.

And while Darren does his very best to heal the emotional injuries of the hurting troops around him, he doesn't realize that he's incurring some horrible emotional wounds himself. The kind you don't readily see or recognize. They're the kind that steal away everything from your self-confidence to your faith.

And even when you head back home into the arms of those you love most, those debilitating-yet-invisible wounds remain. And they're so very, very hard to heal.

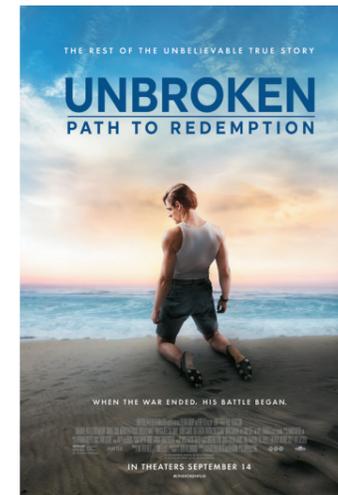
Indivisible is based on the true story of Army Chaplain Darren Turner. It's an involving and compelling story. But like the chaplain's 15-month duty in Iraq, the film has both soaring moments and a few stumbles, too.

The moviemaking at times feels a bit like a project pieced together with by-the-number precision. But thanks to compelling, emotional performances (particularly that of actress Sarah Drew), and a moving behind-the-scenes look at the struggles of soldiers and their families, this film is able to pick itself up out any potentially dusty fox holes and shine.

Better yet, this poignant war story delivers its message of faith in a natural, organic way. It gently shows rather than tells. It helps us care for wounded people and illustrates the ways men and women of God can influence those around them, even in the midst of the warring difficulties of life. |A

UNBROKEN: PATH TO REDEMPTION

Unbroken: Path to Redemption continues the true story of former prisoner of war and Olympic athlete Louis Zamperini. The first dramatic chapter of his narrative unfolded in 2014's *Unbroken*, and this sequel follows Zamperini as he leaves the military to begin a rocky transition to civilian life in the mid-1940s.



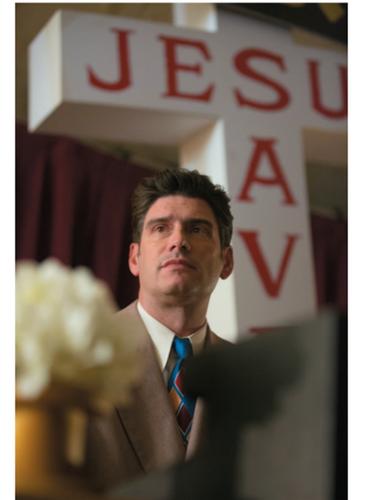
Plagued with post-traumatic stress disorder after his emancipation from a Japanese POW camp, Zamperini is consumed by the terrors of his past. Unable to break free, he turns away from his loving wife and young daughter and seeks refuge in the bottle.

But one night, Zamperini has a supernatural experience, one that forces him to lay down his pride at the foot of the cross and to confront the terrible demons of his past. After Louis returns from the war, he wants to live life to the fullest. He's an eager, positive young man with big dreams. In those early post-war days before he meets

Cynthia, he invests in his relationships and enjoys being around others.



Once Cynthia comes into his life, they marry and pursue their dreams and passions together, despite being poor and unable to find work. As time goes on, Louis falls into depression and a drinking problem, but his friends and family strive to help him. Louis' older brother, Pete, is someone Louis looks up to and seeks out for counsel. Even when Louis wants to shut the world out, Pete still challenges his brother to be a better man.



Cynthia, for her part, is dedicated to Louis and vows to stay by his side (apart from a moment when she briefly threatens to divorce him at a low point in their relationship). She is patient, loving and persistently interested in his physical, emotional and spiritual well-being—and she is his biggest fan. Cynthia gains courage and hope to stay faithfully present in her marriage from her friends and from her own faith.

God's Word promises that our weaknesses reveal His strengths as He works in and through us, that we'll be made strong through His power. (See 2 Corinthians 12:1-10.) It's an idea that's completely countercultural. That's because it asks that we admit our failings so that we can receive strength that can only come from the One who is strength.

Louis Zamperini, a real-life war veteran, knew what it meant to be weak. To be powerless. To be vulnerable. He experienced weakness at the core of his being. He suffered things that most of us will never fully understand. He struggled with PTSD, alcoholism, anger, bitterness and a desire for vengeance. Louis' marriage and his family life suffered as well at times.

But God wasn't far from Louis Zamperini. And just when he thought he'd lost it all, he found hope in the only *real* Hope. |A

Movie Reviews compiled from PluggedIn.com

plugged'n.

AUTHENTIC | HUMOUR

So, we got a lot of feedback from our readers about the 'Changeable Church signs' in Issue #1 and it seems that you folks really like these things!

Anyway, we don't get them much here in NZ so thanks to our American brothers & sisters, here's a few more...



AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE

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